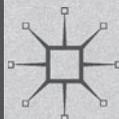


PRISON
VOCATIONAL
EDUCATION AND
POLICY IN THE
UNITED STATES

*A Critical Perspective on
Evidence-Based Reform*

Andrew J. Dick,
William Rich,
Tony Waters



Prison Vocational Education and Policy in the United States

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A Critical Perspective on Evidence-Based Reform

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This book is dedicated to Andy, Renee, Matthew, and Ian.

PREFACE: A STUDY OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN CALIFORNIA PRISONS

INTRODUCTION

In 2007, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) was promised by the California State Legislature \$500 million per year to expand programs in vocational and Adult Basic Education (ABE). The Legislature and Governor Schwarzenegger hoped the new curricula and classes would reduce crime and lower California's sky-high recidivism rates. The Legislature intended a major policy shift and wanted results for their money. They wanted verifiable evidence that the program worked.

This is where our study came in. The CDCR contracted with our team to gather evidence about the purchased curricula and (hopefully) verify that the desired results were being achieved. We evaluated the education programs at eight California state prisons from 2008 to 2011. To complete the contract, we wanted to “tell the story” of vocational education in California's prisons that would be useful and relevant to prison administrators. To ensure this, we entered the CDCR's world of prisons. This book is the result of our findings and experiences.

Like other public institutions, prisons are dominated by the administrative fads of the day—in this case, the evidence-based decision-making model. In California's prisons, this demand was translated into specific legislation signed by Governor Schwarzenegger, *Public Safety and Offender Services Rehabilitation Act of 2007* (also known as Assembly Bill [AB] 900) and the “California Logic Model,” a rehabilitation model emphasizing the treatments inmates would undertake as they served their sentences.

This model was the consensus of an “Expert Panel” which issued its report in 2007. The vocational education programs we evaluated were very prominent in the California Logic Model. But as we found out, irrespective of administrative fads, the core mission of the CDCR is not to run vocational education but to safely and securely incarcerate, as of 2007–2008, 170,000 prisoners. To do our evaluation of vocational education, the CDCR facilitated multiple visits to eight of California’s 33 prisons. In the prisons, we were given access to prisoners, prison officers, teachers, counselors, and prison administrators.

To fulfill the terms of our contract, we generated a report that was *useful* for the CDCR. Being *useful*, as we were constantly reminded by them, meant that we needed to produce numbers because numbers are valid for bureaucratic decision-making. The data needed to be verifiable observations and evidence-based. What they did not want were opinions from academics, or anyone else, which were unanchored in evidence. *Evidence* was the key; the CDCR clearly felt they already had plenty of opinions anchored in feelings and beliefs coming from the Legislature, the prison officers union, newspaper opinion writers, and many other places, so they did not care what our opinion was. Throughout the study, we did our best to provide something that was evidence-based and would be useful to officers and administrators making difficult decisions about what programs would be effective or not.

But something else kept staring us in the face during the study, something that was not asked for by the CDCR. The point of prison is not education but incarceration. The CDCR runs prisons, not schools, and prisons are fundamentally about punishment. From what we saw, corrections and rehabilitation are always secondary to this goal, even though the Legislature, via AB 900, declared otherwise. Even more striking were the voices of those we encountered within the system. We were told repeatedly by inmates, teachers, prison officers, and prison administrators that nothing is ever as it seems in prison—there is always another layer of regulation, inmate gang activity, potential and actual violence, drugs (legal and illegal), lockdowns, and so forth, that derail educational goals. Such activities, of course, are those of a prison, not a school, yet such activities inherently disrupt educational goals. A class may be well conducted, teachers well trained, and a curriculum well chosen, but the fact that the students may have to submit to anal cavity searches before and after class has consequences for how much learning occurs and the quality of that learning.

These things were not part of what the CDCR asked us to study—they asked us to study vocational education as an analytical unit. Our “deliverable” was to be about running vocational education classes that were in a prison, rather than a prison that happened to have a school. This situation created the conundrum this book is based on: is this book about vocational education in prison (which is what our official report—the deliverable—was about and we are so proud of), or is it about prisons where vocational education classes are incidentally inserted? This book is about the latter.

Our book is structured to reflect the multiple realities nested within our research domain. We invite readers to view the problems of education for inmates, not through a linear report of results based on experimental research designs, but as a series of stories about prison life, classroom dynamics, and research protocols. In spite of the sometimes Kafkaesque limitations, we invite readers to look through the window of our experiences and the resulting critique of applied research itself in order to better understand the larger issues of prison education. By doing so, we think this approach will lead our readers on an adventure story.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book could not have been created without the contributions of colleagues and friends. We wish to acknowledge David Philhour, who provided not only the expertise of an outstanding statistician but also the calm and deliberate perspective we needed throughout the project; Gail Hildebrand, our support staff with Grants and Contracts served as editor, advocate and at times, negotiator with our funder as we endured stop orders and difficult re-start timelines; Josie Smith, our keen eyed and reflective typist, and of course the selfless men and women of the CDCR who shared their truths, helped us to understand and performed wonderfully in extremely difficult circumstances.

NOTE ON AUTHORSHIP

Both Bill Rich and Tony Waters wrote and/or heavily edited this entire book. The report that is at the heart of this book was largely prepared under the leadership of Andy Dick before his cancer diagnosis in May 2011. Still, in the preparation of this section, both Bill and Tony played important roles drafting sections of the report and editing what Andy

wrote. As we hope the text will show, there was a camaraderie in the development of the data and organization of the overall report.

The report did not become a book until after Andy's death in May 2012. We have not put our individual names on the chapters we first drafted because of the mutual effort we made throughout the preparation of the book. We have also not removed the personal pronoun "I" in the vignettes because most of those were first drafted by Bill; the only vignette drafted by Tony is Chap. 17, "Could be Worse." Therefore, when "I" is used in the vignettes, it almost always refers to Bill. In this respect, we decided to leave authorship attributions off the individual sections—the book, as a whole, is a truly shared collaboration of equal parts!

Chico, California, USA

Bill Rich
Tony Waters
August 31, 2015

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SECTION I

Structure and Thesis of the Book

THESIS

This book reflects a favorite teaching strategy Bill learned from reading Richard Elmore (2011). At the end of a course, Bill likes to ask students to respond to the following prompt, “I used to think ... and now I think” This kind of reflection becomes even more interesting when students reframe their current understanding of problems and issues to see events and actions through multiple frames of reference. In this situation, we, as authors and researchers, are also in the role of our students whose task is to answer “I used to think ... and now I think”

The thesis of this book is that evidence-based research in prison includes two contradictions. The first contradiction is that the goals of prison and education are fundamentally different and even contradictory—prison is about punishment and discomfort while education is about nurturance and learning. This thesis is developed in Chap. 1. The second contradiction is the nature of agency-funded “evidence-based research.” Such research conflicts with the implicit and explicit policy goals of the agency funding the research (in this case the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation [CDCR]). Policy goals are always generated in a political environment that reflects values and not rationally generated “evidence.” This is dealt with in Chap. 2.

This book elaborates on why these two contradictions exist and the consequences for not only our study of vocational education in California

prisons but policy-focused research in general. Or, to quote ourselves from Chap. 6:

Such a rational program should in theory work; after all, its assumptions are rooted in the best research available and sound understandings of how and why criminogenic factors contribute to crime rates. However, such a rational model also assumes an efficient and effective bureaucracy to administer what is, after all, a complex process of individual diagnosis, delivery of programs, and parole follow-up. As will become apparent from the data presented in this report, the CDCR is not always able to deliver such programs at least for vocational training, particularly in the context of what the overcrowding in California's prisons that the Three-Judge Court Panel (2009) explicitly described as "criminogenic."

It is clear from what the Expert Panel (2007) and others write, that programs can and should be developed for prisoners that reduce rates of recidivism for parolees. Among these programs are the programs specified in AB 900. What is less clear is whether such complex programs can be implemented in the current environment of California's overcrowded prisons.

OVERALL ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

Our book is structured to allow readers to see our subject as research, critique, and personal human experience. Given what we learned and experienced, we believe there is really no better way to address the combined subjects of prison education, prison reform, bureaucracies, and the nature of evidence-based research than to layer the original report between our analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of evidence-based research.

We kept the original structure of the report because we believe it is useful for policymakers in California (and elsewhere) who assess prison vocational education curricula. However, we adjusted subtitles and some language so the subject is less "California centric." We believe that the problems of doing research about vocational education in prison are not unique to California but are present in many prison systems in the USA. This part of the book is for anyone interested in what it means to safely implement effective vocational education classes in prison when faced with gang activity, frequent lockdowns, and other stringent rules of a security-conscious environment. The bulk of this part of this book was written and conceived under the leadership of Andy Dick in 2010–2011.

We learned much about this subject during our study and want to share it with a broader audience.

This book is structured in a unique way. Including the report itself, there are four elements: a preface and introductory chapters, the report, vignettes, and a concluding chapter:

1. Prefatory remarks that place the study of vocational education into the context of larger bureaucracies for prison administration and schools and an introduction to the report. This includes the Preface and Chaps. 1–3. These sections were prepared by William Rich and Tony Waters in 2013–2015.
2. A revised and expanded version of the report (the “deliverable”) produced under contract to the CDCR in 2011 (and which was declined by the CDCR in favor of a shorter, more administrator-friendly version) is the “middle part” of this book. To make the original report accessible, we have broadened the language in a way that places vocational education in California in the context of the massive institution, that is, the CDCR, which includes over 100,000 inmates, 65,000 staff, and a budget of \$10 billion per year.

The report is divided into six chapters (Chaps. 5, 6, 9, 10, 13, and 15); Chap. 10 is by far the longest and includes the data that is the basis for our analysis and conclusions throughout the book.

3. Tucked between the report chapters are eight provocative, jolting, and surreal vignettes describing how prison life dominates the delivery of otherwise conventional vocational education courses (Chaps. 4, 7, 8, 11, 12, 14, 16, and 17). These are stories of alcoholic “pruno” and greenhouses, strings dangling from anuses, the culture of retirement, missing glasses, life sentences, and why things could be worse. These stories highlight how prison bureaucracy pushes and pulls at innovations in prison education within the massive system of incarceration found in California today. These stories come from what we experienced and were written based on our notes, and were written by William Rich and Tony Waters.
4. A final chapter (Chap. 18) describes the broader lessons learned about vocational education in prisons, the implementation of public policy in California, and the difficulties of doing academic research—applied or theoretical—in the context of California’s prisons. This was written in 2014–2015 by William Rich and Tony Waters.

THE BOOK IN THREE SECTIONS

Section 1 (Chaps. 1-3)

In the first section, we introduce ourselves and set the stage for our project by giving our bona fides as applied practitioner-researchers. We explain how we landed a research contract with one of the largest prison systems in the world, the CDCR. The task we contracted for was to evaluate the effectiveness of 12 vocational education programs spread across 8 institutions in 24 classrooms. The CDCR wanted to know if the classes begun in 2007 would lower CDCR's 3-year 66% recidivism rate by 2010.

In Chap. 1, we describe the politics behind this contract and of the major reform law passed by California's Legislature and signed by Governor Schwarzenegger in 2007 (AB 900). This is also discussed in a more general way in the Literature Review of the report itself (Chap. 6).

We visited prison classrooms funded by AB 900 multiple times over a 3-year period and produced research reports of which we are very proud. But we were also stymied by the fact that our official reports do not tell the whole story of vocational education in prison. Telling this story more in-depth is the point of Chaps. 2 and 3. We conclude these two chapters by describing the Kafkaesque nature of studying such a question in the immense bureaucracy, that is, the CDCR prison system. In doing this, we critique the implicit theories that govern the system and its contracting for research with people like us. Layers of complexity were added as we address what was perhaps the most important issue of all: resolving the paradoxes between prison security, punishment, and the nurturing environment of the classroom.

In our study, there were always "elephants in the room" that remained unaddressed; specifically, the courses we studied were not in schools but in a "custody world." The schools we studied were, in fact, prisons. The nature of such "undiscussables" (Argyris & Schoen, 1996) in a prison environment is that they are wished away: classrooms were framed as free-standing units magically parachuted from the state Legislature into prison yards with an assumption that they were somehow free of the prison environment. We show how linear logic models, rational and reasonable though they may be, do not work when they rely on simply renaming existing processes and groups, as if renaming them alone will magically change the historical trajectory of an institution. This section represents a critique of efforts at the current trend in management, evidence-based decision-making.

This, of course, returns us to our thesis, which focuses on the limitations of both doing “education” in an institution focused on punishment and the inherent conflicts of interest for doing research in a politicized policy environment.

Section 2 (Chaps. 4–17)

The Report The second section of this book has two parts, interspersed. It includes an edited version of the main report we submitted to the CDCR. This report is the anodyne original report, in its full evidence-based glory, as submitted to the CDCR on December 31, 2010, by Andy Dick and ourselves. It was rejected by the CDCR in February 2011 because it was too long and detailed. We were told by the analyst rejecting the report that CDCR executives could not read anything more than 60 pages, including an Executive Summary. The rejection was copied to CDCR legal counsel and payments to the CSU Chico Foundation withheld pending the submission of the 60-page report.

We used to think that comprehensiveness and evidence were the main points of the project, but now we think the CDCR’s reaction is actually an object for the study itself. As applied researchers, we were, and still are, proud of the original report we submitted on December 31, 2010. It used original techniques to satisfy the CDCR’s demand for “evidence-based” research and numbers to try to answer the question of whether the classes we observed reduced recidivism, which was the overriding question the California Legislature and the CDCR were so concerned about. We did this despite the fact that, for example, there were only imprecise “proxy” data for rearrest: the CDCR could not provide us with data indicating whether or not inmate students enrolled in the classes we observed were rearrested in the 3-year period after release. Nor could they tell us if the inmate students were employed in the trade they learned in prison or anywhere else.

We used to think that these omissions were technical problems to be overcome with statistical manipulations, but now we believe the absence of the data is a big part of the story itself. These omissions were the product of (at least) two things. First, we did not have a 3-year window to follow prisoners who completed the courses. Simple math made the Legislature’s recidivism goal impossible to achieve. The courses began in 2007 and we received the data in October 2010. These 3 years did not provide enough time for inmates to complete classes, leave prison, and then be tracked to see if they committed new crimes within 3 years of release.

The second part of this omission was less straightforward. Oddly, the CDCR does not link databases for prisoners and parolees. They do this in order to protect privacy and discourage “fraternization” between prisoners on the inside and those on parole. The results are two separate bureaucracies within the CDCR that do not talk to each other verbally or via the nonexistent Internet links in prisons (no Internet connections were permitted in classrooms because of security concerns). No CDCR teacher on the “inside” was permitted to initiate communication with a parole agent or prisoner released on parole. Consequently, a basic source of data was missing. There was no way to find out from the CDCR’s computers if a specific parolee who had taken a vocational education class had recidivated or not. Initially, we thought we would get the data, but we now know the data never existed. The absence of such basic data is not something to be gamed statistically; it is part of the story of why we used to think one thing but now think another.

Officially, the CDCR refused to accept our report because it was too long for their administrators to read (296 *single-spaced* pages) and, therefore, it is out of compliance with the specifications of the contract that asked for a “brief” report we were told it should be about 60 pages.

The length of our report had grown not only because of our own interest but mostly because of the extraordinarily rich qualitative interview data we collected and reported. Such data are nuanced, “thick,” and much bulkier than a numbers-driven report. Our pride and enthusiasm were reflected in the report, which we wanted to share with CDCR administrators and teachers whom we respect and believe are perfectly capable of digesting a longer report. So why did they reject the report?

We believe the rejection may have been based on our recommendations, particularly, promoting school principals (powerless middle managers) to the rank of Assistant Wardens in order to increase the authority of education in the prisons. We suspect this, because a year after our revised, shorter final report was submitted in June 2011, the Assistant Superintendent of the Office of Correctional Education had not received the report or even knew of its existence. Apparently, not all evidence was appropriate for the educators to read even in an institution where decision-making is based on evidence.

Still, our report did answer the very specific research questions posed by the CDCR administrators, and it analyzed the quantitative data that were provided while developing the deeper analysis based on qualitative interview and field observations. While the content is not bland, the report chapters are the perspective of emotionless, unbiased, rational data-driven researchers, which was the persona we assumed.

Vignettes We also recognized we would have personal, human reactions to what sociologist George Ritzer (1998) calls the bureaucratic “rationality of the irrationality,” or did we see something even worse, the inhumanity in the humanity? So we added personal vignettes between the report chapters. These stories were written from jarring or shocking experiences that, while not accounted for in our research methods, most certainly add validity and depth to the knowledge we developed. These vignettes describe our personal experiences as researchers with the underlying prison culture. All are part of the context needed to understand vocational education in prison.

Section 3 (Chap. 18)

The third section of the book is contained in Chap. 18, which is a summary critique of the limitations of evidence-based decision-making in prison education. We “close the loop” by asking how our report met the goals—or not—of evidence-based research. It is here also that we return to the thesis about the contradiction between the nurturing environment of schools, the punitive nature of prisons, and the inherent limitations of doing policy-oriented research in prison. We point out that these contradictions inherently corrupt the process of research itself. Such contracting implicitly restricts the evidence we can collect because the conclusions we reach need to focus on what the contractors want, rather than what they need. But we do not conclude our critique with a sense of hopelessness based on the enormity or complexity of the problems. On the contrary, we advocate strongly for evidence-based research and talk about the impact third-party researchers can have when they can share their findings without fear of losing the next contract.

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Applied Research in California's Prisons

ORIGINS OF THIS PROJECT

This book is about an evaluation rooted in evidence-based research that failed. Not only did the evaluation fail, but the findings it was supposed to highlight never materialized, and the program we evaluated disappeared in the flurry of budget cuts that occurred following the recession of 2008–2009. Indeed, one of the highlights of the 3-year evaluation was our presence as researchers at Corcoran State Prison in October 2010. While there, we attended a meeting where at least half of the teachers in the vocational education classes we were evaluating were laid off. In this context, our evaluation of a 3-year-long “experiment” in evidence-based research slowly but surely petered out.

This experiment included both quantitative and qualitative data. The qualitative data were generated in the many interactions we had with prison administrators, teachers, and inmates. The quantitative data were generated specifically at the insistence of California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) administrators who believed that “evidence” means numbers and only numbers.

For this research, we produced two reports. The first in late 2009 was a “Curriculum Review” of eight curricula purchased by the CDCR with a small portion of the \$500 million appropriated by the California State Legislature in 2007 to expand vocational education programs in state prisons.

We observed that, among other things, the gardening courses designed to meet the increasing demand for landscapers fell short of the criteria laid out in AB 900, which required that the curricula be accredited by a national body and that credentialed teachers were hired. The program was soon cut from the CDCR curricula (more about this will be discussed later). The CDCR was apparently proud of this report (as we were) because they posted it to their website.

Following the issuance of our Curriculum Review, we set out to complete the more general “Program Review” of the new vocational education classes funded by AB 900 money. The CDCR gave us twelve specific research questions that structure the entire report, as particularly evident in Chap. 10 (results section). Identifying these questions kept us focused on questions specifically having to do with AB 900 and its interest in relating vocational education programs to the goals of the legislation, which were raising employment rates and lowering recidivism rates. This report was ostensibly due by the end of 2009, but this date quickly ran afoul of California’s ongoing budget crises; we received repeated stop-work orders from the CDCR in response to budget crises throughout 2009–2010. Quantitative data regarding the inmate students who had completed the courses were finally delivered to us by the CDCR in October 2010 for a report that was due by December 31 of that year.

The final report that this book is based on was 296 single-spaced pages in length and delivered to the CDCR on December 31, 2010. In February 2011, we received a note from CDCR’s Office of Research (copied to their attorneys) demanding a 60-page report they felt would be more accessible to their administrators. We delivered a 60-page report with a 200-page appendix in June 2011. The CDCR received this report, made the final payment to California State University, Chico (CSUC), and then apparently never read it. Gone were the early enthusiasms about using evidence-based decision-making to craft programs for vocational education in California’s prisons. And why should there be? By the time the report was issued, most of the classes had been eliminated in budget cuts, and repeated court orders demanded reductions in inmate populations because the overcrowded conditions in the prison system were determined by the courts to be “cruel and unusual.”

Still, we were proud of our report for a number of reasons. First, because we believed strongly that what we did, as well as what the CDCR did, was a good faith effort in making evidence-based decision-making work. That it did not work does not belie the fact that we and the CDCR

wanted it to work. But negative results are also results, as we learned (and teach) in research methods classes: the fact that the dog did not bark is just as significant as the fact that it did. In this case, the failures of California's "experiment" in vocational education in prisons in general, and our evidence-based evaluation in particular, tells us a great deal about the limitations facing large institutions like the CDCR when they try to initiate reform using "evidence-based research."

Despite the limitations highlighted in our report, we remain supporters of vocational education in California's state prisons, but this is really only an opinion derived from the "informed gut," which we believe is still an important basis for taking risks and making decisions—as every administrator inevitably does. However, we do question whether the linear-type reasoning used in evidence-based decision-making for prisons (or anywhere else) can actually be made to work in the "scientific" risk-free determinism dreamed up by CDCR administrators. We reached this conclusion only after chasing a great deal of data in California's prisons and working with a great number of well-intentioned and conscientious people living in a society that was probably, as the Supreme Court said, "cruel and unusual."

This project was created on an assumption that the effectiveness of a school reflects the strategies of teachers, curricula, and school administration, even in a prison. Bottom line, prison is a terrible place to operate a school—school in prison is not the same as a community college. In this respect, we are writing in the tradition of [Ravitch \(2010\)](#) who wrote about the inherent limitations of the school accountability movement in education, of which the demands for evidence-based decision-making is very much a part. As with Ravitch, we are not calling for an end to research—research and data are critical to decision-making. But evidence *informs* decision-making. It is not a substitute for decision-making.

TONY AND ANDY'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CALIFORNIA YOUTH AUTHORITY

This project really began in the 1990s when both Tony and Andy became involved with applied studies of juvenile rehabilitation programs. In Tony's case, this was with the California Youth Authority (CYA) where he was a graduate student assistant crunching statistics at the headquarters in Sacramento and later as a researcher/writer on an evaluation study (*Young Men as Fathers Curriculum*) undertaken by UC Davis in 1997–1998.

Tony's involvement came with a certain professional élan; at the time, the CYA had an excellent reputation for doing high-quality independent research that was used to develop rehabilitative policies. Indeed, it was seemingly a last bastion of such applied research because adult correctional institutions since the 1980s had adopted a more punitive focus toward criminal justice. In the context of "get tough" anticrime policies from the 1980s and 1990s, rehabilitative programs in the adult system were eliminated and cut back. For a short time, it even seemed as if any institutional interest in how effective rehabilitation programs were conducted had disappeared. In terms of research, this meant that the much larger California Department of Corrections (CDC) had a smaller research division than the CYA—and most of what the CDC did was provide statistical understanding of the institutions so that they could be run more efficiently as punitive institutions.

Meanwhile, Andy was in graduate school at Utah State University in Provo where he was evaluating the phenomenon of "peer courts," programs adopted across the country in an attempt to cut rates of juvenile crime. Andy's study was one of the few evaluations to become long term—indeed, he later followed up his Ph.D. dissertation research with an independent long-term evaluation of the peer court system. By doing this, he was able to follow a program from the initial enthusiasm of the 1990s to the eventual disillusionment of the 2000s.

Tony and Andy both ended up getting Ph.D. degrees in Sociology and teaching at California State University, Chico, in 1996 and 2001, respectively. This in turn led to yet another evaluation project, this time an evaluation of a "Positive Parenting" curriculum that was undertaken in 2002–2003. As with the previous projects, the goal of the study was specific, policy focused, and focused on juveniles; in this case, juveniles assigned by a court to take parenting classes in the context of their delinquency records and probation reports. The assumption was that because the "students" taking the parenting classes (held in various parole offices, alternative schools, and lock-ups in Riverside and Placer Counties) had problems with parenting themselves, they were at a high risk for not only reoffending but also for becoming parents of children who could become offenders. The reasoning went that since this usually is the case, could it be determined if the curriculum presented worked to interrupt such generational cycles of crime? As with the *Young Men as Fathers Curriculum* Tony evaluated in the late 1990s, this program involved a class lasting about 12 weeks with weekly 2-hour meetings where a

contract teacher presented the purchased curriculum. Evaluation and “evidence” of effectiveness were considered the critical capstones to the course. Indeed, such an evaluation was part of the federal grant authorizing the project.

What would have been a good research design for answering questions about parenting and recidivism among our target population? The answer was seemingly straightforward: track a group of juvenile delinquents over a period of 3 to 5 years after they have taken the class and compare it to a group that has not taken the class. Does the group that took the class have higher or lower recidivism rates? Does that group have a higher or lower rate of involvement with children born during the follow-up period of 3 to 5 years?

Straightforward as such a project design might seem, it quickly runs up against two problems, one practical and one philosophical. First, bureaucratic requirements restrict access to released delinquents—they are, after all, a very “vulnerable” population. Short-term follow up is easy because such research is done under tightly controlled circumstances: the delinquents are in a classroom, which can be observed, and “students” always are hopeful that cooperation with any authority figure (including researchers) will make a positive impression on the probation/parole/correctional officers (CO) who control their lives.

Long-term follow up, on the other hand, is more difficult. After discharge from parole, the parolees/probationers really do not want much to do with their former colleagues from the joint, including researchers. Further restricting continued access are anti-fraternization policies of correctional institutions that discourage (or even forbid) long-term, non-professional contacts between employees of the correctional institution and those who have been released from the institution or completed parole. And finally, released prisoners and delinquents have no incentive—and a number of disincentives—to cooperate with researchers. Predictably, after they are released from parole, such “successes” prefer to disappear into broader society. What is more, results from long-term studies spanning years and decades will largely be out-of-date relative to policy decisions since that evidence is based on “ancient data.” Thus, such long-term studies are few and far between and not that important for policy decisions tied to an annual budget cycle or a 2- to 4-year political cycle. Nonetheless, academics can derive general principles of importance and value; however, seen from the worldview of administration, such principles are not very applicable in the context of day-to-day decision-making.

These logical problems relate to common assumptions underlying our rehabilitation programs. In the parenting programs, there was an assumption that a 12-week course given to 17- to 19-year-old delinquents would have a measurable effect on broad dependent variables such as recidivism and parenting styles. Similarly it was assumed that the prison-based vocational education programs described in this book would solve the social, psychological, and disciplinary issues, as well as alter the habits prisoners brought with them from the outside.

In reality, such assumptions are nonsensical. First, education is not at the root of all problems as President George H.W. Bush and others often claim (see Waters, 2012, p. 3) any more than economics, psychology, or poverty are. So why were such assumptions embedded in the prison classes we studied in the first place? Why, time after time, did our informants assert they were sure that vocational education would solve the recidivism problem? For that matter, why do we (Bill and Tony) believe this and argue so vehemently for engaging prisoners in educational programs? Our answer is a philosophical one that we introduce here and take up in Chap. 2.

CALL FOR RESEARCH PROPOSALS

These evaluation problems of the late 1990s and early 2000s emerged in a shifting landscape for corrections in California and a demand for accountability that was “evidence-based.” Evidence-based quickly came to mean “measurable” and, therefore, quantitative. The pressure to deliver quick evaluations meant questionnaires were administered on the first day of class and then 12 weeks later when the class was finished. In this context, “success” was measured by whether the students had “acquired information” that they would not have gotten otherwise. This “acquired information” was typically taken out of the canned curriculum program the institution had purchased, and it related to information and attitudes regarding effective/normative parenting strategies. Usually, at some level, the students got “the information,” even though their lives were immensely complicated by bad home situations and the fact that they were incarcerated or on probation. Notably, of course, the information did not relate back to the core goals of the programs, which were about reducing recidivism and improving parenting behavior that we were unable to “measure” given the lack of long-term data. Nevertheless, using a combination of the quantitative techniques and structured qualitative techniques, we produced what we think was a good report.

Our report about the parenting classes was one of the last issued by the CYA Office of Research. The CYA itself was buffeted by a series of scandals in the early 2000s involving the mistreatment of wards by custodial staff, and in the case of the Office of Research, a scandal involving testing psychiatric drugs without getting the legal authority to do so from the Legislature.

In about 2004, the CYA was merged with the CDC, and renamed as the Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ). In doing this, the larger CYA Research Office was merged with the smaller CDC Research Division that had been focused on the statistical reporting needed to report on the administration of a prison as an institution with primary goals of public safety and punishment, and a secondary one for rehabilitation.

Ironically, as the primary institution for rehabilitation, the CYA was downsized and folded into the CDC, even as Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger began leading a drive to shift the goals of the larger institution to rehabilitation. This began with a symbolic name change to the CDCR in 2004. Schwarzenegger also let it be known that he was open to enlarging the prison budget, expand the number of institutions, and implement new programs focused on rehabilitation. As part of this push, there was to be evidence-based decision-making, which was fortuitous for the researchers transferred from the CYA.

This was the context of a call for proposals in 2005 from the CDCR Office of Research for *academic* research to be conducted in California's prisons. Unlike traditional research, this call did not require the evaluation of a specific program or policy. This initiative came from the "Expert Panel on Corrections" that was chaired by the well-known criminologist from UC Irvine/Stanford, Joan Petersilia. Academics were asked to propose something that would interest them as academics and the CDCR. Andy and Tony proposed to do a survey on the education programs at the CDCR for parolees and others. We could locate nothing in the academic, the CDCR website, or "gray" literature that inventoried what programs the CDCR was actually undertaking, although an inventory of records at the headquarters and state prisons might be of interest.

The proposal, however, did not go very far. The CDCR was still undergoing rapid change in 2005–2007, and the request for proposal (RFP) that we responded to soon was lost in the various reorganizations. In addition, there were increasing demands for "accountability" and "evidence-based decision-making" (i.e., two of the administrative catchwords making the rounds of government bureaucracies at that time). As a result, after about

a year, the CDCR Office of Research came back to us with another proposal. Would we be interested in doing an evaluation of the new vocational education programs that were to be created in response to AB 900? These vocational education classes resulted from an evaluation by the Office of Correctional Education (OCE) at the CDCR headquarters in Sacramento. Their evaluation indicated that the vocational education programs in the prisons at that time (e.g., dry cleaning, horse wrangling, and shoemaking) were not realistic in the current labor market. Nor were these programs necessarily accredited—who, after all, accredits wranglers or shoemakers?

As a result, in 2007 under AB 900, a new series of programs were established to train inmates in accredited programs, using credentialed teachers, and using nationally recognized curricula. These were the programs we were asked to evaluate in two phases. The first phase would evaluate the curricula purchased—did the purchased curricula meet the requirements the Legislature expected in a prison environment? The second phase would be a comprehensive evaluation of how the programs were implemented. It was also in Fall, 2006 that Bill Rich became part of the project—the CDCR indicated to us that besides the sociological element that Tony and Andy brought to the project, a curriculum specialist would also be needed.

THE “CURRICULUM SPECIALIST” JOINS THE TEAM

The genesis of Bill Rich’s involvement with this project started with an informal conversation. At the suggestion of the CDCR, Andy and Tony began looking for a “curriculum specialist” to help with the project. Governor Schwarzenegger had recently recognized, with much hand-wringing and public chagrin, that California was spending more on incarcerating criminals than spending on higher education in both the University of California and California State University systems. It was time to hold the corrections system accountable for its results and graduate reformed inmates who were ready to hold jobs and become productive and responsible citizens and family members.

The idea of studying anything to do with prisons had never occurred to Bill when Tony invited him to coffee to ask him to fill this key role. Bill remembers that Tony sarcastically predicted that the CDCR would become involved in the research in a way that would focus it on finding only limited “results.” He predicted that the terms of the contract would frame the research to be *useful* to the CDCR administrators who had

preconceived notions about the positive relationship between the vocational education classes they created and the goals of the Legislature.

Bill found other humor in the proposed project. In his professional role as a school administrator (1979–2000) prior to becoming a professor of Education in 2001, one of his chief concerns was to keep schools safe. From a school administrator's view, "safe" meant removing troublesome students his staff were unable to help. In this role, he had felt a certain professional satisfaction in removing such students from his school and sending them to a more restrictive setting where they would be someone else's problem. What is more, teachers and parents liked it when he did this, and it did not appear to cost the local school any money. Thus, in a strange way, Bill related well to Mathew Cate, Secretary of Corrections under Governors Schwarzenegger and Brown. At a 2010 conference, we heard Cate say that in his former role as prosecutor, he was concerned with getting criminals away from society. However, now in his role as Secretary of Corrections, he was committed to helping inmates change and become productive and contributing citizens in society. Bill felt much the same way about the project; the metaphorical students he had sent away from "his" school in the past were now staring him in the eye as he wandered among California's prisons trying to figure out the best way to get them back into the society from which they had been cast out.

Yet even more stunning than the idea of helping educate criminals was the idea that the corrections system was to be held accountable for the results in the same way schools were. Bill completed his doctoral dissertation in 2000 with a case study of the impact of the *California Public School Accountability Act of 1999* (PSAA) on school achievement as measured by test scores and other measures of "accountability." This law, a precursor to the federal *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB), codified a shift in responsibility away from multiple forces supporting the schools (e.g., parents, families, the economy, and cultural values) and directly onto the schools. At its most extreme, this shift meant that if homeless children without dental, vision, other medical care, or English as a first language could not achieve success with arbitrarily set standards, then it was the fault of teachers and administrators in the public schools. The achievement gap between ethnic and socio-economic groups recorded in standardized tests since the watershed *Equality of Educational Opportunity* (Coleman et al. 1966) was now the fault of "failing schools" and "underqualified" teachers. In much the same way, teachers in prison faced a similarly arbitrarily set standard, that is, prison. Likewise, prison administrators assumed that the vocational skill

deficits of inmates could be corrected with the right mix of programs without considering the environment in which the “students” lived.

School accountability is both a political and a business concept, but not an education concept. Holding people accountable or getting your money’s worth makes sense in the domains of politics and business. But how does accountability connect to education in schools or prisons? In the USA, education is more deeply politicized than in other countries in the sense that legislative bodies and political appointees select curricula, identify goals, and hire teachers; none of these tasks are monopolized in the USA by educational professionals (Cremin, 1990). In such a context, it makes sense that a political concept like “accountability” can be transferred to education. Accountability further connects to education on a cultural level. If accountability means holding people to account on one level, it can also mean blaming or scapegoating when things do not work as planned. Many Americans believe that problems can be solved with a kind of Biblical Old Testament punishment, or what Lakoff (2002) calls *strict parent morality*, along with a strange stew of cultural ideas including a combination of business concepts and practices. Applied to schools in a robust educational movement this is known as *educational accountability* (Elmore, 2004). Who could have guessed that this political, business-based, and culturally relevant movement would be applied to fix the social and economic burden of incarcerating 172,000 inmates?

Bill read deeply about failing schools serving students in poverty that made up a “school-to-prison pipeline,” a pipeline in his previous career he had helped stock to the acclaim of parents and teachers. But now he would witness the cultural rituals acted out in the belief that education could rehabilitate (or perhaps more accurately, habilitate) one of the most systematically and intentionally deprived groups in America—prison inmates. The project Tony described was irresistible.

As a former administrator, Bill was not surprised when the first CDCR administrator he met, who was an advocate of our study, said, “We are all about programs, programs, programs.” This perspective aligned closely with accountability responses in public schools because programs, as the administrator stated, meant control and accountability via scripted lessons, standard curricula, and tests that putatively isolated variables within the school or classroom environment. The jargon, borrowed from the schools, was there. Instructors were to become certified in curricula, which were provided in a manner as close to the prescribed content, method, and timeframe as humanly possible. Students would be evaluated on their

mastery of content, passed eventually onto a “graduation,” and awarded course credit. This linear, quasi-scientific approach in theory lent itself well to program evaluation and indeed mimicked the logic and experimental design of the federal government’s *No Child Left Behind Act* which was simultaneously being implemented in K-12.

But more irony appeared, because, as Bill pointed out, only schools serving students in the most challenging circumstances of poverty relied on this kind of evidence-based model of instruction identified by the CDCR administrator as “programs, programs, programs.” In high socio-economic status (SES) schools, a successful administrator might say they are all about “students, students, students” instead of “programs, programs, programs.” Teachers in such schools are expected to understand their students, assist them as they encounter ideas that are new, encourage them to overcome obstacles, and be recognized for their uniqueness. Such teachers work in the role of humanistic youth development experts. Students are intent on finding the source or object of their passion for learning. Teachers are expected to provide students a clear rationale for lessons and students are expected to wonder, “Why are we learning this?”

In low-SES schools—and prisons—the system is geared to narrow variation among students and eliminates the teacher as a variable in program delivery and evaluation. Teachers follow a script and pacing guide or they face discipline from the principal. Students within schools from juvenile hall to state prison routinely state words such as, “I’m just trying to work my program” in the same way that they say “I’m just doing my time” until release, and indeed as prison guards point out, “I’m just doing my time” until retirement.

SHIFTING SANDS, THE REPORT TAKES SHAPE

Along with the OCE, the Office of Research at CDCR was deeply involved in the design of the research and the specific steps to be taken as we moved through the institution. These requirements changed frequently as the CDCR responded to competing demands from the Office of Research, the OCE, and the local concerns of each prison, even as each office cycled through personnel changes. The establishment of the protocol resulted in considerable delays as the four or five research managers (and their supervisors) took time to get “up to speed,” offer suggestions, and then transition on to retirement, transfer, and, in one case, death, between 2007 and 2011 when the project concluded.

We also made clear our motive for actually accomplishing something that would help the OCE fulfill its mission to rehabilitate human beings, and we were impressed that each of the managers in their own way shared this general goal. We shared that we wanted to help and would commit to telling the truth in order to provide the most useful data possible. A kind of mutual acceptance seemed to be taking place among research team members and CDCR executives. We left the first meeting with a feeling of optimism and purpose in taking on this job.

In this context, Andy and Bill in May 2008 were called to a meeting attended by numerous OCE staff including assistant superintendents, federal grant coordinators, a technology and data collection expert, former and current principals and vice principals of prison schools (who, at that time, worked at the OCE in Sacramento), and a research manager. A few days prior to the meeting, the research manager sent Andy a document that for all practical purposes was a new research design. When we arrived for the meeting, we expected to continue our conversations under the assumption that the new RFP response would not be due in such a short turnaround time. Following introductions, the research manager opened up on Andy and blasted him with varying demands and mild insults about his work ethic and the appropriateness of our team to undertake this work.

Andy gave as good as he got and outlined what Bill remembers as his first verbal draft of a conceptualization of the CDCR as a structure built on the “shifting sands” of policy and direction. He reiterated our desire to continue with proposal alterations on a reasonable timeline, and the research manager huffed off to another urgent appointment. After this person left the room, the formerly silent members of the OCE team embraced us with handshakes and congratulatory comments mixed with assurances that we could ignore everything the research manager had just said. Apparently, the OCE understood more about the give and take of CDCR politics than we did; they apparently saw elephants in the room that were invisible to us at the time. Although reform was planned by the CDCR and OCE in a particularly logical and rational process, it was clear that things did not operate that way at the top of the organization, at least not on that particular day. We left committed to continue but wondered out loud what these contradictions might mean? We continued to ask these questions while writing this book.

In this context, there was further insistence on “numbers” and “evidence” with respect to educational goals. The contract was slated to begin in May 2008 and to take place over 18 months. We were actually quite pleased with the contract as it was finally written, if for no other reason

than the CDCR was open to a substantial qualitative research component where we could visit prisons, observe classes, and interview inmates. This approach aligned with the true goals of Andy and Tony as sociologists. There was also, of course, a requirement for quantitative data pertaining to graduation rates, sentences, recidivism, and other intervening variables. David Philhour was included in the report as the “statistics guy” who would take the files that were promised.

This is how the project began. But it was not the collaboration we had originally proposed in 2006. Rather, it morphed into just another research contract where the project design was tailored to get politically digestible results for very narrow questions regarding curriculum issues provided by the vendors (us) in the form of “deliverables.” The saving virtue was the fact that we would have unusually robust access to eight prisons, including a chance to talk to prisoners and teachers regarding learning in the prison environment. We especially looked forward to the opportunity of interviewing prisoners.

What follows is a description of how the project proceeded, and most importantly, the on-the-ground compromises we made as the CDCR wrestled with the competing demands of the state budget crises, rapid changes in the economy as a result of The Great Recession of 2008–2010, declining budgets in research and education, and the resulting rapid turnover in staff, personnel, and prisoners. Indeed, by the end of our 3-year project, many of the teachers we interviewed were transferred or laid off and the classrooms shuttered.

THE THREE ELEPHANTS

We always felt there was much more than being “on task” with respect to a narrowly focused assignment when it came to evaluating the vocational education classes we observed. We identified “three big elephants in the room” that we believe affected the quality of “programs, programs, programs” delivered in the prisons we observed. These were:

1. We were working in a prison, not a school. The interests of running a safe prison in overcrowded conditions came before everything, including education doctrine or the conduct of the engaging and effective classes. It does not matter whether this doctrine deals with school accountability, an inclusive curriculum, or developmental psychology. Security trumps everything, or in the words of one vocational education teacher, “It’s a custody world!”

2. California prisons were overcrowded during our study. Not only were the classes we evaluated in a prison, they were being conducted in a prison system that was peaking at 172,000 prisoners in 2008, which was over 200% of design capacity. Facilities were stretched to the limit, and classroom space was used for housing. It was so bad that the US Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit and the US Supreme Court (2009) defined the operation of California’s prisons as constitutionally suspect under the ban on “cruel and unusual punishment.”
3. The Great Recession of 2008–2010 soon overwhelmed the capacity of California to sustain high imprisonment rates. As a result, between the time our proposals were drafted in 2007 and the time our final report was issued in 2011, there were 25% fewer prisoners in the CDCR system and 50% fewer vocational education classes. One of the prisons we visited, Norco, was even in the process of being closed.

The three elephants in the room were not simply inconvenient distractions, although our study design assumed they were. Rather, they became key issues that provided the major context not only for our report but also for the entire rehabilitation movement in California. In combination, the three issues overwhelmed reform efforts by the state Legislature, the pretensions of Governor Schwarzenegger to prescribe “rehabilitation” for individual prisoners, and assumptions by the reform community about creating logical models for rehabilitation. The bureaucratic inertia created by the three elephants effectively ignored the larger picture and our report. They did this in the context of a strong belief in the power of rehabilitation, education, and a behaviorist logic that was organized into legal and administrative frameworks via the California State Legislature, governor, and the administrative apparatus of the CDCR. That history is briefly reviewed here.

AB 900, CALIFORNIA LOGIC MODEL, AND THE “R” IN CDCR

The first decade of the twenty-first century was challenging for corrections in California. The prison system was caught in a paradox—they were responsible for punishing criminals for their misdeeds but were also charged with rehabilitating inmates in a way that would reduce future

lawbreaking. Vocational education courses were an attempt to achieve these two goals by offering inmates a chance to rehabilitate as they served out their prison sentence.

CDCR policies reflected the shifts in public sentiment relative to corrections, punishment, and rehabilitation as it redefined its mission during the previous 50 years. Once focused on rehabilitation during the 1960s and 1970s, the system became more focused on punishment in the 1980s and 1990s as the state adopted life sentencing for habitual criminals, used imprisonment to fight the war on drugs, gave parole agents greater leeway in revoking parole, and became the place to house the mentally ill. Even as crime rates dropped since 1995, the number of people in prison continued to rise. Due in large part to the high incarceration rate, the costs of imprisonment in California rose and became the highest in the nation. As a result, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger in 2004 signaled an interest in having the CDC adopt policies that would encourage rehabilitation (and reduce costs) by lowering recidivism rates. Costs were \$49,000 annually per prisoner (CDCR, 2009).

California's recidivism rates hovered around 66% in the early 2000s, meaning about two-thirds of prisoners released were rearrested within 3 years (CDCR, 2010). Some researchers believed this was because California's rehabilitative programs were weak relative to others states. The criticism was that there was not a "full menu" of rehabilitation programs available in the prisons (Expert Panel, 2007, pp. 1, 3). Governor Schwarzenegger was also acutely aware of the financial and human costs of such statistics (Expert Panel, 2007, p. 6). By adding an "R" for "rehabilitation" at the end of CDC, Schwarzenegger wanted to send a clear message to inmates, prison staff, law enforcement, and the people of California that California's prisons were not just for punishment but also for rehabilitation. In 2004, the CDC became the CDCR.

The reform movement resulted in the establishment of an Expert Panel to evaluate how the CDCR could respond to the new demand for rehabilitation services in their institutions. The Expert Panel promulgated the "The California Logic Model" to the Legislature in 2007 (see p. 73). This model identifies the presumed relationships and milestones in the evidence-tested pipeline of "programs, programs, programs" to help develop individualized rehabilitation *programs* that will lead to the release of fully rehabilitated inmates. In particular, inmates, whatever their background, were to be provided a "Roadmap for Rehabilitation" (Expert Panel, 2007, pp. 9, 72) that emphasized strong literacy and vocational

education programs focused on preparing for the workforce. This road-map identified programs useful inside the prisons and on parole to help an inmate succeed.

The Legislature responded by passing the *Public Safety and Offender Services Rehabilitation Act of 2007* (AB 900) at about the same time in 2007. When signing the omnibus prison reform bill AB 900, [Schwarzenegger \(2007\)](#) optimistically claimed:

This is a major step forward, but now the real work begins. With this bill, we will add 53,000 beds – the most built in a generation. But we will also put management reforms in place so that these beds are built quickly and the rehabilitation programs tied to each and every new bed are strong.

Similar emphasis on individualized rehabilitation programs was mandated in AB 900. AB 900, the California Logic Model, and the Expert Panel Report all assumed that vocational education would be part of a therapeutic model with individualized behavioral modification plans developed for each inmate.

REHABILITATION IN CALIFORNIA, AB 900, AND THE ORIGINS OF THIS REPORT

A central component in any rehabilitation program is providing inmates with basic academic and vocational educational opportunities to prepare them for life after prison. Indeed, the Legislature in AB 900 told the CDCR that the people of California have an interest in seeing that inmates released from prison after serving their sentence lead a “conventional life.” This meant that when inmates were paroled, they would not commit crimes and would get gainful employment to support themselves and their families. However, this seemingly straightforward directive is difficult to implement given the population in California’s prisons and the nature of the prisons themselves.

California’s prisoners often have a poor educational background, poor employment history, weak work skills, mental health problems, and a poor history of integration into conventional society (Expert Panel, [2007](#)). The isolating environment of prison by its very nature exacerbates this problem. In prison, personal assets and skills atrophy and mental health issues worsen. In this context, one goal of corrections in California—removing

an inmate from society while preparing them to be reintegrated back to society—is inherently flawed. This flawed goal (the first of our big elephants in the room) reflected an expression of one of the large ongoing and unresolved assumptions in the contracted study (i.e., the tension between punishment and rehabilitation).

But reintegration becomes even more difficult when individuals have a criminal record that follows them into the job market after release, signaling to employers that a particular individual is a higher risk than someone without a criminal record. AB 900 was designed to infuse the spirit of rehabilitation into the correctional programs developed in a more punitive environment during the previous 20 to 30 years. The bill provided for the construction of new facilities, rapid expansion of programs for Adult Basic Education (especially literacy and English as a Second Language), and vocational education.

Under the terms of AB 900, the CDCR rapidly streamlined its existing vocational education programs to focus on those trades that had the greatest potential for long-term job placement. The OCE selected courses, curricula, and hired credentialed teachers, many of whom were transferred from within the ranks of the institution's plant operations staff. For inmates who tested well in basic English language skills, the OCE would offer vocational education employing instructors. This created an irony, *vis-à-vis*, the design of the prison program was to reserve vocational education for the higher functioning and compliant members of the population while others were put in Adult Basic Education (literacy) classes.

Using money appropriated by AB 900, the CDCR purchased new vocational education curricula, which they believed would contribute to the success of inmates on parole by increasing the chance for gainful employment in different occupations. The legislation instructed the CDCR to do this by putting into effect a curriculum that would, among other things, use credentialed teachers, meet national accreditation standards, and train inmates for jobs needed in California's economy; in other words, the same prison schools were to have the same quality "inputs" (and presumably outputs) as a school outside prison. In 2007 when the legislation was passed and funded, the courses that met these criteria tended to be in the skilled building trades that were in high demand according to a job-market survey conducted by the OCE. What this meant was that vocational education curricula were purchased and used to provide students

entry-level skills in trades likely to improve the probability of landing a job in the building trades once paroled.¹

Included in the AB 900 funding was a request from the Legislature for an evaluation of whether the vocational education programs were meeting the stated goals of reducing recidivism and increasing the chances of gainful employment for parolees. This question was developed in the context of the simultaneous assessments of the CDCR programs undertaken by the Expert Panel (2007) which focused on reorienting the CDCR's programs toward rehabilitation and evidence-based models of programming.

THE NEED FOR PROGRAM EVALUATION IN THE CONTEXT OF CHANGES IN PROGRAM GOALS

By 2008, the Legislature, the governor's office, and the CDCR had created an elaborate justification and philosophy for rehabilitating inmates to please a range of constituencies who contributed to crafting the program. These included:

- Federal judges requiring reductions in prison overcrowding, mental health care, and racial desegregation.
- Public safety advocates demanding long sentences, including the “three strikes and you're out” legislation.
- Prison officers urging the construction of more prisons and the preservation and the primacy of custodial policies.
- Teachers unions insisting that only credentialed teachers be hired and accredited programs used.
- Trade unions seeking to regulate entry into the field via approved/accredited programs.
- Literacy and education advocates.

In this context, we were asked to create two “deliverables.” The first deliverable was an evaluation of the curriculum purchased by the CDCR in 2007 to teach nine different classes at eight different prisons using money from AB 900. Our job was to evaluate whether the purchased curricula were effective for the prison environment. This report was delivered in November 2009.

The second report was to be an overall evaluation of the vocational education. We would look at how well the delivered curricula addressed the

goals of the legislation to create job-ready parolees and reduce recidivism. The first due date for this report was June 2010; however, due to work stoppages, it was not delivered until June 2012.

To conduct the research, we were funded to conduct visits to the prison classrooms, interview “students,” teachers, and prison administrators. Most important from the perspective of the CDCR, we were to complete a *quantitative analysis* of data banks the CDCR would make available to us. We expected the statistics supplied would include basic demographics, information about sentences and offenses, graduation rates, recidivism rates, and indicators of employment.

The content of our deliverable was to be strictly focused on the classes. We were to evaluate the curricula and courses in the context of the explicit policies mandated by AB 900 and the “Roadmap for Rehabilitation” (Expert Panel, 2007). In short, we were to examine the courses independently of any broader context and evaluate them as courses that were inserted incidentally into and then implemented in prison. Given these goals and assumptions, our recommendations would indicate if the classes were conducted in the most effective way possible. The report would relate what was done in the prison classroom using evidence that demonstrated accountability to the state Legislature.

RELATING TO PRISON ADMINISTRATORS, TEACHERS, PRISONERS, AND OFFICERS (SUITS, GREENS, BLUES, AND “OTHERS”)

Prisons are, by definition, closed and controlled worlds. California prisons are segregated by status and rank with the differences marked by uniform. The prisoners are also segregated by race.

The majority of the prison population is there against their will “doing time.” Online prisoners wear blue and gray while new prisoners wear bright orange jump suits. Inmates are organized by race in California, a situation that the state tolerates, despite a Supreme Court order in 2005 ordering desegregation. State policy creates the segregation, starting with regulations regarding bunking by race. But this segregation also reflects the internal social organization of the prison gangs, which are also organized by race.

Among prisoners, status differences are by race and gang affiliation. The boundaries are marked by skin color and often by very visible gang tattoos

on the body, face, and scalp. These “gang” associations are sustained by patterns of association in the yard and in bunk arrangements. The “self-segregation” of prisoners into separate racial/gang groups is tolerated by the prison administration as long as their ultimate authority is recognized. Blacks, Whites, Hispanics, and “Border Brothers” all sit together at meals, hang together on the yard, and are bunked and celled by race. The administration acquiesces to these arrangements in the interest of expediency, peace, and security.

COs are the next biggest group. These officers wear green uniforms with bulky stab-proof vests and carry pepper spray and batons. Some COs work on the yard and, depending on security levels, there may be as few as two of them for several hundred prisoners. The officers who are in observation decks/walls are armed with lethal and non-lethal firearms.

A subgroup that makes up a kind of elite among the COs is the internal security staff who watch the regular officers so that they do not sell drugs, cell phones, or other highly desired items to inmates. These security officers wear black uniforms. All are called “cops” by the prisoners, “officers” by the professional staff within the CDCR, and “guards” by the general public.

A third group is the administrative staff—people who often wear suits rather than the green CDCR uniform, but also wear the bulky stab-proof vests. The suits see their job as being responsive to public safety needs, which means running a prison where there is little violence, and the officers maintain control while keeping costs down. This is most easily accomplished by limiting movement: if you do not let inmates out of their cells, they do not have much opportunity to get in trouble by engaging in violence, selling their medications to other inmates, or other kinds of issues that interrupt the smooth operation of the prison. Harkening back to elephant number two, overcrowding, many of the institutions worked to keep prisoners in their cells and limit movement through lockdowns. During lockdowns, inmates were prevented from engaging in violence, but they were also prevented from going to class, a form of movement required for any kind of education within prison. For the suits, a boring prison is a good prison—but because the inmates are not working, it is also an expensive prison because well-paid COs must do chores normally done by prisoners. Tradeoffs are always being made!

Teachers are among the “other” staff in the prison. The teachers we interviewed wore civilian clothes. They were did not wear suits or and

were prohibited from wearing blue, gray, white, or and were prohibited from wearing other colors that prisoners wear. Still, there was a distinct status difference between teachers and prisoners. They did not wear stab-proof vests or carry pepper spray or batons even though many of them were in close proximity to prisoners who had access to sharp tools. In the event of a crisis, they did have a panic button that brought the officers in green quickly. They were also alone with 28 prisoners during much of the workday. The teachers were credentialed, professional, and interested in education. They were often idle due to lockdowns and spent much of their day doing paperwork as described on p. 219.

The only women in the prisons are a few guards, teachers, nurses, and administrators.

As for us, we were the old white professor guys (ok, Andy was not *that* old) who dressed more or less like the teachers but had no panic buttons. We were also the newest, and perhaps most naïve people in prison, but clearly aligned with the prison school system, not the prisoners. So as such odd ducks, how did we fit in?

THREE WHITE PROFESSOR GUYS (ANDY, TONY, AND BILL) GO TO PRISON

Letting Others Talk

We liked people from each group and found them often willing to talk about the vocational education programs we were evaluating and prison life in general. From our discussions, we became aware that each group was intimately familiar with prison life, which we were not, and we encouraged these conversations. We found people were frank and open when discussing vocational education issues. We also occasionally found people (including prisoners and sometimes officers) who did not want to talk. And then there were prisoners who would talk non-stop.

One thing many informants would tell us at some point in the interview was that in prison “people in prison always lie.” We heard this from prisoners, teachers, and administrators. Prisoners said it about other prisoners, officers, and administrators. And of course, administrators, prisoners, and teachers said it about prisoners, and occasionally about each other. Prison life is about getting people do things they really do not want to do. What does such coercion mean for the quality of education programs?

But Everyone Here Lies

Question: How do you know a prisoner is lying?

Answer: His lips are moving.

This quotation comes from a “cop,” but we heard similar comments from all corners of the prison. Some administrators assumed it about representatives from prison officer unions. Teachers assumed it about principals, and principals assumed it about the teacher unions. Among prisoners, it was assumed that prison officers were devious—the only ones assumed more devious were their fellow prisoners.

More importantly, what does it mean to say “everyone lies” in prison, and in particular, what does it mean for the quality of the data that are reported here in both quantitative and qualitative form? In doing this report, we became acutely aware that “data” depend on trusting the informants, whether they are reporting statistics to headquarters that are passed on to us, negotiating terms of our contract, or speaking into the microphones of our recorders during interviews.

But the ubiquity of the comment about lying, and the conflict we observed in the prison means that what we report here is colored by the violent and coercive nature of prison. In fact, the only prisoner who we are sure told us the truth was an elderly lifer in an office services class:

Me: Would you like to talk to us about vocational education?

Prisoner: You gonna bust me?

Me: No, I can't.

Prisoner: I don't really want to talk to you.

Me: Ok, thanks anyway.

Prisoner: You gonna bust me?

Me: No, I can't.

Prisoner: You gonna bust me?

Professorial Big Mouths

During the time of our study, we were one of the few “official” people able to travel from prison to prison. Budget cuts meant that the travel of headquarters staff was curtailed, as were staff development seminars

where teachers, principals, and other prison school staff would interact. As outsiders who travelled, we became, in an odd way, “weak link” intermediaries in the system. This meant that teachers and others would often confide in us about their frustrations.

As we became better travelled, we found ourselves having opinions—and it was tempting to share them when asked. After all, talking is a big part of our job as professors. But this compromised our position as researchers—we needed to hold the opinions for the report and this book. We have tried to do this, though admittedly, we often talked too much. It is flattering to be able to offer your opinion to important people—though not often the best strategy for letting them talk as Andy occasionally would point out to us! Keep your professorial mouth shut, and “listen, listen, listen.”

REWRITING THE PROJECT FOR CDCR IN 2011 AND ANDY'S ILLNESS

Serial budget crises at the CDCR during 2008–2010 resulted in “stop work” orders telling us to halt all work on the project. This meant that prison visits were cancelled, and contract conditions were renegotiated without considering the project or our regular duties teaching classes. Several times, it looked like the research would not be completed.

The last due date negotiated for the report was December 31, 2011. After a blur of editing in late December, Andy finally pressed the send button to the CDCR on precisely that date. The report itself was a single-spaced, 296-page behemoth, due in large part to the extensive use of “quote dense” qualitative data and elaborate explanations of how quantitative “proxy measures” were created to explain the relationship between recidivism and the completion of classes (see Chap. 10).

The report was reviewed by our newest CDCR research manager who spent January and part of February reading what we wrote. After line editing about one-third of the report, she concluded that the report was not useful for policymakers, and therefore should be rewritten in a more “concise” format. Without discussing this with us first, she copied this order to CDCR legal counsel and threatened to withhold remaining funds from the CSUC Research Foundation unless we did as she requested. On the advice of the CSUC Research Foundation, Andy started doing this immediately

while continuing to teach full-time. Also at this time, we began seeking a publisher for the overall report; Andy and Bill attended the American Educational Research Association Conference in New Orleans in April 2011 where they presented a paper about the evaluation. They also met Burke Gerstenschlager from Palgrave Publishing who encouraged them to submit the report for consideration. As for the report itself, work was almost complete in May 2011 when Andy was diagnosed with lung cancer. Bill and Tony completed the final submission of the report in June.

This final version of the report was divided into a much shorter main report (60 pages) with a 200-page appendix that included much of the qualitative data. We were dissatisfied with the overall construct of this report, and to be honest, a bit frustrated with the assumption that administrators could not deal with a longer report.

As for making the submission to Burke and Palgrave, this was delayed for over a year as Andy struggled unsuccessfully with cancer. He passed away in May 2012 at the age of 48.

As for the “utility” of our final report, we are not clear what the CDCR has done with it. It was made clear to us that the November 2010 curriculum report was used as a basis for reorganizing specific classes. However, from what we can tell, the final report, while approved, was never even sent to the OCE. Layoffs, retirements, and resignations in both offices apparently meant that the report was lost in the shuffle. It is of course immensely pleasing that Palgrave is now publishing this version.

WHAT BILL AND TONY *REALLY* THINK OF THE PROJECT, THEIR ROLE AS ACADEMICS, AND THE CDCR

The development of this report lasted roughly 6 years between the time we first proposed it and the time it was finally delivered to the CDCR. In the end, we were quite proud of the work we did in a prison environment that required us to innovate research methods, apply new methods of evaluation, conduct interviews in some of California’s darkest corners, and provide access to one of the most unusual environments imaginable for schooling. Pride in what we were able to do with the cooperation of the CDCR is why we have included the bulk of the original report here as the “middle chapters” of this book. But more importantly, we learned a great deal about how large bureaucratic prisons deal with change and rehabilitation. As a matter of fact, the flaws that limited our capacity to implement our study bedevil attempts to reform prisons everywhere.

RESEARCH METHODS

Each of us is trained in research methods; Andy, in particular, taught the subject at CSUC for many years. In research methods courses, we teach about the importance of isolating a dependent variable that needs to be explained and then “explaining” the difference in the dependent variable using valid and reliable data. These data might be of a quantitative or of a qualitative nature—each type has its advantages and disadvantages.

Quantitative data classify and thereby simplify complex phenomenon in a way that can be easily seen by the more numerate among us, and it provides an aura of legitimacy in a culture where “accountability” is so important. But the disadvantage is that statistical techniques are used to summarize activity taking place across large institutions using both descriptive techniques and the inductive reasoning that random sampling permits. In doing this, you inherently “simplify” complex categories and situations in order to fit observations into the predetermined units and categories that are on the measuring tool (see [Scott, 1999](#) and [Waters, 2012](#)).

There are several disadvantages to quantitative data, particularly in a prison situation. First is the simplification of what are indeed complex phenomena in ways that are neither random nor reflect valid measures of things like employment outcomes or recidivism (i.e., two of the dependent variables we wanted to explain). Likert scales (see p. 130) are notorious for doing this. But so are test results and other measures that “sample” using the prescribed choices on multiple-choice tests, such as those used by the CDCR to hold students “accountable.” Important for our study was a more mundane limitation, which was that the CDCR did not systematically count the “things” in a way that was suitable for explaining the dependent variables the Legislature wanted to know about: job success and recidivism. In the case of our study, this included such mundane issues as getting computers to read files created in different formats, “cleaning” data to exclude irrelevant information, and satisfying the CDCR requirements for privacy and security. In sum, the fact of “security first” trumps not only educational goals in the CDCR, but also the collection of good data that can be used for decision-making, whether evidence-based or not.

Finally, it should be noted that quantitative data have one really super important quality: bureaucrats really like them. Statistics are an essential rhetorical device giving validity to decisions about programming

across a large institution like the CDCR (i.e., a way for bureaucrats to CYA—“cover your ass”). Because of this, such data are often closely held in various offices (see Weber, 1921/2015). Statistical knowledge is power—at an appropriate moment, a closely held statistic can be dropped on an opponent in order to justify a policy position. But what does such a fact mean for the validity of the statistics grudgingly provided to us?

But there is another way to approach research questions that are not suited to quantitative methods. Qualitative methods (including such things as structured interviews, field observations, and so forth) provide a context for quantitative data. However, such data are time consuming to collect, requiring travel and time spent just watching. The CDCR environment also limited the validity of such data because, as we were continually reminded in prison by inmates and correctional staff alike, “everyone lies” (see p. 31–32, 103, 129, 159, 298). Presumably, this generalization applies to both quantitative and qualitative measures. While we are not sure that such a sweeping generalization is true with respect to our interviews, it is still a challenge to validity. Still, such observations are an excellent way to check the generalizations created by quantitative data and provide a context for what the numbers say or do not say. But the data produced often lack the imprimatur sought by quantitative data—the rhetorical capacity that pointing to a statistic can provide the bureaucrat making a decision about funding.

This tension between quantitative and qualitative data pursued us throughout the project. The CDCR always professed a preference for “the numbers.” Yet getting raw data from the CDCR to provide those numbers proved to be an almost insurmountable task. Indeed, we did not get the final “data drop” needed to do our research until October 2010 for a report that was due by December 31. The data came from inside the institution and did not include follow-up data on future arrests—a critical variable in a report that was supposed to quantify “recidivism” (nor, for that matter, records of the test scores the students took or whether they were awarded credit). In response, we created a “proxy variable” for recidivism, which was a comparison between those who had left the CDCR and those who were returned within 2 years of exiting *any* vocational education class (whether they graduated or not), not just the AB 900 classes we were studying. To be honest, we think this was methodologically lame, and a poor way to estimate the utility of the classes. But

it was the best we could do under the circumstances and the type appreciated by the CDCR.

PROBLEMS OF IMPLEMENTATION

Perhaps the biggest problem we saw was the short timeline imposed by implementation cycles and political cycles. We were surveying new programs in different prisons often taught by recently hired teachers. The courses under ideal circumstances (i.e., taught in a community college) take from 3 months (janitorial) to 2 years (electrical) to complete. We might be able to assess initial implementation of courses but were not able to receive long-term data that would point to the effects of the programs in terms of the big question of how do the programs impact recidivism?

But on a more general level, what we “really thought” had more to do with the classes themselves that were staffed by conscientious and hardworking people and with the broader organizational culture of the CDCR. And this brought us back to the point raised earlier. We were first and foremost in a prison and not allowed to acknowledge this in what we wrote. So irrespective of how well we did the interviews, crunched the quantitative data, or evaluated the curricula, we were not allowed to write about those elephants in the room (i.e., that the primary problems had to do with issues like security, race, and so forth, and not vocational education).

Behaviorist Reasoning

Related to the difficulties of bureaucracy is the tendency of management to seek behaviorist reasoning when developing programs. This model works well in factories and other economic organizations where freely contracting adults can enter into contracts or not. Indeed, it is the basis for how employment incentives and deterrents are structured throughout the economy.

Such behaviorist reasoning was commonly heard in the prisons from administrators, guards, and prisoners. Behaviorism is rooted in an oftentimes simplistic faith in the power of incentives and deterrents. However, by its very nature, this is a poor way for understanding prisons; prisons are not free—indeed, as we described above, in prison, deception is assumed as normal in the everyday life.

Bureaucracy in Prisons, Schools, and Universities

Much has been written in the literature about schooling regarding the difficulties of “change leadership,” but as we found here, and indeed as Bill has found in schools, change is often another word for endorsing the political fad of the moment, which in this case is accountability. But in the unfree world of prisons, accountability to whom, what, and which goals? In prison, safety, security, cost, and punishment come first, and then, almost as an afterthought, education and job training. The CDCR is, first and foremost, accountable for the safety of its officers and prisoners, and education is less important. This means that classes will always be disrupted when demands that are more important present themselves in the form of lockdowns, sudden transfers, gang segregation, safety training, tool checks, and many other routines that trump the educational goals specified by the Legislature.

THE LIMITS TO PLANNED SOCIAL CHANGE AND “ONE MORE IN TWENTY”

To conclude this introduction on an optimistic note, it should be noted that, as one life without parole (LWOP) inmate told us “things could be worse” (see chapter 17). In a strange way, the “educational accountability” movement that we critique here is an improvement because the alternative used before 2005—no systematic programming—was even worse.

As a final word in this chapter, we conclude with the words of a senior CDCR administrator who optimistically described what it means to society when a vocational education program is even minimally successful. The anecdote, which is discussed in Chap. 10, can be thought of as “one more in twenty” and is a good concluding thought for this chapter:

NA: When I talk to correctional officers, I use the phrase, “1 more in 20.” So that correctional officer has to escort 20 guys to a classroom to learn to read and write. And have to escort them back and have to sit there and watch them the whole time and the teacher has to teach them and we feed them and do all those things. And of those 20 guys, six are going to make it if we do nothing. That’s just the way it will work, they’re low-need guys or they’ve got family support, or what they did was an aberration or whatever, or they’re too old to recidivate, or what have you. And on the natural, those other 14 will not. They’ll be back. And the reason we do this [education] program is that there’s that 7th guy that can make a difference. That’s your 5%.

And so, what I point out is that we release 120,000 a year to the streets. And if you can get all of those guys in a program, 5% of that now is 6,000, a big number. And of those, DOJ [Department of Justice] would tell me they're going to commit 10 crimes a piece before we catch them. And so now you're talking 60,000 fewer felonies committed in California as the result of a little [education] program.

And to quote our own analysis (p. 197), which is a further attempt to deliver the results that the CDCR wanted to hear:

If there are, indeed, 6,000 individuals who do not recidivate and return to prison, the cost-savings to Californians is \$294,000,000 per year (assuming an annual cost of \$49,000 per year to house an inmate, on average, as reported by the CDCR [2009]). Clearly, such savings is substantial.

Ultimately, planned social change operates as this administrator describes—and not through the grand pronouncements of politicians. As the administrator might have said, by not having rehabilitation programs that hold out promise for just “one in twenty,” things “Could be worse!” (see Chap. 18).

NOTE

1. Notably, even in the context of the deep 2010 recession, these trades continued to be in high demand (Rasmussen 2010).

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Prison Logic Meets Educational Research Logic: The Undiscussables of Evidence-Based Decision-Making

NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND AND THE CALIFORNIA LOGIC MODEL

AB 900 had a strange mix of goals—those from the prison system and from the educational establishment. Central though is the dream of “evidence-based research” that dominated discussions in public administration in the 2000s.

This chapter is about the logic of *educational* research and how it was adapted to our study in *prison*. We start from the assumption of the field of education that focuses on learning generally, or what the classical sociologist Emile Durkheim called, “the influence exercised by adult generations on those who are not ready for social life” (1956, p. 71). In the case of AB 900, the goals were defined by the “adults” in the California State Legislature as reducing recidivism by preparing released prisoners for the work force as a means to reduce crime. Thus, our evaluation was pushed by the Legislature out of the realm of “corrections research,” and into that of “education research.” This despite the fact that, no matter how you slice it, “punishing and reducing crime” are fundamentally different than the values of the schools where preparation for adulthood is the goal.

There was a problem in AB 900 as described in Chap. 2. Prisons were tasked with competing goals: those of education and those of imprisonment. This resulted in two contradictions—punishment and then educating the punished even though prison life itself, by its very nature, is

not conducive to learning. This resulted in conundrums: gang affiliation trumping educational needs in class assignment, lockdowns by race cancelling instruction, sleeping in dormitories with dozens of “criminals” and their gangs, and strip searches before and after classes when attendance required crossing security boundaries.

What did the dissonance between the goals mean for our study about vocational *education in prison*? The answer was that such unsolvable conundrums were ignored and became “undiscussables” (see Argyris & Schoen, 1996, p. 20) that were typically dismissed with the shrug of a shoulder and finger pointing at the faceless “bureaucracy” and its rule book.

This brings us to the real question of this chapter: How do “evidence-based” bureaucracies (education or prison) effectively ignore inevitable “undiscussables?” In the case of our study, how did the goals of education become undiscussable in the context of prison? In large part, this can be seen in how the tension between education and rehabilitation in the California Logic Model was consistently trumped by preexisting California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) demands for security and order.

BUREAUCRATIC DECISION-MAKING IN PRISON

We think that a big part of the answer to our question lies in the nature of bureaucracy itself. In the modern world, education and prison are both bureaucracies: one (education) preparing those not ready for social life by virtue of age and the other (prison) seeking to punish through imprisonment.

Bureaucracies, according to the classical sociologist Max Weber (1921/2015), involve three aspects:

1. A rigid division of labor is in place for the purpose of performing regular daily tasks as official duties in the functioning of the bureaucratically governed system.
2. In order to fulfill these duties the necessary chains of command are firmly established and divided up (among the *Beamte* [civil servants]), and their capacity to coerce (physical, sacred, or other) is firmly restricted by regulation.
3. Regular and continuous fulfillment of these assigned duties, and the execution of respective rights is systematically secured by hiring people with certified qualifications. (p. 76)

What is more, both prison and education bureaucracies delegate discretionary authority to the “street level bureaucrat” (e.g., correctional officers and teachers) or what Wilson (1989) calls “operators” in “coping institutions” who deliver the bureaucracy’s “product” in relative isolation from supervisors. After all, no warden monitors the minute-by-minute performance of a teacher or correctional officer in the fashion that workers on an assembly line are monitored. This is also why indirect measures of performance, like test scores and “write-up rates,” are used as a proxy by supervisors. The problem for supervisors in such coping institutions is that even if they pretend to “produce” test scores and recidivism rates, they are at the mercy of those operators doing their complex job independent of direct supervision. In the case of prison schools, the operators we saw were a mix of prison officers and teachers. The job of these operators was to quickly apply professional judgment in potentially volatile situations that are inherently complex and not given easily to the prescriptions of the rule books. In this context, teachers and prison officers become “buffered” from external criticism not only by school culture but also by the labor contract (Elmore, 2004). Evaluation of teachers and officers is established in mature labor contracts through unions that assume that administrators and street level bureaucrats “have each other’s back.”

But what are the street level “products” of these bureaucracies? In the case of the schools, the product is a class of educated students in a classroom; and in the case of prisons, the product produced by prison officers is a “secure yard.” In both cases, the field level bureaucrats use their bosses (e.g., principals and wardens) as buffers against the emotions of potential critics (e.g., parents of children, or a population with fears of criminals) regarding how they do their jobs of teaching and punishing. In such a context, the new role of principals is to “get the back” of their operators who, in exchange, generate happy parents (schools) and a public that feels safe (prisons).

Which rigid division of labor, chain of command, and qualification is used to implement a program of vocational education in a prison? Will it be the bureaucratic norms of the schools with their emphasis on social life, learning, children, and no child left behind? Or will it be based on the security imperatives of the CDCR in which a locked down yard is a safe yard? The answer is obvious: it is the security imperatives of the CDCR because “it’s a custody world.” But in AB 900, the Legislature opted for the goals of the education establishment, which is why our

contract emphasized the use of learning goals, accreditation standards, and employment goals. So how did these goals, emerging as they do out of “child-centered bureaucracies,” fare in the world of California prisons?

EDUCATIONAL GOALS IN A PRISON ENVIRONMENT

Evidence-based education is the “scientific solution” proposed to answer such questions. The assumption is that evidence-based solutions *work* even for large policy conundrums. Throughout our prison interviews, teachers and administrators referred to test scores, point scores, butts in seats, and so forth. In this context, evidence is numbers and little else (see p. 128–130; 138). Education advocates were quick to jump on the evidence-based bandwagon since this approach was both reasonable and so visibly successful in other fields. And indeed this bandwagon has a well-storied history: foresters gather evidence about the condition of forests, rate the likelihood of wildfire danger, thin the forests, and prevent wildfires. Vaccines were invented that all but eradicated dreaded diseases such as whooping cough; indeed, few Americans now have even heard a child make the terrible cough that sounds like “whoop” that comes with this affliction. We can look with pride at systematically reversing some of our most disastrous environmental mistakes such as the Dust Bowl in the 1930s that occurred as a result of plowing up the grasslands of the mid- and southwest throughout the earlier years of the twentieth century.

Thus, by employing an “evidence-based” approach to the Dust Bowl problem, the US Soil Conservation Service convinced farmers to engage in agricultural practices that evidence showed would help stabilize the soil. Contour plowing reduced wind erosion. Paying farmers to take land out of production and replace it with grasses countered the market driven need to plow up more acreage and plant more each year, thus exposing more soil to be blown away by wind. These and other strategies paid off for farmers and the USA; evidence-based soil science drove the improvements. Why should the same principles not work with third graders? And if with third graders, why not with prisoners?

There is actually more in common between soil conservation methods and educational methods in prison than might first be realized. Both wobble between “evidence-based” and “practice-based responses.” During the initial meetings with Dust Bowl farmers, many soil conservation scientists received the famous, if partially fictional response, “Don’t talk to me

about farming, Sonny. I done wore out five farms before you were even born'd!"¹

In the same way, we would hear prison officers brag about their practice-based capacity to read prison yards, and of experienced teachers who could safely saunter around prison classrooms without mace or a stab-proof vest. One correctional officer shared that he could spot inmates selling their prescriptions on the yard only minutes after emerging from the pharmacy window. And one experienced teacher talked about his resentment that correctional officers continued the culture of “heroic” service for security with ceremonies and awards when a homemade knife—a shiv was confiscated. According to this teacher, vocational education teachers talk inmates into handing over to them all manner of home-made weapons privately so that the class would not be shut down for a complete and thorough search.

But the farmer and prison employees are in fact different—the analogy works only so far. Most particularly, soil retention can be correlated with specific policies and measured using evidence provided by laser levels, hydrometers, and other readily available mechanical yardsticks. The goals of education (and prison) are seemingly as easy to identify—but only sort of, as we found in our study of recidivism and learning. The measuring tools, despite the CDCR’s best efforts, were simply not there. There was no laser level (or even a 1930s-era spirit level) or hydrometer to measure vocational education inmate students with precision, irrespective of the confidence that prison officials bandied about test scores. The focus on creating a world for prisoners who will become “adults” in an adult-centered world (see Durkheim above) simply is not measurable. In establishing prison and school bureaucracies, the explicit goals created by politicians, such as “No Child Is Left Behind,” “Students First,” “We Are a Learning Enterprise,” and so forth, may be at best “pretend-measurable” because, ultimately, the legitimacy asserted through the act of measurement is more important than a vaguely worded goal that is ultimately just a slogan. But these statements become more than slogans—they are the goals that focus the efforts of millions of teachers and hundreds of thousands of school administrators (and education professors like Bill). Just as Campbell’s Law asserts, the act of measurement drives policy rather than the measurement being designed to understand policy (see Waters, 2012, pp. 176–179). The question for the bureaucracy (and AB 900) becomes, “Is this massive operation reaching the goal established for it and how can we design a measurement tool which will reach this conclusion?”

America's public schools and prisons produce a wealth of practice-based knowledge on local lore as well. Certainly this was the case in our study of the CDCR where we found prisoners, officers, administrators, and wardens with views of why and how education was necessary for success after incarceration. Indeed, we never met a single prison administrator, correctional officer, teacher, or prisoner who thought that there was not a strong correlation between schooling, rehabilitation, and recidivism. Quotation after quotation in our report (see p. 173, etc.) reflect the persistence of this cultural belief. Local tradition and historical practices govern culture and behavior in prisons that have evolved in a closed world—a “total institution” where there is little direct input from the outside world (see Goffman, 1961). Still, the values of the otherwise inaccessible world “outside” permeated prison-based belief systems.

TEACHER ISOLATION AND THE CULTURE OF PRACTICE-BASED EDUCATION (AND PRISONS)

The street-level bureaucrats that are the prison teachers we observed operated in isolation from each other and from ongoing professional learning. Not far removed from the Dust Bowl farmer story, the education culture carries similar humor that illustrates systemic problems between “managers and operators” as identified by (Wilson 1989, pp. 168–171) but applied to relations between teachers and principals. For instance, to illustrate teacher isolation, one education folk story begins with an experienced principal meeting with a recently hired, young teacher. The principal says, “Welcome to our school! Here is your room key. See you in 30 years.” (In the prison world, the same is also said to second-degree murderers and newly hired prison officers.)

Isolation is reinforced in the prison environment: not only is “protection needed” from community, parents, and school boards, but also from prisoners who “always lie” and prison administrators concerned with “security first.”

In the case of prisons, this “buffer” between the public and the prison is even more severe (Elmore, 2004). As prison officers coping with the situation explained, everyone is “serving time”—prisoners for a defined period and officers until retirement. In this context, as with teachers (but more so since indeed the isolation is greater) local traditions and folk knowledge come to describe rationale for policy and action. In the case of California

prisons, these ideas permeated the development and implementation of vocational education programs.

ASSUMPTIONS OF CONTROL IN THE PRISON CLASSROOM

Countering the isolating, even idiosyncratic nature of prison teaching, the California Legislature in 2007 asked prisons to adopt a scientific approach based on evidence-based research, otherwise known as “programmed learning.” This method was adopted from the world of the education schools, rather than the research offices at the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) or Department of Justice. Precise curriculum design, scripted instruction, and sequenced content were highly correlated with a belief that increased test scores could be predictably replicated in any classroom or school. In such a context, external variables were wished away, just as poverty is wished away in the public schools. Ultimately, it is such wishes that underlay the assumptions found in AB 900.

The prescribed programmed learning methods reflected the frustrations of legislators and administrators with the de facto control teacher-operators enjoy in classrooms. Legislation in effect asserted that the correct program and a well-controlled program deliverer could give the program designer the real power in the classrooms. Such approaches remove autonomy and a large degree of professional discretion from individual teachers.

But what elephants were left out? At least since the Coleman Report (Coleman et al. 1966) or even *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954, educators have come to realize that learning, despite the isolation of the school-teacher, did not occur in a vacuum—student achievement is not solely controlled by the school or legislation. Rather, family socioeconomic status (SES), racism, and parental educational attainment represent important variables that correlate well with student success in school. How can the education bureaucracy, ultimately controlling only the school bureaucracy, deal with poverty, racism, and other factors of the broader society? In short, how could control be asserted over far-flung isolated classrooms? This is the implicit question behind educational reforms ever since centralization of American schools began in the 1920s (see Waters, 2012, pp. 29–37).

The daunting news that the education bureaucracy did not control the “output” of their schools was perhaps no surprise in French Existentialist circles, but American education bureaucrats from John Dewey’s (1916/1966) school of “can-do” American pragmatism have a harder time swallowing it. So with ebullient optimism and a persistent

American faith in progress as a fundamental cultural tenet, the fact that many students were left out of learning due to their social circumstances was simply not acceptable. Like other educational true believers, former Washington DC Schools Superintendent Michelle Rhee (2012) famously proclaimed in *The Huffington Post* that teachers must tackle poverty and never use it as an excuse. But by doing this, the consequences of poverty again became an “undiscussable” byproduct of cognitive dissonance.

The belief that education is the basis for an ever-growing middle class served the ideology of social mobility and the good life very well. Dewey (1916/1966) linked education to the success of democracy itself, and every high school student continually hears the message that those with higher levels of education bring home a lifetime of earnings that far outstrip students who complete high school alone. The prisoners living in isolation that we interviewed brought to the school this very sentiment. They, in effect, threw the argument back in our face to explain what they saw as the duplicity of “the system.” Excluding them from the chance to learn, in this circumstance, was the reason they could not progress—it was the lack of schooling, not the prison’s conditions. But does this really hold up?

Instead of confronting the dissonance, American educators, prison administrators, and researchers focusing on American schooling sought only the variables they could control, pushing issues of living conditions, including poverty, into the category of “undiscussables.” The belief was that if teachers could control what they do as both individuals and as a team throughout a school, then they might be able to make gains against the overwhelming barriers that prevent students from achieving their learning potential. Scholars sought out schools that, despite the odds, found unusual success with children and young adults in poverty—in essence, they sought out the outliers in normal distribution in hopes of identifying magic bullets rather than a simple outlier.

DOUBLE LOOP AND CHANGE

The idea that an organization as large and decentralized as the CDCR could change its purpose from corrections and incarceration to rehabilitation by legislative fiat reflects a desire to “wish away” its institutional nature (see Waters, 2012, pp. 31–32).

The reason why is that, as Argyris and Scheon (1996, p. 20) describe, single and double loop learning are ways to understand change in organizations. Learning that changes routine procedures is single loop learning. In any school, simply improving the efficiency of student dismissal routines

is single loop learning. Frederick Taylor described single loop learning in his management texts in the early twentieth century. It is difficult to find anyone who disagrees that such change would be valuable in terms of increasing learning time efficiency, and schools and prisons are quick to tout the benefits of such adjustments. This kind of change is also not very difficult to achieve and is consistent with the Legislature's assumptions about evidence-based decision-making.

But such single loop learning is not how schools actually work or change; there is actually a second loop. In double loop learning, Argyris and Schoen (1996) assert that the underlying values of the organization are explicitly examined in conjunction with the new changes. Double loop learning (1996, p. 21) occurs when new values are created via new theories of action. This kind of organizational learning requires members of organizations to recognize their own preexisting theories about the way the organization actually works and to confront gaps between values and actions. In schools, that should mean that the problems poverty brings to school need to be acknowledged even if the schools cannot do much about poverty.

For education in prison, it needs to be acknowledged that the values of custody and safety trump educational goals. When a security threat is perceived, the school is shut down. Even when an inmate student is called for a routine medical appointment during class, most correctional officers send the inmate student immediately to the clinic whether or not classroom routines are interrupted; the system is implicitly valuing established security routines over education. We met correctional officers who occasionally delayed sending inmate students to appointments in order to support class time. But to challenge established routines, a correctional officer needed seniority so that he was not suspected of being "pro-inmate" in the subculture of the CDCR staff. Single loop policy-making did not affect the underlying values focused by security concerns. Routines normally supported the actual values of prison life, which meant restricting movement out of the cells by inmates in the interests of maintaining values of safety and efficient custody. But such things are, of course, undiscussable.

CONSCIOUS UNDISCUSSABLES

Edmonds (1979) identified characteristics found in outlier schools where students in poverty appeared to enjoy higher achievement levels on standardized tests. He began the "effective schools movement." No French existentialist, Edmonds and other optimistic American educators renewed

the faith in education by identifying a set of variables that successful schools possessed. The key focus was on the things the school could control, since focusing on social conditions was so disempowering and depressing for the mainly middle class teachers who made up the teaching force. Strong leadership, a climate of expectation, orderly but not rigid atmosphere, communication to the students of the school's priority on learning, and more became the variables to be "measured" and "tracked" (Edmonds, 1979). Teachers were admonished to, in effect, ignore the poverty and disorganized lives of students under these leadership conditions. Attention focused instead on the "rigorous curriculum," from which it was assumed some students would actually benefit.

As the effective schools movement grew, process variables for schools on the path to effectiveness were identified under the euphemistic rubric of "Effective and Improving" schools. For language minority students, school improvement involved shared governance with teachers and parents, academically rich programs, an emphasis on ethnic pluralism, and personal attention to students (Pierce, 1991). Wasley, Hampel, and Clark (1997) found that schools that regularly received and acted upon solid critical feedback from external sources made more progress than those that worked autonomously. Additionally they asserted that the ability of the faculty to develop teaching skills in a rigorous self-analysis that focused on student gains was critical to increasing teacher effort and understanding. In 2001, Glickman added that developing a coherent program using democratic collective inquiry, action research, and integrated improvement efforts could improve schools. Data on student learning—defined narrowly as performance on standardized tests—were also employed in feedback to teachers and community. In effect, such efforts would trump inequality, poverty, and the effects of incarceration and the social variables that got inmate students imprisoned in the first place.

In the 2000s, spurred by federal legislation like *No Child Left Behind Act* (2001), *Race to the Top* (2009), and *Common Core State Standards Initiative* (post 2010), education researchers focused on "What Works" (U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Science, n.d.) and the development of more programs that appeared to increase test scores for low achieving students no matter what their SES might be: in other words, "evidence-based decision-making." School administrators designed systems to scientifically address an identified problem and solve it. So did the Legislature in AB 900 and the many prison administrators

and teachers we talked to. In this case, the identified goal was educational achievement as measured by test scores.

Thus the juggernaut of No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and standardized programmed teaching swept through America's schools in 2001 as a result of a bipartisan agreement negotiated between President George W. Bush and Senator Edward Kennedy.² At the school level, practitioners were spurred forward with moralistic slogans such as Michelle Rhee's "No Excuses!" as a way to keep the blinders on, avoid looking at undiscussables (conscious or not), and focus on the variables and data that schools could actually control. As Wilson (1989) recognized, bureaucracies respond to accountability demands with data, and school systems (and prisons) produce voluminous amounts in response.

UNDISCUSSABLES AND THE DOUBLE LOOP IN PRISON: WHY BEHAVIORISM CAN'T BE CHALLENGED BY DEVELOPMENTALISM

But again, what about the "double loop" at the deepest level by organizations? In the CDCR this includes the behavioristic theories used by prison officers and prison-based vocational education teachers to explain agency. Data or evidences that confirm such theories are applied to make important decisions, as was reflected in our interview data. An emerging "defensive reasoning mindset" (Argyris & Schoen, 1996, p. 2) effectively squashed alternative new theories and data that contradicted the organizational biases.

Such undiscussable biases also exist in other surprising contexts. For instance, a widely recognized example is the "trusted professional relationship" within pharmaceutical industry drug sales organizations. This relationship of trust ignores the salesperson's undiscussable profit-driven relationship with a doctor. If the *professional* relationship is revealed as simply profit driven, then the theory of trust held by the doctor is broken and the relationship becomes an affront to professional ethics (Avorn, 2004). In the same way, if the behavioristic theory of action emphasizing punishment and reward is analyzed by a development approach, the assumptions underlying the ideology of the prison edifice is threatened. So it becomes undiscussable instead.

In effect, powerful undiscussables become that way simply because they are undiscussable. At our initial meeting over coffee, Tony pointed out

that, as paid consultants, we were most likely being hired to make findings the organization wanted us to make. In other words, our findings would be objective, evidence-based, and neatly support their agenda. To succeed with this contract and to land future contracts, it behooved us to confirm the dominant theory that guided the CDCR (and AB 900) which assumed that programs and vocational training were effective solutions to the persistent recidivism problem. The road map was made clear to us: it was to be the California Logic Model and Expert Panel report.

From an instructional standpoint, such programmed learning offers a sense of deep control, which is critical in an administrative environment focused on custody and security. In this context, the logic of the custody world trumps educational reasoning, with its roots in developmentalism with behaviorism. If students read one curricular unit or module at a specified pace, they were then ready to take the written test that is equated with “learning.” All students must read the exact same material so that variations in student performance on the test can be understood in terms of input from the program, much in the same way that inmates move systematically through sally ports and strip searches. Of chief importance is the view of students as vessels to be filled up like adding cash to a bank (Freire, 1970). Prisons play a small role in the educational world of such “programmed learning.”

What were the basic assumptions of AB 900? Simply that, in the first place, a problem can be isolated, and, in the second place, inputs can be controlled at the school level but only in the context of reward and punishment behaviorism inherent to prison administration. Again, as the Coleman Report (Coleman et al. 1966) called into question with respect to poverty, this is not straightforward with education in prison. Or, as the Expert Panel (2007, p. vii) put it, they “suggested that the Legislature enact legislation to ‘expand positive reinforcements for offenders who complete rehabilitation programs and follow the rules’” (Chap. 5, p. 74).

Undiscussables and Evidence-Based Decision-Making

The dissonances of evidence-based decision-making does not necessarily add up to scandal except, perhaps, in the political world of state legislatures. But since the reform of corrections is deeply connected to the political process, the absence of evidence becomes a pragmatic reason to dismantle on-going programs. For example, the fact that California spent approximately \$49,000 annually per inmate to keep 170,000+ prisoners

miserable, angry, and uneducated was one such undiscussable AB 900 and other policy decisions ignored. This well-known undiscussable was dealt with by ostensibly changing the name and purpose of the organization responsible for correcting criminals to one responsible for rehabilitating them (as if there is a major semantic difference between the two words!). In other words, the undiscussable “poverty” pointed to by the Coleman Report in 1966 in regard to public education was made equally undiscussable when looking at prison education. Policy makers could ignore not only the home conditions that produced the social problems in the first place (e.g., mental health, illiteracy, emotional disabilities, poor diet, history as victims of child abuse, and drug abuse), but also those exacerbated by incarceration itself (e.g., chronic fear, gangs, poor “home” conditions, and violence). Somehow it was more palatable to leave this key concept as an undiscussable and recast and redesign the California Department of Corrections into an organization that both punishes and rehabilitates at the same time—not an easy trick.

*The Undiscussable in Inmate Placement: CDCR’s
Version of Poverty*

Embedded in the California Logic Model (see p. 73) are assumptions about the nature of instruction, learning, and rehabilitation. The preexisting hierarchy was, as a result, adapted to a new and different task. One of the most interesting examples of conflict between the new purposes of the CDCR and the existing roles and processes within the system was found in the steps that led to inmate placement in rehabilitation programs (see p. 78, 90). This happens on the prison yard where a prisoner lives under the supervision of a yard captain. A well-established cadre of correctional officers, administrators, social workers and, sometimes, correctional educators are members of the Unit Classification Committee, and have been so for decades. Such committees hold placement hearings for each inmate to decide which programs would be most supportive of the inmate’s rehabilitation. This purpose aligns closely with the rational steps of the California Logic Model cited by teachers, principals, officers, and wardens. Inmates would be consulted and diagnosed at intake and prescribed the programs that were effective at treating their needs—even if, as the inmates repeatedly emphasized to us, the diagnosis process was inherently coercive. Indeed, could it be otherwise? Prison is coercive by its very nature.

In reality, each placement committee used only tried and tested “practice-based responses” that insisted on public safety and prison security first. If an inmate needed and wanted carpentry but that assignment conflicted with gang membership, the inmate student was assigned to another program or remained in his bunk. This happened without effective consultation with inmates. Correctional officer authority at a basic level was also asserted in the placement hearing process. If an inmate insisted he did not want janitorial class and would not learn the content of the course, he might be assigned to janitorial class to prove that his defiance would not be tolerated and that correctional officers were in charge, not the inmate.

Another key criterion that trumped the evidence-based decision-making of the California Logic Model was the funding formula that was based on an assumption that incentives were needed for the prison to fill every class to capacity. Each institution received educational funding for each inmate student in a class in an Average Daily Attendance (ADA) model that paid for filled seats. This meant that even if a vocational painting course was the best match for an inmate’s interest and aptitude but no opening was available, he would be assigned to another class because a seat was available there. The audit of “butts in the seat” to generate funding overshadowed the establishment and implementation of a local treatment plan for inmates. At the same time, we recognize that much can be learned from the evidence and applied to improve the way schools in prison function. Indeed, Slavin (2013) claims that barriers to evidence-based education can be overcome and improvements can still be made. But can this really happen in the context of bureaucratic hierarchies rooted in goals of security and budget efficiency?

The Undiscussables in Data

Inserting vocational education programs into correctional institutions under AB 900 created an instant demand for data that could be used for evidence-based policy advocacy. It was a basic premise encoded in AB 900. Administrators needed data in order to document and justify their compliance and efforts to implement the required programs and to show success. Naturally, as researchers we asked teachers, vice principals, and principals what kinds of data they were actually gathering? The answer was always numbers, numbers, and more numbers, because numbers are the only evidence policy-level people in California could “see,” to borrow James Scott’s (1999) metaphor. Seeing through the prism of numbers is the only

way the CDCR could “see” their 172,000 prisoners and their programs, programs, and programs.

But we found that teachers were mainly on their own when it came to defining and collecting data in order to satisfy the demand for numbers, which, through no fault of their own, violated basic statistical demands for validity and reliability. There was no consistent system-wide format available to use. One teacher might create a spreadsheet and collect attendance data. Another might use a different format and focus on the test results for inmates in her classes. Since, for security reasons, no internet was provided for teachers or among education systems between institutions; data formats and spreadsheets were teacher developed, unique, and often shared via stick drives. The overall mantra was that data needed to be collected to show success—how that was done was left to the individual with little formal direction from peers or the institution. There was no experimental research design established to show whether programs had any effect. Again, in this Wild West of prison data collection, the point was to show success for whatever the explicit demand required, not experimental validity. Teachers would share their data by trading their stick drives, but this resulted in the sharing of viruses, which dampened the teachers’ desire to share data.

An exception was the OCE, which sent out requirements for data in order to complete reports on the progress of programs, and data were provided in response. But ultimately, the CDCR was forced to reveal the embarrassing undiscussable that they had no reliable or valid data about the progress of students in vocational education or about the recidivism of the vocational education students after release. This information was only revealed through the persistence and relentless efforts of Andy. He repeatedly told the CDCR that the effectiveness of these vocational education programs could not be evaluated without basic information such as number of inmates attending or completing classes. Eventually, some data were provided two months before the report was due, and our team initiated various statistical manipulations to generate the quantitative section of the report. The statistical manipulations on pp. 192–196, we must admit, are from a statistical standpoint that is quite a stretch—we have doubts about the reliability of the measures for recidivism. Indeed, as described on p. 192–196, and 233–234, we felt like we fudged the data interpretation a bit so there would not be a negative correlation between students going to vocational education classes and the proxy measure for recidivism, which, indeed, was our first result. We hoped that what we did satisfied the CDCR’s demand for numbers, numbers, and more numbers in a very practical, if not reliable, fashion.

HIDDEN PRIORITIES IN THE CLASSROOM

We often found excellent and conscientious teachers who provided standard routines and well-established classroom routines so students learned how to begin, stay on task, and complete class work. The way students collected books from shelves, the way they interacted in project-based learning groups, and the way they checked out and returned tools from secure areas in the shop often gave a sense of order and control.

During our classroom observations in prison, it was clear that some teachers organized crisp and efficient closing routines. But this occurred outside the context of the larger social world, which the prison reflects. When the projects or book work was completed, inmate students used time well and worked up to the time the class was “dismissed” to be strip searched or simply returned to their cells.

Observing and isolating this kind of evidence allowed us to make recommendations about the effective and efficient use of time in classrooms. The problem is that our recommendations also did not reflect whatever else was going on in the rest of the prison. The teachers we observed were in charge and had control of inmate student behavior when the students were there. This was quantifiable. It could be reasonably assumed that the learning would be increased if more time on task were achieved through more effective and efficient classroom dismissal routines. If such improvements could be standardized across classroom settings, then the effect would be an improvement to the entire system of inmate student learning. But they cannot be because, ultimately, it is a custody world, or as one administrator put it, “It’s the ‘State pen,’ not Penn State.”

THE FINAL UNDISCUSSABLE: IT IS A CUSTODY WORLD (NOT A SCHOOL)!

Prison continually leaked into the vocational education classrooms, despite assertions to the contrary. In the classroom sanctuary, inmates were supposed to trust one another, and they did to a large extent. Yet Andy’s sunglasses were stolen and hidden so quickly that a cadre of guards, prison officials, and the teacher could not retrieve them (see Chapter 7). From a programmed learning instructional point of view, the program controlled all the key variables that determine how well inmate students would learn. However, we found that prison life leaked into the classroom again and again. Placement hearings working under the espoused theory

of assigning the most appropriate educational setting for inmate students actually worked under a theory that placed two other criteria far ahead of learning: safety (first and foremost) and funding (“butts in the seat”). On top of that, the inmates, always aware of the coercive relationship with prison authorities, never offered frank responses in Unit Classification Committee hearings, which were needed to implement the treatment plan dreamed of in the California Logic Model. Other issues were beyond the control of our prison educators within classrooms. For instance, one man in welding class was actually a welder prior to incarceration. However, he could not advance, because he, like many others, spoke and read only Spanish. The rules of the CDCR required the programs to be offered solely in English.

The following chapters are the gist of the original report compiled under the direction of Andy Dick and submitted to the CDCR on December 31, 2010. This report was our attempt to “give the CDCR what they needed” in terms of applied research. But our report also reflected our pact as researchers to tell the truth as we saw it while still respecting the CDCR’s need for a document that could be used as “evidence” for furthering policy interests that we are also sympathetic to. We pointed to the problems in the placement hearings as explained earlier in this chapter, we pointed out the greenhouse curriculum issue, and we also recommended they give more organizational and hierarchical authority to education by making the prison principal the equivalent of an associate warden with a seat at the decision-making table. Such an action would strengthen the ability of the institutions to make the double loop change that was required to meet the values of rehabilitation and education.

Their reaction? *They hated it!*

They rejected a report that did not accept their undiscussables, elephants, or anything else! Instead, they asked for a shorter (60 page) document more appropriate for the reading level of the CDCR administration. To back up their insistence, their correspondence to us was copied to the CDCR’s general counsel—the house lawyer.

What the CDCR really wanted was a validation of the ideology behind AB 900, and that the CDCR was making a good faith effort to implement AB 900, a fact we had no quarrel with. Indeed, the CDCR did make a good faith effort to implement the legislation. However, what becomes apparent from the data we collected is that our findings were trumped by the ideology embedded in AB 900. We believe reading the report makes it clear how and why this happened.

NOTES

1. This is actually a quote from my stepfather, Charles C. Rich, who worked with the Soil Conservation Service in the early years of the Dust Bowl as a civil engineer. They were tasked with teaching farmers how to improve soil conservation in plowing techniques. —Bill Rich
2. Scholars provided a level of critique that focused on the core of the ideals that undergird both NCLB and the entire effective and improving schools movement. These scholars also relied on evidence. Notably, Rothstein (2003) argued that pouring ever more national resources into education might not be the most productive pathway to close the gap. He points out that if we want to preserve the current gap in social class differences, then we must also accept the gap between the achievement of children from middle and lower classes (p. 149). Highlighting the ambitious nature of the Educational Justice goal, Rothstein does not assert it is impossible to achieve. He merely states that it will be much more expensive than anyone wants to believe and that it cannot be the work of the schools alone (p. 149). The central problem is that students need to have families with stable employment, medical care including dental and vision, stable housing, and a crime free, productive social environment in order to thrive.

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SECTION II

The Report & Vignettes

Vignette: Could the Prisoner be My Son?

Prisons are far from my life. My wife and I selected a place of immense natural beauty in Northern California to raise our family with many mountains, streams, and lakes that afford hiking, camping, canoeing, fishing, and skiing; all healthy and active things to do with children. I saw my children in a place of beauty every day. Their small town schools were inviting and encouraging environments to learn. Their grandparents, aunts, and uncles guided and nurtured them and their cousins as they played in a small mob they called “the lost kids,” where the youngest stretched to be old enough to join in and the eldest regressed to play the games and tell the make-believe stories.

Our children sat in the center of our active lives. As I moved up in my career in education and through leadership roles in various schools, I was principal for each of my children for at least a year. We arranged our work and recreational time in ways to help them grow and thrive at every stage of their development. The fearless and intelligent leadership of my wife constructed an extraordinary family of international and inter-cultural dimensions I had not dreamed could exist.

When our children needed punishment, I applied corporal punishment at the advice of a counselor I respected. This was “corporal” punishment in the true sense of the term, not simple spanking. Their misdeeds could be worked off in chores that involved physical work that taxed the body. Thus, in a kind of Catholic approach to redemption, weeds were pulled, leaves raked and thrown away, and firewood moved and re-stacked in a

new place. Afterward, they started over with a clean slate. They knew how to work because I worked with them on projects for fun like making skim boards for the beach or on chores like painting around the house. I prayed daily for their protection and happiness. I requested and received a special prayer from our parish worker-priest when they learned to drive. Even now, although they are independent adults, I continue to pray for them.

When I began to understand the nature of prison during this study, I first focused on the stark incongruities within the social setting, especially the surreal world of Kafka, that was so apparent, and the highly controlled, if contradictory, rules of life under the awards and punishments of B.F. Skinner. These associations came to me in conversations with guards, teachers, inmates, and administrators and were further developed among our research team, Andy and Tony.

One inescapable fact is that nearly all the inmates were black or brown men. As visitors, we were the “three white professor guys.” We discussed our need to be objective about the things we saw and joked about the way the inmates saw us, as aliens from outer space. “Who are you?” we were asked in every prison. We were not feds, cops, prison administrators, guards, nor teachers. We confused them. Life narratives that came out in interviews with prisoners were equally stark in contrast to our own. How many foster placements are possible above 20? How many gang members can you have in your family? These were people, I thought, who lived close to prison in many ways from the early stages of their lives. The scale of racism that worked itself out in the arrest, plea bargains, and incarceration of so many black and brown men was hard to comprehend.

I once asked a painting teacher if the students were matched to the class in some way. She told me to “go talk to that guy.” I approached a tall Hispanic man who stood staring at a wall. I spoke to him but he continued to stare. He was incoherent, in a daze. I returned to the painting teacher who told me he was heavily medicated but has been sent to class every day for the past two years. He spent his time there just wandering around, except when the temperature exceeds 92 degrees. That is when he was sent back to his air-conditioned cell in a special facility designed for the mentally ill who would otherwise have an adverse reaction with their medication due to the heat. I wondered how living in this environment, overcrowded to the degree of being labeled “cruel and unusual” by the U.S. Supreme Court, contributed to his condition?

The painting teacher used the word “hideous” to describe the place. High fences and a bleak guard tower brooding over a moonscape where

no grass is permitted since inmates in such a yard could hide weapons by burying them in the lawn. It is difficult to explain how unusually ugly the environment was to me. I imagined the fine alkali dust that collects on one's clothing as a kind of gray residue that must be the exfoliated skin from so many inmates packed together. During exercise period, they walked in circles around a track. And seeing them, and thinking of the tall Hispanic man in the vocational painting class, I heard Rilke's verse:

His vision, from the constantly passing bars, has grown so weary that it cannot hold anything else. It seems to him there are a thousand bars; and behind the bars, no world.

The next day we visited an office services class. These students were mainly older Hispanic men. This meant they were serving long terms for anything from murder to molestation. We observed and took notes and afterward debriefed the teacher. This teacher organized the class so that her "porter" (an institutional job for inmates awarded by custody officials) helped not only in managing the voluminous paperwork but also in directing the tutorial and other learning support offered by some of the class members to others within the class. She had built a kind of smoothly running learning community here.

From the teacher's office, a room at the center of a wing of classrooms, we could see her classroom and another classroom next door through windows in an interior wall. Once we completed the meeting with the office services teacher, I stood up and gazed through the window to the other classroom. It appeared empty but at the far end, close to the door to the yard, sat two young white men. One had black hair and faced us and one had sandy hair and had his back to us. Andy entered the room to talk with these young men and I followed.

As I looked at the inmates, I felt a visceral shock. The man with his back to me moved his arm as he talked and this movement mimicked my son's way of moving his arm. The back of his head looked like the back of my son's head. He turned his head and back, and it was as if my son were sitting there. I felt my stomach turn and stopped breathing for a moment. I moved more quickly to see, absurdly, if my own son were in this prison, if this were some kind of nightmare. Andy introduced us to both the men. I stared intensely at the sandy haired man, now a boy to me, and more of his movements, the way he held his head, the way he turned his

head, mimicked my son's movements. I could barely listen to his story, but calmed myself and paid attention when I told myself this was not my son, I was not dreaming. But his story continued to align itself in some ways with my own. He was a professor's son from southern California who loved to surf and play in the outdoors. He had gone astray in his early teens as many do and, according to his own story, drug use had stunted his emotional development. However, he said he was not punished or corrected in a way that changed him for the better. He continued on a path of self-destructive, nihilistic behavior, focused by petty drug dealing. In the end, the police, prosecutor, and jury believed he ran with an infamous gang and was guilty of accessory to murder. He asserted his friends were not a gang but a social group, and he had not personally participated in any murder. He felt he suffered a great injustice when at age 20 he was given a sentence of seven years to life.

When he first got to prison, he was placed in a Level III yard. This meant he was grouped with men who were assessed at a Level III for danger of violence on a custody risk scale of I (low) to IV (high). He said he was terrified most of the time. During his first months in prison, a riot broke out on his yard in the form of a gang fight. In these situations, all inmates must take a side or be attacked in a fight (or in the future, by retaliation, for not taking a side). He lay down and hid his face on the yard. He said the guards made fun of him and told him to "man up" and fight. But he stayed down. That action got him transferred to a safer placement, which meant segregation into a "Sensitive Needs Yard" where the lowest and most vulnerable prisoners—the child molesters, sex offenders, and snitches—were housed because they needed protection from more main-line inmates who do not tolerate them. Even in prisons where inmates have little, social hierarchies still exist.

The inmate I was talking to blamed the state-appointed lawyer for not presenting his parole case more effectively. He had a job waiting, a supportive family, and a crime free, if not promising life ahead he said. But he also knew that his crime, being infamous, would be hard to overcome. He said that his story had been made into a movie with a famous star playing his role.

Andy and I talked with him and, apparently, I unconsciously counseled him in his situation. Andy later said he appreciated my role as "Principal Bill" with the young man, prepping his thoughts for the parole hearing. I remember saying, "This is all bad, but you have to be good," just like I would have to an errant sixth grade boy in my school.

I asked him about surfing. He said as a teenager he had a shortboard and thrashed waves. He said when he gets out he will get a longboard and just ride waves. Andy asked him what he would tell the parole board next time he got a chance. He held out his hands, palms down, and said he would tell them he will work his job, paddle out in the surf every day, and “praise the water.” I understood the solace he was seeking from a relationship with pristine nature. I wondered to myself for a moment if some connection to nature could be restorative, therapeutically represented in a vocational course in prison. Is vocational coastal cleanup possible? Absurd! Andy indicated to him that some on the parole board might not understand what he was saying so he might want to think about how he states his meaning. He told us about his own father who was also a professor like us.

When I got home, I told this story to a friend who is a social work administrator. He laughed at me and joked that I might have overly identified with this interview subject. And such was the case, obviously. But it served also as an experience that brought all the issues of incarceration and prison life home to me as a “white professor guy” who lives a life far from prison. These inmates were not my children or like me or mine in thousands of ways. Few spoke of fathers. But when I encountered one who could have been like my family, I was affected deeply. I gained an awful understanding of the deep debilitating effects of prison as punishment. I was even more horrified now at the routine dehumanization of seeing black or brown men locked in individual cages, waiting for transport, and walking in shackles from wrists, to waist, to ankles. The unthinkable, that such a fate could befall one’s own child, would be nearly unbearable. The point of prison is to punish and chastise the individual for the sake of justice. The loss spouses, children, and parents of inmates must feel daily extends the pain and chastisement across generations.

I read in the newspaper that the inmate we spoke to was recently paroled against the recommendation of the governor and the pleas of the mother of the murdered boy. Newspaper reports said he was a model prisoner and earned an associate degree while incarcerated, a privilege extended to prisoners who have the family to pay for books and tuition.

Seeing the brown and black inmates now as I see this paroled individual, I hope they can overcome the damage prison inflicts. I wonder what kind of support paroled inmates really need to avoid recidivating. I also wonder how we can resolve the paradox of rehabilitation with punishment and the impact of punishment on victims, families, and our society.

Report: Vocational Education in California Prisons: A Comprehensive Evaluation of Twelve Courses

INTRODUCTION AND PROJECT BACKGROUND

The first decade of the twenty-first century was challenging for corrections in California as prisons were caught in a paradox of using overcrowded facilities designed to punish criminal misdeeds, while at the same time they were charged to rehabilitate inmates in a fashion that reduces future law-breaking. Vocational education courses offered in prison were an attempt to achieve these two goals by offering inmates a chance to rehabilitate as they serve out their prison sentence.

The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) has reflected the shifts in “public sentiment” relative to corrections, punishment, and rehabilitation as it adjusted its mission during the last 50 years. This resulted in a system once focused on rehabilitation during the 1960s and 1970s, becoming more focused on punishment in the 1980s and 1990s as the state adopted life sentencing for habitual criminals (“three strikes and you’re out”), used imprisonment to fight the “war on drugs,” and gave parole agents greater leeway in revoking parole. Thus, even as crime rates dropped since about 1995, the number of people in prison continued to rise. Due in large part to the high incarceration rate, there were concerns about the costs of imprisonment in California, which became the highest in the nation. Most notably, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger signaled an interest in having the California Department of Corrections (CDC) adopt policies that would encourage rehabilitation (and reduce costs) in the context of the strong criminal penalties demanded by the laws passed 10–20 years earlier.

The most important shift was signaled in 2005 when the CDC was renamed the CDCR to highlight a new emphasis on reintegrating paroled inmates into society upon release. This policy shift came in light of the observation that California’s recidivism rates hover around 66% within 3 years of release (CDCR, 2010) and were among the highest in the nation. The result is significantly overcrowded prisons and high costs of incarceration, now over \$49,000 annually per inmate (CDCR, 2009). Some researchers believed that this is because California’s rehabilitative programs are weak relative to other states. The criticism is there is not a “full menu” of rehabilitation programs available in the prisons (Expert Panel, 2007, pp. 1, 3). Governor Schwarzenegger was acutely aware of the financial and human costs of such a statistics, and “putting the R in CDC-R” for rehabilitation to the name of the prison system (Expert Panel, 2007, p. 6). Schwarzenegger wanted to send a clear message to inmates, prison staff, law enforcement, and the people of California that California’s prisons were not just about punishment but also rehabilitation. When signing omnibus prison reform bill AB 900 in 2007, Schwarzenegger said:

This is a major step forward, but now the real work begins. With this bill, we will add 53,000 beds—the most built in a generation. But we will also put management reforms in place so that these beds are built quickly and the rehabilitation programs tied to each and every new bed are strong.

This emphasis on individualized rehabilitation programs was also mandated in AB 900. AB 900, the California Logic Model, and Expert Panel Report all assumed that vocational education would be part of a therapeutic model and individualized behavioral modification plans developed for each inmate. Further urgency was given to such plans in 2009 when the Federal Appeals Court’s “Three-Judge Court Panel” found that the crowding in California’s prisons was unconstitutional and ordered the state to reduce crowding.

*Rehabilitation in California, AB 900 and the
Origins of This Report*

A central component in any rehabilitation program is providing inmates with basic academic and vocational educational opportunities to prepare them for life after prison. Indeed, the Legislature in AB 900 told the

CDCR that the people of California have an interest in seeing that inmates released from prison after serving their sentence lead a conventional life. This means that when inmates are paroled they do not commit crimes, and they can achieve gainful employment to support themselves and their families. This seemingly straightforward direction is difficult to implement given the population committed to California's prisons and the nature of California's prisons themselves.

California's prisoners often have a poor educational background, poor employment history, weak work skills, mental health problems, and a poor history of integration into conventional society (Expert Panel, 2007). The isolating nature of prison by its very nature exacerbates this problem. In prison, personal assets and skills atrophy, and mental health issues worsen, thus further isolating inmates from conventional society. In this context, one goal of corrections in California—removing inmates from society while preparing them to be reintegrated back to society—is flawed.

Under the terms of AB 900, the CDCR rapidly streamlined its existing vocational education programs to focus on those trades that had the greatest potential for long-term job placement. The CDCR Office of Correctional Education (OCE) was put in charge of selecting courses, curricula, and hiring credentialed teachers. The OCE did this with an eye to conducting courses that promoted literacy, a GED degree for inmates who had not graduated from high school, or, for inmates who tested well in basic English language skills, vocational education. In contrast to public high schools, the design of the prison program was to reserve vocational education for the higher functioning and compliant members of the population. In addition, every inmate, whatever the background, was to be provided a roadmap for rehabilitation (Expert Panel, 2007, pp. 9, 72) of which strong literacy and vocational education programs focused on preparation for the workforce were central. As will be discussed shortly, this roadmap identified programs inside the prisons and on parole where an inmate needed to succeed. Using money appropriated by AB 900, the CDCR purchased new vocational education curricula, which would contribute to inmate success on parole by increasing the chance for gainful employment in different occupations. The legislation instructed the CDCR to do this by putting into effect a curriculum that would, among other things, use credentialed teachers, meet national accreditation standards, and train inmates for jobs needed in California's economy. In 2007 when the legislation was passed and funded, the courses that met these criteria tended to be in the skilled building trades. What this meant was

that vocational education curricula were purchased and used to provide students entry level skills in trades likely to improve the probability of landing a job in the building trades once paroled. Notably, even in the context of the deep 2010 recession, these trades continue to be in high demand (Rasmussen, 2010).

Included in the AB 900 funding was a request from the Legislature for an evaluation of whether the vocational education programs were meeting the stated goals of reducing recidivism and increasing the chances of gainful employment for parolees. This question was developed in the context of the simultaneous assessments of CDCR programs undertaken by the Expert Panel convened by the Secretary of the CDCR in 2006–2007, which focused on reorienting CDCR’s programs toward rehabilitation and evidence-based models of programming.

Consistent with AB 900, the Expert Panel on Adult Offender and Recidivism Reduction Programming Report (2007) resulted in the “California Logic Model,” a flow chart describing how rehabilitative programming would be part of every inmate’s program while they moved from intake, were assigned to an institution to serve their sentence, and then released on parole. The flow chart describing the California Logic Model was widely distributed within the CDCR and became a guide for programming decisions in both the education programs and custody decisions (Fig. 5.1).

Expert Panel and the California Logic Model

The CDCR Expert Panel on Adult Offender and Recidivism Reduction Programming released recommendations in a 2007 report, “A Roadmap for Effective Offender Programming in California.” An important element of this report is the “California Logic Model” for corrections and rehabilitation, which spells out what an ideal program of incarceration and rehabilitation might look like. The report also provides specific recommendations about how to reemphasize the CDCR’s expanded role in rehabilitation. In particular, the report was said to recommend “new models for in-prison rehabilitation programs, risk assessment tools for analyzing parole revocation decisions, and other methods to reduce recidivism and end the perpetual overcrowding crisis” (CDCR, 2007).

The report suggested that if all of the panel’s recommendations were adopted, California could significantly reduce its inmate population and

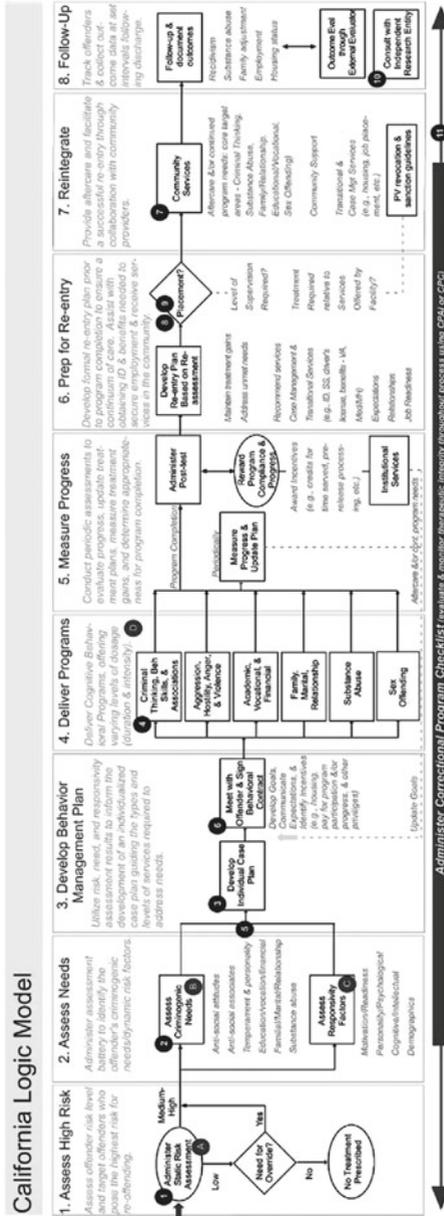


Fig. 5.1 California Logic Model. Source: Export Panel (2007)

the crowding that has driven per capita incarceration costs so high. In short, the report emphasized that effective rehabilitation programs reduce overall imprisonment costs.

Eleven specific recommendations were made to the CDCR by the Expert Panel. The second recommendation, which is the focus of the present study, suggested that the Legislature enact legislation to “expand positive reinforcements for offenders who complete rehabilitation programs and follow the rules” (Expert Panel, 2007, p. vii). Other recommendations focusing on integrating rehabilitative programming (both in prison and on parole) are also relevant. As specified in the Expert Panel’s report, there is an assumption that there will be an integration of vocational education into both rehabilitation programs in prison and on parole. This assumption about the importance of vocational education integration in the grand scheme of corrections will be returned to repeatedly because it is difficult to implement in prison. Rehabilitative programs such as vocational education often take a back seat to the necessary demands for safety, security, record processing, privacy, and anti-fraternization regulations.

Perhaps the key element of the Expert Panel report was the publication of a “roadmap” rooted in eight evidence-based principles and practices in corrections that described the underlying relationship between incarceration parole and rehabilitation. This roadmap emphasized that each inmate was to receive rehabilitative services in a systematic fashion from reception, to imprisonment, and into parole after serving their sentence, and was described schematically in the “California Logic Model” (Expert Panel, 2007). This, the Expert Panel wrote, should be rooted in evidence-based rehabilitative programs that research has shown were effective in the past. Such rehabilitative programs were to be prescribed for inmates in the context of criminogenic and rehabilitative needs that were to be identified at the time of reception by the CDCR, continued through the period of incarceration, and maintained during parole.

AB 900

Assembly Bill 900 (*Public Safety and Offender Rehabilitation Services Act of 2007*) is a wide-ranging law passed by the California Legislature in 2007. The bill directed the CDCR to, among other things, construct new prison beds and develop programs for the rehabilitation of prisoners. It instructs the CDCR to “implement a system of incentives to increase inmate participation

in, and completion of, academic and vocational education consistent with inmate's education needs" (PC Sec 6 2054.2). The legislation requires the CDCR to do this in a fashion that decreases the chances for recidivism and improves the likelihood of success once inmates are paroled. In a manner consistent with the California Logic Model, the Legislature specifically instructed the CDCR to do this in the context of "Prison to Employment Plans" in the hope that "the continuity of services provided both before and after an inmate's release on parole will improve the parolee's opportunity of successful reintegration into society" (PC Sec 9.8 6270(b)). The Legislature further required that this should be undertaken by accredited teachers and using curricula that met national accreditation standards.

This is a tall order since it assumes a high level of competence and coordination within the CDCR at reception, in classification, and finally in parole. The California Logic Model, in particular, assumes that risk needs would be assessed, behavior modification plans developed, programs delivered, and progress measured with the result being that reentry and reintegration back into society would occur. Finally, there is follow up on issues like vocational capabilities, education, follow-through, and re-arrest rates. This was to be done in the context of implicit and explicit goals rooted in evidence-based approach. Although this evaluation of vocational education in the CDCR is narrowly focused on 19 classes and 12 specific vocational education courses, it is important to remember these programs constitute just one component of the broader rehabilitation program.

In attempts to achieve the reforms required by AB 900 and recommended by the California Logic Model, administrators within the OCE sought a new, broad, and clear vision. In marked contrast to an existing array of unique and sometimes stand-alone programs, the OCE developed a well-coordinated and more coherent system of evidence-based programs whereby quality could be monitored and improved. With such criteria in mind, they evaluated job markets, purchased standardized curricula, and hired new teachers to implement the programs across the state using the criteria specified by the Legislature (i.e., that it be nationally accredited, meet industry standards, and can be used in all California prisons).

Sentencing Credits and the 2009 CDCR Budget

While this evaluation of vocational education programs in California was being conducted, the California State Legislature and the Governor were faced with a need to cut the CDCR budget due to decreased tax revenues.

This need to cut the budget resulted in a paradoxical compromise in the 2009 budget agreement, in which the Legislature agreed that sentences for inmates could be reduced by up to 6 weeks if they completed accredited educational or vocational education programs while incarcerated (which had the unusual name Senate Bill (SB) 18 XXX). This incentive-focused policy was consistent with the spirit and letter of AB 900 and the Expert Panel, both of which recognized that successful completion of such programs was consistent with reduced offending and better success on parole. This policy became law on January 25, 2010. Unfortunately, because of the state's fiscal crisis, half of the CDCR's vocational education programs were eliminated only one month later on February 1, 2010, because of drastic budget cuts. Thus, inmates' means to earn such sentence reduction was eliminated.

Vocational and Industrial Education in CDCR Prisons: A Brief History

Vocational education, or at least industrial activity in prison, has a long history in California prisons dating back to at least the operation of the "jute mill" at San Quentin State Prison during the late nineteenth century. Particularly in the years after this, industrial manufacture and education came to be seen as a major goal for the CDC. Indeed, such programs expanded during the twentieth century as wardens came to believe that such activity was a cost-saving device—products could be used in the prison and for state government—and a basis for rehabilitation and integration of inmates back into the work force after release. Implementation of rehabilitation and education programs was also established as part of the California Youth Authority in the early twentieth century.

In the adult CDC, wardens were encouraged to innovate and respond to local needs and capacities. Wardens, who until the 1990s were autonomous gubernatorial appointees, accomplished this with little central coordination. Lacking a systematic approach, decentralized and independent institutional efforts resulted in vocational education programs across California's growing prison system that were not uniform in their standards and of variable quality. At times these programs were coordinated or merged with industrial production programs conducted by the Prison Industry Authority (PIA). Others were free-standing and designed to meet the local needs of the prisons, such as shoemaking and dry cleaning.

Most common vocational courses were in the automotive trades (e.g., auto mechanics), building trades (carpentry, plumbing, electrical, painting, welding, etc.), tailoring, print shop, dry cleaning, office services, and so on. More idiosyncratic programs taught trades like bronco busting, license plate manufacturing, firefighting, ophthalmologic technicians, and underwater welding.

Oftentimes, these programs were of high quality, growing from the vision of a charismatic warden or teacher. Outstanding achievements at one or two institutions, however, did not translate into benefits for the entire system. Nor did the skills taught necessarily articulate with broader industry standards, certification programs, or California's job market. The low cost of prisoner labor and the limitations posed by the prison environment also meant that programs were not always up-to-date. For example, the CDCR manufactured their own shoes by hand long after the cobbler trade became obsolete due to cheaper alternatives. Likewise, print shops were maintained long after the development of more complex photocopying machines.

OCE Responds: The Vocational Education Reforms of 2005–2007

With the renaming of the CDCR in 2005, the follow up with AB 900, and the Expert Panel Report in 2007, the OCE began to create uniform programs intended to train inmates in a vocation where they could earn a livable wage on parole and that would provide them national certification. This meant evaluating existing programs relative to the job market and identifying curricula that could meet these demands in a prison environment. This was done because inmates with employable skills are more likely to stay out of prison (Adams et al., 1994; Crayton & Neusteter, 2008; Expert Panel, 2007; Hill, 2008; Vacca, 2004). This led to the elimination of traditional vocational programs that did not have an obvious entry point to the job market, which, while serving the needs of the institutions, did not prepare inmates for expanding industries with adequate wages.

Inmate Incarceration and Rehabilitation in California: Vocational Education

The CDCR incarcerates inmates sentenced by county-level courts to sentences longer than one year.¹ As a result, initial processing is at the county level and undertaken by the offices of county sheriffs who operate the

jails. In addition, judges sentencing convicted criminals also have available county-level probation officers' sentencing and needs recommendations. Upon conviction, inmates are sent to a CDCR reception center for several months. During this time, the CDCR evaluates the inmate for institutional capacity, legal requirements, inmate sentence, security classification score, and rehabilitative needs. A range of custody staff, counselors, social workers, psychologists, and education specialists are involved in these decisions, which are made in a series of internal hearings.

Intake and Classification

Intake is done at specific reception centers. This is where decisions about security risk, rehabilitation needs, physical and mental health issues, and space/beds availability are first made. Relevant information is entered into the inmates file; in effect, the first stop on the "roadmap to rehabilitation" for the inmate. However, broader issues, particularly custody and security that are the primary goals of the CDCR, are still the primary basis for these classification decisions, and it is in this context that inmates are assigned to a particular prison and one of four levels of custody. Testing for literacy and a review of educational information are part of these intake assessments. These decisions ultimately determine if an inmate is assigned to a work assignment, PIA, basic education classes, vocational education classes, or waits on a yard for assignment. Overall, despite AB 900, educational and rehabilitative needs become a fairly low priority when assignments are made at the reception centers. Higher priorities include practical considerations like space/bed availability and security classification for the inmate.

Classroom Assignment and ADA Models

After arriving at a new institution, whether it is to begin a sentence or the result of a transfer, an inmate attends a "Unit Classification Committee" meeting (see pp. 147–152). Staff from relevant units (e.g., education, counseling, custody, and psychiatry) are present at the hearing under the leadership of the captain of the yard or a designee. The inmate's correctional counselor, who typically has a background as a correctional officer and a BA degree, makes programming recommendations that

are discussed. This can include inmate work assignments or education assignments. In the end, however, the Unit Classification Committee does not necessarily develop a tailor-made behavior modification plan. Although this tailor-made plan represents the heart of the prescription for rehabilitation outlined in the logic model, it is not surprising that other local institutional considerations effectively veto some of the plans at this stage of decision-making. Some of these considerations include space availability, the broader needs of the prison for staffing of kitchen facilities, laundry facilities, and PIA slots.

The CDCR uses an “Average Daily Attendance (ADA)” model to fund education programs, which means that there is an incentive for yard captains and school principals to fill available educational seats. This makes maximum use of classroom space a priority, but it also means that it is more difficult to make appropriate assignments given the individual inmate preferences. As will be discussed in the results and discussion sections (Chaps. 10 and 13), such policies make programming for individual inmates administratively difficult.

The Vocational Education Classroom and California Prisons

The curricula purchased by the CDCR in 2007–2008 with AB 900 monies focus on specific vocational trades. As specified in the AB 900 legislation, such courses provide inmates with an opportunity to receive nationally recognized certification in vocations, which, according to job surveys, have a good earning potential. For many of the vocations, CDCR’s teachers are certified to conduct National Council of Construction Education and Research (NCCER) training affiliated with the University of Florida. NCCER courses also afford inmates the opportunity to receive transferable community college credit from Pima Community College in Tucson, Arizona. For other vocations, certification is via certificates for the handling of toxic chemicals (e.g., landscaping and painting) or the Microsoft Corporation (office services). Class size throughout the CDCR is 27 students.

Because of the nature of prison education and the routines of inmate assignment, admission is on an “open-entry/open-exit” basis, which means that new students appear on almost any day and students may depart on any day. As a result, few students are working on the same section of the curriculum at the same time, and the utility of group lecture

and group instruction is limited. Instead, teachers in all classes organize students into small groups who undertake the same task or project. All vocational education curricula are broken into small units, which are concluded with standardized examinations for proficiency focused on bookwork and hands-on exercises.

Time-to-completion of bookwork and practical competency varies, particularly in the prison environment that is subject to frequent lockdowns causing class time to be lost. In addition, abrupt transfers of inmates, parole dates, and other delays caused by the nature of prison inhibit the efficiency of vocational education. The result is that vocational education courses do not always take a set time for any one inmate to complete certification requirements. Rather, the study vocational education courses last from about 3 months (janitorial) to 3 years (electrical works). Completion times also vary greatly because of inmate student motivation, lockdowns, and program stoppages. There are also wide ranges of difficulty, for example, courses for janitorial requiring a sixth-grade reading level and electrical requiring the math and literacy skills of a high school graduate (see Dick et al., 2009).

Vocational Education Facilities in California Prisons

California's vocational education facilities are housed in a variety of facilities, ranging from World War II era Quonset huts to facilities designed as vocational education classrooms found in the newer prisons. The classrooms are more or less accessible to the yards on which the inmates live, an important consideration because movements by prisoners between yards are controlled by prison officers, reflecting the importance of restrictions on inmate movement within the prisons. Well-designed classrooms are accessible to the yards and do not require strip searches before and after class.

Materials necessary for the hands-on portion of courses are available through both standard CDCR procurement and from sources that the teachers develop themselves. Typically, inmate teaching assistants or clerks who are supervised closely by the teacher check out tools, books, and other equipment. The classes are dominated by the need to maintain security where there are sharp objects, saws, knives, and other standard tools that can be used as weapons. As in every corner of a prison environment, security is a primary concern.

Prison Crowding, Prison Environment and Vocational Education

Issues created by prison crowding dominate programming for vocational education, as it does other conditions in prison. Indeed, the first finding in the Expert Panel report (2007) was that “The state of overcrowding in CDCR prison facilities makes it difficult for offenders to access rehabilitation programs” (p. 2). This happens in expected and unexpected ways. For example, prison crowding means that the ideal vocational classrooms might be used as dormitory space. In 2007, 18,000 inmates were housed in spaces designed for programs (Three-Judge Court Panel, 2009).

As with all prison facilities, crowding means that there is pressure to use all available space efficiently. In one prison, a warden described how overcrowding limits programming options, including the use of administrative segregation penalties for inmates violating prison rules. His administrative segregation unit was always full because it was too small relative to the overpopulation of inmates assigned to the prison. As a result, if there was an incident, he could not quickly send an inmate to administrative segregation because all beds were already taken. In his words, the pipeline was “clogged” due to overcrowding. Likewise, the pipelines to vocational education are “clogged” because there is strong pressure to utilize every seat at all times. This means that even when an inmate arrives at the Unit Classification Committee with appropriate skills and background, it is unlikely that a seat will be available in a vocational education class.

Education specialists know that a good class includes real-life vocational skills, team-building, and effective communication (Brandon, Chard-Wierschem, & Mancini, 1999; Greenberg, Dunleavy, & Kutner, 2007). Simulating “real life” in a prison environment where there is an emphasis on security, command, and pressures from gangs makes the habits and modeling for such “real-world conditions” inherently difficult. At the same time, many inmate students bring significantly less work experience and lower skills to classes than the general population (Lawrence, Mears, Dublin, & Travis, 2002). This is why practice and demonstration is an integral part of the vocational education coursework required by the CDCR. For adult learners, contextualized instruction increases motivation to learn and attendance (Comings, Soricone, & Santos, 2006); this clearly cannot be the case in prison.

THE STUDY: METHODS AND APPROACHES

In 2008–2010, a team of researchers from California State University, Chico (CSUC) evaluated 12 vocational education programs at eight prisons throughout the state. The vocational trades included in this evaluation were Auto Mechanics; Building Maintenance; Carpentry; Electrical Works; Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC); Janitorial; Landscaping; Mill and Cabinetry; Office Services; Painting; Plumbing; and Welding. The CSUC team first evaluated the curricula purchased for the courses and submitted their report to the CDCR in November 2009 (see Dick et al., 2009).

A multiple method approach was adopted for evaluating the vocational education courses in this study, including collecting available statistical data, classroom observations, and formal interviews with administrators, teachers, and inmate students. Data for statistical analysis were obtained from the CDCR Adult Research Branch and OCE. In addition to this statistical description, the report contains an evaluation of the implementation and the processes of vocational education including:

1. Statistical comparisons of classroom data.
2. Quantitative descriptions of good, adequate, and weak vocational education classrooms.
3. Thorough analysis of interview data to answer the research questions and identify key concepts and themes regarding vocational education in California's prisons.

NOTE

1. This was changed to 3 years by the “Realignment” legislation (AB 109) of 2011. This legislation was signed into law to relieve crowding in the prisons we studied by keeping lower level inmates in county lock-ups for up to 3 years. Previously, the limit was 1 year.

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Report: Literature Review

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND RECIDIVISM

Gaes (2009) conducted a meta-analysis of the relationship between prison-based education programs and post-release outcomes. His analysis assesses if, how, and why adult-basic education, GED programs, and vocational training programs affect post-release recidivism and employment rates. Gaes' analysis showed that inmates who participated in any type of education program while incarcerated tended to have lower recidivism rates (see also Hill, 2008). This connection is postulated in the design of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation's (CDCR) education programs in the Expert Panel's (2007) report, "A Roadmap for Effective Offender Programming California."

Along the same lines, Petersilia (2003) found that inmates who enrolled in any type of educational program while incarcerated had lower recidivism rates than those who did not. However, as Petersilia rightly points out, no type of education is a magic bullet. Participation in education while incarcerated does not mean that every prisoner so treated will not recidivate, rather it only means that as a group they will have lower recidivism rates. Indeed, as Petersilia acknowledges, the reduction in recidivism "is not large" (2003, p. 177), while pointing out that the financial savings from prison-based education programs are substantial. Indeed, as Aos, Phipps, Baroski, and Lieb (2001) note, the vocational education programs' benefits per dollar spent in Washington State were substantial (up to \$7.13

per dollar spent) under most assumptions of their model. This is in large part due to the combination of the high cost of incarceration relative to the costs avoided by lower recidivism rates.

Petersilia (2003) credits the best education programs with a 10–30% drop in recidivism rates (defined as reconviction for a new felony offense within 3 years of release). Thus, if a normal recidivism rate is, say, 50% and an effective education program drops that rate by just 20%, that means 40% of the parolees who participated in education are returned to prison, while 50% of the prisoners who did not have the program return. Although not a vast difference, as Petersilia (2003) notes, this overall financial effect is significant because reincarceration is so expensive, especially in California where the cost for maintaining a prisoner is estimated at \$49,000 per inmate per year (CDCR 2009a).

Such savings might be difficult to “see,” but they are also not the only “savings” associated with recidivism; notably they do not include the suffering of victims and their families that does not occur, or for that matter, the effects on the lives of the inmates’ children. For example, as Petersilia (2000) notes, children of incarcerated adults are five times more likely to serve time in prison as adults than children of adults who are not incarcerated.

Furthermore, employment is directly related to recidivism and crime in similar fashion. As employment rates and wages climb, crime rate falls (Solomon, Johnson, Travis, & McBride, 2004). What is more, without marketable skills it is less likely inmates will find employment after release. For this and other reasons, the Expert Panel (2007) recommended vocational programming for every California inmate with a need in this area. There is substantial evidence that participation in vocational education programs while incarcerated leads to reduced rates of recidivism, particularly for adult offenders (Aos et al., 2006).

The Three-Judge Court Panel (2009) went beyond such cost–benefit calculations in their assessment of the effectiveness of rehabilitative programming in California prisons for addressing overcrowding and public safety. The panel noted that rehabilitation programs also improve public safety.

Based on the overwhelming and uncontroverted evidence, we find that additional rehabilitative programming would result in a significant population reduction while improving public safety and reducing the burden on the criminal justice systems ... such programming would enhance the likelihood that recidivism will decline as the prison population is decreased. (p. 152)

The statement of the Three-Judge Court Panel reflects their concerns about prison crowding, and the fact that there is a reciprocal relationship between reduction in crowding, and the capacity of stretched institutions to administer programs for incarceration and rehabilitation more efficiently.

THE BENEFITS OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN PRISON: HUMAN CAPITAL, SIGNALING, AND CRIMINOGENIC NEEDS

Studies have addressed why education programs are successful for helping to reduce recidivism rates and improve employment outcomes for parolees (Aos et al., 2001; MacKenzie, 2008; Petersilia, 2003). Discussions focus on two important reasons: first, training increases the human capital that a parolee offers potential employers; and second, earning a certificate in any field “signals” to potential employers a seriousness that compensates in part for the stigma of a criminal record (e.g., Gaes, 2009; Petersilia, 2003; Spence, 1973).

Human Capital

Offering inmates the opportunity to increase their “human capital” is one of the most commonly cited reasons for assigning an inmate to a vocational education or basic education course. Indeed, such reasoning is implicit in AB 900, which indicates the CDCR will “determine whether the programs provide sufficient skills to inmates that will likely result in their successful employment in the community, and reduce their chances of returning to prison after release to parole” (Sec. 13, Chap. 9, § 3105). Sufficient skills reflect the fact that people who have specific skills can more easily find jobs and can also earn higher wages for their work because they are worth more to their employer.

Theories about the nature of human capital emphasize that a trained skilled worker is worth more to the employer than one who is not trained or skilled. The role of education for creating human capital is explicitly addressed in the vocational educational curricula evaluated here (see Dick et al., 2009). In the vocational education courses purchased by the CDCR, there is a rigorous range of literacy requirements to improve reading, hands-on opportunities to improve job skills, and various other technical skills that can improve employability. Potential employees who

have mastered such skills are more valuable to employers, are more likely to be hired, are more likely to generate profits for companies, and are more likely to generate good wages for the employee. They also provide ways for the inmate graduate to “signal” to potential employers that they have a level of competency to be considered for a job via their human capital (Gaes, 2009; Spence, 1973). This is one reason why professional certification is important for CDCR vocational education courses. In the case of inmates, such positive signals are particularly important because inmates are stigmatized with a criminal record, which signals risk and incompetence.

Job Market Signaling

Licensing, certification, and criminal records are sometimes referred to in the labor market as “signals,” which are the characteristics that an employer uses to assess the productive capabilities of applicants at the time a hiring decision is made. Licenses, certificates, and other documents signal to potential employers that a potential employee has specific skills, interests, and commitment to a profession. In the absence of other information such as personal recommendations, employers believe that applicants who possess positive signals are more likely to be able to perform the job and be a good employee. People with obvious positive signals, like credentials and certificates, fit this bill and present less risk to the future employer (Gaes, 2009; Spence, 1973).

However, there is also negative signaling. The negative “signal” of a criminal record tells an employer that they are taking a risk with a particular individual. The stigma attached to a criminal record includes the belief that the applicant may be more likely to engage in theft, drug use, and other anti-social behaviors that will cause trouble in the workplace (Gaes, 2009). Employers might rely on such negative signals as tattoos, accent, race, and especially relevant for this study, a criminal record.

Vocational education classes in prison (or elsewhere) send positive signals to employers. Moreover, positive signals within the labor market are particularly important for parolees seeking a job upon release because, by definition, they are stigmatized (Gaes, 2009; Petersilia, 2003) and employers are less likely to have any other information about a potential employee who has spent months or years in prison. The exception is if the parolee can produce a signal that a vocational certificate provides. Certification is important for a parolee seeking work because they are unlikely to have the

other connections through which hiring decisions are made. Possession of a nationally recognized certificate mitigates the stigma of a criminal record.

In summary, there is widespread consensus in the literature about the benefits of vocational education in prisons for reducing recidivism and increasing post-release employment. There is also consensus that it does this by improving human capital and signaling to employers that an employee is a lower risk hire. However, there are still questions about the overall effectiveness for the vocational programs purchased by the CDCR with AB 900 monies. Do these programs create the greatest impact possible in public safety, decrease in crime, and decreased incarceration rates? These questions are important for the purposes of this literature review, and for assessing overall quality of the courses included in this study.

Criminogenic Needs

The Expert Panel's (2007) report specifically identified seven criminogenic needs. These seven factors are highlighted explicitly throughout criminology literature and are associated with criminal behavior. All of the criminogenic needs apply to the population being examined here, but some inform this study more than others do. These criminogenic needs include having educational, vocational, and financial deficits with low achievement skills; having anti-social and pro-criminal associates; being isolated from pro-social others; familial dysfunction; and alcohol and drug abuse (Expert Panel, 2007, p. 26). Notably, such needs are also emphasized in AB 900 that directs the CDCR to undertake interdisciplinary assessment of all inmates:

The Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation shall conduct assessments of all inmates that include, but are not limited to, data regarding the inmate's history of substance abuse, medical and mental health, education, family background, criminal activity, and social functioning. The assessments shall be used to place inmates in programs that will aid in their reentry to society and that will most likely reduce the inmate's chance of reoffending. (AB 900, Sec. 11, Article 2.5, § 3020)

The point of such programs is that, the more criminogenic needs present in a person's life, the more likely it is that an individual will commit crimes again. The first step in this process is identifying these needs, which is why

there is an insistence in both the Expert Panel's (2007) report and AB 900 that individualized behavior plans be the first step in creating a program for behavior modification, which will presumably occur when an inmate is released on parole. The assumptions about what type of programming is undertaken by the interdisciplinary assessments teams are straightforward. At intake (presumably at the reception center), a team of experts including correctional officers, school principals, psychologists, correctional counselors, and the inmate meet as a "Unit Classification Committee" to develop a plan. This committee, which uses the best evidence available, then develops a plan to address the specific criminogenic needs. This panel then meets again with the inmate before transfer to the prison to serve their sentence, or annually. Follow up after the sentence is served is assumed by a parole program, which has access to the data and resources used to treat the inmate. Thus, by the time that the sentence is served, this committee will have successfully addressed the criminogenic needs of inmates, which in turn are followed up with the type of parole services specified in AB 900, especially community-based corrections which lead to job placement (see also Petersilia, 2003). While not every inmate will have reformed, a certain proportion will have, and the need for future incarceration will decline.

Such a rational program should in theory work; after all, its assumptions are rooted in the best research available and sound understandings of how and why criminogenic factors contribute to crime rates. However, such a rational model also assumes an efficient and effective bureaucracy to administer what is, after all, a complex process of individual diagnosis, delivery of programs, and parole follow-up. As will become apparent from the data presented in this report, the CDCR is not always able to deliver such programs at least for vocational training, particularly in the context of what the overcrowding in California's prisons that the Three-Judge Court Panel (2009) explicitly described as "criminogenic."

Criminogenic Nature of Overcrowded Prisons

As an initial matter, we conclude that the current combination of overcrowding and inadequate rehabilitation or reentry programming in California's prison system itself has a substantial adverse impact on public safety and the operation of the criminal justice system. A reduction in the crowding of California's prisons will have a significant positive effect

on public safety by reducing the criminogenic aspects of California's prison. The Three-Judge Court determined that, because of overcrowding, the state is limited in its capacity to classify inmates properly according to their security risk or programming needs (Three-Judge Court Panel, 2009).

It is clear from what the Expert Panel (2007) and others write that programs can and should be developed for prisoners that reduce rates of recidivism for parolees. Among these programs are the programs specified in AB 900. What is less clear is whether such complex programs can be implemented in the current environment of California's overcrowded prisons.

HIGH-QUALITY VOCATIONAL EDUCATION CURRICULA

High-quality vocational education curricula, whether in prison or elsewhere, include effective teaching strategies, performance (hands-on) evaluation of skills of the trade, and paper-pencil evaluations. According to Keiser, Lawrenz, and Appleton (2004a), excellence in technical or vocational curricula rests on, first, teaching students who already have basic competencies and, secondly, on hiring teachers who possess outstanding pedagogical strategies.

The first factor, basic competencies and skills in the vocation, assumes that workers possess several fundamental abilities before entering the workforce including workforce behavior (e.g., punctuality, communication, and team work) (Keiser et al., 2004a; see also Secretary of Labor's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills, 1991). The second factor focused on pedagogy and teaching strategies. Keiser and colleagues state there should be an articulation (coordination) of tests and hands-on performance assessments with the curricula. Hands-on performance assessments should require students to show what they know by using actual tools to demonstrate procedures they have learned.

Context: Basic Competence and Skills

The first key factor focused on basic competencies and skills of a high-quality curriculum was outlined in Secretary of Labor's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) report in 1991. SCANS identified specific competencies that individuals must acquire if they are to become

productive workers. These competencies were summarized by Dick and colleagues (2009, p. 17) and include the following:

1. *Productive use of resources*—Workers should possess skills to allocate time, money, materials, and space efficiently.
2. *Using information*—Employees must acquire, organize, maintain, and evaluate data effectively and utilize technology to manipulate data and process information.
3. *Interpersonal skills*—Employees need the ability to work as a team member, to lead, to negotiate, and to work with individuals from a variety of cultural and ethnic backgrounds.
4. *Comprehend systems*—Workers should be able to comprehend social, organizational, and technical systems. They should also be skilled at monitoring, designing, and improving systems.
5. *Technology*—Workers should have the ability to use up-to-date technology and to diagnose and troubleshoot as well.

SCANS (1991) also identified three foundational skills (or human capital) that people need to possess to be excellent employees, or for that matter, excellent students in a vocational education class. First are basic skills such as reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Second, thinking skills are needed in the continuously changing market and work environment, and include problem-solving, decision-making, reasoning, and creativity. Third are personal qualities and ethics such as self-management, integrity, and sociability. Notably, these foundational skills do not require technical competence; rather, they underlie the technical competence that make up the skills portion of an excellent course.

Outstanding Pedagogy and Teaching Strategies

The second characteristic of an excellent vocational education curriculum is effective teaching methods, meaning that the classroom learning reflects both school environment and the reality of the job site (Finch & Crunkilton, 1999). This variable assumes that there are planned instructional methods, high-quality teaching facilities, and that the vocational education curriculum is relevant to the real world of work. In addition, teaching strategies should be student oriented. This is especially important in a prison environment where literacy issues can be an issue. Finally,

Keiser et al. (2004a) stress that since vocational education should reflect the reality of the job site, teachers should model the role of a foreman.

Another important factor in outstanding vocational education involves appropriate assessment strategies. Authentic performance assessment is postulated to be a key foundation of learning in any curriculum (Keiser et al., 2004a; Wiggins, 1993). Performance assessments permit students to demonstrate what skills, tools, and procedures they have learned from the teacher. Upon successful conclusion of a course, certificates and other indicators signaling employability can be awarded.

Qualities and Attributes of an Excellent Vocational Education Teacher in Corrections

Pioneers in the study of excellence in teaching vocational education in corrections focused on teacher attributes associated with student success. For example, Gehring (1992) identified several characteristics of successful veteran correctional teachers including self-awareness, the ability to sustain energy in a harsh environment, capacity to relate well with others, the ability to stimulate interest in others, and to be able to establish meaningful goals and manage resources.

On the other hand, Brazzell, et al. (2009) conclude that the lack of research on evidence-based practices in correctional education makes it difficult to draw conclusions about effectiveness in specific programs or teaching methods. In such a context, MacKenzie (2008) identified general principles for adult education that can be used to inform an understanding about vocational education in corrections. These principles include an emphasis on individual rehabilitation (as the Expert Panel and AB 900 call for) and the capacity to address a range of inmates' criminogenic needs. Implementation is accomplished with trained teachers, research-based curricula, and standardized teaching protocols (MacKenzie, 2008).

Unfortunately, there are few studies about how incarcerated adults learn best, whether in vocational or adult basic education programs. This fact exacerbates the problems associated with designing correctional education (Brazzell et al., 2009). Lacking a well-developed set of empirical studies, scholars and practitioners identify general components of successful correctional education based on practical experiences in prison and what is known about vocational education in general. Some of these traditional components are student needs assessment, student placement in

programs based on the assessment, well-trained teachers, and effective use of technology and incentives (Brazzell et al., 2009).

Evidence-Based Decision-Making in Corrections and Education

In the midst of complex issues and large, unwieldy organizations, evidence-based approaches are seen as rational ways to make policy changes and programmatic improvements. Joining the work of professional researchers using high-quality methodology with the practical knowledge and perspectives of practitioners results in the most effective evidence-based approaches to teaching (Comings, 2003). Comings, et al. (2006) point out that neither rigorous, well-designed research, nor practitioner knowledge alone is enough to ensure that the best policies and practices are implemented. Only by combining professional wisdom with systematically collected data can these strands of knowledge produce the desired best effects in a systematic fashion. With these conditions in mind, the CDCR and the Office of Correctional Education (OCE) have attempted to systematically integrate evidence-based curricula into their vocational education programs.

CLASSROOM AND FACILITY APPROPRIATENESS FOR “REAL-WORLD TRAINING”

Educators know that “real-world training” is critical to skill development. Therefore, successful vocational educators reflect the work environment in their classes and match cognitive tasks consistent with current job requirements (Appleton et al., 2007). *The Craft Instructors Guide* (National Center for Construction Education and Research, 2007) used in CDCR courses focuses curricula on such skills, tasks, knowledge, and attitudes. An obvious shortcoming for the prison classroom is that skills are taught out of context and in isolation from the real work environment. For example, *The Craft Instructors Guide* recommends including guest speakers and taking field trips to job sites to make the learning more realistic. Such recommendations highlight the paradoxical nature of creating a real-world environment in prison.

Vocational classes in prison often provide the first steady experience in a work-like environment for many inmate students. Poorly educated and often only casually employed prior to prison, many inmate students do not

come to vocational education well-prepared to work. Foundational work skills such as time management, self-discipline, and work ethics are gained in vocational education classes and are valuable on any job when inmates are released (Petersilia, 2003; Solomon et al., 2004). Vocational education experiences serve to socialize inmate students away from the norms of prison life and toward the norms of the outside world (Petersilia, 2000).

CLASSROOM DYNAMICS IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

Vocational education classrooms provide an active learning environment. Inmate student engagement in the tasks and procedures of the trade is visible even to the casual observer. Although reading to learn is often the core strategy in an academic classroom, hands-on and project-based learning provide the foundation of student experiences in vocational classrooms (Finch & Crunkilton, 1999).

Because best practice indicates that entering the vocational education classroom should ideally approximate entering a job site to the greatest extent possible; effective classroom instruction starts with detailed information about the project(s) to be worked on that day (Ausubel, 1960). Feedback on earlier progress, including both correction of mistakes and recognition for jobs finished successfully, provides both instruction and motivation (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Thus, students should begin their academic day following targeted review of prior activities and accomplishments.

In well-established vocational education classrooms, helping students remain on task often places vocational teachers in the role of a job foreman. This means that once the hands-on skills are taught, practiced, and demonstrated, the instructor assesses the speed, accuracy, and quality of work. Work groups support students' on task behavior through peer pressure and mentoring. Pacing guides provided by the teachers also assist students keep track of their progress according to timelines established for vocational education classes.

Transition times between classroom activities are also a test of effective classroom management (Marzano, 2003). In well-managed classrooms, students assemble quickly in assigned locations to hear directions or go over plans for the day. In an ideal classroom, students listen well and ask questions if they do not understand what is required of them. At clean up time, students move efficiently to secure tools and materials and leave a

clean and safe work environment for the start of the next workday (Frey, 2010).

Because some activities require less preparation and clean up than others, students normally finish transitions at different rates. In well-managed classrooms, students know what kinds of “sponge activities” (Hunter, 1973) they can work on so that time is used efficiently for learning. Such activities can include end-of-class assessments or activities such as self-assessment and preparation for the learning and work plans of the next day.

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCESSING AND PROGRAMMING OF PRISONERS

Designing effective vocational education classes involves grouping students by ability, interests, and motivation, a fact recognized in AB 900’s insistence on interdisciplinary assessment of inmates when developing rehabilitation plans. This happens routinely in schools outside prisons where criteria like age, placement tests, tuition payment, prerequisites, and ability testing are used to group students into appropriate levels. Students at fixed predictable times, and classes end after a semester or other standard period has passed. Such grouping and predictable start and end dates mean that teachers can plan for large group activities (e.g., lecture, hands-on training) rather than seeking to match books, lectures, demonstrations, with every single student. This kind of “opportunity to learn” (Marzano, 2003, p. 22) makes the delivery of material and organizing the classroom more efficient and cost effective (Kelly & Turner, 2009).

TEACHER DEVELOPMENT, TRAINING, AND CLASSROOM STAFFING IN PRISON CONTEXT

Contemporary educational improvement strategies rely on the development of teacher knowledge and skills (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). Teachers gain new knowledge and skills by routinely engaging in professional development activities, especially those emphasizing teaching practices and peer coaching or collaborative skills among professionals (Dufour, et al. 2006; Osterman & Kottkamp, 2004; Showers & Joyce, 1996). Wong and Nicotera (2007) analysis of educational literature iden-

tified characteristics of evidence-based professional development strategies for teachers. Some of the strategies they identified included:

1. Focuses on content and connects to instruction.
2. Active learning for teachers.
3. Includes performance and academic standards.
4. Brings inquiry-based processes.
5. Encourages teacher leadership in professional development.
6. Continues over extended duration.
7. Becomes part of daily practice.
8. Supports and encourages collective and collaborative participation of all educators, administrators, and teachers together.

The advantages of on-going training are numerous. Unfortunately, traditional professional development for teachers, according to Richardson (2003), occurs within a “cultural norm of individualism” (p. 402). This means what a teacher does in the classroom separate from other teachers and promotes isolation from colleagues. This is even more the case for vocational teachers in prison, which by its very nature is isolating. Further, these teachers are likely to be the only instructors in their trade making collaboration difficult. As a result, the literature indicates that teachers left in isolation, without the support of continued on-site professional development, invent solutions to frustrating problems that may not be consistent with institutional goals. Having regularly scheduled training with peers and trade experts can help teachers improve instruction and programmatic outcomes.

THE PROBLEM OF RECIDIVISM

The nature of recidivism is at the heart of why vocational education is part of the California Logic Model, Expert Panel Report, and AB 900. Indeed, dealing with recidivism is at the heart of why the goal of rehabilitation was placed into CDCR’s name in 2005; there was recognition that punishment alone did little to correct future behavior after inmates were released, and even, as described above, could be criminogenic. In effect, the “punishment only” approach led to avoidable further costs to society in terms of crime, victimization, and future incarceration costs via “the revolving door” between prison and the streets.

Recidivism is measured in a variety of ways in different places and times, but the most common way is to look at rearrest, reconviction, and reincarceration in the 3 years following release. Petersilia (2003) and Aos et al. (2006) reviewed the widespread problem of recidivism, how it occurs in different jurisdictions, and the influence of different legal and parole regimes. Following a study by Langan and Levin (2002), Petersilia (2003) noted that the best studies of recidivism were panel studies of rearrest rates of cohorts released in 1983 and 1994. The 1994 cohort (which included 272,111 inmates) found that two-thirds of the released inmates were rearrested for a crime within 3 years, though just one-quarter were sent back to prison during that time.

Rates of reoffense are highest in the first year after release (Langan & Levin, 2002), and almost half of rearrests occur during the 6 months after release. This means that if the parolee makes it through the first year, there is a declining probability that he will be rearrested. This pattern was recently confirmed by a large study of California inmates (CDCR, 2010).

Such statistics are ultimately why the Legislature insisted in AB 900 that rehabilitation programs in prison be closely connected with parole services, and included funding for additional community corrections programs. In highlighting “Parole to Employment” plans, the Legislature recognized that the period after release is the time when parolees are most likely to reoffend, or in the language of AB 900:

The Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation shall develop an Inmate Treatment and Prison-to-Employment Plan. The plan should evaluate and recommend changes to the Governor and the Legislature regarding current inmate education, treatment, and rehabilitation programs to determine whether the programs provide sufficient skills to inmates that will likely result in their successful employment in the community, and reduce their chances of returning to prison after release to parole. (Sec. 13, Chap. 9, § 3105)

What the Legislature is pointing at with this section is the fact, established through evidence-based research, that the highest risk time for a released inmate is the time immediately after release. Or, put in another way, will hiring offices perceive an ex-con as someone with too much time on their hands and likely to be rearrested soon, or as a busy potential worker? Again, the bulk of the evidence indicates that having skills and working is what leads to a judgment that the parolee is a busy potential worker, which

in turn leads to better behavior. Nevertheless, this is not necessarily the case for all inmates. The strongest relationship was for inmates aged 27 and above at the time of release; recidivism did not decrease that much for younger inmates (Uggen & Staff, 2004).

California's Parole System and Recidivism

As Petersilia (2003) points out, the recidivism rate in the CDCR is among the highest in the USA. The context though of any broader understanding of recidivism is the unique legal environment in which the California parole system exists. This is due to a number of factors. First, in particular, unlike other states, the CDCR deals only with more serious criminals while lower level offenders serve time in county jails and are supervised by county-level probation officers after release. Second, California places an unusually high proportion of its released inmates on parole with stringent conditions (e.g., no drugs, alcohol, or association with criminals) and then monitors them carefully, particularly using the technologies of mandatory drug testing, which has become more common in recent years.

In sum, coupled with the financial difficulties California's parolees have immediately after release, it is not particularly difficult to understand how recidivism rates in California prisons are higher than other states, even though in the past 3-year cohort studied by the CDCR, they have declined slightly (see CDCR, 2010). Most significantly for this report, the nature of this recidivism does provide an important context for how and why vocational education programs should be developed inside the prison and put into the prison–parole–employment continuum assumed by the Expert Panel Report (2007), AB 900, and other relevant policy statements.

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Vignette: Sunglasses

We were brought to the prison by our guide, a former vocational education instructor who had been promoted to be a system-wide vice principal (VP) at the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) headquarters in Sacramento. On the drive down, it became apparent that he despised inmates and saw them as always conniving, plotting to cheat, overpowering, or committing some act of manipulation or violence. He mouthed the words of rehabilitation but also expressed his resentment of correctional officers (COs), describing them as “lifer employees” assigned to work with prisoners he considered simply as sociopaths. As an expression of his distrust in prisoners, our guide (and more than a few teachers and educational administrators in the system) repeated the joke, “How do you know when an inmate is lying? When he opens his mouth.”

When we first arrived at the prison, we were met as outside guests, objects of both suspicion and official respect. The site VP took us to the classes we were to observe in a modern shop building. He was a person who helped us understand what we confidentially termed “the retirement culture” of CDCR. This VP exemplified what appeared to be the *raison d’être* for many employees in corrections: waiting for retirement. Given the opportunity, such individuals always talked about what they would do upon retiring at age 50 while pointing to the legend that life expectancy for CDCR employees is only about 56.

The shops we were to observe were large and contained functional if not up-to-date equipment. Inmates entered the shop through the

doublewide, slide-up doors that clattered open to receive them from their cells at the appointed time after a complete strip search.

The building was rectangular with two complete shops. A shared classroom stood at the center of the building with access from both shops. Likewise, the teacher's office was at the center of the building with door access into each shop. Looking at the teacher's office from the shop floor, one saw a low counter that formed a kind of enclosed area around the door. This area contained desks for the porters and other assistants. (The job title "porter" reminded me of the black railroad servants on Pullman cars. One might assume the position would have a title such as "shop assistant" or "aide," but porter was an institutional job and these inmates were selected and evaluated by custody officials. Porters were assigned to any prison function from education to laundry.) Teachers made requests for specific inmates to serve as their porters due to their knowledge and skills, but the selection criteria were ultimately left up to custody.

We entered, were met by the teacher, introduced, and led from the shop floor into the shared classroom. The teacher gave us a brief talk about the facility, the inmate students, the porter, tool security, and the program. We expressed our gratitude for the opportunity to observe and interact in the shop and classroom with the inmate students.

I wandered from one workstation to another, observed the equipment, and sought an opportunity to interact. The inmate students were a mixed group of Hispanics and African Americans. This integration was an achievement in itself.

I introduced myself to a small group of inmate students as a professor and researcher. This alien identity created an opening for conversation. I watched as each inmate thought about talking to me. Typically, he would pause to consider the pros and cons of speaking with an outsider; eyes would move right and left as he considered the alternatives. But since we were so foreign in the universe of the prison—we were neither guard, teacher, counselor, nor medical person—we seemed to pose no threat.

When I asked questions, I first received short answers. "What are you learning in this class?" "I'm learning about saw blades." Then one student, an African American man I estimated to be in his late 30s, asked me if I would like to see the plans for his house. I eagerly said I was very interested. He explained he would build this house when he was released. He could only construct a small-scale model because there were no lumber resources to speak of in the program, and he produced a thick binder from a drawer and opened it for me. He explained each of the

well-developed sketches. These were his plans for the life he dreamed of. There was the family room, the kitchen, the living room, the backyard patio with barbecue, the lawn, and the study. He needed a study because he wanted to continue reading and learning. His intensity was impressive; I did not need to prompt him to tell me more. If I pointed to any area of the plans, he spoke of the alternative ideas he had considered and why he had decided to build the design we saw in his plans. This was an interesting individual, bright and engrossed in his ideas. We were completely engaged in this project that he planned to begin in less than 2 years after he completed his sentence.

I was so intently involved in this inmate's explanation of his dreams and actual plans that I did not at first respond to our guide, who lightly touched my elbow. I remember thinking it would be rude to disengage from this man's story, so I simply ignored the guide. Hearing these dreams coupled with skills learned in vocational education courses made this a compelling experience for me.

Our guide next stood beside me to intervene, and I raised my hand in a gesture of impatience at being interrupted. So often we were shuttled from place to place due to the security needs of the institution and here was finally an opportunity for me to hear an inmate tell a significant story. After all, our guide had told us on our 8-hour drive the many ways educators resented and even scorned COs for their self-congratulatory, pompous attitudes. If a guard, for instance, found a shiv (knife-like weapon) he would be celebrated with a medal and given a commendation for saving lives. This would serve as one more piece of evidence in the propaganda machine that only guards, with their bulletproof vests, batons, mace, radios, helmets, combat boots, green uniforms, and guns, save us from the bloodthirsty hordes of vicious inmates. On the other hand, teachers enter, work, and leave the prison in casual street clothes, without radios, batons, vests, or other accoutrements of power and violence. Many of these teachers have negotiated weapons away from inmates, including shivs, and stored them in their desk drawers until a CO could be called to collect them. These teachers build trust, respect, and reinforce the vision of the classroom as a sanctuary with no congratulation.

Our guide pressed my upper arm again and said, "Look up." I said, "Just a second," and remained focused on the inmate and his story, a bit annoyed at the intrusion. The inmate looked around and sighed disappointedly, "Oh no." The guide motioned the inmate away from me and said again, more urgently, "Look around. You need to move with me

now.” I saw that the workstations were empty. “Look at the shop,” he said. I thought the inmates had started to clean up and slowly took in the whole room. I didn’t know exactly what I was looking at. As we moved deliberately toward the teacher’s desk, he said, “Look in the corners—they’ve ganged up.” There was no clean-up going on. The inmate students had huddled in the corners of the shop: Norteños, Sureños, Bloods, Crips each had their own corners. “See how they are organized,” our guide said. The point man, or first fighter, stood the farthest out into the shop while others were arranged in defensive positions behind him. Each chief, or shot caller, was in the corner sitting in a chair accompanied by two others. This form was consistent for each group. All eyes were up and watching the room.

I scanned the room to find the student with whom I had been talking. He looked at me and mouthed the word, “Sorry.” He shrugged and moved into a middle position in his corner holding his binder. The room was quiet.

“What’s going on?” I whispered to our guide. He drew me farther away from the shop and into the adjoining classroom. I learned that my colleague, Andy, was talking to a couple of inmate students when he got a phone call on the teacher’s office phone. He went to answer the phone but forgot that he had left his sunglasses on a table in the classroom. When he returned from the call, Andy remembered his sunglasses but saw that they were gone. He told the teacher who immediately relayed the information to the school’s VP and our guide. Next, the classroom CO was told.

Everything changed at this point. Andy’s glasses were like finding a million dollars. They could also be sold “as is” in the yard. In the right hands something as mundane as sunglasses can be made into weapons: wire to stab and glass to slash or cut. Inmates showed fear, not of us, but of the rival gangs in the different corners. In a moment, the entire dynamic in that shop had changed from learning and thinking, to one of fear.

Our presence changed the way a situation like this is normally handled. The VP stepped in and took charge, leaving the teacher to observe passively. The VP was embarrassed at such a poor showing of inmate vocational education. He yelled at the class. He cursed and told the inmate students they were a worthless bunch of idiots and knuckleheads. He told them the glasses needed to be produced within 5 minutes and placed somewhere in the shop, no questions asked. If the glasses appeared, the whole incident would be forgotten. If the glasses did not appear, he would call in the “bulls” (COs) and they knew what that meant. The inmate

students remained silent and unresponsive to the anger and threats of the VP. As researchers, we watched and anxiously waited.

The strategy (threat) did not work. As was later speculated, the glasses may have been passed to another shop in the seconds Andy was in the office talking on the phone and from there to the cells and yards. It was likely that no one in the classroom possessed the glasses at the time the inmate students were given the ultimatum.

A squad of eight or ten bulls arrived in the classroom; the VP repeated the conditions that the glasses must be produced. While we observed what was happening, the classroom teacher confided to me that he would have handled the situation differently. He said he would have told them he was embarrassed, that he trusted them, but they were violating his trust. He would have appealed to their desire to maintain their own classroom standards. He expected he would have learned the story and might have been able to retrieve the glasses somehow from a location in his own shop or in the one that adjoined the shared classroom. But the fact that the bosses were embarrassed and had called the bulls made it too late.

Franz Kafka himself could not have written a more surreal account of an educational experience for both inmates and researchers: the threats to produce an object no one possessed, the naïve interest of a professor–researcher in the authentic and heartfelt project of an inmate student, the passivity and power of inmates under the threat, and the feckless attempt to control the situation by the administrator. Onto this stage sauntered a troop of bulls ready to gaze up the anus and into all other orifices of each inmate student during a strip search to ensure the missing glasses or their deconstructed parts were not spirited out of the shop in a body cavity. All this while everyone knew the parts were, most likely, long gone.

We were escorted out to our golf carts by the cursing VP who let loose with epithets that reflected both his frustration and his commitment to the retirement culture that permeated the conversation of so many CDCR employees. All he wanted was his pension—it was his only reason for putting up with the duplicity of prisoners and bulls alike.

And so we return to the question of why we wrote this book. Our introductory story is replete with metaphors for the entire problem of education and, specifically, vocational education in prison. We left the prisons after each research visit thinking how good it is to be leaving. The dust we shook from our clothing is often the fine alkali powder of the lower central valley of California that covers everything from furniture to floors in such overcrowded, hot, and disheartening places.

But the classrooms are still a sanctuary. The teachers are, for the most part, natural people—developers, psychologists, and managers—who offer respect, understanding, know-how, skills, and knowledge. Within the life-world of a school in prison (or a prison surrounding a school), teachers transport their students into a world of hope for a more normal life of self-respect, work, productive relationships, and accomplishment.

The fear experienced by inmate students rarely entered the classrooms. But when it managed to seep in, as related in this story of the missing sunglasses, it engulfed everyone—students, teachers, researchers, administrators, custody officials—and set in motion the dull and ineffective bureaucratic response using the threats and fears of B.F. Skinner’s experiments. The consequences? Passive resistance, strip searches, movement back to cells, and class cancellation followed by investigation. All ranks were closed around chief identities: custody and prison staff versus inmates and gangs.

We wondered how these teachers could perform under such strange and unpredictable working conditions. Most were hopeful in the belief that their work created opportunity both inside and outside the prison for each student who was able to grasp the reality. Small victories carried them such as procuring a few sticks of lumber from another department in the prison. The gallows humor and disdain for inmates is a defense mechanism that permits teachers to endure the myriad disappointments they faced.

Likewise, we wondered how inmate students could learn under such circumstances. We found hope and achievement amid an environment where many disincentives and norms flourished to work against both hope and learning alike.

Andy’s sunglasses were never found.

Vignette: Greenhouses

At the first prison we visited for this study, we came upon a greenhouse. We were visiting the landscaping class to see what kinds of inmates were enrolled, how the teacher managed class, and what materials he had on hand. The teacher mentioned that a greenhouse was at the prison but could not be used yet because it was not assembled. I asked the principal about this, and he pointed to the collection of pipes for an irrigation project laid against a fence. According to the principal, the greenhouse was dumped in this location, unassembled, because custody officials could not designate a safe place for it to be used. It was a relatively large structure, about as big as a two-bedroom apartment. Inmate movement to and from this structure and inmate supervision within the staffing allocations of correctional officers (COs) needed to be established before this rather large piece of equipment was erected. The principal mentioned that he feared the parts might be pilfered for other needs by the time custody officials approved a site.

At this stage of our study, our first prison visit, this greenhouse information appeared to be one of the many issues involved in successfully getting AB 900 programs up and running successfully. In the classroom itself, the teacher cobbled together basic information about horticulture (e.g., worksheets about plants, magazines, irrigation system workbooks) and garden tools including shovels, hoes, and rakes. The teacher was hard working and appeared to plan only on a day-to-day basis because he had

no organized curriculum to draw lessons from in a systematic and sequential manner.

When we were there, the teacher focused on workplace safety as a curriculum topic. Important in every vocational setting, safety was also important as a universal fallback lesson to fill time if a teacher had not planned well or if there was no planned program in place. We were told that, each day, a 30-minute period was devoted to a safety meeting led by an inmate student. The inmate student read aloud a safety passage in a workbook and reminded his listening classmates to think about being safe during activities. This was a bit humorous because some of the inmate students returned to their study areas and promptly fell asleep in their chairs. (At this point, I did not understand that many were fairly well medicated for psychiatric reasons and sleep was normal for them, in class or elsewhere.) In this low security prison unit, a majority of inmates was serving sentences related to drug addiction and many suffered from mental health problems. When asked what would happen if the fences came down, one official said, "Most would come back for dinner."

Over the next 3 years, we visited seven other prisons (this one multiple times). Only one had an operational greenhouse with a well-developed landscape horticulture program. In fact, I was drawn to this program as a kind of park within the normally bleak prison environment. Immature plants at various stages of growth were arranged on the ground in pots as if the area was a working nursery. The greenhouse was filled with plants and inmate students were visible working inside and out. They had been able to do this because this was not an AB 900 class (i.e., the class for whom the boxed up greenhouse was for and, in fact the makeshift greenhouse, was part of that prison's curriculum before AB 900 programs were funded).

When we returned to the AB900 prison where the greenhouse still lay unassembled, I entered the classroom and walked around to reconnect. Two inmate students approached me. They asked me if I would like to know what they had been learning. "Yes!" I replied eagerly. They led me to a corner of their classroom where they were growing plants in a hot house. They had built the structure from metal bookshelves, plastic sheeting, portable lights, and extension cords procured from within the prison. The plants were growing in small pots with potting soil from the former outside garden. I was astounded.

The problem was that with an AB 900 prescribed focus on industry standards and alignment to those standards, the classrooms for landscaping classroom looked "weak." We interviewed inmate students during our

second visit. Even though this yard was rated a low security Level I yard, the gang culture still had a powerful influence over everything we saw. Asking inmate students in class if we could interview them was a lesson in the social norms of prison. Each inmate student said he did not mind but would have to talk to someone else before we began. The other person he consulted was a gang leader who approved or disapproved the interview. Sometimes, the gang leader would let us know we could interview an inmate student but not the one we had invited—he would provide us with a person.

The teacher of the landscaping class was finally granted permission to use a space outside the classroom but within an adjacent enclosed courtyard for a garden. This was an important part of inmate-constructed curriculum in my view; for the teacher, it represented hands-on experiences in landscaping. Inmate students on our second visit proudly took us through the garden showing us the drip system, vegetables, flowers, and, the *coup de grâce*, strawberry plants. Hoeing and raking ground to nurture flowers and vegetables was instructional, but more importantly, rehabilitative. Time spent in this environment was constructive and healthy. All this was accomplished in a small 20 feet by 40 feet area among dilapidated buildings. No weeds were visible and all the soil was carefully tilled. Stepping stones were arranged in a neat winding path through the garden.

On our final visit, we learned that the garden had been taken out. Custody officials feared that the strawberry crop of two dozen plants could be a reason to cause fights or to make pruno, a fermented alcoholic fruit drink, and alcohol was forbidden. The teacher was disgusted by this action especially after custody officials had given him permission to develop a garden.

It was during our last visit that we learned about the complete role reversal of the official social system in two important areas: safety and curriculum. First, the teacher seemed to be out of sorts. I asked him if everything was okay. He asked if I had heard about what happened to him. I said I had not, but I was all ears. At this point, he almost broke down in tears but after regaining composure he told me his story.

He had recently returned from a 3-month stress leave to take up his role as teacher again. He took the leave because of an altercation in the employee parking lot. He was driving around the parking lot looking for place to park his car. He found one and turned in just as another vehicle arrived at the same spot. The driver cursed at him and demanded he let him have the space because he was there first. He rolled down his window

and tried to talk with him. He said it was obvious he arrived before the driver did and there was no reason to move. At this point, the driver cursed at him and rammed his vehicle into his car. Frightened, he rolled his window up and waited for the man to leave. The driver got out of his pickup, pounded on his car, and finally drove away to park in another location in the parking lot. The teacher ran to his department and reported him immediately. Turned out the angry man was a CO.

Fortunately, since it was a prison, the entire parking lot was under video surveillance, and the incident was captured on video. After an investigation, the CO was brought up on disciplinary charges. His friends, who were also COs, contacted the teacher and asked him to testify at the disciplinary hearing that things were not as bad as they seemed, and that he understood this officer was under a good deal of pressure at home. The disciplinary hearing resulted in suspension without pay for the officer for a period. This outcome, however, did not help the teacher in the long run.

A group of inmate students in his class came to him shortly after the hearing with a request to speak with him in private. They told him he was a good teacher and that he had learned a lot about how to work with inmates. They could tell he cared about what happened to them. And that is why they cared about what might happen to him. They advised him that he should never walk in certain areas of the prison because there was a contract out on him from the CO. He would be hurt in some way if he appeared in a specific area of the institution. Other inmates would jump him. It was at this point that he took the stress leave.

This conflict was acted out not simply on the intellectual and academic stage, or on the policy stage, but also in the realm of practical operations. The fact that inmate students protected their teacher from retaliation by a CO is stunning. Yet this was the fear, apparently. Good teachers are prized by inmate students and they do not wear vests or carry weapons. They rely on mutual respect, practical skills, and their teaching skills to guarantee their safety.

In addition to a role reversal, a dramatic change in the overarching emphasis on programmed learning emerged in the form of a very unique observation. From the standpoint of an educator, this landscaping class provided perhaps the most significant experience in the entire study—more important than seeing men in small cages shackled for transport (see Chapter 17), more significant than seeing men “gang up” in fear in the corners of a vocational education shop (see Chapter 7), and more important than stretching the proxy data in search of programmatic outcomes

for vocational education (see Chapter 10). Being protected in this fashion symbolized what we educators call “democratic education” whereby students take the initiative to move beyond the banking metaphor, beyond the identity projected onto them of *tabula rasa*, to become creators of their own learning beyond the control of the classroom, which in this case was a prison.

So, the landscaping program received a rating of “poor” in the evaluation of the planned curriculum because there was not a set of national standards on which to develop a program as AB 900 required. The entire program rested on the abilities of an individual teacher, but these attributes are not “scalable.” Central offices cannot replicate the trust and respect he engendered from his students, to the point where they not only advocated for him but also protected him against their own jailors. They developed a love for the content and were strongly motivated to find work in the field. But the landscaping program was shut down because it did not meet the evidence-based criteria demanded by AB 900, which required class instruction in industries where jobs could provide an income to support the families inmates had back home. As a result, education needs were systematically ignored and inmate students who might succeed in landscaping fell out of the focus of the legislation. In a kind of ethically bankrupt triage, only the most able inmate students would benefit from courses and programs that met the criteria of providing economically viable jobs.

Report: Methods

This evaluation of vocational education in California’s prisons necessarily required multiple methods to answer the research questions posed by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR), the general limitations inherent to collecting data in a prison environment, and limitations posed by the type of data the CDCR could provide. In this chapter, California State University, Chico (CSUC) describes the quantitative and qualitative methods that were used to develop this evaluation. First, however, the specific classrooms presented by the CDCR as a “sample” and their characteristics are discussed.

SAMPLE

This evaluation examines vocational education in California’s prisons. When originally conceived, and well before CSUC was contracted to conduct this study, the courses, classes, and prisons to be included in the evaluation were selected by the CDCR based on AB 900 criteria. The sample was selected using the following process after the passage of AB 900 and the creation of “recidivism reduction strategies”.

The OCE informed all 33 school principals that money had been allocated for the creation of new vocational education classes. To be eligible for this money, the school principals needed to apply for the funds, be willing to create “new” vocational education classes, and have the classes participate in an evaluation project. Because of the tie with AB 900, these new classes were given money to purchase new curricula and equipment. In 2006 and

2007, when these classes originally began to take form, but before the recession-induced budget crises of 2008–2009, there was great enthusiasm and a widespread belief that they would be an important tool to reduce recidivism and long-term incarceration costs within the CDCR. Because of the possibilities of expanding vocational education at their prisons, knowing these classes could help reduce recidivism, and understanding these classes would be included in a scientific evaluation, several principals applied for these Recidivism Reduction Strategies monies.

Eight prisons applied for the Recidivism Reduction Strategies monies to develop the new classes. The prison school’s principals selected classes from a menu of vocational education courses based on conditions specified in AB 900 (particularly, requirements for nationally recognized certification and labor market demand), availability of credentialed teachers, and regional need. In this context, 12 different vocational education courses and 19 classes developed. The AB 900 funded courses are the ones included in this evaluation. Table 9.1 displays the prisons, courses, and classes evaluated in this study.

Table 9.1 Vocational education programs and prisons included in the evaluation

<i>Vocational education courses</i>	<i>CDCR institutions</i>							
	<i>ASP</i>	<i>CAL</i>	<i>CCI</i>	<i>CIM</i>	<i>COR</i>	<i>CRC</i>	<i>PBSP</i>	<i>SATF</i>
Auto mechanics						•		
Building maintenance			•				•	
Carpentry		•				•		
Electrical works								•
Heating ventilation/ air conditioning		•	•		•			•
Janitorial services			•			•		
Landscaping			•			•		
Mill and carpentry			•					
Office services	•							
Painting	•		•					
Plumbing				•		•		
Welding								•

Note: Institutions included in this study: *ASP* Avenal State Prison, *CAL* Calipatria State Prison, *CCI* California Correctional Institution, *CIM* California Institution for Men, *COR* California State Prison Corcoran, *CRC* California Rehabilitation Center, *PBSP* Pelican Bay State Prison, *SATF* Substance Abuse Treatment Facility Corcoran

Source: Dick et al. (2009, p. 13)

LOGISTICAL PROBLEMS

Several obstacles confronted this study, causing CSUC and the CDCR to adjust ideal methodological approaches while still completing the most comprehensive evaluation possible. These problems start with the sample compromised by the lack of random selection of the classes. Survey methodology was also not considered practical; there was not a stable population of inmate students (or parolees), there was a wide range of literacy represented by the CDCR's inmate population, and practical problems were encountered administering a questionnaire in a prison environment.

Another significant problem experienced during the course of this study was the lack of institutional data available to CSUC and long delays in getting what limited data were available. Initially, the focus of this evaluation was to assess whether these vocational education courses help reduce recidivism of students who complete them. Unfortunately, there is no database that includes both vocational education class attendance/completion and success on parole. Moreover, quantitative data concerning enrollment, course completions, wait lists, measures of behavior in prison (violations), and other important variables were unavailable or were only partially available. Indeed, the researchers were told that much of this information was still maintained in paper-based custody files only. As a result, other methods of data collection were used.

A third obstacle confronting the evaluation was the work stoppages imposed on the researchers when state budgets were late, and the CDCR reorganized their programs in response to demands from the Governor's office for the elimination of programs. It is important to note that several CDCR administrators in various departments worked tirelessly to save this evaluation. Funding was eventually provided for the completion of this project, but it happened only in the context of ten full months of work stoppages in what was originally scheduled to be a 30-month project (see Chap. 1, p. 33).

In this context, the three methodological strategies explicated below were selected because they are robust, addressed the research questions posed, generated a great deal of information regarding these 19 vocational education classes, and could be reasonably accomplished given the parameters of this evaluation including the work stoppages.

QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS

Qualitative semi-structured interviews comprise the core methodology employed in this study. Interviewees were selected in two ways. First, the researchers simply approached potential informants and asked them if they would be willing to participate in the study and be interviewed. Every CDCR administrator and personnel who were asked were willing to oblige the request. Most of the inmates who were asked to be interviewed were willing to do so, usually after they learned a little bit more about the purpose of the evaluation. Some inmates, in fact, were so motivated to talk about their classes (for both good and negative reasons); they sought out the researchers and asked to be interviewed. The second way inmate interviewees were selected was by recommendation from teachers or other inmates. These inmates were seen as being the “spokesperson” for the class and not necessarily the best or ideal student. In situations like these, the researchers made a special point to give the nominated person an “out” if he did not want to be interviewed. Only one took this opportunity.

All interviewees were read an informed consent form and were promised their identity would not be revealed if they agreed to participate in the study. As a part of the informed consent process, interviewees granted the researchers permission to record the exchange. Interviews were recorded using a small electronic recording device for later verbatim transcription. Because the names of the informants were used during the interviews, pseudonyms were assigned to each interviewee. The letters used to signify different interviewees were randomly assigned with the codes connecting the letters to the informants known only to the researchers. To be clear, the letters are not the interviewees’ initials and are not connected to the informants in any systematic way.

Analysis of the transcripts was done using the respected qualitative research software Atlas.ti. Once the researcher identifies key themes, Atlas.ti searches transcripts for key words, themes, and other concepts relevant to overall research questions. This helps the researcher identify quotations, themes, and concepts across many pages of interview transcripts. (In the case of this project, the 53 interviews resulted in 3898 minutes of interviews, with the average interview lasting 73.5 minutes. There were over 1100 pages of interview transcripts.)

Formal interviews were conducted during the course of this evaluation (June 2008–January 2010) with countless informal, but no less important, conversations also taking place. Table 9.2 summarizes the 53 formal interviews conducted as a part of this evaluation.

Table 9.2 Summary of interview data (in minutes)

<i>Interviewee</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>
Inmate	33	59:53	29:46	15	133
CDCR administrator	8	73:15	22:20	48	112
Education administrator	7	117:26	35:19	84	175
Teacher	5	102:48	23:08	73	130

Note: CDCR administrators included wardens, deputy wardens, and headquarters. Education administrators included principals, vice principals, and OCE

CDCR QUANTITATIVE DATA

CSUC requested data from the CDCR and Office of Correctional Education (OCE) to help answer many of the research questions driving this study. Unfortunately, most of the requested data were unavailable or were not housed in a central location where it could easily be gathered. In other instances, the requested data were not collected by the CDCR or were in paper–pencil form at different prisons and offices throughout the state. Even though the CDCR did their best to collect the information in a timely fashion, CSUC did not receive data records until just as this study was concluding. What was delivered to CSUC had to be reformatted to be useful and capable of being analyzed using the statistical program SPSS. The steps undertaken by CSUC are explained below.

Data Preparation

The data for male inmates involved in vocational education were delivered to the researchers beginning in September 2009 in three separate data sets. The final delivery arrived in October 2010. The data sets were in either SAS or MS Access format and required being converted to SPSS format. The “Offenders” data file consisted of 36,265 inmates with data on 30 variables. These data were randomly selected by the CDCR for analysis by CSUC. Some of the variables included date of birth, ethnicity, principal offense, strike count under the three-strikes law, age at time of present incarceration, and mental health diagnosis. The “Crimes” data file consisted of 153,964 records of offenses committed by the 36,265 inmates. This data file contained 14 variables such as CDCR life number, offense by criminal code, type of offense (e.g., violent, sex, drug, use of firearm), and string (qualitative) variables describing the nature of the

offense. The “Work Records” data file consisted of 3,643,057 records of weekly reports from January 7, 2007, through September 13, 2009. It also included information on 13 different variables indicating if the inmate worked that week (Yes/No), term in and out dates, primary and secondary work or vocational assignment, CDCR life number, and file date.

Transferring these three data files into SPSS required creating appropriate variable and value labels. This required some manipulation of the data received; for example, certain variables received as string variables needed to be transformed into numeric variables. New variables also needed to be constructed in the Work Records data file to indicate if an inmate had participated in one of the vocational programs, which was within the 19 programs involved in this study. A variable was constructed to indicate if multiple exit dates were present within the study period indicating that an inmate had been sent back to prison—this was needed as a proxy for recidivism, which is key to what the CDCR wants to know.

The three data files also needed to be merged into a single database using the CDCR life number as a unique identifier. In that multiple records for each of the 36,265 inmates existed in the Work and Crimes data files, sums were calculated for the variables of interest within those files and placed into a new data file and linked to the CDCR life number. The files were then merged. After this process was completed, the combined dataset consisted of 144 variables on 36,265 cases. Of these 36,265 cases, 4414 represented individuals who had been involved in one of the 19 vocational education classes included this evaluation. In addition, it was discovered that 238 of these individuals participated in two separate programs included in this evaluation, and nine participated in three. The population of the classes individually and in total ($n=4670$) during the 141 weeks represented in the available data are summarized in Table 9.3.

After identifying the vocational education inmates who had participated in at least one of the 19 classes included in the evaluation, 31,851 cases of inmates who took some other vocational education class remained. To make use of these data, and to provide some comparison to the inmate students from the courses involved in the study, 1000 inmates were randomly selected for evaluation. The specific prisons where these vocational education inmates were housed, or the specific classes they took, were not available. CSUC had also requested, and was given, information on 1000 randomly selected male inmates who did not participate in any vocational training during their incarceration. The purpose of requesting this information was to provide a pseudo

Table 9.3 Inmate students' participation in study group vocational education programs during the study period

<i>Program</i>	<i>Number of students</i>	<i>Maximum weeks in class</i>	<i>Average weeks in class</i>	<i>SD</i>
Automotive mechanics (CRC)	178	138	33.3	33.2
Building maintenance (CCI)	210	81	16.8	13.8
Building maintenance (PBSP)	68	78	26.6	21.9
Carpentry (CAL)	103	107	30.9	26.9
Carpentry (CRC)	93	121	31.5	29.6
Electrical works (SATF)	296	138	36.5	30.9
HVAC (CAL)	77	107	29.6	24.6
HVAC (SATF)	164	123	28.2	22.5
Janitorial services (CCI)	539	90	12.8	12.6
Janitorial services (COR)	309	52	10.4	8.3
Landscaping (CCI)	271	92	15.5	15.9
Landscaping (CRC)	145	116	25.5	23.3
Mill and cabinetry (CCI)	142	82	21.5	17.3
Office services (ASP)	1125	138	28.8	28.7
Painting (ASP)	126	118	26.1	27.7
Painting (CCI)	300	65	19.9	15.2
Plumbing (CIM)	191	76	17.3	13.7
Plumbing (CRC)	129	114	26.9	23.6
Welding (SATF)	204	106	19.5	20.9
Total	4670	n/a	39.0	30.6

Note: Institutions included in this study: *ASP* Avenal State Prison, *CAL* Calipatria State Prison, *CCI* California Correctional Institution, *CIM* California Institution for Men, *COR* California State Prison, Corcoran, *CRC* California Rehabilitation Center, *PBSP* Pelican Bay State Prison, *SATF* Substance Abuse Treatment Facility

“control” group with which to make comparisons. The same procedures were conducted to create a useful data set including the same 144 variables for comparison with both vocational education groups. During this data cleaning, it was discovered that two had participated in vocational education at some point during their incarceration. These two cases were dropped from the analysis. Finally, the Vocational Education and Control subjects were then merged into a single flat file database.

The researchers decided to include all 4414 inmates participating in the 19 study programs in the data analysis. These 4414 vocational education inmate students are compared with the 1000 “other” vocational education students and the 998 non-vocational education prisoners. Thus, the total number of subjects included in the analyses in this report is 6412.

CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS

Qualitative Observation Data

CSUC constructed an observation rubric to guide, structure, and standardize the researchers' observations of the classes as they were being taught. The observation rubric was used by the researchers to collect data about the classes, teacher performance, and inmate students in a way that was meant to be ethnographic and unobtrusive. The original research questions, AB 900, and the academic literature guided this evaluation and were instrumental in the development of the observation rubric. In particular, recommendations from educational literature (Arter & McTighe, 2001; Wiggins, 1993), recommendations from prison educational professionals, literature on prison education (Feinstein, 2002; Hanneken & Dannerbeck, 2007; Feinstein, 2002, MacKenzie, 2008), and the research team's previous observations all informed the development and use of the rubric.

The 19 vocational education classes included in this study were assessed in the active classroom setting. Student interactions and activity were described using a structured observational rubric developed by the research team. This rubric was used to create six central themes. These themes were based on a combination of what was asked for in AB 900, understandings about best practices in prison classrooms, best practices in general vocational education classrooms, and what is known from the best teaching practices literature. The themes are as follows:

- Classroom environment
- Class logistics
- Instructional activities
- Whether the class reflected a job-like setting
- Program fidelity
- Teacher activities

In addition to this formal method of collecting observational data, many unstructured ethnographic data gathering visits were performed. Between April 2008 and October 2009, over 100 classroom visits were conducted by members of the research team. Each visit to the classes provided a data gathering opportunity and informed every aspect of the evaluation.

The results of the structured and unstructured observations are used in two ways. First, all visits to the vocational classes offered qualitative assessment opportunities whereby systematic insights and observations were developed. Every visit to a prison vocational education class was filled with a litany of data gathering opportunities and new information. This knowledge was used to develop insights about prison vocational education that informed further the data collecting efforts. Second, members of the CSUC research team completed a structured observational rubric whenever possible.

Qualitative Data Evaluation

Each of the variables grouped into these six themes were rated by each evaluator using a 1–10 scale. Scores of 1–3 were indicative that the class was rated as weak on a variable, scores from 4 to 6 meant the class was adequate, 6–9 was good, and 10 meant the class was judged as excellent on that variable. This method of evaluating the classes resulted in as many as three scores for each variable for each class.

The criteria for useful data involved the following process. First, the theoretical usefulness of all of the variables was reevaluated. Variables determined to lack usefulness or explanatory power to the CDCR and OCE were discarded. Next, Cronbach's alpha was calculated for the remaining variables according to sub-themes. When used with such qualitative data, Cronbach's alpha assesses whether a set of variables measure some central idea or concept (Field, 2009). Variables found to distract from the strength of the remaining variables (e.g., made Cronbach's alpha weaker) were eliminated. Next, all remaining variables were examined to ensure no more than 20% of the cases on that variable were missing. If a variable was found to have more than 20% of the cases missing, it was eliminated. In the end, 33 valid variables were identified and are included in the analysis.

Next, each individual case (i.e., a class rated by an evaluator) was examined to ensure adequate valid information for analysis. Any case with one-third or more missing values on the variables was eliminated. Of the 57 cases, nine were not found to meet the necessary threshold and were eliminated from further analysis. As a result, 48 valid cases remained. For all variables and cases that remained, missing values were assigned the mean score for that variable based on all the other valid cases. This technique increases the usefulness and explanatory power of the data. By replacing the missing values with the mean for all cases more stability is inserted into the data. This procedure does not negatively affect how each variable is assessed.

STATISTICAL PROCEDURES

Primarily, the researchers rely on descriptive statistical and non-parametric techniques for CDCR institutional data. When appropriate, chi square tests of statistical significance are reported. Chi square allows the researchers to assess observed findings with expected outcomes if two variables are unrelated (Field, 2009). For this report, chi square is used to determine whether differences exist between our vocational education inmates-students, inmates who took other vocational education classes and inmates who did not participate in vocational education at all.

Descriptive statistics and analysis of variance (ANOVA) are used to evaluate the results of the classroom analysis data. Using procedures described above, the classes were rated good, adequate, and poor for each variable included in the evaluation. ANOVA allows the researchers the ability to assess how different these groups are from one another statistically and how similar these classes are to others in their own group (Field, 2009). When ANOVA is statistically significant, the differences between the groups based on how the classes are rated for each variable is considered important.

For the classroom analysis data, multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) is also reported. Much like other multivariate statistical procedures, MANOVA examines the relationship between all predictor variables and the outcome variable in order to discover which of the variables have the greatest impact on the dependent variable (Field, 2009). For this evaluation, MANOVA is used to best understand which variables have the greatest impact on a class being classified as good, adequate, or poor.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Twelve research questions were developed by the CDCR to guide the evaluation of the 19 vocational education classes included in the study. These research questions were constructed both by CSUC and the CDCR's Adult Research Branch to provide OCE with the most thorough and exhaustive information possible given the parameters of the study. Important concerns of AB 900 also informed the development of these research questions. In addition to influencing the direction of the study, the research questions directly influenced the researchers' data gathering and data analysis efforts. The research questions are as follows:

1. Do the vocational education programs use evidenced-based curricula?
2. Are curricula taught uniformly at all sites?

3. How many participants are enrolled in each of the vocational education programs?
4. What are the characteristics of the vocational education inmate-student population?
5. How many participants complete these courses?
6. How consistent are these programs with the framework of the California Logic Model?
7. Does completion (or participation) of these programs lower recidivism rates among paroled or released inmates?
8. Do vocational education dropouts, graduates, and non-vocational education inmates differ in their recidivism rates?
9. What factors contribute to participants dropping out or failing the program?
10. What are the employment outcomes and economic stability for the vocational education program participants?
11. What are the entrance admissions criteria?
12. What other factors are associated with waiting lists and their uses?

CSUC's answers to these research questions can be found in the results chapter (Chap. 10).

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Report: Results Research Questions

CONTEXTUAL NOTE TO CHAP. 10

Chapter 10 is the “Results” section of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) report and contains extensive quotation from inmates, teachers, and CDCR administrators about vocational education in California prisons. The Results section is responds to the CDCR’s 12 research questions. Of these questions, the most general, and most important, is Question 6, which is about how the vocational education classes program fits with the goals of the California Logic Model developed by the Expert Panel (2007). In this context, there is also an important but briefer section presenting the quantitative data that we were able to generate. In large part, this was in response to the CDCR’s demands for “numbers, numbers, numbers” to legitimize evidence-based policy decisions that would presumably be made about the funding of vocational education in California prisons.

The qualitative data and quantitative data, of course, pointed to different conclusions. The qualitative data describe inmates, teachers, and administrators who are deeply invested and believe in the importance of vocational education courses for rehabilitation.

However, the flawed quantitative data we were finally able to get from the CDCR indicated that there was no real relationship between enrollment in CDCR courses and the admittedly rather imprecise “dependent variable” we developed for recidivism. In fact, during our first “runs” of the data, it turned out that there was actually a slightly negative relationship

between taking a vocational education and being sent back to the CDCR as an inmate. This is the opposite of what the CDCR wanted to hear, and they asked us to continue with the analysis until we generated a more palatable result. This we did, and the result is printed in this chapter—and it is pointed out that there was a 2% positive relationship between inmates who had taken a vocational education class and recidivism. Yes, this is a positive result, but also well-within any margin of error, even if we had thought that the dependent “proxy” variable was a valid measure of recidivism. But we did not think that, and still do not.

As researchers, we believe that the qualitative data should trump the flawed quantitative data. This impulse, we believe, is rooted in a critical evaluation of the methods used to collect the quantitative data as described in the text. Having said that, we also note that we interpreted the data in the most positive light possible—highlighting a 2% difference in recidivism as measured by the “proxy data.” Rereading the text 4 years later, we are aware that our reasoning is weak—the difference is clearly within the margin of error, even if the measure itself is assumed to be reliable and valid. However, we are letting it stand as we wrote it in 2010/2011.

As for the qualitative data, we do not think it indicates that there are better results from recidivism one way or the other. The people we interviewed could only speculate that the effect on rearrest 2 or 3 years after release would only be positive. More to the point, regarding the value of vocational education, is the unanimous consensus that the programs facilitated prison management in a very positive way, contributed to the diffusion of tensions in prison, and was a point of pride for inmates and their families. Notably, this is something that most of our informants had intimate knowledge of, and we regard their views were both valid and reliable.

But of course this was not the question we were asked to answer by the CDCR, or for that matter AB 900. The point of the vocational education funding for the CDCR was to reduce recidivism, and on this point, our conclusion is “we don’t know.”

ORGANIZATION OF CHAP. 10

Chapter 10 in the original report was considerably longer because it included extensive quotes from CDCR inmates and staff. These have been cut in the interest of keeping this book to a manageable size. Still, we

believe the quotations that have been retained are an important voice—they are the words of the inmates and staff of the CDCR talking about their hopes and dreams for vocational education. To understand how the culture of CDCR “thinks,” it is important to evaluate such views. An important insight to be observed is that, despite a culture where there is a great deal of mistrust (“everybody lies”), there is indeed a consistent story from inmates and staff with respect to how and why vocational education programs are important and can be successful.

The Research Questions

After a great deal of discussion, we were given 12 research questions. Chapter 10 is organized around these 12 research questions which were presented at the end of Chap. 9 and again here

1. Do the vocational education programs use evidenced-based curricula?
2. Are curricula taught uniformly at all sites?
3. How many participants are enrolled in each of the vocational education programs?
4. What are the characteristics of the vocational education inmate-student population?
5. How many participants complete these courses?
6. How consistent are these programs with the framework of the California Logic Model?
7. Does completion (or participation) of these programs lower recidivism rates among paroled or released inmates?
8. Do vocational education dropouts, graduates, and non-vocational education inmates differ in their recidivism rates?
9. What factors contribute to participants dropping out or failing the program?
10. What are the employment outcomes and economic stability for the vocational education program participants?
11. What are the entrance admissions criteria?
12. What other factors are associated with waiting lists and their uses?

We also added questions 13–16, which we felt were important for the CDCR to consider. These questions are:

13. What is the quality of Classroom Instruction?
14. What are the Problems and Obstacles to Prison Education?

15. How do students evaluate their class and teacher?
16. What is the value of prison education to students, the prison, and the community?

In Question 13 is more of the statistical analysis that the CDCR wanted so badly. This statistical analysis is something of a stretch—it is based on qualitative observations we made using Likert scales of our design. Since it is possible, we developed “Cronbach’s alpha” tests that measures inter-rater reliability. It sounds good, but we do have doubts about the very subjective judgments that were inserted in the first place.

Again, these research questions reflect a responsiveness to AB 900 requirements (thus the emphasis on evidence-based criteria and recidivism), and the needs of the CDCR for information that can be used to manage the courses (e.g., uniformly taught curricula, dropout causes, and waiting lists).

However, by far the most ink is spilled on Question 6, which is about the California Logic Model. The California Logic Model, per our instructions from the CDCR, was at the heart of our evaluation because it underpinned the design of the programs we evaluated. The Logic Model describes ideal steps that each inmate is assumed to undergo between intake to parole and where an evidence-based prescription is applied. Understanding the Logic Model in the context of what actually happens in the prison, and especially in the prison vocational education classroom, is what this lengthy section is about. Rereading Question 6 some years later, we became aware that it did not always fit tightly with an evaluation of the California Logic Model itself. Still, it is the place where we put the important data we have about classroom dynamics, student selection, and ultimately the breakdown of a plan well-meant but ill-conceived. In this sense, it is indeed a critique of the somewhat utopian goals of the California Logic Model.

QUESTION #1: DO THE PROGRAMS USE EVIDENCED-BASED CURRICULA?

The vocational education curricula included in this study were subjected to a thorough and comprehensive evidence-based evaluation by the research team (Dick et al., 2009). Only a few of the most salient aspects of the report are provided here in order to answer the research question concisely. The research team focused on the planned curriculum, which consists of the texts assigned to each of the 12 courses. The team

employed two evaluation instruments to assess the planned curriculum. First, the Technical Education Curriculum Assessment (TECA) rubric (Keiser, Lawrenz, & Appleton, 2004a) was used to evaluate the curricula. Second, the Flesch-Kincaid grade level formula was used to assess the readability of the textbooks used in the courses.

The research team completed the TECA rubric as they reviewed the planned curriculum for the vocational education courses. Six criteria were addressed including Instructional Strategies, Problem Solving, Integration of General Education Content, Assessment, Personal Qualities, and Diversity. TECA also provides a method to assign an “overall evaluation” of the quality of the curriculum based on four important characteristics found in excellent curricula: Industry Standards and Practices, Real World Curriculum, Workplace Competencies, and Access to In-Depth Understanding (Keiser, Lawrenz, & Appleton, 2004b). All criteria were assessed using a 0–4 scale. The lowest rating of 0 would indicate no alignment with rubric criteria. A score of 1 suggests the materials are found to be deficient (weak) on the characteristic, while a 2 indicates that the curriculum is adequate at addressing the characteristic. A score of 3 means the materials are good at meeting the characteristic. Finally, a score of 4 indicates the materials are excellent at presenting the characteristic. Based on the criteria found in TECA, courses were rated as follows:

- *Weak*: Landscaping
- *Adequate*: Janitorial
- *Good*: Auto Mechanics, Building Maintenance, Carpentry, HVAC (Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning), Painting, Plumbing, and Welding.
- *Excellent*: Electrical Works, Mill and Cabinetry, Office Services (Dick et al., 2009)

The Flesch-Kincaid readability scale was applied to the texts of the curricula and provided readability scores for each course in the study. Significantly, average inmate reading proficiency is estimated to reach only the easiest level represented in the texts of the programs (Dick et al., 2009). The CDCR estimates that the average reading level of California’s inmates is seventh grade (CDCR, 2009a). With this being the case, Dick and colleagues found that only three course curricula and the National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER) *Core Curriculum* text would be accessible to the average inmate. Courses were grouped based

on readability scores as easier to read, moderately difficult, or difficult as follows:

- *Easier to read curricula*: Auto Mechanics, Building Maintenance, Janitorial Services, and the *NCCER Core Curriculum* all scored below ninth grade reading levels.
- *Moderately difficult curricula*: Carpentry, Landscaping, Mill and Cabinetry, Office Services, Plumbing, and Welding require reading comprehension between 9.5 and 10.6 grade levels.
- *Difficult curricula*: Electrical Works, HVAC, and Painting with average Flesch-Kincaid grade level scores greater than the eleventh grade.

To summarize, the curriculum evaluation provided thorough evidence as to the effectiveness of each curriculum using the evaluation tools TECA and Flesch-Kincaid readability analysis (Dick et al., 2009). Evidence of the effectiveness of each curriculum indicates variation in quality according to the measurement tools applied. However, the curriculum evaluation also provides evidence of specific areas that can be improved. Standardization and national certification of courses such as those provided by NCCER provide a data system that tracks and analyzes inmate progress toward real-world job skills. Standardized courses also provide continuity across the system of CDCR institutions resulting in superior coordination, not only toward the same goals and objectives, but also toward the same tools for performance and paper–pencil assessment of student learning. The curriculum evaluation also shows that a high-quality set of materials is not available for all vocational education inmate students, and that not all students are adequately prepared for the challenges of more difficult courses. Evidence about curricula must serve the needs of diverse groups of students and align with the Expert Panel and California Logic Model (2007) in order to provide the right students with the right program at the right time (see Fig. 5.1).

QUESTION #2: ARE CURRICULA TAUGHT UNIFORMLY AT ALL SITES?

Of the 12 courses included in this evaluation, seven were taught at more than one prison: Building Maintenance, Carpentry, HVAC, Janitorial, Landscaping, Painting, and Plumbing. As a consequence, whether the courses were taught uniformly at different prisons, or even on different yards within a prison, the uniformity of five courses—Auto Mechanics,

Electrical Works, Mill and Cabinetry, Office Services, and Welding—could not be assessed. Nevertheless, vocational education classes throughout California’s regular classrooms have many of the same strengths and weaknesses throughout the CDCR.

Observations of each of the seven courses with more than one class indicate that the courses are taught in a similar fashion, even at different prisons. The teachers use similar practices to keep students active in the course work, using both hands-on applications and the provided curriculum. The two exceptions to this rule were for the janitorial and landscaping courses where the teachers developed their own curriculum because a standard curriculum was not available.

The open-entry/open-exit method of assigning inmate students to classes also provided inmate students with a consistent educational experience in the event they were transferred from one prison to another. Open-entry/open-exit means students join a class at any time but will start at the beginning of the curriculum.

On the other hand, several factors inhibit uniformity in class offerings. Foremost are the logistics and necessities of prison administration. For example, institutional and yard security levels prohibit inmates who participated in Building Maintenance at Pelican Bay State Prison from becoming students in the same class at California Correctional Institution, which is taught on a Level 2 Sensitive Needs Yard.¹

Inmate classification and assignment committees and wait lists also mitigate against the importance of uniformly taught classes. As examined in greater depth in Research Question 6, Unit Classification Committees (see also pp. 78–81) and Inmate Assignment Offices serve as the gatekeepers to the rehabilitative programs prisoners participate in, the educational opportunities they are afforded, and what jobs they can hold. Because vocational education classes are required to have precisely 27 students under the Average Daily Attendance formula, an inmate is likely to be on a wait list before he is allowed to join a class. In most cases, this can be several months.

Resources and supplies availability also mean that classes may not be similar. Teachers in some classes have state-of-the-art tools and supplies while at another institution the teacher may struggle to have the bare minimum.

Individual teaching styles also hinder the ideal of uniformity. In most cases, the teachers we studied were talented and invested in their craft. In some instances, however, teachers were found to be disengaged, disinterested in their students, and adverse to instructional activity.

Aggravating the problem of uniformity is the fact that teachers of the same classes cannot collaborate or talk about professional issues with peers. CDCR teachers are separated by more than just geographical space; the constant demands of their job, ranging from preparing for class, security precautions, completing required paperwork all restrict collaborative opportunities.

QUESTION #3: HOW MANY PARTICIPANTS ARE ENROLLED IN EACH AND ALL THE VOCATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS?

Partially because of open-entry/open-exit and the sometimes rapid turnover of students in the vocational education classes being evaluated, an accurate count of the students is difficult to achieve. Added to this problem is the fact that collecting data from each of the classes about student enrollment is problematic. As a result, the CDCR and Office of Correctional Education (OCE) were not able to provide definitive numbers to the California State University, Chico (CSUC) research team; therefore, a clear-cut answer to this research question is not possible.

What is known is that vocational education classes are capped at 27 students; and because the OCE is paid based on Average Daily Attendance formulas, these classes are usually full. If, on the off chance, a seat comes open and no one is on the wait list, the Unit Classification Committee and Inmate Assignment Office will assign a student to the class because of CDCR policies and Legislative mandates.

One way to estimate how many participants are enrolled in vocational education is to use the CDCR institutional data provided to CSUC. Between January 7, 2007 and September 13, 2009, 4414 inmates were enrolled in one or more of the vocational education classes being evaluated here. (*Note:* A small number were enrolled in more than one class—there were 4670 enrollees among 4414 inmates). Such a high number of students suggest a great deal of turnover in these classes. Other factors that could contribute to the high number of inmate students being enrolled in these classes include some classes being shorter in duration than others, higher turnover in classes housed on lower level yards, and even teacher turnover where inmate students are unassigned to a class and replaced by others when the new teacher starts.

QUESTION #4: WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE VOCATIONAL EDUCATION INMATE STUDENT POPULATION?

The data reported here describe the characteristics of the inmate students who participated in the vocational education classes. These data represent every vocational education inmate student (regardless of the length of time spent in the class) in the 19 classes included in this evaluation between January 7, 2007 and September 13, 2009. One hundred forty-one week's worth of data are represented (mean = 39.0 weeks, $SD=30.6$). In total, 4414 inmate students participated in at least one of the 19 classes included in this evaluation. In some cases, some inmate students were members of more than one class. The researchers found 238 inmates were students in two classes (5.4%), and nine were students in three of the 19 vocational education classes in this evaluation (0.2%).

As shown in Table 10.1, the majority of vocational education students are Hispanic (39.4%), followed by Whites (29.9%), then African Americans (25.2%). Nearly one in five of the vocational education inmate students had a mental health diagnosis. The average age of the vocational education students was 39.1 years ($SD=10.4$). On average, these inmates came to prison on their present commitment term at the age of 34.5 years ($SD=10.6$) and they were 28.0 years when they began their first term in prison ($SD=9.2$). The broad standard deviations and high average ages are, in large, part a reflection of the large number of lifers in the classes and the CDCR (see below).

Table 10.1 also shows the number of weeks that inmate students from the 19 classes were involved with vocational education during their present prison sentence. On average, the students were in their classes for 34 weeks ($SD=25.1$). This was 5.5 months longer than the "other vocational education" comparison group. During their entire stay in prison the study group was involved in any type of programming for an average of 56.1 months ($SD=25.4$). This is similar to the "other vocational education" group (mean = 51.2, $SD=27.2$). In contrast, the non-vocational education group participated in rehabilitation programming only 27.3 months on average, with a standard deviation of 32.4. This suggests these inmates participated in rehabilitative programming for just a short time and that many of the non-vocational education inmates did not program at all during their present prison term.

Table 10.1 Characteristics of male prisoner population in California percentages and means cross tabulation

Demographic variable	Vocational education participants vs non-participants			Total (%)	<i>n</i>
	Voc Ed study group (<i>n</i> =4414) (%)	Voc Ed other (<i>n</i> =1000) (%)	Non-Voc Ed prisoners (<i>n</i> =998) (%)		
<i>Percentages</i>					
Ethnicity					
White	29.9	26.7	26.6	28.9	(1854)
Hispanic	39.4	37.9	41.1	39.4	(2527)
African-American	25.2	29.3	28.4	26.3	(1689)
Asian	0.4	0.7	0.4	0.5	(30)
Other	5.1	5.4	3.5	4.9	(314)
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	(6412)
Mental health diagnosis					
Yes	19.2	13.5	18.1	18.1	(1162)
No	80.8	86.5	81.9	81.9	(5252)
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
<i>Means</i>					
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Total mean (SD)	
Age	39.1 (10.4)	36.4 (10.2)	37.8 (11.1)	38.5 (10.5)	
Age at incarceration	34.5 (10.6)	31.0 (9.7)	34.4 (10.7)	34.0 (10.5)	
Age at first California incarceration	28.0 (9.2)	25.8 (8.0)	28.0 (9.2)	27.6 (9.0)	
Percent of weeks listed as being in Voc Ed	34.0 (25.1)	28.5 (24.3)	(no data)	33.0 (25.1)	
Percent of weeks programming (Work or Voc Ed)	56.1 (25.4)	51.2 (27.2)	27.3 (32.4)	50.8 (28.8)	

Table 10.2 summarizes the study group and comparison groups characteristics regarding their criminal and prison history. On average, the vocational education students in the study group were convicted 2.3 times ($SD=1.7$) and had been convicted a total of 4.1 times ($SD=3.6$). Over half (55.1%) of the vocational education inmate students had already recidivated, meaning that they were in prison at least one time previously. The men in

Table 10.2 Characteristics of male prisoner population in California means and percentages cross tabulation

<i>Means</i>					
Demographic variable	Voc Ed study group (n=4414)	Voc Ed other (n=1000)	Non-Voc Ed prisoners (n=998)	Total	
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	mean (SD)	
Number of convictions	2.3 (1.7)	2.0 (1.5)	2.1 (1.6)	2.2 (1.6)	
Total offenses	4.1 (3.6)	4.1 (3.7)	3.9 (3.8)	4.1 (43.7)	
Times in prison	4.0 (4.1)	3.4 (3.5)	4.3 (4.8)	4.0 (4.2)	
Total years in CDCR prisons	6.9 (5.9)	7.5 (6.3)	5.6 (6.2)	6.8 (6.1)	
<i>Percentages</i>					
Demographic variable	Vocational education participants vs non-participants				
	Voc Ed study group (n=4414) (%)	Voc Ed other (n=1000) (%)	Non-Voc Ed prisoners (n=998) (%)	Total (%)	n
Commitment offense					
Drugs	21.1	19.4	26.7	21.7	1390
Sex	14.4	11.3	7.5	12.9	824
Murder	11.5	14.7	8.5	11.5	738
Assault	15.8	17.9	15.4	16.0	1028
Burglary	7.7	6.4	7.9	7.5	481
Robbery	8.0	12.7	8.2	8.7	560
Other violent	1.7	1.7	.5	1.5	97
Other property	10.8	8.8	15.2	11.2	716
Other Misc.	9.2	7.0	9.9	9.0	574
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	6408
First commitment					
Yes	44.9	51.6	49.2	46.6	2991
No	55.1	48.4	50.8	53.4	3423
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	6414
Serving a life sentence					
Yes	10.4	13.4	8.1	10.8	693
No	89.2	86.6	91.9	89.2	5721
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	6412
Number of strikes					
None or one	74.9	71.9	80.4	75.3	4831
Second	24.7	24.0	17.0	23.4	1499
Third	0.4	4.1	2.6	1.3	84
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	6412
Re-offended during study					
Yes	25.0	17.7	27.0	24.2	1551
No	75.0	82.3	73.0	75.8	4860
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	6411

the 19 vocational education classes had been in prison four times on average (mean=4.0, $SD=4.1$) and had spent an average of 7.0 years in prison ($SD=5.9$). This is slightly less than the other vocational education students (mean=7.5 years, $SD=6.4$) but longer than the non-vocational education inmates (mean=5.6, $SD=6.2$).

Almost 90% of these inmate students are eligible for parole at some point, with the remainder serving a life sentence. California's "three-strikes" law also affected the vocational education classes. Seventy-five percent of the vocational education inmate students from the included classes had none or one strike. The remainder had two (24.7%) or three (0.4%) strikes.

The single crime most represented for vocational education students from the 19 classes was drug offenders (21.1%). This was also the case for the other vocational education group and non-vocational education prisoners. When combining the results for all violent crimes (Sex, Murder, Assault, Robbery, and Other Violent), 51.4% of the inmate students were committed for a violent offense.

Table 10.2 shows 25% of the vocational education inmate students of classes included in the evaluation had reoffended during the study period. This is better than the non-vocational education prisoners, where 27.0% reoffended, but worse than the other vocational education students, 17.7% reoffended. These data will be discussed in greater depth in response to the research questions asking about recidivism (research questions 7 and 8).

QUESTION #5: HOW MANY PARTICIPANTS COMPLETE THESE COURSES?

Limited data were provided to CSUC about course completion. As a result, it was difficult to assess exactly how many vocational education students complete these courses. In particular, problems with CDCR data collection presented a significant obstacle in this regard. For a host of reasons, the CDCR and OCE had difficulties collecting data about course completions, and some institutions were more reliable in providing this information to the OCE than others.

Another problem with answering this research question is that the classes were in active operation for different amounts of time due to variations in lockdowns and so forth. In some cases, the classes were not fully running by January 2008, the first month covered by the available

data. What is more, several classes included in this evaluation were terminated because of the radical budget cuts suffered by the CDCR and OCE between late 2008 and early 2010. In addition, graduation data for one class were missing, and only partial course completion data were provided to CSUC in nine cases.

The vocational education course completion data provided to CSUC covered January 2008 to July 2010. However, nine of the classes were terminated in early 2010 due to budget cuts; as a result, CSUC choose February 2010 as a cut-off date for data analysis. Cases terminated prior to March 2010 are noted. Generally, 25 months of data are included in the analysis.

Between January 2008 and February 2010, we have records for 359 inmates completing one of the vocational education courses included in this evaluation. Because CSUC does not know exactly how many students were enrolled in these classes between these dates, there is no way to estimate what proportion of the whole this number represents. However, given the fact that each class is to have 27 full-time equivalent students at all times, and given the open-entry/open-exit method of assigning students to these classes, it is likely these 359 completions represent a small proportion. This estimation is partially confirmed by the fact that 11 of the 19 classes in this study averaged less than one completion per month, and five had no reported completions during the 25 months of the study. Note, too, that completion rates ranged from about 3 months for Janitorial Services to over 30 months for a complicated course like Electrical Works.

Table 10.3 displays the completions for each course included in the evaluation. The first class listed, Automotive Mechanics, stands out because of the total lack of completions reported. Some background is necessary for interpreting this result. Several years ago, the CDCR discovered that a clerk proctoring the certification exams for Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) was stealing copies and selling them to other students. In response, ASE revoked the privilege of certifying inmates at this particular institution for 10 years. Because the study period fell within this 10-year moratorium, no course completions are reported. Prison and school officials are attempting to deal with this situation by either transferring students to another prison to complete their term and take the ASE exam, or offering to pay for the test once the inmate paroles. Inmate transfer to another prison is particularly difficult because there are so many logistical issues, including those involving the Unit Classification Committees, the Inmate Assignment Offices, and prison overcrowding. In the absence of this specific problem, it

Table 10.3 Vocational education course completions, maximum per month, mean, and class status

<i>Program</i>	<i>Number of completions</i>	<i>Maximum completions per month</i>	<i>Mean completions per month</i>	<i>Class status</i>
Automotive Mechanics (CRC)	0	0	0	Ongoing
Building Maintenance (CCI/PBSP)	21	4	0.65	CCI-ongoing PBSP-terminated 8/08 (<i>n</i> =7 months)
Carpentry (CAL/CRC)	52	21	1.04	CAL-terminated 3/10 CRC-ongoing
Electrical Works (SATF)	9	4	0.36	Terminated 3/10
HVAC (CAL/SATF)	37	6	0.74	CAL-ongoing SATF-ongoing
Janitorial Services (CCI/COR)	126	14	2.57	CCI-terminated 2/10 (<i>n</i> =24 months) COR-terminated 3/10
Landscaping (CCI/CRC)	16	2	0.32	CCI-terminated 2/10 (<i>n</i> =24 months) CRC-terminated 3/10
Mill and Cabinetry (CCI)	36	8	1.57	Terminated 1/10 (<i>n</i> =23 months)
Office Services (ASP)	7	5	1.16	Terminated 7/08
Painting (ASP/CCI)	7	5	0.29	ASP-terminated 3/10 (no data) CCI-terminated 2/10 (<i>n</i> =24 months)
Plumbing (CIM/CRC)	28	10	1.12	CIM-ongoing CRC-ongoing
Welding (SATF)	20	14	0.86	Terminated 1/10

Note: Institutions including in this study: *ASP* Avenal State Prison, *CAL* Calipatria State Prison, *CCI* California Correctional Institution, *CIM* California Institution for Men, *COR* California State Prison, Corcoran, *CRC* California Rehabilitation Center, *PBSP* Pelican Bay State Prison, *SATF* Substance Abuse Treatment Facility

is likely some inmate students would have completed this course during the 25 months represented by these data.

There were two Building Maintenance courses represented in these data with 21 total completions. The teacher for the class at Pelican Bay State Prison (PBSP) retired early into the study and the school did not hire a replacement. Consequently, there are only 7 months of data. If PBSP

school administrators had been permitted to hire a replacement teacher for this class in a timely fashion, it is probable this completion data would have been higher.

Two Carpentry classes, two HVAC classes, and two Painting classes are represented in the completion data in Table 10.3. In all the three cases, only one of the three classes reported any course completions. Therefore, for one of the Carpentry classes the mean completion per month was 2.08, and for one HVAC class the mean completion per month was 1.48. In the case of the Painting classes, seven completions by one class alone is unimpressive, but could be the result of the original teacher being replaced or the teacher being out on extended leave. In any event, why the other three classes did not report any completion data was not made known to the research team.

The Janitorial Services classes are noteworthy because of the high number of completions. In fact, these two classes accounted for 35.1% of the total course completions represented in Table 10.3. Two reasons most likely account for this high completion rate. First, students from both classes speak highly of their teachers, of the extra attention they were given, and the professionalism of the teachers. Second, these classes were designed to take a relatively short time for students to complete (i.e., about 3 months). Contributing to this high completion rate too was that both classes were taught on lower level yards (one a Level 2 yard, the other a Level 1 yard) where the population turned over rapidly.

The Mill and Cabinetry course represented in these completion data also had a good rate of completion. In the 23 months of operation before the class was terminated, 36 inmate students were able to earn course completion and NCCER certifications, for an average of 1.57 completions per month.

The results for the Office Services class must also be addressed. The data provided to the CSUC research team reported that the class was terminated in July 2008, providing only 6 months' worth of completion. However, this class was operational with a new teacher on subsequent visits to the prison. As a result, these data do not represent the actual number of course completions.

As for the other courses, the number of completions during the 25-month period represented by the data is generally unimpressive. However, for all courses included in this evaluation, the completion data presented here are a reflection of a wide variety of systemic issues, including data collection problems, personnel turnover, lockdowns, misassignment of inmates,

budget problems, challenging curricula, and subpar teachers. As a result, the reader should exercise caution when considering the completion data of these vocational education courses. Of the 4414 inmate students who were enrolled or participated in the vocational education courses in this study, 359 completed according to data. This results in a completion rate of approximately 8%.

QUESTION # 6: HOW CONSISTENT ARE THESE PROGRAMS WITH THE FRAMEWORK OF THE CALIFORNIA LOGIC MODEL?

The California Logic Model was developed in response to the key recommendations offered by the Expert Panel's report "A Roadmap for Effective Offender Programming in California" (2007). The California Logic Model sets forth a rehabilitative model that would make prison a more effective form of punishment and treatment, as well as make the CDCR more efficient. To this end, the Expert Panel developed an eight-step process (roadmap) to shape inmates' time in prison in the most effective way possible. This process starts the day the prisoner arrives until they are discharged from parole. The eight steps were developed using evidenced-based strategies following an extensive review of the literature.

1. *Assess High Risk*: Assess offender risk level and target offenders who pose the highest risk for reoffending.
2. *Assess Needs*: Administer assessment battery to identify the offender's criminogenic needs/dynamic risk factors.
3. *Develop a Behavior Management Plan*: Utilize risk, need, and responsibility assessment results to inform the development of an individualized case plan guiding the types and levels of services required to address needs.
4. *Deliver Programs*: Deliver cognitive behavioral programs offering varying levels of dosage (duration and intensity).
5. *Measure Progress*: Conduct periodic assessments to evaluate progress, update treatment plans, measure treatment gains, and determine appropriateness for program completion.
6. *Prep for Reentry*: Develop a formal reentry plan prior to program completion to ensure a continuum of care.

7. *Reintegrate*: Provide aftercare and facilitate a successful reentry through collaboration with community providers.
8. *Follow-up*: Track offenders and collect outcome data at set intervals following discharge. (Expert Panel, 2007, p. 20)

Because of the comprehensive nature of the California Logic Model and its importance to the future of corrections in California, this research question covers a wide range of results, including the time it takes to get a major policy up, running, and funded in an organization as large as the CDCR. The first four steps—especially as they relate to the delivery of rehabilitation programs like vocational education (e.g., Step 4)—provide the focus for answering this question. More generally, the importance of the California Logic Model to CDCR presently, and as they plan for the future, was evident in many interviews conducted during this evaluation. The following from an upper-level CDCR administrator illustrates the central role of the California Logic Model to CDCR:

CSUC: You've mentioned the California Logic Model. How important is it to what you see the future as?

FQ: This is kind of an important question to me right now. I feel very strongly, as does the Secretary, from all my conversations with him that we have a plan. And the last thing we need to do right now is to change our plan. It's pretty basic evidence-based planning, it's the same thing that everyone else that works is doing. So I don't see us changing that in any significant way. Are there going to be pieces that are going to be harder and going to get delayed and may even get shelved? Probably. Our secure re-entry facilities are already on hold just due to the state's fiscal situation and our inability to construct in any kind of a timely way. But that doesn't hold us up from doing the rest of the plan.

This last point reflects the fact that during the past decade, the CDCR has undergone incredible change and endured turmoil because of court decisions, overcrowding, the new emphasis on rehabilitation, and unexpected budget cuts. Nevertheless, the CDCR remains committed to the California Logic Model.

Despite its utility and centrality to the current and future mission of the CDCR, implementing the California Logic Model has been difficult. Budget cuts and overcrowding dramatically impact the CDCR and the rehabilitative programs. While CDCR administrators from the top down recognize the value of the California Logic Model, legislative decisions to cut CDCR's

budget forced these administrators to “pick and choose” what parts should be put into practice now and what other aspects can be delayed. Over half of the classes included in this study have been eliminated because of the drastic budget cuts experienced by the CDCR in late 2009. As observed by one senior-level administrator of education, “With budget cuts, certainly there are a whole number of areas in here that probably we won’t see implemented in our lifetime, regardless of how this was set up” (QP).

Even for those aspects of the California Logic Model that are implemented, problems remain. Given the fits-and-starts in implementing this rehabilitative model, many throughout the organization are either unclear of its purpose or uncertain of its promised benefit.

PR: There are still a lot of staff members that really don’t understand the Logic Model or haven’t been briefed on what we mean by criminogenic needs? What do you mean by risk to re-offend? Doesn’t it have to do with their crime?

Until the CDCR fully implements the California Logic Model, this evidenced-based program will remain more of an ideal than reality. As a consequence, CDCR employees are skeptical of its import and they remain hesitant to fully buy into its premises. More importantly, until such a time when the CDCR is supported by governmental leaders in implementing the California Logic Model, a complete evaluation of the utility of the paradigm or the organization’s use of it is premature. Each step in the California Logic Model is mentioned below.

Steps 1 and 2—Assessment of Risk and Needs

The first two steps of the California Logic Model involve assessing inmates’ risk to reoffend and criminogenic needs. At every level of the CDCR, the value of inmate assessment is recognized and embraced. As described in the Expert Panel’s (2007) report, evidenced-based strategies to direct strategies for implementing corrections are theoretically the most effective and efficient way to administer court imposed prison sentences. One vice principal described the approach to assessment in this way:

BF: It’s more of a holistic approach, a more hands-on approach, is based off of their risk and needs. You run their COMPAS [Correctional Offender Management Profiling for Alternative Sanctions] scores and find out what their risks and needs are. Where are they at, and go off of that; prioritize off of that.

The need for a more adequate approach to assessment across the CDCR is recognized by most people associated with the system—from Headquarters to Level 1 inmates. Another vice principal specifically addressed this point:

FK: We need to do a better job of assessing our inmates when they first get to a Reception Center. That they take tests to see which areas they're most interested in. That we find out what kind of learner they are to help them move into the avenues where they want to go, as opposed to sticking them some place where they're not going to do well in.

Assessment of risk One central goal of assessment is to evaluate inmates' risk to recidivate. Following the Expert Panel's report and evidenced-based recommendations, the CDCR focused educational and rehabilitative programs toward high to moderate risk to reoffend inmates rather than inmates who are low risks to reoffend based on their criminogenic needs (to be discussed shortly). Assessment was key to identifying inmates who would benefit from programmatic interventions such as vocational education. For inmates, the advantage of this evidenced-based strategy is a greater promise of success on parole; for society, it is reduced crime. As one senior CDCR administrator puts it, "We can target the higher risk offenders, and we can implement programs that have been shown to work. You know, our chances of succeeding are going to be much higher" (FQ).

But not everyone working within the CDCR agrees with this strategy. A handful of respondents expressed concern about providing programming to high and moderate risk inmates while essentially ignoring the needs and rehabilitative desires of low-risk prisoners. Their concern is that by ignoring low-risk inmates' needs and not providing them programming, these prisoners will come out of prison much worse off than when they went in. One respondent puts it this way:

BF: Now you've got the low-risk offender who doesn't have access to those services, or they're not as accessible to him or her as they are the high to medium risk offender. So now you've got this inmate sitting on the yard, sitting on their bunk, waiting to get out, but now they're having to deal with the prison politics and the influence from the other inmates; the peer pressure. And you may have somebody who might be a low risk [when they went in], but they might still just be on the edge. So now you've got a lowrisk offender who's now a medium risk offender.

This respondent wonders whether the investment in moderate- and high-risk inmates exclusively, and ignoring low-risk inmates, is balanced by the realized benefit?

Criminogenic needs The Expert Panel's (2007) report specifically identified seven criminogenic needs. These seven factors were found throughout criminological literature to be associated with criminal behavior. All of the criminogenic needs apply to the population being examined here, but some inform this study more than others do. These criminogenic needs include (1) having educational, vocational, and financial deficits with low achievement skills; (2) having anti-social attitudes and beliefs; (3) anti-social and pro-criminal associates and being isolated from pro-social others; (4) temperament, impulsiveness, and weak self-control factors; (5) familial dysfunction; (6) alcohol and drug abuse; and (7) deviant sexual preference and arousal patterns (Expert Panel, 2007, p. 26). The more of these criminological needs present in a person's life, the more likely that individual will be to commit crimes. The first step in this process is identifying these needs.

With the Expert Panel's report identifying the broad categories of criminogenic needs, the California Logic Model encourages the CDCR to both identify these needs in every prisoner's life and devise interventions to address these deficiencies. The first step in this process is identifying an inmate's capacity for change, which can be the basis for a behavioral management plan. As one senior-level prison administrator puts it:

CN: A plan for that inmate's success needs to be created for every inmate. And I think I would start by determining the needs of the inmate right up front. What are the obstacles in regard to this individual's recidivism? And what do we have that can assist him in overcoming those obstacles?

The plan recommended by this informant would be built around addressing the inmate's criminogenic needs. With this concept being a central concern to the CDCR and the future of corrections in California, several interviewees offered insights about the most important needs prisoners have. Although many of these observations are more specific than the seven criminogenic needs spelled out by the Expert Panel (2007), each calls notice to and confirms those overarching deficiencies. The most frequent criminogenic needs identified in the interviews included:

- Being raised or living in an environment characterized by poverty, poor social institutions, and crime

- Being an ethnic minority
- Living in an environment where drug and alcohol abuse are prevalent
- Being paroled to the same area one was originally arrested in
- Having a dearth of personal resources
- Anger issues
- Substance abuse and addiction issues
- Being gang affiliated
- Low self-esteem
- Being victims of abuse (physical, emotional, and sexual)
- Poor educational opportunities during developmental years
- Poor secondary educational opportunities as a result of overcrowding and the removal of vocational educational opportunities
- Dropping out of school
- Being illiterate
- Suffering from mental illness
- Immaturity
- Homelessness
- Having no extended family support
- Poverty
- Hunger
- Transportation issues or concerns
- No work history
- Minimal vocational skills
- Trying to live on minimum wage
- Coming from a divorced family

Another senior administrator summarized the perception of prisoners' general needs this way:

LY: You've got to teach someone life skills. Some of these guys don't even understand the responsibility, "I've got to get up in the morning. I want breakfast; I'd better get up because it [work] starts at 6:30." That's rehabilitation. So teaching them that skill, teaching them that you've got to go to work, you've got to be to your appointment on time, teaching them the basic responsibility that they didn't have before.

In addition to addressing general criminogenic needs, one vice principal emphasized that inmates are sent to prison because they committed a crime. Consequently, addressing an inmate's criminal behavior must be included in the more general behavior management plan. The informant

says, “What happened? What crime did they commit that got them locked up? Are they a sexually violent predator? Does that need to be addressed? [Addressing the crime] should [be] first” (BF).

Step 3—Development of a Behavior Management Plan

Based on the results of the assessment tests and identification of inmates’ criminogenic needs, the California Logic Model suggests that the CDCR develop a behavior management plan. This process begins with the Unit Classification Committee on each prison yard. Based on the assessment tools and the inmates’ criminogenic needs, the Unit Classification Committee might require inmates with low educational achievement to attend adult basic education classes. Others will be required to work on getting a General Education Degree (GED), and some might qualify for vocational education classes. In addition, the Unit Classification Committee also determines whether inmates are eligible for other rehabilitative programs (e.g., substance abuse) or prison jobs. The Unit Classification Committees make referrals to the Inmate Assignment Office, which assigns inmates to recommended programs when vacancies arise on a first come, first served basis. In this context, the Unit Classification Committees and Inmate Assignment Offices are important to this evaluation of vocational education in California’s prisons.

Classification committees existed many years prior to AB 900 and the development of the California Logic Model. Each committee met needs common to institutions across the CDCR and unique needs specific to each local prison yard. The processes of the committees and perspectives of its members were well entrenched in local organizational culture. Now, with the passage of AB 900, the development of the California Logic Model, and the increased focus on successful implementation of education programs, the historical and explicit purposes of assignment committees shifted. Effective for meeting local purposes prior to AB 900, assignment committees are seen by many as ineffective and even as stumbling blocks in meeting the demands of system-wide rehabilitation through education.

Usually, the Unit Classification Committee is comprised of the Yard Captain (or his or her designate), a Corrections Counselor II (supervisor), the inmate’s Correctional Counselor, a representative from education (principal or vice principal), and other concerned parties such as psychologists or substance abuse counselors. One clear finding from the interviews is that the Unit Classification Committee does not always run efficiently or

effectively, especially with regard to education. This is because its charge goes well beyond rehabilitation and criminogenic needs, and it is responsible for the smooth functioning of the yards. On some yards, or at some prisons, the Unit Classification Committee appears to work well and has a collegial relationship with the education department; at other institutions, custody's idiosyncratic concerns dominate.

Another theme identified was the fact that staff and inmates do not view the role of the Unit Classification Committee similarly. CDCR officials view the Unit Classification Committee as simply an integrated function of administering corrections. There are concerns with how well it functions, but no indication was given that the committee should change in form or function. Inmates were profoundly aware of the influence of the Unit Classification Committee on their lives and behavioral management plan, but their experience with the committee suggests that it operates randomly and without clear direction. Because of the importance of the Unit Classification Committee to the vocational education classes (and to correctional education more generally) it is instructive to examine this committee from each of these perspectives.

The Unit Classification Committee from CDCR staff perspectives It is important for the reader to begin to understand how the Unit Classification Committee works. Several interview participants described the inmate assignment process, but the following quotes are most clear and thorough.

BF (an administrator): The classification process is, the inmates come in, they look at their COMPAS [Correctional Offender Management Profiling for Alternative Sanctions] scores, they pull their C-file [the inmate's permanent custody file]. They do what's called a classification score sheet. And they find out what their risks and needs are and what their point rating is and also what their background is. What kind of potential they might have or not have. What their TABE [Test of Adult Basic Education] scores are. And then the institution, the classification committee, will look at the different vacancies that they have or the different programs that they offer, whether it's support services or in the kitchen, or if they need people out there running weed eaters, which they call porters, or vocational programs or academic programs. But other times I've seen an inmate come in with a chip on their shoulder and an attitude. It doesn't matter what they say. They just have a vacancy and hey, we need someone running steam blowing. We need somebody on the steam line. Just shut up, you're going. I've seen that happen also. At another prison a senior administrator emphasized the

desire of the Unit Classification Committee at that institution to build upon inmates' previous experiences and interests. This prison's Unit Classification Committee believes that by doing so programmatic interventions are more likely to have a positive impact on inmates.

CN: With our classification committee, we try to find out what areas the individual may already have skills in—if he has skills in a specific vocation already. We try to focus in that direction to try to ensure that we're building upon something that they've already started.

As shown previously, some problems were identified with how effectively and efficiently the Unit Classification Committee's operates. Often, criticisms of the committee reflected the fact that inmates were assigned to classes or programs where they did not belong. Another significant complaint about the Unit Classification Committee concerned an overall lack of coordination between custody staff and education. Staff and administrative informants reported the Unit Classification Committee would simply dismiss the concerns or insights of education staff outright. They claimed that the Unit Classification Committee and Inmate Assignment Office placed an inmate into a slot based on yard needs, rather than their criminogenic or educational needs, often over the objection of the education staff or inmate.

In many cases, it was perceived that there was a more authoritarian tone from the custody side of the Unit Classification Committee and Inmate Assignment Office. The following quote from an upper-level administrator in the OCE hints at some of the problems found between the custody side of the Unit Classification Committee and education:

KZ: [Inmate assignment] is not education driven—we're living in the paramilitary structure. So we have to co-exist. There are some, we just had training, and we had the inmate assignments, the classification people, the associate wardens and my principals all in a huge meeting and said "you have to live together."

Sometimes, though, a healthy partnership was observed between the Unit Classification Committee and education. Often, the vocational education classes on these yards were found by the researchers to be functioning at a higher level. In situations like these, KZ felt there was a common purpose and mutual respect among members of the Unit Classification Committee as they worked to the betterment of the inmates:

KZ: How do I put it—there’s some that work together very well. There’s some that do not. Some of it could be personality issue or a respect issue. And I’m saying that we’ve got our share of individuals out there who may not be as with it—I’m talking from education perspective—as others. But that position [the Unit Classification Committee] needs to be able to have the ability to work with the other department [education].

This member of the education administration is not assigning blame to the Unit Classification Committee or custody side of the equation. Rather, what comes through is a desire for a shared responsibility for inmate assignment as well as a desire for a greater voice during the proceedings:

CN: I think we need to work closer with our custody staff to determine what the classification of the inmate is. Not so much what the paperwork is, but what does the correctional officers see of this guy. And currently our education department is not doing that. They need to be calling us and say, “I’m considering placing this individual into a position of authority, basically. What do you think?”

The explicit concern of this administrator is that some classroom assistants are manipulating their way into getting these jobs. If these individuals are “in the mix,” as he puts it, then assigning them to the classes can expand their drug trade or the influence of prison gangs, thereby working against the institution as a whole.

The greatest concern over problems perceived with inmate assignment concern the decisions made by the committee in placing students in classes, irrespective of the requests of education or the inmate. Essentially, the concern was about sometimes random and haphazard placement of students in classes with little or no reflection of the appropriateness of that individual for taking that space in the class. The feeling was that there was routine misassignment of inmates to classes and inappropriate assignment of inmates into classes that they were not interested in taking. The distinction is important. What was described to CSUC by our informants effectively undermined the implementation of the behavior management plan asked for in the California Logic Model.

Regarding assigning inmates to classes without regard to inmate student interest, one assistant principal said this, “A lot of them [the inmate students] were involved just because they had to be involved. They were thrown into a vocational program through classification” (BF).

The unmistakable problem identified here is the requirement that education seats have to be filled at all times. This creates a situation where inmates are placed in classes simply because of administrative need resulting from the Average Daily Attendance model used for getting paid by the state, rather than rehabilitative needs. Administering education in this way creates problems for the California Logic Model, for the efficacy of education and other rehabilitative services, and for the inmates themselves. For example, all education positions to be filled can result in the wrong student taking that space in a class. This means an inmate assigned to the class will fill that seat for a minimum of 3 months or sometimes longer. During this time, another inmate who is qualified and interested in the class is prevented from attending it because there are no openings in it. As a consequence, this inmate can be (mis)assigned to a class that he has no interest in. Or, during the time this inmate is waiting for his chance to enroll into a class he desires, he is wasting time on the yard or is misplaced into a prison job that does not match his preferences or criminogenic needs. Whether the inmate is left to his own devices on the yard, or is misplaced in another class (effectively preventing another inmate from the opportunity to take a class he is interested in), the time lost could prevent that individual from successfully completing the class before he paroled—he may not have enough time to complete the curriculum before he is released. When this situation occurs once, it happens again and again creating a backlog of suitable inmate students for appropriate class space being taken up by misassigned students.

The Unit Classification Committee from prisoners' perspectives Naturally, inmates' perspectives of the function and efficiency of the Unit Classification Committee is different than the administrative ideal of the CDCR. The general theme emerging from the inmate interviews is that the Unit Classification Committee functions outside their (the inmates') interests, and that inmate wishes and desires are treated as being irrelevant. From the perspective of the inmates, the Unit Classification Committee functions idiosyncratically, serving the functional interests of the prison and reflecting the personality of the members of the committee only. One inmate described his experience with the Unit Classification Committee this way:

CSUC: So can you describe for me the process, in this class or any class, an inmate has to through in order to be assigned to a class.

SK: You go to committee, which is your counselor and the facility heads and they see where you're capable of going—if I'm allowed to come from behind the wall. And like here in, their wanting you to do one voc before you can even have a job. So then they give you an option of which one you want. You can pick any one of them, but you're not always going to get that. What happens is you get put on the list, and whatever seat opens up, they just go down the list and fill seats. In my own case, I got lucky, I got the one class that I asked for. But most people don't. There's half a class out here that doesn't want to be in here [in the class where the interview was conducted], they just got put in here because a bunch of openings came up.

Another inmate said this about the decisions of the Unit Classification Committee:

KY: So, I mean, you go to the classification hearing, you walk in there. They tell you what your point number² is and how it's going to drop or if it goes up. If you've ever been a felon ... your points will come down and there's a set place where you can go to. There's an established number for some people. And then after that, they talk and ask you what jobs you want to be put on, what lists you want to be put on. They put you on a job lead, or sometimes it's "no, we're not going to put you on this." It's up to their discretion. And then from that, they just sit there and they talk amongst each other and then they send you out of there. I mean that's basically the hearing.

What is evident from such comments is that inmates think the Unit Classification Committee can be coercive and makes decisions as if the inmate himself is irrelevant or incidental to the process of rehabilitation. This is a theme that emerged in a number of interviews especially with regard to assigning inmates to classes they are not interested in taking.

CSUC: Why did you choose to become involved in vocational education in prison?

KY: They force you really, they did.

CSUC: Could you talk about the hearing? What happened at the hearing?

KY: When we go into the office, they bring up your arrest history. Then after they go through your arrest history, they ask a few questions that you—where you want to work at. And you tell them where you want to work at and they basically, well, we're going to put you on this list, this list, and this list. And wherever they put you, they put you. Even if you comfortable somewhere else, they take you out of there and put you somewhere else.

Another inmate said this:

CSUC: So, is that situation kind of unique, that you had some control over where you were assigned, or does assigning kind of just happen to you?

EK: Here, assigning just kind of happens to you, you know what I'm saying. You really don't have any say so, they just tell you this is where you're going to go, and if you don't like it, you can go on C-status. And that's loss of privileges and loss of time, so you really don't have any say so.

This inmate communicates about a veiled (and sometimes overt) threat of punishment if inmates choose to not attend a class they are assigned to, even if they are not interested in or prepared to take that class.

An inmate spoke about how fortunate he was to get the vocational education classes he wanted, thereby avoiding possible consequences for not attending a class he did not want to take:

SK: They [the Unit Classification Committee] give[s] you an option of all the classes here, and I chose this one. And due to luck, because usually you don't get your choice, they just put you wherever there's an opening. And here it's hard to get switched around and stuff. They've got issues with that. I got lucky, somebody dropped out of the class right after I was put on the list. So I got the class.

Step 4—Deliver Programs

The CDCR has developed programs to implement the California Logic Model as fully as possible. The CDCR is obviously committed to inmate assessment and identifying their criminogenic needs, and it attempts to identify programmatic interventions to help inmates increase chances for success on parole. A key component of this strategy is the Unit Classification Committee. The Unit Classification Committee serves several purposes in inmates' lives, including determining whether they will be required or permitted to take educational classes, and if so which ones. For all intents and purposes, these are the first essential steps in delivering programs.

In a perfect situation for prison education, the first step in delivering programs is assigning motivated and interested students to the correct class as described in the California Logic Model. This ideal is especially important for vocational education classes where prerequisites of acumen and interest contribute to the inmate student's success in class. However, for a host of

reasons, the CDCR is not always effective or even pragmatic in assigning inmates to classes that match the inmates' needs, interests, and capacities. Instead, inmates can be assigned to classes that do not match their career needs, capacities, or literacy. At other times, inmates are misassigned to classes to meet administrative demands. Whatever the case, the importance of getting the “right student in the right seat” is essential to administering vocational education as efficiently as possible with the greatest success.

Right student—Right seat The theme of getting the right students into the right seat (classes) was mentioned in over 20 of the formal interviews of CDCR personnel conducted for this evaluation. As was described in the previous section, the CDCR and the Unit Classification Committees have found doing this difficult in the context of effective prison management. Many of the interviewees discussed problems in the classes because of having the wrong students in the wrong seat.

An inmate student put it this way:

BA: I believe that he would wish that everyone in his class would really want to be here. But unfortunately, there are many—well, I don't want to say many—there are those that don't want to be here. Just part of the program. They're program, so they're here. And my thing is that you have a lot of people that are in the academic class, the education, that don't want to be there. My opinion on that is, anyone that doesn't want to be there, let them go. Don't put them in there.

The teachers also have complaints about assigning students to the classes they do not want, and several expressed frustration about the situation. Not only does having a misassigned student in the class make teaching vocational education in prison more challenging for teachers, but it also compromises the overall quality of the class. Disengaged and unwilling students create an atmosphere of negativity among the other students. For teachers, such students drive down the completion statistics by which they are evaluated. One seasoned teacher at a Level 4 yard said:

TCC: The other thing is I would make it so they would want to be here. What's the point of having people that don't want to be here assigned that are totally uninterested in this. Why would you have that? It's totally ridiculous. So it's a choice. If they want to participate, great. But for them to be mandated, it's the same thing you get everywhere in your life. You have to do this, I don't want to do that. So that's why I say you can lead rather than tell.

Notably, many of the students who expressed frustration about being assigned to a class acknowledged their presence in the class prevented other inmates from benefitting from the class. It is important to note, the complaints they had were not directed toward the teacher—most of the time, and the students acknowledged the teacher was doing a good job under difficult circumstances. As one student stated about being in a class he did not want to be in:

CL: But this here, I'm not going to pursue a plumbing career when I get on the street. As I look at it, I'm just taking up space in here. Get an individual that wants to be in here. There's a lot of them—they're in the system—[who] would love to be in this class. Me, myself, I have no interest in this class. It's such a good program, it's good for the people that want to learn.

As far as the student perspective is concerned, perhaps this point is best made by the following inmate who had successfully completed the class and now served as a clerk for the teacher:

SJ: To be honest, I would base the people on what time they have. There's a guy here that's only got six months. He's not going to be motivated. I don't care what vocation you put him in. In six months, you've got to be motivated. But me, when I came in here, I had a little over two years. And you find most of the people that go about doing stuff has a little more time. Then sometimes I worry about the placement of some of these individuals in here. Some of them, the reason they don't want to participate is because they can't understand. They're kind of slow-learning and this class might not be for them. And a lot of people become disruptive because they're embarrassed. And they're hiding what's wrong with them.

The teachers of the classes in the evaluation were also asked about students who are misassigned to their classes. One teacher describes a perspective of this issue, especially with regard to Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) testing teachers are required to administer:

BU: Some of them I would say they are misplaced. But I have to say, on that too, just because we do the TABE test, they don't like that TABE test. Some people don't work good under pressure and it's a timed test. Just like we took in school, but we were young then, and now you've got these grown men who are trying to do it all over again and it's the pressures of it. I just started another

thing. I try and break it up into sections. So like, Saturday, I'm doing TABE testing right now, and it's 4.5, 5 hours, or whatever it is, to take this test.

So what is the solution to this dilemma? What should be clear is that no simple solution exists. Two education administrators indicated that the best place to solve this problem is in the Unit Classification Committee.

One principal was even more pragmatic about the misassignment of inmates into vocational education classes:

QK: Well, the way they assign students is going to have to change, but they know that. But because just throwing a body into a program is not the right thing to do. We need to look at how much time left to serve, if he's in a wheelchair, he can't necessarily be in all the voc programs. They need to look at putting the right student in the right program.

Both philosophically and pragmatically, there are real negative effects of assigning the wrong students to the wrong education classes, especially vocational education classes. This is especially true for students who do not have the requisite skills (reading, math, language) to succeed in these often challenging courses. However, for this evaluation, the importance of getting the right student into the right class goes beyond the broader themes of inmates not wanting education. Some inmate students simply do not want the vocational education class they have been assigned to, while others are committed to making the most of the opportunity. Both of these themes will be examined next, specifically with regard to the vocational education classes included in this evaluation.

Vocational education students who do not want the class It quickly became evident during the classroom observations and interviews that not all students wanted to be in the classes included in this study. Some displayed this attitude by simply being disengaged from the class (i.e., by putting their head down or socializing). These inmates would sit off to the side (usually) and visit or joke with other disengaged students; some would read books, draw, or write letters, and still others would, at times, sleep. Other inmate students who did not want to be members of the classes would openly complain about having to go to class and were vocal about their dislike of the subject, the teacher, the other inmate students, or just about anything else. In this context, interviewees (students and teachers) were asked to estimate the number or percentage of students in their class

($n=27$ full time students) who did not want to be in the class. The following are a sample of the students' responses.

CSUC: How many of the 27 guys in the class don't want to be there?

EK: I'd say probably about 50%.

CSUC: How many of [the other students] do you think just could care less if they're in this class one day to the next?

SK: Half the class.

CSUC: Are some inmates referred to the program who don't fit at all? Who don't want to be here?

FF: Yeah. Probably 70% of the class.

These responses from inmates from different classes at different prisons represent a clear pattern and problem for vocational education in the CDCR. What emerges is the fact that many of the inmates assigned to these classes simply do not want to be there. While some will take proactive steps to be reassigned or unassigned to the class, other inmates just end up wasting time and taking up space.

One of the reasons inmate students do not want to be in a particular vocational education class is because they have no interest in the trade itself. This was true of two inmates who were interviewed together because they both wanted to voice their frustration about being in a class they did not want. These two inmates were not disruptive and were always respectful of their teacher—as confirmed by the teacher himself. Both took steps to be reassigned or unassigned from the class, which failed. It is also important to note that while these inmates were frustrated with their situation, they did not participate in the interview because they have an “ax to grind.” Instead, their motivation to be willing to be interviewed appeared to be more out of a genuine desire to provide the CDCR an opportunity to better administer vocational education. A final point of context: these two inmates were from different ethnic groups. Because of the racial tension that is persistent in California's prisons, it is unlikely they “came together” on this issue specifically to mislead the researchers:

KQ: But this here, I'm not going to pursue a plumbing career when I get on the street. As I look at it, I'm just taking up space in here. Get an individual that wants to be in here. There's a lot of them—they're in the system—[who] would love to be in this class. Me, myself I have no interest in this class. It's such a good program, it's good for the people that want to learn.

CSUC: You're not criticizing the program, you're criticizing your place in the program.

KQ: Exactly.

CSUC: Do you feel the same way?

CL: Yes. I don't knock this program. Like you said, there's guys that need to be here, that want to be here, that have two or more years to do, you know what I mean. I'm thinking this was going to be more of a hands-on. We'd go out to buildings and stuff like that and actually, you know, 'cause I'm the type of person that I can learn by watching.

Asked about their efforts to get removed from the class, they said:

KQ: But you can't force people to stay in here.

CL: We're being misled, you know what I mean? And a lot of guys are aware of the lies and stuff like that, but I'm in a position where, I'm aware of the lie. And stuff like that. But I'm not trying to make a big issue of it because I've got too much to lose. Because then I'll be putting my [release] day in jeopardy. So what's more important, my day, or to just sit here and eat it up? And that's what I've been doing is just sitting here and eating it up. Because I told Mr. X. I said, "Mr. X., I've been down almost three years.... I have actually five months and some change left. I'm not going to be able to learn anything. So the most I can do is come to class every day and not be disruptive." And I just sit there.

KQ: What do I do?

CL: I don't do nothing, I don't interrupt.

CSUC: And that's respectful.

KQ: There's nothing wrong with Mr. X. He's a good guy. But he tells you his job is to make sure you're in here. But he doesn't say you *have* to do this. He will say he would *like* for you to do it.

When one informant (BN) referred to "putting my day in jeopardy," he meant that if he refused to go to class he would be sanctioned for non-compliance, which would jeopardize his parole date (i.e., delaying it for a minimum of 90 days). For BN, that was too steep a price to pay. Another informant (JS) was more willing to stay in prison longer if it meant getting out of the class. He blamed the situation on the way that particular prison was run. However, other observations and interviews suggested this was not the case as related by this inmate:

KQ: This institution—any other institution I've been to would have had me pulled out of this class. I'm talking any institution, and I've been to a lot of them. They'll only keep me in there for so long. I've been trying for four months to get a gate pass and get another job. The counselor does absolutely nothing ... and I'm just about to say "hey, up yours. Give me 30 more days." Because I've already been down that route before. They make you do

something you don't want to do, you're going to get tired of me and I'll tell you to kiss my ass. What are you going to do now?

However, some students do change their minds about being in a class during the time they are waiting to be reassigned. Several inmate students indicated this was their experience. For most of these students, the single factor that changed their mind and attitude was the teacher. Good vocational education teachers engage their students with the hope of helping them learn a trade and rehabilitate their lives. Here, a student implies that a good "rapport" with a concerned teacher changed his attitude toward his class:

TT: I [didn't] want to be here. But I'm not just going to waste my time.

CSUC: So how did you get to that point? You came into the class, you didn't want to be in the class, you tried to get out of the class.

TT: Because I got no help from the counselors.

CSUC: You're frustrated.

TT: I'm frustrated. And I'm not going to take it out on her [the teacher]. Like I said when I first came here, I don't want to be here, but I'm not going to disrupt your class. So that gives us a rapport. She knows where I'm coming from, she knows I'm not just sitting here, those are my true feelings.

Vocational education students who do want the class There are many students who want to be in vocational education classes. There is much evidence indicating that many students take vocational education courses seriously and desire to learn a trade in prison in order to improve their life chances. Before leaving this discussion concerning assigning the right inmate to the right class, the CDCR and the Unit Classification Committee deserve some credit for also "getting it right" for many inmates. This section examines some of the themes that emerged when interviewees discussed why they wanted the class they were attending.

One inmate describes his change in thinking about his involvement in vocational education. To put this inmate's comment into some context, his efforts at personal redefinition and rehabilitation were nothing short of remarkable. This individual was an active member of a prison gang, had a violent history, and was a member of a racist hate group when not in prison. Further, as he clearly indicates, prior to becoming a member in the class he had no interest in vocational education:

SK: I didn't want to come to the class. The state forces you to do a vocation. I have a job, I've never been without a job on the streets, so I refused it. And

I went on C-status [no privileges] on the other yards with refused folks. But when I got over here, I was close to the house [paroling], I figured they were going to put me in there. If you're forcing me to take it, I'll take it. So then once they're forced, they give you an option of all the classes here, and I chose this one. And due to luck, because usually you don't get your choice, they just put you wherever there's an opening. And here it's hard to get switched around and stuff. They've got issues with that. I got lucky, somebody dropped out of the class right after I was put on the list. So I got the class.

A student from another class had a different perspective of inmate students' desire to be in vocational education classes. He thinks most of the students are interested in the trades being offered and want to learn while some do not:

DD: The ones that are in education, most of the guys want to learn. And naturally, a guy that signs up, it's because he's interested. And non-education individuals are guys that have no interest in it at all. And the second commentary on that is the ones that get pushed in here, they're more or less happy just doing whatever they're doing. A lot of guys that come into education, they'd rather be a porter or yard crew or something like that because they really don't want to do anything.

One inmate student wanted to make it clear he was involved in the specific vocational education class because it was what he wanted to do. He wanted to learn about that trade and was not interested in taking any other vocational education course:

DD: No, I wouldn't do another vocation voluntarily. I'm doing this for me. I'm doing this because I don't know this and I want to learn it. But I can say from my point of view, there is no incentive. I'm getting absolute zero from this. Doing flat-time, and if my time in prison or getting out is contingent on what I achieve while I'm in here, if I make changes in my life, make a concerted effort to go out and make changes that brought me to this place, then yeah.

I want the certification. To me, that's what it's all about. I'm not just coming here to waste my time. I want to learn, and the system is allowing me to use their equipment and all their tools, they're supplying [supplies] for this particular class to practice. Give me walls to work on, things like that. So to me, it's a plus. I mean, I'm not learning anything by pushing the broom on the other side.

While this student wanted vocational education because he was interested in the trade, many inmate students saw vocational education as a chance

to better themselves and to be active doing something productive while incarcerated. A side benefit of vocational education is that it removed inmate students from some of the problems and negativity experienced in the dorms, housing units, or the yard.

Two dominant themes emerged when the inmate students were asked why they wanted to participate in vocational education in prison. First, it helps them improve their quality of life while still in prison. Second, vocational education classes help to better prepare them for a successful life once they parole, including enabling them to meet their personal responsibilities, some for the first time in their lives.

UY: So now that I've come up out of there, it did actually open up my heart and my mind to it and opened me up to a whole new thing, you know what I mean? So I started really thinking, what is it that I could do? So when I got here, I went into a place of level 1 where I could apply myself for the future. When I went to classification, I was in that mind. So instead of saying no, I want a pay number job, I want to go pick up trash off the yard or I want to go to the kitchen so I could eat and hustle food—I'm thinking no, I'm tired of this. I'm tired of being tired of this and I need to pick myself up by the bootstraps and do something for myself. And so I asked. I just opened my mouth and asked. "What kind of [vocational] programs do you guys have here?" "Oh, Mr. X, we have this and this and this and this." And I have a little bit of maintenance experience, so I said, building maintenance. From the last time I was out there, and from convicts in here, you know we go into construction trades. That's a readily available money source for us when we get out. So I thought, well you know, maybe I could try it out. Just try it. So I said, hey, put me in a vocation. So I just tried it.

The following inmate's statement represents the epitome of the hoped-for goal of rehabilitative services in California:

KR: I'm looking for any type of trades that will better me when I get back out there into the community so I can be the solution instead of the problem. When I get back out there in society. Trying to help my family out, so I'm trying to gain as many skills as I can and as many avenues as I can. Get out there and be productive.

Class implementation At its most basic, Step 4 of the California Logic Model calls for the delivery of programs that are part of an organized plan for rehabilitation for each inmate. In the case of this evaluation, the focus is on vocational education. In this context, informants were asked questions

about their experiences with vocational education in California's prisons. Many respondents had knowledge of only a single class while some administrators had a perspective of the system as a whole. Included in this section is an examination of informants' thoughts about the curriculum; how these classes prepare inmates for a vocation and the outcomes associated with vocational education. What becomes apparent from these data is that it is challenging to offer vocational education in prison. Overall, vocational education is viewed in a positive light by inmates, teachers, and prison administrators. How and why there is this positive consensus is evaluated here from the perspective of the curriculum, certification, and recidivism, also highlighted by both AB 900 and the California Logic Model.

One upper-level prison administrator had this to say about providing vocational education:

LY: I personally believe and in my experience, that voc[ational education] is the biggest bang for the buck as far as giving them that tangible skill. You teach somebody to weld, he can feed himself. You teach somebody to build something, he has pride. You know, there's that pride factor that's also part of this. Because most of these guys suffer from horrible low self-esteem. They've been beat down their whole lives, which led them to where they are.

Another principal discusses an aspect of the classes that is not contained in the curricula:

CT: Now explaining to them that, you know, we all have bosses; sometimes we don't like our boss, but we still need to do our job—that's how I had to explain to my classes when a new teacher came in that they already knew their reputation and they didn't really want to be in that teacher's class. They were disgruntled. But again, you correlate it to a work environment, a job ethic. You guys are all together on the outside, why you have to segregate on the inside is beyond me, but that's [the influence of prison gangs] for inmates. But that's why classes can work either in academic or vocational trades. Vocational classes, even though you have book learning, you have that hands-on opportunity.

This informant is speaking to both the general benefits of vocational education classes—teaching students a “job ethic”—and the structure of the classes. Both features of vocational education provide an important context for the classes. Inmate student experiences within this context include a range of activities replicating the community college classroom, and the worksite, while at the same time encompassing instruction, independent study, and hands-on practice.

It is important to remember that while there is an attempt to imitate vocational education “on the outside,” teaching in prison is not the same as teaching vocational education in a high school or community college. The nature of prison, the population, security requirements, the rapid turnover of students, and other constraints that arise in a correctional environment require teachers to be adaptable in how they structure classroom activities. For example, one student described how a painting teacher adapted to a prison situation in which there were few practical “real-life” places for students to practice:

DD: Basically, what we’re doing in here is a little unorthodox because, when you look at it, this is commercial and residential painting. This is not where artistry and faux-tension comes into play. This is basically how to use a brush, identify brushes, painting failures, what to look for, that type of thing. How to work safely on scaffolding, and everything that would be used for commercial or residential painting—somebody’s house or a commercial building, something like that. That’s basically what this whole class focuses on, or what it’s supposed to. But [the teacher] is more into the painting this (the informant points out an example of painting more artistically), which is good. I mean, it gives individuals more incentive to want to be in here. They’re learning regular painting plus they’re picking up some other things that they’d like to do, which gives more incentive to want to learn.

Standard purchased curricula To help teachers best implement the classes, the CDCR provided standardized curricula (see research questions 1 and 2; Dick et al., 2009). One senior education administrator described the tools and curricula provided to help teachers to deliver the programs. “Now, we have provided an instruction booklet at a particular grade level range. And that instructor has the ability to supplement that material; they can take advice from other vocational instructors on what they do [as well]” (PSA). A student also commented on the material for the class. When asked what he likes about the class, he said:

LU: I pretty much like everything about the class. How it’s set up, you know, to be self-paced. How accessible he is, how it’s not only book work, it’s actual hands-on with the equipment that you’d have to use out in the street.

A teacher added this about the materials he is given to teach the class:

NE: With this NCCER program—it’s developed for a program that the student has more ability to be exposed to various, you know, different type

of experiences or skills. And so what I'm trying to get at is, I think this program would be better served if we give them certain skills, like how to braise, how to solder, and abandon the thought of this trying to be a watered down apprenticeship program.

This is the advice that the CDCR appears to have followed, as curriculum is now designed to bring students to an entry-level skill set.

A key factor influencing how teachers implement vocational education in prison is the curriculum they are given to teach. Indeed, the overall evaluation of these classes by students and teachers is largely influenced by their general perception of the curriculum. Nearly every one of the respondents indicated they like the curricula for the classes and had favorable things to say about the material. In fact, criticisms of the curricula often centered on their implementation, not the material itself. Dissatisfaction with the curricula was often misplaced criticisms of teachers who were not satisfactorily implementing it.

However, the curricula used for the 19 vocational education classes included in this evaluation were judged to be excellent or good (Dick et al., 2009), with just two curricula being judged as adequate or weak. Many students and teachers (from different vocational education classes) like the curriculum. The comments point to strong curriculum coherence from their own perspectives. This evaluation was true even when the curricula were considered to be challenging. Here is what one student said about an NCCER curriculum:

CSUC: But it's a tough textbook?

UY: It is. The construction technology that I'm getting ready to get into, you have to be able to recognize that if you don't understand something, to ask. That's how you learn. The basic, core curriculum, that's safety. You've got to get that first. A lot of times that's common sense. You know, don't stick your finger in a light socket. But when you crack open that technology book that's a text, that's actually college curriculum, right? So that separates the men from the boys and you have to be able to apply yourself to that.

Another inmate student describes his experience with the curriculum. Note that completing the bookwork for his class was something that he completed in a timely fashion, but the hands-on portion of the class was more difficult for him. In particular, he hinted later to us that his teacher did not facilitate the students completing the class by providing them opportunities to complete the hands-on assessments. The strong

curricular coherence present in the planned curriculum was missing from the students' experiences due to lack of hands-on activities.

CSUC: How long did it take you to get through the curriculum?

BP: It did take me not too long. It took me like, a little over a year. That's because it just—I can do all the numbers and the math of it, I'm pretty good with that stuff. It didn't take no time. But as far as all the other stuff in the book, you got to do with your hands, you got to put it together and do all the stuff that it does in there. You can't just learn it from the book itself. The book only shows you some things but the majority of stuff you put it with your hands. You catch it more.

The chance to practice the skills students learn is a key component of vocational education classes. The trades evaluated in this study require students having the opportunity to work with the materials, tools, and procedures to ensure they are learning the subject matter, as well as for the certification tests asked for by Legislature. Not surprisingly, given the population studied here, the inmate students report that the hands-on training they get in these classes is their favorite part. In fact one informant, when asked what his favorite part of the class is, said "I like the hands-on. Going out and working with the equipment" (KB). Most of these men report being kinesthetic learners (not their words) and having the opportunity to practice the skills they are being taught helps them to process and learn the material better.

Teaching and teachers

One way the teachers maximize their resources in the prison context is through the use of group work. Usually, individual students within the groups were at different places in the curriculum, a necessary adaptation to the open-entry/open-exit assignment of students. Such group work helped teachers take advantage of more advanced students in helping them teach the newer students. In fact, peer tutoring was found to be a key component of all vocational education classes observed. One teacher described group work in class this way:

TCC: Because half of these guys, more than half of them, have gone through all of the basics and, if I did a basic lecture, it would be stupid to make them go through it over and over and over again. I mean, what's the point? So mostly you get smaller groups. And so you do small-group orientations and small-group lectures and small-group teachings. Once they go through

something, I have them teach the next group. I go through it with them, they go through it themselves, then they pass the performance period test and then they teach the next group.

It is important to note that this teacher, in particular, was one of the more outstanding teachers observed during the course of this evaluation. The teacher's understanding of student learning challenges, intense focus on a high level of student engagement, and organization of instruction through structured group work exemplifies some of the teacher professionalism observed that made vocational education an effective program.

Another teacher also described using group work:

BU: I want them to work as a team, because again, in prison, sometimes you have races and cultures and stuff like that that don't allow them to intermix, so sometimes I make them interact with each other just because they're going to have to deal with that on the outside, too, if they get a job.

This teacher recognizes the benefit of racial integration (and greater racial tolerance) that emerges from the integrated work groups. The capacity to work with others from differing ethnicities is important after parole, and often at odds with the prison environment.

The inmate students were asked to share their thoughts about the teachers. With rare exceptions, the teachers were viewed by the inmates as effective and held in high regard. One student described his teacher's willingness and ability to help students:

BA: But those that are in this class that really want the help, Mr. X is always ready, willing to help you, to assist you in any kind of way that he can. He does assist those that are interested in this class and don't have GEDs, he's working diligently, from what I can see, with those students in acquiring their GEDs.

Many students spoke about how their teachers would "go the extra mile" to help students learn the material and grow as individuals. Here is how another student described the teacher of a class on a lower level yard (note the enthusiasm of the inmate for a "hands-on" approach):

CSUC: Is he a good teacher?

LU: Yes, he's very hands-on. He does the steps, because you know, you have to. In here you're babysitting a lot. Because the reason why, like I said, that a lot of people are here is because of impulse control. You never learned

impulse control. And you know, he has to break it down without seeming disrespectful.... He doesn't mind doing it or showing you how it's done. And he has a wealth of experience that backs up his knowledge of how to do it. So, you've got lazy teachers that want to just sit back there under the air conditioner all day and then you have the ones like Mr. X that is out there.

Of course, not all students were as enthusiastic about how their teacher administered the class. One student offered this evaluation of his teacher:

UQ: He needs to be down here a little bit more than he is up there [in his office]. Give out a little bit more advice. If we had more hands-on, I would like to see him come in with stuff to show us how he'd like it. His ideas, his views. And then we can take our own views and take it from there. But like I said, he's a busy man. He's always doing paperwork. But he does come down sometimes. If we had more hands-on, I think we'd be doing a lot better.

The teachers themselves discussed ways they help their students learn. The teachers in the high-rated classes in Dick et al., (2009) curriculum evaluation actively engaged students on a variety of subjects, not exclusively the material of the class. This primarily meant instruction indirectly related to success in the trade (i.e., teaching students to read or basic math skills). Here is one teacher's response to a question that literacy instruction also be part of a vocational education class:

NE: One of the responsibilities I have as well is to improve their literacy skills. And as certain as I think you can feel, I get students that have various needs. And let's say a small population does come here with, let's say functionally illiterate, or are illiterate. And so having been in the trade and working with people of such abilities, they're able to make a living. So, to a certain extent, I have to modify the program to give them some entry-level abilities to possibly pursue some sort of entry into let's say, the piping trade.

Another teacher discusses how to bring extra information to teaching students about math in a way that makes sense:

TCC: But anyway, going back to motivating them. Everything has its motivation. Like math. We do construction math in here. And the math, the way I work it is, I say, how do you know you're not getting cheated by your buddy if you just bet on something? How do you know that when you get out of there that someone's not cheating you on your paycheck? How do you know if the general store, Safeway, who's not interested in cheating, miscalculates?

Another advantage to hands-on learning activities is that it encourages inmates to work together in groups. This is particularly important as students are often required to work with others from different ethnicities. In real-world settings, especially in most of the trades offered to CDCR inmates, the ability and willingness to work as a team is assumed. Indeed, in most situations, ethnic segregation is not permitted, and inmates must work effectively with people from different ethnic groups. Hands-on and project-based learning exercises help students develop teamwork skills and positive inter-group interactions. Here, one teacher talks about the obstacles inmate students have in getting a job and working in a given field:

NE: I've been out in the trade and I've worked with ex-felons, alongside of them. As a matter of fact, the business manager of the local, when I went in, was an ex-felon. But they (the ex-felon), they don't work well in teams. They tend to do jobs that are one-man oriented. And as soon as that's done with they're usually let go.

Many of the respondents, including both school staff and inmates, believed that there would be more opportunities for hands-on learning if work groups could do more tasks within the prison. The benefits to the students are apparent, but the benefits to the prison are more complicated, since using inmate labor potentially interferes with both certification requirements and union contracts.

An example illustrates the point. One of the HVAC classes included in this study purchased a state-of-the-art walk-in refrigerator for students to learn on. Because the refrigerator was significantly larger than the rest of the equipment in the class, it required special wiring to be functional. However, because this was a special request of the plant operations department, it took over one year before the unit was hooked up. At the same time, this prison had an Electrical Works vocational education class where students were learning how to install wiring for such walk-in refrigerator units. The more advanced students in the Electrical Works class were adequately trained to connect the refrigerator for the HVAC class, and the Electrical Works teacher offered to have his students do the work, but the plant operation department refused to allow them to do so. This would have been a perfect opportunity for one vocational education class to help another and the prison as a whole. Specifically, having vocational education students practice their new skills (controlled and supervised) throughout the institution can help the prisons save money in a variety of

ways. This example demonstrates just one. The following quote develops this point further. A principal and vice principal talk about how they tried to deal with requests for inmate students to service the prison itself:

CSUC: If we identify in our report that men learning the trade should be allowed to practice that trade more than just in the classroom setting—but you have this obstacle of plant ops (operations)—how can we recommend that obstacle be overcome?

EP: We developed a program and we implemented it for awhile, it was a [certain type] program, it was called, through janitorial, that [education] will provide trained inmates, through vocational janitorial, and you have a maintenance worker take them over to the hospital and they do the work. A cooperative kind of program between vocation and plant ops.

QK: We'd be using a plant ops person to do the supervision.

It is not just education administrators and teachers who think project-based learning can help both vocational education students and the prison. The students think this as well. Here, two inmates interviewed together make the point:

KQ: But if you take us to buildings, and something's broken, give us the tools and say, take that apart and fix it. Let us get dirty.

CL: Yeah, grab that 9-16 and a 45. We already know because we know what tool is what and what pipe is what and stuff like that. And what's connected and everything, you know what I mean? And that's where I'm at right now, you know what I mean? You're learning and working as you go.

Another student summed up the point by briefly discussing how his class is permitted to service the institution by doing minor jobs related to the trade they are learning. He recognizes that the hands-on opportunity reinforces the course curriculum, making the endeavor more successful.

DD: Yeah, we'll go and paint a lobby. We'll go and visit the laundry. We painted some of the bathrooms over here. Some students painted it. I mean, there's opportunities for real-life applications of what you're picking up in the book.

One intangible outcome of implementing vocational education programs in California's prisons is these programs offer inmates hope. The vocational education courses under consideration in this report hold the promise of a livable wage once paroled, and even the possibility of eventually

becoming one's own boss by owning a small business. Indeed, many of the inmates interviewed indicated that they want to turn their vocational education training into something more than just a job; they hope it will become their profession.

EK: But with this vocational class hopefully, it gives me an opportunity and it starts me in the right direction to where I'll be able to build something when I am released, you know what I'm saying. Give me some incentives, some kind of insights on where I can go and I might not have to look for employment, I'll be able to be my own boss and start my own company or something, you know.

Certification and Signaling. A tangible benefit of the vocational education courses evaluated in this study is the opportunity to earn certification for skill development and course completion. Courses certified through the NCCER or other nationally recognized organizations are the best examples. Courses included in this study that offer national certification include:

- Auto Mechanics (through Automotive Service Excellence)
- Building Maintenance
- Carpentry
- Electrical Works
- Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC)
- Mill and Cabinetry
- Painting
- Plumbing
- Welding

The advantages certification offers inmate students are substantial. The most obvious benefit is that students have concrete evidence of their training and preparedness for working in a particular trade. Certification provides inmate students a sense of accomplishment and pride in their achievement. It provides them something positive to tell their families, and it reinforces their rehabilitative efforts. But, most importantly from CDCR's perspective, certification improves the students' chances of success upon parole.

Offering classes that provide certifications of achievement are required by AB 900 and recommended in the Expert Panel's report (2007). Both California's legislators and the widely respected academics and practitioners on the Expert Panel recognize the importance of providing standardized vocational education courses with certifiable outcomes. One teacher

uses certification as a way to get new students to become more personally invested in the class. The class referred to is nationally accredited.

One aspect students like about the NCCER program is that they, their families, or potential employers can have instant access online to their records. The NCCER database legitimizes the inmates' vocational education efforts while on parole. Certification signals evidence of their skills to potential employers. One inmate puts it this way:

DD: I want the certification. To me, that's what it's all about. I'm not just coming here to waste my time. I want to learn, and the system is allowing me to use their equipment and all their tools; they're supplying paint for this particular class to practice.

This inmate student emphasized the importance of using the vocational educational opportunity rather than working as a porter in the dorms or cellblocks. Another inmate shares how he was interested in learning about automotive repair for its own sake, but then realized the importance of certification for getting a job:

RR: I was just going to take it day by day. Automotive, but you know, I need certifications to get into the automotive business. Business wise stuff—I can't go be a mechanic without no certification. They're going to look at me like I'm an idiot. Especially the diplomas that they do here. It's just a completion. All that is an entry-level. I mean entry-level is better than nothing, but I really want to get the certification thing going on. Especially in this class. If they gave me that incentive, it would make me work a little bit harder to get that certification.

What is likely a common response, this informant implies he would try harder in the class if he was certain certification was something he would be able to achieve.

An interrelated benefit of certification and vocational education is parolees can signal their rehabilitation to future employers. As is commonly recognized (Gaes, 2009), parolees are stigmatized by their status and sometimes, if they have prison tattoos, their appearance. This history makes finding gainful employment more difficult. Indeed, this is one of the reasons why AB 900 funds vocational education in the first place—to improve the likelihood of success once an inmate paroled. Improved reintegration upon parole also serves the greater good by reducing recidivism and improving public safety overall.

An inmate discusses the importance of positive signaling when looking for a job:

CL: That's why I'm trying to at least have some kind of experience in plumbing. It could be anything, but I know plumbing—I was thinking about my conviction and everywhere on the application, have you ever been convicted of a felony? So I'm thinking more like if I do this plumbing, they're not going to trip on the guy about having a felony.

Vocational education and recidivism reduction The following quotation summarizes a common sentiment of the CDCR and educational administrators concerning the value of vocational education to reduce recidivism. Here, a senior administrator from one of the prisons in the study responds to the question: “Do you believe that vocational education inmates are going to be more successful or less likely to recidivate and if so, why?”

BP: I do because, those that complete the class, I should say, not every vocational inmate is going to be successful because they haven't had the opportunity to complete the class. I believe the percentage is going to be greater of those that are less likely to recidivate that have completed the class. And the reason I believe that is they now have a marketable skill. They've learned how to weld and they have a certificate that they can present to an employer that says, 'I'm not just Joe Blow off the street who wants to be a welder's helper, I'm an actual, certified welder.' As an employer, that's what I would be looking for. Obviously, I am going to consider their prison time. But if an individual walks into my place of business and he can present me with certification that correlates with my business, as opposed to the individual is just coming out of prison with no ability to provide that certificate, I'm going to give him a job.

Finally, as one teacher noted earlier, the institutional name on the certificates does not signify any direct relationship with the CDCR or the specific prison in which the inmate is incarcerated. This is important, especially as these men attempt to resume their lives back in the community. Certificates, diplomas, or other documents recognizing student achievement are awarded by adult schools. These schools have names that do not represent the prisons in which they are housed. Just as an example, Golden Hills Adult School is the school at Avenal State Prison and Tulare Lake Adult School is at California Substance Abuse and Treatment Facility (SATEF) in Corcoran. The fact that the prison schools are represented by

innocuous names is beneficial to parolees as they attempt to signal positive rehabilitative achievements while minimizing their status as an ex-felon.

Step 5—Measure Progress

Step 5 of the California Logic Model largely calls for the CDCR to measure inmate progress based on programmatic interventions and to administer post-tests, especially with regard to behavior management interventions. Whether CDCR is following this recommendation is beyond the scope of this evaluation, but one aspect of this step does fit with this evaluation of vocational education: rewarding program compliance and progress toward completion. Specifically, the Expert Panel (2007) recommended the CDCR and California's Legislature provide incentives to inmates who comply with the prescribed rehabilitation program and complete classes that address their criminogenic needs. In this regard, Step 5 is of central importance to this evaluation of vocational education of these 19 vocational education classes.

Incentives for vocational education students are an important concern. CDCR officials, education administrators, teachers, and students all have an interest in seeing vocational education function as efficiently as possible. This means that there are incentives for course completion and intermediate accomplishments. Indeed, the investment in incentives is small compared to the savings of reduced recidivism and increased public safety. California's Legislature recognizes this fact with the passing of the 2009 Budget agreement that included programs for awarding inmates who successfully complete programs like vocational education up to a 6-week reduction in their sentence (see The bill with the unusual name SB 18 XXX, 2009), which was signed by Governor Schwarzenegger in October 2009.)³ This legislation enables the CDCR to administer such incentive programs.

CDCR leadership also recognizes the importance of providing inmates incentives for programmatic compliance. For example, one senior-level administrator said "that's one of the reasons that we put forward this proposal to give inmates credits for accomplishments—the idea of motivating [them], which is in the expert panel report as well" (NA). One local prison administrator put it more pragmatically: "If we're going to be rehabilitating, I think [incentives are] appropriate. Just like with your children. You've got to give them incentives in order for them to do stuff" (LY).

Naturally, not all incentives and other credits are available for all inmates. Eligibility is based on such criteria as length of sentence, commitment offense (only inmates convicted of non-violent offenses are eligible), and completing basic requirements as determined by COMPAS and other assessment tools.

NA: Obviously it doesn't impact inmates serving indeterminate terms because the Board of Parole has jurisdiction over how much time they serve. And I think also violent inmates are not included because their sentences are mandated by the three strikes law, which was put into effect by the initiative process, and so the Legislature would need a 4/5 [sic] vote to return that, and they don't have that kind of support. But there's still a significant number who would be eligible.

To be eligible for incentives, inmates must be willing to address some of their core criminogenic needs.

Clearly, the idea of incentives is well received by CDCR administrators. Not surprisingly, inmates are also in favor of incentives. One inmate had this to say when asked if he thought incentives were a good idea for vocational education and other rehabilitative programs:

EK: Yeah. Okay, you get in these classes and you've got people like, oh, 'I've got a year, I'm going to stretch it out.' Now you've got those same guys saying, 'Let me get this done.' So now you have these guys knocking this class out because they're like, 'Man, I want to get this done, I want to go home six weeks early. That's a month and a half I can get home.' Now you're able to put the other people who want the class in the class too.

Most informants, including staff and inmates, agreed that such efforts invoke positive behaviors from inmates. However, pursuing this line of questioning further, it became evident that most CDCR administrators viewed incentives and time credits almost exclusively as a way to incentivize behavior inside the institution, rather than as a long-term rehabilitation program. For example, prison jobs are especially appealing to inmates who do not have outside resources to draw upon. Prison jobs permit inmates a chance to purchase such goods as toothpaste, deodorant, and preferred food items like Top Ramen soup packets. In fact, a common scenario relayed to the researchers involved students who would drop out of classes because they were given a prison job paying \$0.11 an hour. Often, these jobs worked against the programs or interventions designed to address the inmates' rehabilitative needs.

To a certain extent, this difference in incentives is imperfectly made up through the development of rituals and ceremonies that reward vocational education students in a non-monetary fashion. Prison schools typically acknowledged student accomplishments with graduation ceremonies. Much like a “normal” graduation ceremony, these were formal events, with guest speakers, recognition for outstanding accomplishments, and even family members in attendance. For many inmates, these celebrations of academic and vocational achievement were the first time they had experienced such success. One inmate said:

HF: Graduation ceremonies are good. It gives the person—makes his chest stick out a little bit more. For me, it’s my second cap and gown. If I do another graduation it will be my third cap and gown.

This quotation also highlights how vocational educational opportunities are valued by at least some of the inmates. But these non-remunerative rewards of the vocational education classes did not replace the allure of paid employment for most (commonly referred to as a “pay number”). Both long-term, intrinsic motivators such as graduation ceremonies and short-term behavioral motivators such as pay numbers are needed.

A vice principal described the way the relationship between vocational education and prison jobs might work:

EP: Before you go work for plant ops (plant operations), you’ve got to go through my electrical program or you have to be enrolled or you have to complete so many units in order to do this work. That’s what we did with janitorial. I will provide you trained staff. You say these guys don’t know what they’re doing ... well, my vocational shop will provide you with trained students. You’ve just got to supervise them.

The vice principal expressed a commonly communicated frustration with the Unit Classification Committees’ lack of commitment to educational policies over and above what appeared to be idiosyncratic or random placement decisions. Many prison and educational administrators believed that there should be a connection between vocational education and prison employment, but this ideal was rarely observed. Moreover, at many of the institutions, such efforts to use skilled labor were met with strong resistance from plant operations staff and their union.

Only one prison visited by the CSUC research team appeared to be explicitly linking vocational education and prison jobs. In the follow-

ing quote, a senior-level prison administrator discussed whether inmates should be made to take vocational education before they are eligible to have a prison job. To the administrator, the relationship between vocational education and prison jobs is a matter of perception: instead of imposing education on inmates, his prison offers the incentive of getting a desired prison job if they complete vocational education. The response provides a great deal of insight, especially with regard to matching vocational education to prison jobs and plant operations.

CSUC: Should inmates be required to “program” [before getting prison jobs]?

EY: No. I think if you require anyone to do anything, you get the very least out of them, because nobody likes things being imposed on them. What you do is create incentives, and we’ve done some of that here. I’ve taken all of the jobs that are available here—you can’t have a job in my prison with a pay number unless you have a 9.0 [reading score on the TABE test]. You can’t have a lead job unless you have a GED [General Education Degree]. So we’ve created incentives, and now the inmates want to go back.

A significant theme that emerged from the interviews was that the respondents believed that there were disincentives for taking vocational education classes because they lost prison privileges inmates had on the yard had. Several disincentives associated with being a vocational education student were mentioned, many by more than one informant. For example, five respondents mentioned not being able to go to the yard for exercise, four identified not being able to go to the canteen, and three mentioned not being able to go to the laundry.

One of the highest-ranking educational administrators recognized how participating in correctional education can be a disincentive for program compliance and rehabilitation. For this administrator, the problem is a starting place to begin fixing this issue:

KY: It’s not so much incentives as disincentives. I have to go to school or I can get my clothes. Hmm. I need clean clothes this week. Gee, I can make my phone call to my wife, my sister, my brother, whatever, or I can go to school. Hmmm. I’m going to go get my phone call. There’s a number of things that are set up as a disincentive as going to school.

Such correctional education professionals are sensitive to the needs of inmates who choose education programs. Indeed, such disincentives end

up being frustrating to school officials and teachers as well, because the situations compromise the students' commitment to the class. This can create real problems for the teachers, especially when the inmate students bring their frustrations to the classroom. One inmate student summarized the situation well when he said:

DF: Small things around here that we need that we can't get, because we have to stay in class all day. Laundry, that's my main one. Canteen, we can get canteen at night. Sometimes we ask them and we can get that. We can't get no yards. Packages, it's awful to get our packages because they don't call them no more at night. And then finally, visits. You kind of mess up your visits with your family so, they're messing up your support. So they're discouraging you and your family all the way around.

Obviously, not being able to connect with one's family, an important factor for preventing recidivism, is a significant issue. The CDCR should take notice of how policies are preventing inmates from visiting with their family.

An inmate talked about how the class he was a student in prevented him from visiting the law library, which is a basic right for inmates:

DD: I'll take the law library, for example. I can't go to the law library until after I'm done with this class. Now we have a law library at 1:15. They won't let me go—even though she [his teacher] lets me go—the officer over here won't let me go until at least 1:30, 1:45.

The researchers then asked DD if vocational education students should have a special pass. His response was especially insightful with regard to disincentives beyond the practicality of having a special pass for students:

DD: Yeah, but it doesn't work that way. If something happens on that yard [leading a lockdown], even if we're over here doing what we're supposed to do, if we get over there, we're on restrictions like those guys. If they're not going to be good, then we're going to get punished for it. So now you're talking about work incentives, hmm, where's my incentive? You've taken the incentive that I have—am I going to get my phone calls? Well yes, I am going to get my phone calls, but I can't get to the yard. So I guess I've got all evening to get on the phone now. I've got a package here, but I can't get it. All the stuff in there is getting older and older and older because I have to wait. And I can't get to canteen, so now I have no coffee. I mean, those little things that you don't see.

DD makes a critical point: all inmates suffer the consequences of a lock-down in the event of trouble on the yard or in a housing unit, even those who are programming and in school. Compliant inmates are at the mercy of those who are not. This feeds the perception that inmates who have no interest in rehabilitation “run” the institution, and inmates who are behaving in ways that are desirable suffer the consequences. Another high achieving inmate from a different class confirms this problem:

CSUC: What about the inmates that are on the yard?

RL: [They] get all the privileges. Exactly. See that’s where everybody gets frustrated. It’s like, what am I working for, when I don’t get any of the privileges’. Except the people that don’t work for it. They’re on the yard all day. Call packages, they can go. When they call canteen, they can go. Visits, whatever. So a lot of people will be like, I’d rather not work and be able to have those privileges than come here and not.

It is important to note that these inmates were among the more accomplished students included in this evaluation. Nevertheless, despite the fact that they lived in different prisons, they expressed similar sentiments: disruptive prisoners can affect the quality of the classes and enjoy more freedoms than inmates who are seeking rehabilitative opportunities.

Disincentives prevented vocational education from being effective tools for promoting rehabilitation and preventing recidivism. On a micro level, disincentives inhibit inmate student success or discourage involvement from non-programming inmates. Perhaps highlighting the problem of disincentives with respect to their influence on vocational education, placed alongside the recommendations of the Expert Panel (2007), will help the CDCR devise ways to reward compliant inmates while punishing those who misbehave or put others in danger. One way to accomplish this goal is to devise creative ideas for providing incentives to inmates who are programming or those who might be considering taking vocational education classes.

Recommended incentives In the following discussion, respondents were asked to identify incentives that would have the greatest positive effect on vocational education, whether big or small. The ideas behind these recommendations are to foster greater participation and commitment on the part of inmates for rehabilitation, thereby reducing the probability of recidivism. Some of the recommendations made are unrealistic, but others are not. Indeed, most of the following recommendations come with relatively little or no cost. Whatever the case, implementing these incentives

will take money, work, and commitment by the CDCR and California's Legislature to implementing the California Logic Model.

Table 10.4 summarizes the recommendations for incentives made by the interviewees and number of people who mentioned them. The discussion that follows highlights the more insightful quotes based on this theme. A high-ranking prison official answers the question, "What other carrots would motivate some of those lost guys to participate in vocational education or something else that's a positive aspect of corrections?"

CN: Earned privileges. If you outline a program where an individual is allowed to use the telephone if he participates in these programs. An individual is allowed to have his canteen if they participate in these programs, or full canteen. More phone calls for the individuals participating in these programs, more canteen for the individuals that participate in these voc-ed programs, where if the individual decides, you know what, I want the hard time. I prefer

Table 10.4 Recommended incentives

<i>Recommended incentives</i>	<i>Number of respondents mentioning incentives</i>
Time credits/reduction of sentence	12
Job placement assistance upon parole	10
Pay numbers	9
Canteen privileges	7
Longer yard privileges	7
Plant operations jobs/Cost avoidance projects	7
First in lines or special appointment times (for canteen, showers, food, medication)	7
Food and coffee	4
Hygiene items	4
Laundry privileges	4
Halfway houses	3
Honors housing/yards	3
Tools and books for use on parole	3
Additional education opportunities	2
Family visits	2
Special identification cards	2
Telephone privileges	2
Better television stations	1
Clothing	1
Conjugal visits	1
Letter of recommendation	1

to do the backbreaking work. Well, you're not going to earn as much canteen. You're not going to earn as many telephone calls. The individuals out here on the line, they covet those things. Those are things that are very important to them. So if you utilize those things that are very important to them, that are not a right, that are privilege, utilize the privileges and make them earn those privileges, instead of giving them those privileges right at the very beginning. CSUC: What other privileges have maybe even not existed, or have been removed, that you might think if we had this, [prisoners] would really be motivated to behave appropriately.

CN: You can have something like preferred housing for the individuals that are following all the rules and regulations and participating in all the vocational education programs that are going to benefit them. Maybe honor yards. It's not unheard of to have yards that are there primarily because they have earned program. They're willing to do what it takes to better themselves. I think that those things are possibilities. These are things that could possibly work.

This administrator exhibited a commitment to CDCR's rehabilitation goals. Note the emphasis on "earned privileges" rather than entitlement.

Most respondents, both prison officials and inmates, mentioned time credits as potentially being the most effective incentive. Many administrators and teachers believe that time credits should be awarded to inmates who program and successfully complete vocational education.⁴

CN: But if [you are] participating in a vocational program where you're earning a marketable skill, you now have the ability to earn that half time. Of course, now I'm talking about something that would take a change in our laws, but nonetheless, you have to come up with some type of carrot to dangle in front of that non-motivated individual that would make them want to participate in something that's going to benefit themselves and also their families.

The following inmate agrees with the value of time credits, but also thinks time awarded should reflect how long it takes to complete a class. For inmates such as this one, varying time credits is an important consideration because he was a student in one of the more lengthy and challenging classes. He believed that students in a class that takes 6 years to complete should be given more time credits than students in classes that take just 6 months to complete:

CSUC: What other incentives would you like to see?

SK: I can't think of anything else.

CSUC: Reduced time?

SK: Yeah.

CSUC: So a six-week reduction if you complete a class?

SK: Well, if you complete it. I'm stuck in a class that I can't complete.

CSUC: Would you have maybe found your way into a voc class sooner if you could have known you could have completed and get the six weeks?

SK: Probably. Six weeks is a big difference. Every day matters, but I wouldn't sign up for a three-year class just to get six weeks.

Given the core goal of providing vocational education classes to inmates—to improve their chances of becoming gainfully employed when they leave prison—the next recommendation makes a great deal of sense: provide job placement or assistance in finding a job once they parole. However, despite the popularity of this recommendation, the connection between prison-based vocational education and the community is missing. In the following, one inmate noted that while time off one's sentence would be nice, helping vocational education students get jobs in the community is more important:

DD: What you can do is give them incentives outside of prison. Get a hold of other painting contractors throughout the state. Giving them tax incentives for hiring ex-cons. Saying, well, if you hired so many inmates, you'd get [such and such]. That way, when the inmates get out, they're guaranteed a job if they want it. Right now, I have all this knowledge, what am I going to do with it? I have nobody to hire me. Nobody wants to hire me because I've been in prison. They're afraid I'm going to steal all their brushes or steal their paint truck. If you want to give a man an incentive, give him something he can work towards.

There is little doubt that establishing community connections early on would take a great deal of work on the CDCR's part, but the probable positive outcomes resulting from these efforts would most likely outweigh any costs. In the short term, providing inmates with certification and other methods to positively signal their ability to perform a trade goes a long way.

Another popular incentive mentioned by informants was paying prison wages to inmates for attending and completing vocational education classes. When asked directly about paying inmate students for participation in school, most teachers and CDCR administrators opposed the idea. Another hurdle is that paying inmates to take vocational education would take Legislative approval, something unlikely to happen.

Most respondents were in favor of incentives for completion, but only a few were in favor of pay for participation (except the inmates—they were all for it). Respondents who were in favor of pay for participation did not suggest giving inmates a great deal of money—just \$10 to \$30 a month so the inmate could buy hygiene and food items at the canteen. A high-ranking education administrator was asked about this idea. The administrator was neither in favor of nor opposed to the idea, but believed such a policy would be costly. The administrator noted there are approximately 44,000 students in CDCR schools. Assuming a 6.5 hour school day (the norm at the time) and a 220 day school year, paying students \$0.10 an hour would cost the state \$6,292,000 per year.

One long-time prison administrator took a creative approach to paying inmates for participation in vocational education. Recognizing inmates have little or no opportunities to legitimately earn money while incarcerated, but also recognizing that many of these men still have strong familial ties, the administrator recommended giving inmates an opportunity to earn nominal gift certificates to give during the holidays or for birthdays. This administrator suggested this form of compensation for compliant behavior could shore up the inmates' investment in rehabilitation without paying them to be students in school.

This is related to the issue of inmates taking on paid employment for the prison. Typically, prison employees are paid between \$0.10 and \$0.20 an hour, whether they are working as a porter, in the kitchen, or with plant operations. The exception to this rule is work with Prison Industries Authority, where they can make up to approximately \$0.91 per hour. The inmate students liked the idea of transitioning from a vocational education classroom to prison operations where they could ply their newly learned trade.

Unfortunately, without a system-wide commitment to place inmate students in prison jobs once they successfully complete a class, achieving this recommended incentive on more than a local scale will probably not happen. The prisons themselves will need to be funded for such positions and not just rely on general funds. However, this would require the shifting of monies in one area to another and would likely result in cost savings to the prisons as a whole. As things presently stand, even where prison administrators might desire to achieve this goal, it is difficult to accomplish.

Providing vocational education students with basic necessities such as toiletries were mentioned frequently. In general, inmate students were frustrated with the limited access they had to basic inmate privileges because they were in the class. They believed they were effectively punished for

being involved with vocational education. Themes repeatedly mentioned included not having canteen privileges, not being able to go exercise on the yard, missing showers and laundry, and so on. Because these “luxuries” were missing from their lives, many respondents mentioned them when asked about recommended incentives. One vice principal said:

CSUC: So what kind of carrots would you like to see or would the inmates like to see that would encourage greater participation and more success?

FK: It doesn't even have to cost money. We've all talked about this. Allow them to go to canteen first. They program, they come to school every day, but the guy that's sitting out there on the yard gets to go to canteen first. What kind of thing is that? So just even those things. If you allowed someone to go to canteen first, we would have to hire more people to handle the men who want education. And once we have them, we will keep them.

CSUC: What are the barriers to that?

FK: The barriers are, I guess, custody would be their part and you can't treat these guys different than you treat everybody else. But why not?

Rehabilitation benefits can be realized by giving education students minor privileges like being first in lines and having special times to visit the canteen. Perhaps foremost of these privileges is the way these slight “advantages” might make inmate students' feel about their efforts. Prison is a negative place filled with constant negative messages. Having the ability to “reward” inmates for working hard in school could help improve inmates' commitment to learning. As things stand now, programming students are sent contradictory messages as they experience negative consequences for their positive behavior. In addition, providing basic necessities for vocational education and other programming inmates could induce others to become involved with rehabilitative services when they may not have done so otherwise. Further, the benefits from providing these recommended incentives can come at little or no cost to the CDCR.

The following quotes represent other recommended incentives that were not identified frequently, but should be highlighted. The first follows the concept of giving inmate students special privileges for their compliance with rehabilitation goals. A high-ranking prison administrator recommends developing honors housing accommodations and honors yards, which are already used at women's institutions throughout:

CN: You can have something like preferred housing for the individuals that are following all the rules and regulations and participating in all the voca-

tional education programs that are going to benefit them. Maybe honor yards. It's not unheard of to have yards that are there primarily because they have earned program.

Special identification cards that allows them slightly greater freedom or privileges were also mentioned.

NQ: Yeah, that's an issue. We've got one hour a day and then you do have red cards. We have from [3:00 to 4:00 pm] here because you're in school the rest of the time. From [3:00 to 4:00 pm] you can go out to yard. That's an hour. And then you can go out after dinner, which is from [7:00 to 9:00 pm]. And you do have a red card because you're in school so you're allowed to come out at night.

Others ideas were helping inmate students' transition back into their community. For example, administrator CN recommends providing programming inmates more visiting hours. A hoped for result of this time would be to further strengthen the family bonds.

CN: We could increase the number of visiting days that are allowed to the inmate population because not everybody has Friday, Saturday, and Sunday off. Some of these people that work out there work weekends and their days off might be Monday and Tuesday, therefore they can't come in and see their loved one on a visit. But doing that, you would incur costs associated with running that visiting room 7 days a week. But these are all possibilities.

Inmate student DD suggested providing the community corrections centers recommended by AB 900. "Halfway houses," as they are more commonly known, help parolees reintegrate back after having been removed from society for an extended period of time.

DD: Like I said, you have to give them something to look forward to once they get back out on the street. You have to give them a place to go. It's just like a homeless individual. He goes out, leaves prison and he goes, well where do I go from here? Prison doesn't do anything for you other than [make you] show up to your parole officer. If you had a halfway house for you to go to, and you have a job here for you, painting, to get yourself back on your feet, give you some self-esteem, get you self-motivated again and acclimated out there on the street, what more incentive do you need?

Unfortunately, with incentives come possible problems. Prison culture is manipulative and has potential for sudden violence. Here, an inmate stu-

dent anticipates problems that vocational education students could have if they are afforded special treatment and privileges:

CSUC: Another incentive we thought about, just give programming inmates a jump-to-the-head-of-the-line card.

BP: That's not going to work.

CSUC: Why?

BP: That's not fair. Somebody's going to be offended by that. Jump to the front of the line, cut in front of people? No. That's not going to work. Somebody's going to put some work on that—they're going to write it up, that it's unfair, unjust—"how does this person get more privileges than I do"—you know.

It brings the conflict between a desired rehabilitation culture and existing prison social structure into sharp focus. Avoiding this conflict will provide reinforcement for a social structure in which rehabilitation is not a real goal. Understanding and managing this conflict can provide the small and consistent steps that enable inmate students to link hard work and accomplishment with a better life, even within prison walls.

Another inmate cautions against providing too many incentives for prisoners participating in rehabilitative programming like vocational education:

LU: You've got to be careful with incentives because they start to do thing because they've been incentivized. So you've got to be careful when you incentivize anything because it takes the value away from the actual prize.

It appears that incentives are understood in two main ways. For some educators and legislators, incentives represent ways to reinforce desired behaviors within an existing prison structure that may or may not be aligned with rehabilitation goals. From this perspective, privileges are layered onto whatever system exists in each institution when desired behaviors occur. For example inmate students are provided an incentive of a shortened sentence if they complete specified programs successfully.

For other educators and legislators, incentives represent a key aspect of rehabilitation. From this viewpoint, incentives should be understood and managed to align with rehabilitation goals and to bring coherence to an inmate's entire correctional experience. Daily life for inmates would improve if they saw their own actions caused explicit and well-described benefits such as canteen or telephone privileges. Honor dorms, for instance, provide a world that integrates the rewards of productive learning and

hard work with the routines of daily life. The inmate's understanding that hard work and learning are supported with benefits every day provides both short-term reinforcement and the opportunity to develop and internalize long-term productive habits.

Step 6—Prep for Reentry

In many respects, the goals of this step, “Prep for Reentry,” are beyond the scope of this evaluation. Preparation for reentry presumably takes place in other programs. Nevertheless, vocational education prepares inmates for returning back to society after prison; through certification and positive signaling, parolees can demonstrate to possible employers a personal commitment to being a good employee. Such requirements as demonstrating skill proficiency, taking proper safety precautions, and even showing up to class (“work”) on time help inmate students become better prepared for life outside of prison.

Some teachers in this study took extra initiative to prepare students for reentry. For example, a teacher in the Office Services class required students to make an oral presentation based on class assignments. Other teachers had students practice interviewing and filling out job applications. In other cases, teachers helped students develop business plans. Most frequently, teachers brought help wanted aids from local employers to encourage inmate students regarding the possibilities for getting a job upon parole.

As will be discussed in Step 7, inmate students want assistance in preparing for their transition to parole and society. Numerous times inmate students expressed frustration and concern about the transition from prison to parole. As was demonstrated previously, inmate students worry about where they will live, transportation, having tools, and so on. They also expressed concern about getting driver's licenses, identification cards, telephones, and health coverage. The inmate students indicated preparation for reentry to society is something they want and need.

Step 7—Reintegrate

Usually, reintegration back into society comes well after inmate students complete their vocational education course. As was the case for the previous step, what the CDCR does and how they implement reintegration policies is beyond the scope of this evaluation. But the California Logic Model proposes a continuum of treatment from admittance in a reception center through to

parole. Given that vocational education assumes inmates will eventually use the skills they are learning on parole, the theme centering on community connections was repeatedly identified in the interviews is important.

Significant obstacles confront inmates paroled from prison and into the community after serving several years in prison. Being away from a rapidly changing society for an extended period can lead to a type of culture shock, which can be upsetting for any individual and the obstacles parolees experience upon release are long-lasting. This is just part of the reason why the Expert Panel (2007) recommended the CDCR identify inmates' criminogenic needs and develop treatment plans to address their social, psychological, educational, and vocational deficiencies.

UY was on his second term in prison. He had been in prison between the ages of 18 and 29 and then paroled back to his home community. He found it difficult to find a job, and eventually resumed selling illegal drugs. After being out of prison for 6 months, he was arrested.

UY: You've been away for 10 years. And now you're in a real big world that's changed since you've been in it. Yeah, that makes a lot of sense. And we went out there with the attire of yeah, I'm hard, I've got tattoos, I'm this, I'm that. Really, when you look into most of us, the percentage of us, it's not what's going on. That's not what they're feeling in their heart. We're feeling hey, I'm lost. I'm scared. I don't know what to do. I need help, but I'm not going to ask for it because my pride isn't going to let me. Bam. You know what I mean? And that's just how it is. So you end up doing what it is that you know how to do. Rob, steal, sell dope. And that's terrible.

A number of respondents discussed the value of connecting the vocational education classes to jobs in the community. Broadly speaking, the researchers asked respondents about the importance of community connections between prison and the vocational education classes and possible jobs. What emerged were three themes: connecting inmate students to unions or providing help wanted information, recommending the CDCR have a job placement program, and recommending inmate students leave prison with a job in hand. What is clear from the following quotes is the respondents understood that inmate students are less likely to be successful on parole if they are not aided in gaining employment.

DD: Get a hold of other painting contractors throughout the state. Giving them tax incentives for hiring ex-cons—that way, when the inmates get out, they're guaranteed a job if they want it.

OO: I say it should be like, I'm in this trade now, like I'm in landscaping. I complete this landscaping job. I think there should be like, say you had people on the outside that have landscaping businesses willing to pull us. They know that we have the credentials, knowing that we know our stuff, and are willing to hire us.

Instead of requiring the vocational education teachers or prisons to develop or make contact with community partners, many respondents suggested the CDCR develop a job placement program for vocational education students to use when they return to their home community. As the following inmate student suggests, vocational education students should have some realistic hope for a good job when they get out of prison. Notice, too, how desperate he perceives his situation will be when he paroles without the hope for a job.

KB: It would be nice if you could complete a course and they help you get into a job somewhere on the street, you know? Where they got something to help you get on your feet and get a job. That's the biggest part of people coming back. You get \$200 [gate money] when you get out of here, and you need half that just to get where you're going.

A prison administrator recommends how such an idea works, including the community corrections centers mandated by AB 900, in the context of vocational education classes. The administrator also refers to something analogous to the Prison Industry Authority:

CN: Well, I think halfway houses definitely have their place, especially for those individuals that don't have anything to return to. When he gets out of prison, all he has to return to is basically that cardboard box he was living in. But I see the point and the necessity in having a program set up where this individual can get a job prior to leaving prison.

This administrator suggested that the best way this would work is to rely on community corrections centers, as described by the Expert Panel (2007) and AB 900. In relying on community corrections centers, reintegration becomes a smoother transition into society.

PR: We don't have any operationalized yet, but they are part of this proof process as well. That's where the real community engagement can take place. We go after who are the highest risk to re-offend, have the highest

need still once they are in those reentry centers to kind of re-look at education needs or vocational skill right there. Community linkages. Those have been very successful in other states.

Most inmates know that the process of parole can work for and against a parolee. In the following, an inmate student speaks to the importance of pre-release efforts and how parole can actually work against an inmate finding a job.

BA: I think that pre-release needs to talk to individuals about successfully completing parole, getting their records expunged. The other thing is that parole should not require anyone who is employed—say I have a job and I go to work from 8 to 5, 9 to 5, or whatsoever, and parole wants me to get off work, race over there to the parole office, try and check in, and see him. Now if you hired me, and you said OK, Mr. X, I want you to work with me from 8 o'clock in the morning to 4:30 every evening. And I come and tell you once a month, hey boss, could you let me go so I can go check in with my parole officer? He told me I've got to go in there and report. It may be OK once. Maybe even twice. But three and four times? That becomes burdensome to your boss and your employer. After awhile they might say, maybe I need to let this guy go and go find me a guy that can be here all the time and is not asking me, can he be off?

Another problem identified by interviewees is that most are paroled back into the community where they were first arrested, as prescribed in the penal code.

LY: You gotta get them in the communities. If you could change—and the problem that I see, and this is my experience, inmates go back to their same environment that led them here. No matter what tools we give them here, if they go back to that environment, they can't succeed. They'd struggle. But the after-care piece gets them established, re-routed. Not in their comfortable surrounding because that's all they know. But a new group of friends, a new job, a new, everyone all focused on the same thing so they're not going back to the same environment. That's why I think the after-care piece is so successful. Gives them that foundation.

Step 8—Follow Up

For a variety of reasons, CSUC was not given access to parolees or data about parolees who graduated from the vocational education, whether that be for the 19 classes included in this study or simply vocational education

in general. This issue aside, it did not appear that the CDCR implemented systematic follow-up programs for the vocational education programs, as described by this step of the California Logic Model, or for that matter AB 900. Several educational administrators greatly desire to learn the effects of their programs and look forward to seeing this step fully implemented. CSUC's impression was that the parole and correctional divisions of the CDCR have very little communication with each other. Notably, though, this bureaucratic inertia and a failure of systematic communication between custody and parole is something that prison administrators are well-aware of. The following summarizes the view of educational administrators about follow up:

QK: There needs to be a system in place for these students after they complete these programs. That's huge. We need to see what happens to them after they've been trained—did they get employment and are they successful? I don't think it's ever been tracked.

Clearly, the CDCR must devise a way to develop communication between divisions if the goal of rehabilitative follow-up is to be realized.

Summary of Question 6 about the California Logic Model

All prisoners face significant obstacles upon release. The California Logic Model provides a useful roadmap for the implementation of the rehabilitative model given the type of difficulties that are anticipated. Following the California Logic Model from start to finish, the CDCR can address some of the social, psychological, educational, and vocational needs of inmates. By identifying inmates' criminogenic needs and developing a behavioral plan to guide their time in prison, the CDCR can offer programs that help reduce risk factors. Providing vocational education courses while incarcerated is a good example of evidence-based programming that reduces recidivism and improves the safety and security of California's prisons home communities. If vocational education is implemented effectively, inmate students are better prepared to rejoin society, including getting a job. But, simply providing them with vocational education courses is not enough, as the California Logic Model clearly indicates. But, for the course work undertaken by the OCE to be as effective as possible, attention needs to be paid to the administrative support for inmate assignment and post-graduation/release follow up, among other things.

In the absence of more intentional programs putting the right student in the right class, as well as follow up on parole, it is unlikely that the full benefits of lowered recidivism will be realized. The results presented here indicate that the vocational education classes studied are doing as well as can be expected despite the significant obstacles confronting prisons schools.

QUESTION #7: DOES COMPLETION OF (OR PARTICIPATION IN) THESE PROGRAMS LOWER RECIDIVISM RATES AMONG PAROLED OR RELEASED INMATES?

AND

QUESTION #8: DO VOCATIONAL EDUCATION DROPOUTS, GRADUATES, AND NON-VOCATIONAL EDUCATION INMATES DIFFER IN THEIR RECIDIVISM RATES?

Research questions #7 and #8 are combined for analytical purposes. First they ask about only subtle differences regarding the same subject—recidivism. Secondly, CSUC was not provided the statistical data typically used to calculate the rates assumed by such questions. Among the problems were the lack of data tied to inmates who had completed vocational education classes, a relatively short period after completion of the classes and parole of participants, and work stoppages in the study due to California’s budget crisis. As a result, these questions can be addressed only imprecisely.

In particular, there are no data regarding vocational education dropouts, let alone recidivism rates for individuals who may or may not have completed the classes. In this context, the research questions are answered using two techniques. First, proxy data are used to approximate recidivism for vocational education students and non-vocational education students. Second, anecdotal data from qualitative interviews are used to discuss the broader theme of recidivism as it emerged in the qualitative interviews. The following results provide an important understanding of the relationship between vocational education and recidivism.

Quantitative Analysis—Proxy Data

Is there a relationship between participation in vocational education and recidivism? Unfortunately, the CDCR data given to CSUC for this evaluation did not provide recidivism information. Thus, in order to answer

this question, CSUC constructed a proxy variable based on multiple “in-dates,” paying special attention to those inmates who had one or more “in-date” during the period covered by the data provided (January 7, 2007, through September 13, 2009). If an inmate was observed to have multiple “in-dates,” it was assumed that inmate was released from prison at some earlier point and then later returned. The created variable is treated dichotomously, with one or more returns to prison coded 1 and not returning to prison being coded 0. Given these parameters, of the 6411 cases evaluated, 24.2% had “recidivated” during the 21-month timeframe covered by these data. This is considerably lower than the 2-year “return to prison” rate of 62.5% described by CDCR for 2005–2006 or earlier years (see CDCR, 2010).

Because these data are only a proxy, three important points must be made about this variable used to assess recidivism as it is used here. First, there is a definitive indication as to why these particular inmates were returned to prison. The individuals could have been returned to prison because of a new conviction, a parole violation, or both. This fact is problematic when making assertions about the broader concept of recidivism, especially in light of the debates surrounding the definition of the term [see CDCR’s recent monograph on recidivism for a summary of these debates, how CDCR has resolved them for their own purposes, and for a more complete treatment of CDCR’s recidivism rates (CDCR, 2010)].

Second, one problem with assigning too much significance to this variable is there is no clear indication as to the number of times a person returns to prison. Although it is unlikely an inmate was returned to prison more than one time during the evaluation period, it is possible. If that is the case, this fact is not evident in the data.

Third, CSUC could not discern the proportion of the three groups of inmates that had been released and not returned to prison. As a consequence, comparing these findings with CDCR data would be inappropriate. CDCR’s (2010) recidivism report is a much more accurate and thorough evaluation of California’s recidivism rates than the results reported here. What the findings reported here provide is a starting reference point for beginning to understand whether vocational education helps to reduce recidivism. Overall, caution must be used when interpreting the results of the quantitative analysis. The variable used here is an indication of recidivism but not an official indication of recidivism as would be the preferred measure of this important outcome. Nevertheless, the results reported here are instructive and help to answer the two research questions.

Three categories were examined to discover whether there is a relationship between vocational education and recidivism. First, 4413 individuals who participated in the 19 vocational education classes included in this evaluation were examined. Of these inmate students, 25.0% ($n=1105$) returned to prison during the period covered. Next, a comparison group of 1000 vocational education inmate students who were not members of the 19 classes included in this evaluation were examined. Of these 1000 students of other vocational education programs, 17.7% ($n=177$) were returned to prison. Finally, a control group of non-vocational education inmates are included in the analysis. Of the 998 non-vocational education inmates, 27.0% returned to prison during the 21 months covered in these data. Inmates represented in these final two groups were randomly selected from all CDCR prisoners to serve as comparison groups to the vocational education classes and students included in this evaluation. Table 10.5 summarizes these results.

Table 10.5 also displays the chi square analysis for the differences between these three groups. As shown, the chi square value of 28.86 ($df=2$, $p=.001$) indicates a strong relationship between inmate group membership and return to prison. In this case, the return rate for inmate students who participated in one of the 19 vocational education classes falls between students who participated in other vocational education classes but closer to the non-vocational education inmates. Further analysis sheds more light on this relationship.

Combining all vocational education inmate students and comparing these inmates to non-vocational education inmates reveal there is a relationship between class participation and return to prison. In this case, 23.7% of

Table 10.5 Return to prison after release for vocational education students included in the evaluation, other vocational education students, and non-vocational education inmates cross tabulation (in percentages)

<i>Return to prison</i>	<i>Inmate group</i>			
	<i>Voc Ed study group</i>	<i>Voc Ed other</i>	<i>Non-Voc Ed prisoners</i>	<i>Total</i>
No	75.0	82.3	73.0	75.8
Yes	25.0	17.7	27.0	24.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>N</i>	4413	1000	998	6411

Note: $\chi(2)=28.86$, $p=.001$

all the vocational education students returned to prison after release. A two-by-two chi square comparing these two groups was 5.00 ($df=1$, $p=.025$). One can see participation in vocational education reduces the risk of returning to prison when compared to non-vocational education inmates.

How do the inmate students from the 19 classes compare with each of the other two groups? Chi square analysis comparing inmate students from the study group to other vocational education students suggests study group inmates are statistically more likely to return to prison after release ($\chi^2_{(1)}=24.30$, $p=.001$). In other words, compared to 1000 randomly selected students from other vocational education classes, the students who attended any of the 19 classes included in this evaluation were more likely to return to prison after their release.

Compared to the 998 randomly selected inmates who did not participate in vocational education in prison, the inmate students from the 19 classes were not statistically less likely to return to prison ($\chi^2_{(1)}=1.57$, $p=.210$). This result indicates that these 19 classes have a positive influence on inmate students but not to the extent that the CDCR hoped.

Several factors might explain the differences between the return rates of the inmate students from the 19 vocational education classes and the other two randomly selected groups, although none of these reasons can be stated with any certainty as they were not assessed. One likely explanation for the differences in these three groups could be the fact that these 19 classes did not exist prior to the CDCR being given Recidivism Reduction Strategies moneys tied to AB 900. As a result, the mission of some previously existing classes was required to shift from being a general vocational education class to one that was standardized and included in this evaluation, with all new inmates being assigned to the classes. In the case of the 19 vocational education study classes, previous cohorts were unassigned and the class was redesigned to match the focus of AB 900. Only after that transition were new students assigned to the class. In addition, many of the classes were required to start from scratch, meaning their actual launch date could have been met with an inexperienced teacher, inadequate class supplies, and 27 brand new students. Indeed, it could take several cycles before a teacher (assuming no changes) “hit their stride” with a class where the benefits realized by the other classes are realized. What is more, the fact that the established vocational education classes performed best with regard to return to prison suggests that established classes are more likely to have a positive affect (e.g., reduced recidivism) than are newer classes. With time, it is possible that the newer classes will produce the same positive results.

To summarize, the quantitative data offer mixed results regarding the impact of vocational education on returning to prison. On the positive side, vocational education appears to reduce the risk of returning to prison, compared to non-vocational education inmates. Indeed, the decline is as much as almost one-third. If such drop was realized across all vocational education classes, that would reflect substantial savings in reincarceration and mean that the classes more than pay for themselves. However, the 19 classes being evaluated in this study did not perform as well. In this case, one-in-four inmate students who took one of these classes were released from prison and returned at a later date because of either a new crime or a parole violation. Statistically, these inmates were no different than the 998 inmates who did not take vocational education in prison.

Qualitative Results

Vocational education is one component of CDCR's strategy designed to reduce recidivism. The value of vocational education to this end is recognized at all levels of the CDCR, from inmates to the executive staff. One member of the executive administration shared the following with respect to vocational education, national certification, and evidenced-based curricula and pedagogical strategies:

NA: When I talk to correctional officers, I use the phrase, "1 more in 20." So that correctional officer has to escort 20 guys to a classroom to learn to read and write. And have to escort them back and have to sit there and watch them the whole time and the teacher has to teach them and we feed them and do all those things. And of those 20 guys, six are going to make it if we do nothing. That's just the way it will work, they're low-need guys or they've got family support, or what they did was an aberration or whatever, or they're too old to recidivate, or what have you. And on the natural, those other 14 will not. They'll be back. And the reason we do this [education] program is that there's that 7th guy that can make a difference. That's your 5%.

And so, what I point out is that we release 120,000 a year to the streets. And if you can get all of those guys in a program, 5% of that now is 6,000, a big number. And of those, DOJ [Department of Justice] would tell me they're going to commit 10 crimes a piece before we catch them. And so now you're talking 60,000 fewer felonies committed in California as the result of a little [education] program.

That's the reason we walk them back and forth every day and make sure that they're fed and we make sure that that teacher is safe. It's not for the

15 guys who aren't paying attention, or the other guys who would make it on the natural, it's for that 7th guy, and the 60,000 fewer felonies that our neighbors and families and friends are going to have to go through.

Obviously this administrator is concerned about issues on a level that goes beyond the CDCR to the core mission of the institution: preserving public safety. If the administrator's estimates are true, educational services like vocational education actually create public safety. In addition, reduced recidivism has a direct impact on the CDCR fiscally. If there are, indeed, 6000 individuals who do not recidivate and return to prison, the cost-savings to Californians is \$294,000,000 per year [assuming an annual cost of \$49,000 per year to house an inmate, on average, as reported by the CDCR (2009a), and they stay for the full year]. Clearly, such savings is substantial.

The participants in the qualitative interviews were asked directly whether they believed inmates who take vocational education classes were less likely to recidivate. All indicated that they do believe this is the expected outcome. One prison administrator stated: "I believe the percentage is going to be greater of those that are less likely to recidivate that have completed the class. And the reason I believe that is they now have a marketable skill" (CN).

What is evident is vocational education is a valuable resource to the institutions and the prisoners themselves. The quantitative and qualitative data suggest strongly that vocational education is a useful tool for reducing recidivism, improving public safety.

QUESTION #9: WHAT FACTORS CONTRIBUTE TO PARTICIPANTS DROPPING OUT OR FAILING THE PROGRAM?

Five overlapping themes emerged during the interviews helping to explain why inmate students fail or drop out of vocational education:

1. Inmate students' attitude.
2. Inmate students wanting to fail.
3. Inmate students being forced to take vocational education or a particular class.
4. Inmate students being ill-prepared for vocational education.
5. Class problems.

Quotes exemplifying each of these themes are provided below. Quotations where more than one theme is identified are presented first in order to illustrate complexity.

This first illustrates how some inmate students may want to fail vocational education, sometimes because they believe they are “forced” into vocational education.

DD: It’s up to me to want to take the opportunities and the things that they have in here to learn. Other guys don’t want to. And you’ve got to understand too, some of these guys are just deposited into these classes without wanting to be here. So their assignment may have an opening for a black inmate, so they’ll just take some black inmate that has no job on the street and put him in here. He doesn’t want to be in here, so what’s he going to do? He’s not going to do anything. Because he doesn’t want to be here. Yet there’s another guy that lives right next to him that wants to be in here. And he can’t get in here because we’re filled with guys that don’t want to be in here. Once they’re in here, we can’t hardly get them out of here.

A teacher described how inmates might both not want a class and are academically ill-prepared to be successful in vocational education:

PSA: A lot of it is because they don’t really want to do it. A lot of it is I think because they’re ashamed that they don’t have the basic skills. I think a lot of it is because, “I’m a grown man and I can’t read and write.” I think once they get over that burden, knowing you’re not the only guy in here like that—it’s shocked many of the guys when they get in here that they got all through school and can’t read and write.

Inmate Students’ Attitudes

According to the respondents, one reason inmate students fail at vocational education is because the students have a negative attitude toward education in general.

SJ: A lot of people just have a negative attitude. You know, instead of looking at the positives we get, they look at the negatives. The negative rules. They don’t care. Plenty of people are capable of passing this class. It’s not that hard. It’s not that difficult. It’s going to be hard for some.

Others prisoners in the classes were uninterested in rehabilitation and preferred to simply “do time.” An education administrator who formerly was a teacher described it this way:

KZ: I think that some guys come in here with time and bitterness. They’re just bitter. There’s some men—one, I don’t know when he came, but he did something that was big. They just want to come here and chip time. That’s all it is to them, it’s killing time.

“Chipping time” is an example of where prisoners are not personally invested in rehabilitation services or programs, but instead simply live out their existence in prison, waiting for the day they can parole.

Inmate students wanting to fail vocational education While many inmates want to use vocational education in prison as an opportunity to improve the quality of their lives, others have no interest in doing so. A vice principal responded in this way:

EK: Because they want to. They don’t apply themselves. I mean, if you apply yourself to anything, as long as you stick with it, I’m pretty sure you’ll be successful at it. I’m not saying that you’ll be successful as far as passing with flying colors or anything, but as long as you apply yourself that means that you’re at least attempting to do the work.

Inmate students being forced to take the class Sometimes inmate students are dissatisfied with the vocational education class they are assigned to. Such misassignment issues are covered in-depth in this response to the research question about the California Logic Model. Informants indicate inmate students fail vocational education because they do not want the class they have been placed in, and they feel forced to take vocational education. These inmate students resisted and refused to participate in any meaningful way. Inmate student DD said: “You can’t force people into something they don’t want.” This raises the question of whether corrections and rehabilitation can be imposed on inmates, or if the motivation of inmate students to change must come intrinsically. While such a broader philosophical debate cannot be solved here, at least for some inmates, these data indicate that “forcing” students into vocational education classes may not always produce the desired response and may also unnecessarily take up limited seat space.

Inmate students who are ill-prepared for vocational education Many inmates come to prison with educational deficits and are ill-prepared for vocational education courses designed for community colleges which demand high levels of literacy and numeracy. The CDCR reports the average educational level is the seventh grade (2009a), while a number of the courses assume a tenth grade or higher reading ability (see Dick et al., 2009). A CDCR principal speaks to the reasons why they may fail vocational education:

BU: Prior education coming in. You hear stories and even after seeing their test scores and stuff like that—or they're from another country and they're doing time here. There are language barriers. But some of these guys only have a 1.9, 3.6, and that's their grade level [reading scores assessed TABE scores]. But if they're willing to do my program, then I try and make my program work towards them.

Lack of fluency in English is a significant barrier to education (as well as being a barrier to rehabilitation and successful reintegration upon release from prison). As this principal pointed out, many inmates are at functional illiterate levels. Even for native English speakers, there are language barriers that prevent success in the vocational education courses the CDCR offers, as well as many other areas of their lives.

Class Problems

Lastly, problems with class functioning were identified as one reason why inmate students fail vocational education. Many of these problems were logistical or functional issues that contributed to student failure, such as not having adequate supplies, inadequate space for hands-on practice, or inmate movement problems due to custody concerns. At other times, the problems preventing student success can be more general and diffuse, as in the case of having a poor teacher or disruptive classmates.

Inmate students are often ill prepared for vocational education. A prison administrator notes that if inmates are both ill-prepared for education and are placed in a vocational education class requiring a higher reading ability, they are bound to fail:

CN: If we have a curriculum that is not based upon the education level of that inmate, then he's not going to be successful. That's why I think that education component initially is so important. Having them educated prior to coming into a vocational area will benefit the individual.

Another problem with classes is a lack of activity or opportunity for hands-on exercises. Several respondents identified this as being a significant factor in predicting whether students fail or drop out of vocational education.

CT: Lack of, not necessarily lack of equipment, but lack of activity. Projects. Being able to buy supplies ... so, this is March. Our budget technically should have started in July. We still don't have our supplies for this school year. So they're running on different leftovers and scraps they had last year to make things.

As is seen from these data, there are many contributing factors that influence student failure and prevent them from completing vocational education. At the heart of the problem is probably the fact that the wrong student is assigned to the wrong class for their ability or interest. Virtually every interviewee pointed to problems created, and opportunities circumscribed, when an unwilling inmate was assigned to the class. The challenge now is for the CDCR to take this knowledge and begin to address these issues as much as possible. The factors that predict inmate student failure or drop out is another reason why the California Logic Model recommends identifying prisoners' criminogenic needs and developing a plan to address these problems. Clearly, there is a great deal of overlap between criminogenic needs and failure in vocational education classes. Improving services in one area will inevitably address problems in the other area.

Another important area that did not appear in the qualitative interview data is the impact of mental health and special education issues on inmate student learning. It was pointed out earlier in this report that approximately 20% of vocational education inmates have a mental health diagnosis. The area of special education needs for inmate education simmered as an undiscussable throughout the study.

QUESTION #10: WHAT ARE THE EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES AND ECONOMIC STABILITY FOR THE VOCATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS?

A direct answer to this research question is impossible because no longitudinal data are available to measure employment outcomes or stability of former vocational education participants. What is more, access to parolees was denied to CSUC researchers for collecting follow-up data on inmate students who had left prison. The researchers will answer this research

question using qualitative data addressing what the interview participants think the employment outcomes are for vocational education students.

The respondents believed vocational education improved the employment outcomes of students, making them economically stable and viable. If this belief is true, the result should be a reduced desire or need to commit crime, reinforcing their commitment to conventional society and their place in it. Overall, there appears to be a good feeling about the benefits of vocational education for enabling students to become gainfully employed once they parole.

CSUC: Do you believe that vocational education inmates are going to be more successful or less likely to recidivate and if so, why?

CN: I believe the percentage is going to be greater of those that are less likely to recidivate that have completed the class. And the reason I believe that is they now have a marketable skill. They've learned how to weld and they have a certificate that they can present to an employer that says, I'm not just "Joe Blow" off the street who wants to be a welder's helper. I'm an actual, certified welder.

Notice the benefit is not exclusively having had the opportunity to learn a trade, but the legitimacy of that education as evidenced by certification. This allows the parolee to positively signal their commitment to a better life, their own rehabilitation, and desire to be a good employee. Taken all together, these factors will help them overcome the significant stigmas related to having been a convicted felon. A school principal further addresses how vocational education can help inmates once they parole:

QK: I think the vocational programs are so important—to be able to get gainful employment and have skills. I think it's such a shame that they took them out of the public schools. Most people are not college-bound. And a lot of these guys that we see in here were not college-bound. In fact, they should have been working with their hands in high school and possibly grammar school.

A senior-level prison administrator also believes vocational education will help prisoners when they rejoin society. In addition, the administrator also thinks vocational education makes sense for the CDCR economically:

LY: I personally believe, and in my experience, that [vocational education] is the biggest bang for the buck as far as giving them that tangible skill. You teach somebody to weld, he can feed himself. You teach somebody to build something, he has pride. There's that pride factor that's also part of this.

One of the direct advantages of vocational education in prison is it affords inmate students more employment options when they parole. Instead of a narrow range of jobs that may not be willing to hire someone just out of prison, they are able to apply for a wider range of jobs and increase their economic chances. This flexibility opens up more opportunities for well-trained parolees. However, what is also important is the attitude inmate students bring to the class and eventually their efforts toward getting a job upon parole. One inmate student summarized this point well:

DD: To me, it's just a mindset. Either you're going to be good or you're not. But the plus side of having education here is giving you an option to learn more to be able to take this, what you learn, out in the street and be able to apply it. You won't have that if you don't take that and make a conscious decision to do it.

One of the advantages of vocational education to inmate students is most trades overlap one another. As a consequence, these students are capable of using the skills they learn in these classes to be able to get jobs in closely related fields. DD was a student in a painting class but did not anticipate becoming a "painter" when he paroled:

DD: I was a contractor on the streets, see, so I know all faces of construction. So as far as having the knowledge and everything like that, that's probably what I'll be doing when I get out. I mean, this is just extra stuff to gain. The painting class will keep me abreast of the new innovations that are coming out all the time.

Sometimes inmate students find themselves in vocational education classes they did not anticipate benefitting from. It was common to hear from students that they were surprised to discover how they liked the classes they were assigned. Many indicated they planned on using the skills they were learning out of prison, even if it was simply for personal benefit. Others might practice the trade they are learning as a way to get back on their feet until something better or more intrinsically attractive comes along.

SJ: I didn't come in here with the intention of using this as a career. It's not really what I was interested in, but I can use anything. You never know. Especially in these times, the economy is bad, so you never know. But at first I was kind of skeptical, like what can I do with this? But with Ms. X, I found out a few things. The area where I'm at is full of golf courses, so who knows.

Even if it's not what I planned on doing for a long time, even if it's just to keep me out of trouble and a stepping stone to go further, I would do that.

One of the most significant benefits from vocational education classes is it provides inmate students hope for a future, gainful employment, and economic stability. An inmate student speaks to how his vocational education experience gives him hope for a better future:

KI: But getting back to this program here, it's very, very important. And I think it's an excellent class, because if a person really wants to do something—hopefully you know, when we get out, we can really apply this. You have to want to change. You have to want to change in here and be tired of this. You know, I hate it in prison. I've always hated it in prison. I don't fit in here at all. But you know, the alcohol has brought me back. So now this rehabilitation through the support here is going to provide me—I don't really think I need rehabilitation as far as not wanting to come back to prison, but I need this class to help me get a job. Hopefully it will work out really good.

In the end, it appears vocational education provides inmate students with positive employment outcomes and economic stability, although we cannot be sure without more definitive data. Nevertheless, the data provided here suggest inmates and CDCR officials believe in the efficacy of vocational education classes for giving parolees a chance for employment in these trades and hope for a better future.

QUESTION #11: WHAT ARE THE ENTRANCE ADMISSIONS CRITERIA?

At this point, this research question is unanswerable. As of December 2010, the OCE is in the process of formalizing the entrance criteria to be used for placing inmates into vocational education classes. This policy is expected in early 2011, despite 4 years of admissions via the conventional Unit Classification Committees.

QUESTION #12: WHAT FACTORS ARE ASSOCIATED WITH WAITING LISTS AND THEIR USES?

There are substantially more prisoners seeking vocational education programs than there are seats available in the vocational education classes we studied. Class sizes are limited to a maximum of 27 full-time students by

the nature of the facilities, custody, and accreditation bodies. In addition to class size limitations, inappropriate placements by the Unit Classification Committees and Inmate Assignment Offices block access to classes by inmates on waiting lists. As a result, many students never have the opportunity to be assigned to a class they are interested in taking. The CDCR needs to develop a thoughtful, objective, and coordinated strategy for dealing with wait lists for all educational programs. This needs to be done in the context of an overcrowded system where “clogging” of assignment pipelines is present not only for vocational education classes but many other prison functions as well.

Unfortunately, this research question is not fully answerable because the CSUC research team was not given specific information pertaining to waiting lists and their uses. Despite asking, CSUC was not told how waiting lists are developed, what qualifies an inmate to be placed on a waiting list, how waiting lists are managed, or how many inmates are on such waiting lists. It became apparent early in the study that informants (e.g., teachers, local prison education administrators) simply were not capable of answering such questions, primarily because of the central role of the Unit Classification Committees and Inmate Assignment Offices in administering the waiting lists. In rare cases where some information was available, the data were not compiled in a way that it could be shared with, or understood by, the research team. In these cases, the researchers were not allowed access to the lists, ostensibly for confidentiality reasons. Hence, the short answer to this research question is that at no time did CSUC know how long (or short) the waiting lists were for classes included in this evaluation. It could be there is a clear set of criteria for placement on the waiting lists known only to the Unit Classification Committees and Inmate Assignment Offices. It is also possible that the ultimate explanations for the lack of information about waiting lists are that decisions in Unit Classification Committees and Inmate Assignment Offices about waiting lists are made in an ad hoc fashion. This means that criteria such as security levels, needs to staff kitchens and other yard functions, management of mental health cases, type of sentence, and other criteria trump management of the waiting lists for classes. In any case, placement of inmates based on the criteria of highest possible opportunity for educational success was not consistently observed.

Because of the vagueness of informant responses about waiting lists and their uses, pursuing this line of questioning during formal interviews was discontinued. Nevertheless, some qualitative data were collected about

waiting lists throughout the course of the evaluation. What emerges from these data is a clear need for management of waiting lists in a fashion that facilitates getting the many willing and interested inmates into “the right seat,” and probably the expansion of total class offerings. One senior prison administrator responded this way when asked if he thought prison education should be expanded system-wide:

MQ: We’ve got 400 inmates on a waiting list, right? So I could have 10 more educators here, vocational or academic, and I’ve got the inmates for it.

An inmate student talks about lengthy waiting lists and how they affect inmate programming:

DD: You have more individuals in here than there are openings in education, so we’ve got a waiting list in here. It’s like, if you go to a sale at Macy’s and all the parking spots are taken. You’re going to have to wait your turn. Or you’re going to have to go someplace else. So we’re pretty much stuck with the opportunities that you have in certain yards.

The irony is that many of the inmates we discussed this problem with did not want to be in the class in the first place and claimed that they were put there by the Unit Classification Committee against their will. Frustration experienced by the inmates unwillingly placed in such classes is avoidable. Many inmates placed in such a situation disengage from the class or rather engage in disruptive “passive-aggressive” behavior.

Here is how one inmate responded to being asked about his experience choosing a vocational education class with waiting lists:

LP: When you first come, you do get to choose. At first, I wanted to go to mechanics—auto mechanics. But it [the wait list] was so long to go to auto mechanics. And really, the only reason I came to this class was my homey [friend] was in the class. He’s gone now, but he said, “I’m in landscaping, it’s pretty cool,” and I said I’m going to come over there. I told them I’ll take up landscaping. And they told me it wouldn’t probably be a slow process getting in landscaping because the list ain’t that long. So it got me in landscaping within about three weeks. I was in the kitchen for awhile then they sent me to landscaping. When I got there, it’s been very productive for me.

The consequences of waiting lists on other inmate students can be negative. Some informants were frustrated because they did not want to be in a particular class but knew other inmates who were stuck on the waiting list. These inmates blamed the problem on the formalities required to be assigned to a class and to be removed from a class by the Unit Classification Committee:

CSUC: You've said a number of times that there's people on the waiting list who would rather be here.

KQ: They're all on the waiting list. They're not letting them.

CSUC: But why?

KQ: Because they're getting paid for us being here.

CL: That's what it is, that we have to go through classification, and this and that. I don't understand why you have to go through classification to get out of vocation, or education, period.

Here were two inmate students in a class they didn't want to be in, which prevented two other wait listed inmates from taking advantage of the opportunity. This created a situation where four inmates are frustrated with the process and the right student was not in the right seat.

When asked what can be done about situations like this, prison school administrators spoke to the importance of targeting the right inmate for the right program. To determine which inmates should be placed in vocational education programs, the administrators spoke about the results of inmate assessment evaluations, and the length of time remaining on an inmate's sentence, and not inmate preferences. These administrators believe such factors are important to make prison education more effective and successful.

QK: I think I mentioned it to you the other day that we are going to target inmates who will be released within maybe three years. We're going to target those first so that we can get them through a program, get them released, and out working.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

In addition to the questions directly posed by the CDCR, the team developed areas of inquiry during the course of the study that would help inform teachers, prison administrators, and policy makers more thoroughly. In our Curriculum Evaluation, we were able to study the planned curriculum

(McNeil, 1996) in the form of course texts, apply a valid and reliable rubric (the TECA), and provide an evidence-based ranking of the quality of the programs. Equally, if not more important, what actually happens during curriculum implementation in the classrooms themselves. For this reason we asked Question #13: What is the quality of classroom instruction?

QUESTION #13: WHAT IS THE QUALITY OF CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION?

The results from three data gathering efforts are reported. First, a quantitative assessment of the 19 vocational education classes was undertaken. Data were developed based on the research team's systematic qualitative observations of the classes recorded by the research team on the classroom observations rubric. This analysis identifies the elements of the classes that result in classes judged to be "good," "adequate," and "weak." This analysis is designed to address issues that were considered by CSUC to be of interest to the OCE as they work to administer the most effective vocational education programs possible. Moreover, the results reported here reflect the broader correctional and rehabilitation goals of the CDCR.

Class Evaluation Rubric

As a brief review, the 19 vocational education classes included in this study were assessed in the active classroom setting. For this purpose, CSUC developed a structured observational rubric to aid in their ethnographic efforts observing six key categories. The six key variables the researchers focused on were elements of classroom environment, class logistics, instructional activities, the "job-like setting," program fidelity, and teacher activities. These six categories and sub-variables were based on a combination of conversations with the OCE and CDCR school personnel, the educational literature addressing prison education, literature about vocational education, and literature identifying evidence-based best practices in teaching and classroom management.

The data were collected over the course of a year and a half. During this time, the researchers made over 100 visits to the prisons and vocational education classes included in this evaluation. Every visit offered ethnographic data gathering opportunities. The classroom observation was

completed whenever possible or was used to structure the writing of field notes after a visit was concluded. The classroom observation rubrics were each completed independently by the researchers. Fifty-seven classroom observation rubrics were completed.

The researchers used a 1–10 scale to assess each of the variables and key elements used to evaluate the classes. A score of 1–3 indicated the class was rated as weak and a perfect score of 10 meant the class was rated as excellent on that variable. Middle scores from 4 to 6 meant the class was rated as adequate and 6–9 meant it was rated as good.

Criteria for Useful and Valid Data

After the classroom observation rubrics were completed by each researcher and entered into Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, the data were reexamined for validity, missing data, and for theoretical usefulness. The criteria for useful data involved the following processes.

First, the theoretical usefulness of all of the variables was reconsidered. Variables determined to lack explanatory power or usefulness to the CDCR and OCE were discarded. Next, Cronbach's alpha was calculated for the remaining variables according to sub-variables. Cronbach's alpha assesses whether a set of variables measure some central idea or concept (Field, 2009). Variables found to distract from the strength of the remaining variables (e.g., made Cronbach's alpha weaker) were eliminated. Next, all remaining variables were examined to ensure no more than 20% of the cases (individual scores for the variables) on that variable were missing. If a variable had more than 20% of the cases missing, the variable was eliminated. In the end, 33 valid variables were identified and are included in the analysis. These are:

1. Classroom Environment
 - (a) Class is modern and designed for education
 - (b) Orderly and clean
 - (c) Adequate heating and cooling
 - (d) Space for lecture and independent study
 - (e) Space for skill application and practice
 - (f) Safe and secure working environment
 - (g) Safe social environment
 - (h) Ethnic integration

2. Class Logistics
 - (a) Adequate supplies for all students
 - (b) Class is well managed
 - (c) Integrated inmate movement routines
 - (d) No wasted time at end of day

3. Instructional Activities
 - (a) Teacher communicates clear learning expectations
 - (b) Teacher checks for understanding
 - (c) Teacher uses a variety of teaching activities
 - (d) Class involves project-based learning
 - (e) Extent of peer instruction/tutoring

4. Class reflects a job-like setting
 - (a) Class environment reflects job-like expectations
 - (b) Class activities simulate real work environment
 - (c) Students are challenged with real world problems
 - (d) Class activities likely improve job success
 - (e) Equipment is up-to-date and well maintained

5. Program Fidelity
 - (a) Curriculum evaluation score
 - (b) Teacher conforms to adopted curriculum
 - (c) Hands-on performance assessments conducted in a timely fashion
 - (d) Written performance assessments conducted in a timely fashion

6. Teacher Activities
 - (a) Teacher communicates clear learning expectations
 - (b) Teacher checks for understanding
 - (c) Teacher uses a variety of teaching activities
 - (d) Class involves project-based learning
 - (e) Extent of peer instruction/tutoring
 - (f) Teacher spends a lot of time in the classroom
 - (g) Teacher spends a lot of time in office

Next, each of the cases (i.e., a class rated by an evaluator) was examined to ensure adequate valid information for analysis. Any case with a third or more missing values on the variables was eliminated. Of the 57 cases, nine

were found to have too many missing variables and were eliminated from further analysis. As a result, 48 valid cases remained. For all the variables and cases that remained, missing variables were assigned the mean score for that variable based on all the other valid cases. This technique increases the usefulness and explanatory power of the data. By replacing the missing values with the mean for all cases, more stability is inserted into the data. This procedure does not negatively affect how each of the variables is assessed.

Reliability Analysis

Cronbach's alpha was used to assess inter-rater reliability of the three evaluators who assigned scores for the classes to each variable and to assess the congruency of the variables grouped under each of the six categories. To assess inter-rater reliability, Cronbach's alpha assesses the consistency of each evaluator's scores with the other evaluators. This method of assessing inter-rater reliability is useful, according to Altermatt (2007), especially for variables that are scored using an interval-ratio level of measurement such as was used here. Altermatt (2007) states that alpha levels should be 0.7 or higher to achieve an acceptable level of inter-rater reliability. This expectation was met for each of the six key categories of variables, meaning that the three evaluators were consistent with each other. The inter-rater reliability when considering all evaluators across all cases and variables was 0.898. When comparing individual evaluators with the others, the Cronbach's alpha for inter-rater reliability ranged from 0.763 to 0.893.

Cronbach's alpha was also used to assess the internal consistency of each variable as grouped into the important theoretical categories within them. Here, too, it was expected that the alpha levels not dip below 0.7 (Table 10.6).

Table 10.6 Cronbach's alpha scores for class evaluation categories

<i>Category</i>	<i>Cronbach's alpha</i>	<i>n of items</i>
Classroom environment	0.704	8
Class logistics	0.833	4
Instructional activities	0.779	5
Job-like setting	0.846	5
Program fidelity	0.825	4
Teacher activities	0.831	7

Statistical Analysis

Overall class rating score Dependent Variable. Based on the assumption that the rating system was internally valid both among the raters, and within each of the sub-variables, an overall rating score was calculated for each of the 19 classes. To calculate the most accurate and objective overall rating score, several steps were taken to control for anomalies in how the data were collected, and the needs of the overall evaluation. In particular, it was important to include the assessment of the curriculum.

First, because the curriculum assigned to the classes is an important part of the overall quality of the classes, each class was assigned scores based on Dick and colleagues' (2009) evaluation of the vocational education curricula purchased by the CDCR (using AB 900 monies) for use in the 19 classes. Table 10.7 summarizes how the curricula for each of the classes included in this investigation were evaluated by the CSUC research team (see Dick et al., 2009).

Overall rating of curricula For the following analyses, the overall rating for the 19 vocational education classes is treated as the “dependent variable.” In this way, the totality of the vocational education courses and the classroom environment—including variables assessing the quality of teachers, facilities, and curriculum—is evaluated. Consequently, from this point forward the analysis focuses on CDCR vocational education classes as a group, which indeed, is how administrators in Sacramento are likely to view them. Additionally, there was a tacit understanding with the teachers' union that we were there to evaluate programs, not

Table 10.7 Overall rating of curricula

<i>Overall rating</i>	<i>Description of rating</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Names of courses</i>
0	No alignment with criteria	0	None
1	Weak	1	Landscaping
2	Adequate	1	Janitorial
3	Good	7	Auto Mechanics, Building Maintenance, Carpentry, Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning, Painting, Plumbing, Welding
4	Excellent	3	Electrical works, Mill and Cabinetry, Office services

Source: Dick et al. (2009, p. 33)

people. If we had provided the CDCR a ranking of classroom practices that could lead to teacher evaluation, then we would have broken a trust. At the same time, we tiptoed around this data as if it did not exist. And the CDCR did not ask for it.

Six classes were rated as good, seven were rated as adequate, and six classes were rated as weak. Classes rated as good were found to have a high mean score. The classes had plenty of space for hands-on application and practice and provided a safe environment for these activities. The classes were also found to be a safe social environment. Good classes were well managed by the teacher. They would use a variety of teaching techniques and would regularly check for student understanding. Hands-on and project-based learning were an important part of these classes. The teachers of good classes were found to act like job supervisors. As a result, the students and teachers in good classes were found to be mutually respectful.

A few variables were found to strongly predict which vocational education classes were judged to be weak. Weak classes were found in classrooms that were not modern or designed for educational purposes. They did not have adequate supplies for all students. These classes were found to have more wasted time toward the end of the day than in adequate and good classes. Weak classes did not reflect a job-like environment and the teacher did not act like a job supervisor. The teachers of weak classes did not conduct hands-on performance examinations in a timely fashion.

Classes rated good share a number of strengths. Weak classes also shared a number of problems. For example, weak classes often have a weak curriculum, poor physical facilities, or weak teaching (Dick, et al., 2012).

This section emphasizes the “voices” of the prison administrators, vocational education teachers, and inmates—the chapter is written to mostly allow the data to speak for themselves. The themes, questions, and quotations selected for inclusion in this section of the chapter reflect their importance to the study and to the CDCR in the opinion of the CSUC researchers. The following themes as questions (in no particular order) are included here:

Question #14: What are the problems and obstacles to prison education?

Question #15: How do students evaluate their class and teacher?

Question #16: What is the value of prison education to students, the prison, and the community?

QUESTION #14: WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS AND OBSTACLES TO PRISON EDUCATION?

From the start of this evaluation, it was evident that vocational education in California's prisons does not reflect the highest hopes of AB 900. Importantly, the inefficiencies and failures of vocational education were not due to the unwillingness of personnel to implement the goals of AB 900, but reflected problems and obstacles embedded in the nature of prison education. Virtually all CDCR and OCE personnel were committed to vocational education and sought ways to make the programs better. The following quotes summarize the two most important obstacles to a more efficient vocational education program cited by administrators. First were issues pertaining to Unit Classification Committee, the Inmate Assignment Office, and "open-entry/open-exit." Second were issues created by the collective bargaining agreement with teachers. It is clear to the researchers that unless such procedural and structural issues are addressed, vocational education in prison will never be as effective as envisioned in AB 900.

Quotations from experienced CDCR staff were selected to reflect the complexity of the problems and obstacles preventing vocational education from being as successful as it could be. From a long-time vice principal:

CSUC: What are some of the barriers or resistance or pushback you've experienced as you try to move forward with the rehabilitative component?

FQ: I already mentioned space constraints – I think that's one of them. That's probably not the type of resistance that you're talking about, but it's a real obstacle for us. The second one has to do with getting the right inmate into the right program at the right time. And what's going to happen as we begin to really roll that out is that at some point that's going to butt up against our inmate classification system, which is, right now, the system we use to decide what level you're at: gender, what classification level you are, do you have a mental health need, and do we have a bed open. And because of our overcrowding, that often boils down to a very small number of places. And if it also turns out that you have a substance abuse treatment need [and] that open bed is not at a place that we have a substance abuse treatment program, then what happens? Who gets priority? And so I think that is a very practical issue that I think is going to get at the core of what some people sort of call the meat and potatoes of prison, is the classification system—getting an inmate to the right prison bed based on his classification level. And I don't think that we [education] should override that. It's just going to bump up against all of the other priorities we have around movement. With a system so crowded as ours, movement is a huge issue.

Next, a teacher summarizes a number of problems confronting vocational education:

BU: Open-entry/open-exit. I'm sure you hear that all the time. Because you get so far in your program and a guy leaves and another one comes in and you've got to bring them up to speed. You've got 4 or 5 people at a time and two days later you've got another one coming in, so that hinders the program and it's not fair to the guys in your class because sometimes they've got to play catch up and it's hard to separate this side from that side.

Other Issues of Education Administration

The previous quotes described obstacles confronting vocational education, which administrators believed were created by classification and prison crowding. Other comments were more focused on identifying specific problems as they related to the efficiency of these programs. The first of these pertains to how education is administered in prison. The OCE and CDCR headquarters are far removed from most of the prisons, which are dispersed in some of the most remote areas of California. These logistical issues obstruct supervision and team-building efforts because administrators cannot easily visit prison schools.

BF: I think the structure of the organization is a bit of an obstacle. I think we could be a tighter unit. There could be more cohesion in and among education, and with that, I think the people's feeling divided is an obstacle itself as well. I think we should be able to get out there and visit the school sites more and be able to have some face time with the different teachers and let them know, we're not here to hurt you, we're here to help you.

According to several of the interviewees, the structure of prison education at the institutions is also an issue. Consider the information provided by KZ, a senior-level education administrator, about the obstacles confronting local prison school principals:

KZ: The other thing is that principals absolutely need to be in a role within the prison that their voice is heard. In the prison, the hierarchy is the principal, reports to an AW [Associate Warden]. The AW reports to the Chief Deputy Warden. The Chief Deputy Warden reports to the Warden. That first layer of the AW, if you've got a good one, it's great. If you don't, the voice of the principal is not going to be heard to that. So that's part of the problem.

The idea that the principal's status should be elevated to that of an associate warden suggests that educators believe obstacles to educational success arise from a power differential within the prison hierarchy. Since principals enjoy less power than associate wardens, then it naturally follows that the prison school's needs could be treated as a lower priority by prison administrators. In fact, this brushing aside the needs of the prison schools was repeatedly observed.

However, increasing hierarchical power was not the only strategy imagined by educators that could help overcome barriers to educational success. Influence could be gained by drawing custody directly into the education mission in a practical way at the point of program implementation. One vice principal recommends bridging the gap between custody and educational viewpoints by assigning a correctional officer specifically to education. This vice principal believes that the result would be a strengthened relationship between custody and education, possibly an important dimension of support for educational goals:

FK: Right, [a correctional officer] would be assigned to education. If they worked under us, I think we would have a better hold on what we can do. Like right now—an inmate is leaving [this was meant as a hypothetical example]. He needs to take one more test. He's paroling though. We just need him for one hour to come over here and take a test so he can get his certification and when he goes home he's going to have it. I can't get that guy over here for one hour. Because he doesn't have a gate pass and I don't have any authority to do that. If they were working for us, they would say, 'OK, you need him for an hour'? We'll bring him over.'

Issues between custody and education took on a variety of forms. For example, at one institution the CSUC research team learned (from multiple sources) that correctional officers required landscaping students to uproot vegetable plants because it was considered contraband, which could be used to make pruno. Another frequently observed example pertained to inmate movement. At some prisons, inmate movement ran smoothly, with correctional officers working well with education. At other times, correctional officers would make inmates wait to get to class for inexplicable reasons. The following from a school principal helps make the point:

CT: We have an issue with custody. Especially vocational prep classes, they generally are in a work change or separate area [a part of the prison requiring inmate to leave the yard to go to education]. So allowing them back and forth

through the work change is an issue because they have to strip for security purposes when they go back on the yard. And that would double or triple the workload of those particular officers, and generally work change officers have been in the system for a long period of time and have earned their stripes to get to that point because they have their weekends and holidays off. They like those cushy jobs but they don't want to do a job that really entails.

A vice principal describes some of the consequences of conducting classes in what was called “a custody world”:

EP: We were put on the back; education was put on the backburner, and we don't get our just due and we don't get things coming to us. You mentioned that he didn't get his wiring [a vocational education teacher needing wiring for an appliance]. We have computers that we have purchased for over a year and a half and we can't get them to come over and put them into service for us. We're not allowed to do it ourselves because it's a security breach. But, they don't have time for us. Simply amazing to me. I don't get the support of the [prison] administration.

Despite some of the problems education staff have with custody when attempting to deliver vocational education, education personnel also recognize the central purpose of the CDCR goes beyond delivering rehabilitative programs; in prison, safety and security trump all other concerns.

Another prison education administrator also recognized the core function of California's prisons and the need for both custody and education to work together:

BF: In some aspects, it would be custody, but I wouldn't say it's custody. I don't want to point the finger at them. It's policy and procedure in the institution. Going back to what I said earlier, it's the “State Pen,” it's not Penn State. So it can only be as successful as it can be working in a prison. It's state prison. These are bad people who have done some really bad things and need to be controlled and need to be watched over very closely and their movement controlled.

Finally, an upper-level prison administrator summarizes the importance of custody and education working together to achieve the larger goal of corrections and rehabilitation:

LY: Obviously, our number one job is to keep things secure inside the perimeter. Number one. I think they go hand in hand. I think without the

education programs, there's more tendency for inmates to want to get out that gate. Without the access to whatever programs, whether it's mental health, medical, whatever program that they need. Without that, I mean, that's why we're one big unit. We all need each other. Yes, it's a custodial world and yes, the bottom line is, count has to clear at the end of the day. So that is number one. Everyone knows that. The security of [vocational education] tools, and then education is very important, to ensure that the inmate doesn't have the tools to escape. That's why it has to be a relationship. Custody staff, education staff. Has to be that relationship and connection.

Class Problems

Some of the problems confronting vocational education pertain to the classes themselves, or better said, the administration of these classes. Interviewees, particularly principals and teachers, related concern about the open-entry/open-exit method of placing students in the classes, the amount of paperwork required of teachers, and problems with procurement. These were perceived by the informants to be significant problems.

Open-entry/open-exit Issues with open-entry/open-exit were identified earlier in the report in the responses to the research question pertaining to the California Logic Model and the research question about wait lists. Open-entry/open-exit is best understood as a method of assigning inmate students to classes on a rotating basis—inmates can start a class at any time and leave at any time. In theory, this allows the CDCR to have full classes at all times in response to policy and budgetary requirements. A side benefit is that inmates who leave a class and are transferred to a prison with the same class can pick the class back up where they left off. Admittedly, some view open-entry/open-exit as an asset for administering correctional education, but many others consider the rapid and seemingly happenstance method of assigning (or removing) inmate students to vocational education to be a problem. The following summarizes the benefits and concerns about open-entry/open-exit from the point-of-view of a principal:

EP: Throughout the prison system, the reason I like the open-entry/open-exit is, throughout the prison system, we have so many transferring from one prison to another prison because all the programs are standardized. So if there's open-entry here and he gets paroled to another facility, that facility can get him assigned to the program he just came from and start off from where he left off. If we had a closed-entry, he'd have to start over again or

have to wait another year to put him into a program where he could start again, so, open and exit, it works inside here.

Paperwork Another common complaint of vocational education teachers is the voluminous “paperwork” required of teachers. Requirements for record-keeping, accountability, security, requisitions of materials, and so forth take teachers off of the classroom floor and away from active engagement with students. Teachers routinely reported spending hours each day completing required paperwork. Most complained about the lack of standard procedure for collecting required data (some electronically, others paper and pencil), and most indicated that there was little analysis provided of the collected data. Here is what one veteran teacher said about the paperwork requirements:

NE: It’s unbelievable the paperwork that is being put upon vocational instructors. I mean something like NCCER should be a fairly simple process that literally takes more time than what it’s worth.

A vocational education inmate student from another class shared the same observation:

EL: It seems like in this class—and I do like my teacher, I can say that—but it seems like the conflict of interest is he has to spend more time on audits, on paperwork, on all the changes they’re constantly making in the administration paperwork, that he doesn’t get the time to come out here and do what I think he would like to do, and that’s talk about electrical.

The irony, of course, is that even though all this paperwork is done, simple statistics used to calculate course completion rates were not available for this study.

Procurement A part of the problem with paperwork has to do with routine requisitions for class supplies. Because of the bureaucratic nature of the CDCR, purchasing supplies for vocational education classes requires multiple signatures at the prison and often in Sacramento. A vocational education teacher describes the process and its problems in detail:

NE: In the trade, the way that they do the bidding process here, like copper—in order to get copper in here, I have to have somebody that’s willing to give me a quote on copper that’s good for, let’s say, six months.

And there's no wholesaler—copper goes up almost on a daily basis. If I get a price today, six months from now, it could be doubled. That's part of these paperwork issues that I'm talking about. It's just astronomical the time involved.

Moving up the organizational ladder, the following represents how a principal views the procurement process.

EP: Because it's such a long procurement process—we have to jump through hoops in order to buy a bottle of water. We need to eliminate all those hoops so we can now spend our money efficiently and not tie up so many man hours, teacher's hours, vice principal, and principal hours.

Moving up the organizational ladder further, the following comes from a long-time education administrator:

PSA: We're paying these people [teachers] \$100,000 a year and they're getting \$30,000 worth of benefits, and we're concerned about \$3,000 or \$4,000 of gas that requires a specific exemption, and it has to come up here. It has to be signed by me. It then goes to the superintendent and has to be reviewed by them. And then it goes to the director. And then it goes to X. And the cost of the review exceeds the cost of the gas. Now, there has to be this process in place, but I think there needs to be an exemption for certain kinds of pre-identified, absolute essentials for academic programs.

These quotes illustrate the overall lack of power correctional education has throughout the prison system. It also brings back into light the problems associated with having prison school principals subject to two supervisors: those at the prisons and those at the OCE. In the end, correctional education simply takes a back seat to other, more traditional concerns throughout the entire system as well as at the local prisons.

QUESTION #15: HOW DO STUDENTS EVALUATE THEIR CLASS AND TEACHER?

Inmate students were asked to provide a general assessment of their vocational education class and teacher. Their responses are summarized in this section.

Positive Evaluation of Vocational Education

Many of the inmate students who participated in a formal interview indicated they liked their class and felt they benefitted from it. Nevertheless, there were some variations. First, one inmate student talks about why he liked his vocational education class and how he believes it will provide opportunities when he leaves prison:

KI: This class is primary to get me going in life again. Getting a good job and be able to make reasonable, even the bottom pay, should be halfway reasonable for me. I've looked in the newspaper and seen ads for office workers. One of the requirements was being able to use the Excel program and workbooks.

This quote is a small representation of the positive comments made by inmate students to CSUC researchers during the course of this evaluation. Other positive quotations about vocational education can be found throughout the report.

Negative Evaluation of Vocational Education

Naturally, not all the inmate students liked or had a positive experience in their classes. The following quotes describe the negative experience students had in vocational education classes. One common complaint was the lack of hands-on opportunities provided by the teacher.

SCN: You've got to get your hands on to complete the course. And we don't get that here. We probably two hands-on modules per month. There was a time before that we were getting no hands-on for like three months when we first came in here. They said they didn't have the stuff to do it. So we just sit and doing bookwork, waiting for the hands on.

Positive Evaluation of Vocational Education Teacher

Positive evaluations of vocational education teachers primarily come in two forms: first, praise for how teachers approach the class, and second, respect for how some teachers give students personal attention in ways that help the inmate students become more successful. Nearly every person the CSUC research team spoke with had positive things to say about vocational education teachers. Indeed, these men and women attempt to

accomplish a difficult task—teaching inmates a trade—in extraordinarily challenging circumstances—prison. Most of the vocational education teachers observed were dedicated professionals who were excited about their trade and helping students.

The first inmate student had enrolled in several vocational education classes during his time in prison. He is asked to compare his present teacher (whose class was a part of this evaluation) to others he had in the past:

CSUC: What do really outstanding teachers do, as you've experienced, that's different?

DD: They'll make sure there's little rules in here. They'll actually participate in what their students are doing, answer questions, exactly what their job description requires them to do.

CSUC: Is Ms. X a good teacher?

DD: Yeah. She does the best she can what she knows about it. Like I said, she knows a lot about artistry work and vocation and stuff like that.

One of the landscaping students speaks about how his teacher would bring to the class outside material to help students learn:

GH: I'll give her an A+ because she brings home paper stuff for us to plant, like different seeds. She spends her money, like \$10 or \$12, to bring in seeds for us to plant in our stuff in the greenhouse out there. We've got strawberries, we've got tomatoes, onions, zucchini, squash. She's a good teacher. And when we do our retail book—the test we've got coming up on retail—she set her main goals and will explain the parts in there that we can read.

Another key quality of well-respected teachers was their willingness to go the “extra mile” to help inmate students with learning. Such teachers gave interested students extra attention when requested, brought in supplementary materials, and provided practical advice about pursuing the trade after parole. An inmate student talked about the responsiveness of his teacher to students who show interest in the janitorial services:

LU: This dude, once he sees you have the interest, he feeds the interest. You say something that you read out of the book, he asks, too. It's almost like the law of attractions. You ask him about this cleaning program, he'll pull out the catalog of the other cleaning product and say, this is how it's different than the other ones. He makes sure that you're learning

direction—he asks about your learning direction. And also he doesn't let the stupid ones in the class take away from the ones that are there to get something out of it.

Another student talks about how his teacher helped him prepare for a career in the trade he was learning with the hopes of eventually becoming a business owner:

CK: Yes. Mr. X, he's the one that helped me come up with my proposals and my business plan, you know what I'm saying. That's not really a requirement or a part of the class, but that's something I take upon myself to ask, "Hey Mr. X, I'm done with this. I know this offers a great job opportunity, so can you show me how to get started?" And he was like, "Oh yeah, Mr. X, just hold on a second. I'll go on the computer." And he pulls up a proposal—this is how you write a proposal.

Such teachers clearly have a significant impact on their students' lives. It is important to note, however, that at no time did the CSUC researchers observe or hear about any inappropriate contact or over-familiarity between the teachers and inmate students.

Negative Evaluation of Vocational Education Teacher

As is the case in all educational settings, not all teachers are beloved and not all teachers are gifted at the task—even if they desire to be. Some teachers of the classes included in this evaluation were better teachers than others. A few were judged to be poor, both by the researchers and the students. Two negative categories of behavior most frequently identified by interviewees when talking about teachers: those who are not teaching because of paperwork requirements and those evaluated negatively because they are perceived to be lazy. The following quotes provide examples of the frustrations inmate students felt when in a class with a deficient teacher.

One student offered the following judgment:

RR: With this teacher here, I don't like to rub salt in wounds and all that, but this guy doesn't know what he's doing. And all this guy does is sit up in there over on his computer every day. This is the first time I've ever seen him jump in on the floor since you guys got here. I was like, wow, this guy's looking real good here.

It should be stressed that most vocational education classes and teachers are judged favorably. However, some of the classes could be improved through restructuring and some teachers' performance could be improved through training. Common themes identified throughout this report, and identified once again in this section, are informative, especially issues regarding paperwork and proper inmate assignment to these classes.

QUESTION #16: WHAT IS THE VALUE OF PRISON VOCATIONAL EDUCATION?

This section examines the perceived benefits of providing vocational education in California's prisons. Two dominant themes regarding the value of vocational education (and education more generally) emerged from the data: first, benefits to the inmate students themselves and second, benefits to the prison. Evident from these data is that there is great value to providing vocational education to California's prisoners, which goes well beyond providing rehabilitative programming or addressing inmates' criminogenic needs. The value of vocational education is difficult to measure, especially within the constraints imposed upon this evaluation. However, the value of vocational education clearly goes beyond providing certifications, positive signaling opportunities, academic achievements, and keeping the inmates' time occupied.

The first part of this section examines the value of vocational education to inmates. The second part focuses on benefits to the institution. Before treating each of these themes separately, and to place the value of vocational education into a broader perspective, some quotes looking at this concept holistically will be examined. The first comes from a vice principal who was a vocational education teacher previously:

CSUC: What's the value of having voc education available?

BF: Keeps the inmates programming. Keeps them busy. Keeps them occupied. Keeps them out of trouble. For those who are being participatory, it's esteem building for the inmates. If you're building their esteem, they're less likely to cause trouble or walk around with an attitude. For the institution, in some aspects, sometimes there's cost savings when some of the inmates can do the work in the institution, but really for the most part, I think that's kind of minimal. I think it's more of a safety and security thing, keeping inmates busy and off their rack. Inside the institutions, especially the triple bunk institutions, those inmates are stacked up in there like cordwood. So they're just sitting there stewing and hanging around each other and of

course they're going to cause trouble. They've got nothing else to do. Get into mischief. And generally that mischief can be harmful. Could violate safety and security procedures. Harpoon [being stabbed] the inmates, harpoon the staff. You know, maybe even escape risks. So that value to the institution is great because it maintains stability within the institution.

The opinions of a school principal on the same topic:

QK: It is a benefit to the institution because it's a job for the inmate. It gives the inmate something to focus on, keeps them out of trouble. If they don't have anything to do, and the more they hang out on the yard, they get into trouble, they get into fights, gang activities. I think a lot of our students have actually been turned around because of education and I've seen it happen right in the institution just from the accomplishment of their program and feeling good about themselves. And when you think about it, a teacher, even with our old, archaic academic classrooms or voc programs, a teacher supervises 27 students plus 2 clerks. So 29 inmates for 8 hours a day. There isn't one officer that supervises that many, that many hours a day.

What is evident is that vocational education provides value for both inmates and the CDCR. This is perhaps succinctly put by one of the wardens who participated in the interviews when he said, "But the bottom line is, there's no down side to education in the system. There's a lot of ups" (EY).

Value of Vocational Education to Inmates

Every interviewee identified ways providing vocational education to inmates was valuable. Value included providing inmates with social capital, work experience, reading and math skills, self-esteem, and a positive way to spend their time while incarcerated.

One concept identified in the interviews was that providing vocational education to inmates will help them discontinue their life of crime. As one education administrator put it:

KZ: Only way to keep inmates out of prison is to give them a viable way to make a living other than what they were doing previously. If you're selling the drugs on the street corner and they don't want to do that anymore, then there's got to be something to be able to replace that. You can give them the GED, you can give them the college, whatever. They can get those. And we do know the recidivism rate for college is only about 20%. If they only have about one semester of college

Several interviewees talked about how vocational education gave them hope for a better life when they get out of prison—in many respects they are expressing the same sentiments about vocational education that the administrators and teachers who discussed how such programs provide hope and keep inmates “out of trouble.”

CK: But with this vocational class hopefully, it gives me an opportunity and it starts me in the right direction to where I’ll be able to build something when I am released, you know what I’m saying. Give me some incentives, some kind of insights on where I can go and I might not have to look for employment, I’ll be able to be my own boss and start my own company or something, you know. So right now, with the help of the vocational class, I feel that I’m headed in the right direction.

A significant part of giving inmates hope for a future is giving them hope for a job when they get out of prison, and at its core, the central point of vocational education is to create ex-prisoners who will become gainfully employed and not recidivate. The following quotes reflect this value. The first is from a prison administrator and suggests that the value of vocational education is to give inmates the tools to be successful when they parole:

CSUC: So what are the benefits of education-vocational education in prison?
 LY: Countless. Self-esteem. Keeps them off, out of trouble. We rarely have incidents in our voc[ational education] programs. You know, when you talk about violence. They’ve got the tools. If they wanted to hurt somebody, they’ve got the tools to do it.

A school principal talks about the value of hands-on job skills for the type of inmates he has seen:

QK: To be able to get gainful employment and have skills. I think the vocational programs are so important. I think it’s such a shame that they took them out of the public schools.

Value of Vocational Education to Prisons

Frequently when interviewees were asked about the value of vocational education to the institutions, one of four broad concepts were identified: vocational education helps with managing the prisoners; vocational

education keeps inmates active; vocational education helps to reduce violence at the institution; and vocational education provides inmates an opportunity to work with inmates from different ethnicities, which helps reduce racial tension. Finally, the value of vocational education is sometimes reflected in the positive relationships with the surrounding communities. Each of these concepts is explored here.

Vocational Education Helps with Managing the Prisoners

What is evident from the following remarks is that a part of the value of vocational education is in helping the administrators and correctional officers manage the institutions' daily routine.

LY: It gives them the structure that they need. You wake up. You go to chow. You go to class. We wake up, we go to work, we come home. Builds more of that life skill block that we need. Occupies their time. Gives them something tangible to do and helps us with our day-to-day structure to manage this operation. Programs are really the best avenue to help a prison succeed in the overall picture of managing. It's just one of the pieces of the pie that helps us manage, but it's a huge piece of that pie to help us manage that monster of an institution.

Vocational Education Keeps Inmates Active

Perhaps the way vocational education, as well as other structured programs, helps administrators manage their prisons is by keeping inmates focused while they are incarcerated, rather than hanging out on the prison yard. Specifically, for every vocational education class at least 29 inmates are engaging in some positive activity (27 full-time students and 2 clerks). When factored across several vocational education classes, adult basic education classes, and other rehabilitative programs (e.g., substance abuse programs), it is clear that these activities are assets for administering and managing corrections. Here is what one senior prison administrator said:

MQ: The benefit is occupying the inmates. Keeping them occupied. Trying to keep them out of trouble. Getting them interested in something and maybe getting them to realize, in the middle of all of this, when they're finally putting their 748th nail into something in carpentry, that maybe they'd rather do this on the streets than do it stuck up in here.

Vocational Education Improves Behavior and Helps to Reduce Violence at the Prison

It is commonly believed by administrators, teachers, and inmates that a part of the value of providing vocational education to inmates is it induces better behavior by the participants. Here is what an upper-level prison administrator said about the relationship between vocational education and reduced violence at the prisons:

PSA: The ability of programs to reduce violence and to encourage participation and constructive participation is an idea that is generally shared by all wardens and most astute custody types of people. They realize the value of programming. I think they realized it more in the last 7 or 8 years because of the push toward different types of programs.

A vocational vice principal at one of the prisons included in this evaluation also believed that vocational education helps to reduce violence within the institution:

FK: It keeps down the violence within our walls because if they get in trouble, they're taken out of education. If they're involved in a riot or involved in a mutual combat, they're going to be pulled out of education because they're going to do time in our administrative segregation.

Vocational Education Helps to Improve Race Relations

One way vocational education reduces violence within the prisons is by having inmates of different ethnicities work together in the classes. The value goes beyond the reduced violence and also helps inmate students when they parole, get a job, and are asked to work with someone of a different ethnicity.

A senior-level prison administrator also identified the possibility of reducing racism at the prisons as value of vocational education:

CN: I believe that the racial tension that we have is as a result of them not having an education.

CSUC: Not programming?

CN: Not programming. Obviously, that's a choice. They choose to do that. But once again, I think part of the reason we have racial tension is the result of that person is uneducated. He doesn't know or doesn't feel comfortable

around individuals of another race as a result of maybe being raised in an area where primarily white people lived or black people lived. Some of these individuals have never been around other ethnics until they come to prison. Not in this close proximity. They've been around them, they've seen them in the stores and things of that nature, but they haven't had to live with them. One of the things that they've been attempting to do with this *Johnson* [desegregation] case is blurring those racial lines by making it to where blacks, whites, Mexicans, all live together instead of being separate.

Vocational Education Is a Positive Public Relations Program

The prisons also benefit from administering vocational education classes to inmates through positive public relations opportunities. Many prisons seek to give back to their local communities through a variety of methods, including having vocational education classes provide some community service whenever possible. A principal and vice principal describe the service their school provides the surrounding community:

QK: The reputation of this institution has been very good because of the community service projects that we've done. Like, tell them about the City of XXXX, what we've done for them.

EP: City of XXXX, we redid, reconfigured, all of our community service projects, our institution projects, are paid by others. They furnish the materials and stuff and we provide the know-how, the learning and the skills and inmate labor. But we did all of the Christmas lights for downtown City of XXXX. Completely refurbished them, painted, sanded, rewired the whole shop, the electrical program.

SUMMARY

The following quote from a senior-level CDCR administrator summarizes the wide-ranging value of providing vocational education to California's prisoners:

QP: To me, again, it's all part of the whole. So the educational opportunities and coursework are much too valuable to be viewed as keeping the inmates busy. I never look at it that way. I think that that kind of view is understating the value. Really understating the value of what this bring for these offenders. So to me they're just part of the process of being in prison. But yes, security is always number one. You've got to provide safe environments for

staff and inmates so that they can move up. Take Maslow's hierarchy—if you don't feel safe in prison, you're going to be focus your energy on survival and not “if I get my GED or not,” right?

NOTES

1. Sensitive Needs Yards (SNY) are where inmates who cannot manage socially on a main yard are housed together. Typical reasons for assignment for such Sensitive Needs include sex offenders, ex-gang members (snitches), and others in need of “protective custody.”
2. The “point number” this inmate is referring to is the custody points each prisoner has based on their crime, sentence, criminal history, and behavior in prison. Custody points determine such things as the level of prison yard the prisoner qualifies for and program eligibility. Each year, with good behavior, prisoners' custody points can go down as many as four points, with some exceptions as in the case of prisoners who are sentenced to life without the possibility of parole.
3. Ironically, SB 18 XXX was part of the 2009 Budget agreement that also slashed CDCR funding by \$500 million for the very education programs which qualified the inmates for the incentives.
4. It is important to note that these interviews were conducted before the Governor signed SB 18 XXX in October 2009.

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Vignette: Shifting Bureaucratic Sands and Work Stoppages

Supervision of our research at the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) was assigned to a consultant from the Research Division, even though our project was under the Correctional Education Division. This, in effect, gave us two bosses at the CDCR, as well as a nominal third boss at UC Davis who handled the accounting between the CDCR and Chico State. We have already described the rocky start we experienced at the outset of the project when the consultant scolded us for not responding quickly enough to last minute changes in the request for proposal (RFP) (pp. 21–22). This was just the first experience of what Andy called the “shifting sands” of decision-making that our project depended on. As it worked out, this was also the first of many supervising consultants for our project. By the end of the 3-year project, which included 10 months of work stoppages, we were on our fifth supervisor from Research because of several departures at the OCE due to retirement, transfer, and in one case death.

Our contract was to use a “mixed methods” approach that included both qualitative interviews and quantitative analysis of program graduation and recidivism data. We were to collect the former on our travel to prisons, while the CDCR would provide us computer files which included lists of inmate students, commitment crime, basic demographics, reading levels, what courses they took, testing, graduation rates, and post-release recidivism.

Collecting the qualitative data for our study was more complex than simply laying out a map, driving to the prison, and calling participants to

schedule interviews and observations. In addition to the budget-induced work stoppages, interruptions included prison lockdowns where no inmate student was in class, or where only one part of the class was there because a specific ethnicity of inmate student was on lockdown. This situation took place when other ethnicities in the particular prison were involved in gang conflict.

A final “shifting sands” issue was the teacher’s schedule. If the individual were out sick, transferred, or retired, it required much decision-making all the way up the chain of command before the teacher could be replaced.

The California state budget crises of 2008–2010 pushed coherency of staffing at every level over the edge. Layoffs struck across state services and hit the CDCR hard, particularly in “non-essential fields” like education and research. Our first work stoppage took place with the first round of layoffs as all non-essential functions, such as research contracts, were suspended. Sands shifted beneath our feet and would do so again. Our projects were cut back and travel rescheduled.

Nowhere was this more evident than in Andy’s attempts to get quantitative data about recidivism, the chief goal of the study. The project started in May 2008 and was stopped just 3 months later on August 1, 2008, due to the CDCR’s lack of clarity in its budget. In early October of 2008, Andy received an introductory email from a new research consultant with the CDCR who indicated how sorry she was about the work stoppage and to let him know they located the CDCR Industry Certification Data in the Offender Based Information System (OBIS) data warehouse and had held three meetings to discuss it. But she could not share the data yet, since our project was still on hold and no one knew when it could restart.

A week later, Andy held an “off the record” phone conversation with the CDCR education administrator who had been our greatest advocate. He reassured Andy that there was no intention to dump the project once funding returned. Andy likewise recommended the project design remain the same with dates for “deliverables” and the completion simply extended to compensate for the work stoppages. Happily, the first news of project restart came at the end of October and was confirmed by the CDCR by mid-November 2008. Contract dates were also discussed. The performance contract originally ran from February 1, 2008, to January 31, 2010, so it was extended until June 30, 2010, even as the scope of work was cut back and reworked.

Travel to prisons started again in January 2009 after a 4-month hiatus and it seemed the search for the all-important quantitative data also picked up steam. In May 2009, Andy learned that he might get program admission data with demographic characteristics in 2 weeks. At the end of May, Andy inquired about the progress in getting the data but nothing was delivered.

In mid-June 2009, Andy heard from the research manager that Research was losing four staff, including the “data cruncher” assigned to work on collecting the OBIS data for us. This made things very difficult in the attempt to get any qualitative data about inmate students and recidivism. The research manager emailed, “I know how frustrating it could be on your part—your project could really be in jeopardy without quantitative data. Hopefully we can deliver for you despite everything.”

In this way, it became even clearer that numbers were fundamental to what the CDCR wanted, not the qualitative data that we believed fit the research questions so well and were needed for this report to be taken seriously. In this context, Bill remembered the many times he heard education leaders admonish teachers and staff to collect good data to show how much things had improved. In situations of organizational turmoil, the point is not open-ended falsifiable “research,” but that everyone needs to look as good as possible.

On September 1, 2009, Andy sent a message to the research manager to ask if any progress had been made in securing any quantitative data for the study. Sometime later it came out that the CDCR never had data on the inmate students enrolled in the programs we were studying, despite the hours teachers spent putting data in their computer (see p. 219). There was no way to tie together student demographic data with vocational education completion data, much less with recidivism data. Simply put, the students in the classes we were studying could not be traced in the CDCR databases. This revelation was stunning. The CDCR hired us to study the effects of educational programming on recidivism but the group responsible for collecting the data did not have it.

But the CDCR still wanted “numbers” to give the report legitimacy. As a result, David Philhour (our statistical guru and data cruncher in Chico) and Andy worked out a way to collect “proxy data” on similar inmate students and determine their recidivism experience. This method could achieve our chief project goal, although not as accurately. Since it was the only option, Andy followed this path.

On September 15, 2009, things progressed to the point where David and Andy received an email from a new “data cruncher,” from CDCR, who asked which format they would like to receive the data since the file was too big

for Excel. On February 17, 2010, David sent the variables we needed. On February 22, 2010, David heard from our research manager that the data cruncher could complete the comparison group by the end of February 2010. On February 25, 2010, Andy emailed David to say, “Yippee! I have some data for you!” On March 12, 2010, Andy again emailed David to let him know about yet another budget-induced work stoppage: “We have been terminated ... we actually have to stop working effective yesterday.” Yet another delay due to state budget uncertainty and still no data. This stoppage was to last until July 13, 2010.

On July 13, 2010, Andy wrote, “Well, after a long wait and some hard work we are officially up and running again. Our start date was June 28 and our report is due October 31, 2010.” But the data remained elusive, and we in fact did not receive it until late October 2010. In this context, we received yet another extension to December 31, 2010.

December 31, 2010, the final report was submitted, and we assumed we were done! A 292-page, single-spaced behemoth was off our plate. We believed we had delivered a quality report that would provide CDCR administrators a chance to understand how their schools, teachers, and inmates saw the strengths and weaknesses of vocational education in California prisons. We were particularly proud of the qualitative interview data we provided that gave voice to the concerns of the people we interviewed. We were less proud of the quantitative data, knowing as we did the many compromises in data quality we had to make to develop shortcuts like “proxy data” for recidivism.

In the meantime, a new manager in the research office was appointed. She contacted Andy in February 2011 to tell him that the report was unacceptable—CDCR administrators could not read that much and only needed about 60 pages. Most significantly, she noted that money would be withheld pending the completion of the 60-page report and that CDCR legal counsels were being advised. This kicked the matter upstairs to Chico State’s Grants and Contracts office and a seasoned administrator began to deal with the situation on our behalf while Andy worked to cut down the report to the size required by the CDCR. On April 15, 2011, our most recent Research Manager at the CDCR contacted CSUC Research Foundation to let him know that payment was being withheld until the revised report was delivered in the required shortened format. The shortened report was finally delivered and the contract fulfilled by June 30, 2011. To this day, we do not know if the CDCR has read the short report or even looked at the earlier one.

Vignette: I'm All Good

I was proud of my experience and abilities as an interviewer as I began this project. I have spent 9 years as a human resources (HR) director and Assistant Superintendent in a school district where my most important responsibility was developing processes for the selection and development of new teachers and support staff. To accomplish this goal, I relied on what I learned from professional HR selection companies who provided training in what was then called “structured perceiver interviews.” My corporate mentor wisely told me that if you simply ask people about themselves and listen carefully, they will tell you everything you need to know about their potential as an employee. Add a solid background check and the input from other trained interviewers and you could be certain you had a good assessment of the candidate.

The purpose of these interviews and processes was to winnow down a pool of eager candidates who were trying to get a school job or to fulfill a calling as a teacher. Any time an opening occurred, I had a list of approved candidates ready to fill the job. If we found out enough about people prior to hiring them, then our efforts to train and develop them would certainly be more productive. We could also weed out those who were looking for employment for the wrong reasons. We knew what these wrong reasons were based on the research provided to us by the HR company. For instance, one question was, “What are your three most important reasons for wanting to be a teacher?” A “look for” response from the candidate and also a “counter” response were provided by the company.

If the candidate gave an answer that was based in an emotional and intellectual desire to engage with students, then the candidate passed the question. If the candidate gave an answer that showed purely self-concerns (i.e., they were looking for a job with lots of time off) then they failed the question. For instance, the joke was that the wrong answer to the three most important reasons question was “June, July and August.”

I thought I was an expert at looking for themes of answers that told a great deal about the skills and motivations of candidates. The bottom line was simply that the work itself, defined in the “look for,” had to be deeply motivating in order to justify hiring a person. Work conditions can be hard on employees, but if the employees get meaning from their work then they are more likely to be good employees.

One of the disconcerting facets of this kind of interview process is the way the interviewer reacts once he has heard what he is looking for, either positive or negative. For instance, in an interview for a school custodian, one question is what the custodian would do if teachers complained about his work. If the custodian begins listing all the ways he would reach out to teachers so that he could find out exactly what they need and then meet that need, then the interviewer would say, “Fine, the next question is” This would sometimes rattle the candidate but my corporate mentor insisted this was not a problem. The candidate had shown you his motivation.

When I began interviewing inmates with Andy, I got chewed out immediately. I had read about grounded theory, but really did not understand what I was supposed to do. I knew how to conduct an interview and when I had heard enough to understand what I thought I was looking for, I jumped to the next question, even if it was obvious that the inmate had more to say. With tutoring from Andy I was able to change my habits and develop well-disciplined listening skills to allow the interviewee to weave his own path through the themes of the interview questions.

But in prison, even this was still not enough. There was no reasonable assurance that I was able to find out what inmates actually thought. This was made clear to me on my first gang leaders’ selected inmate for interview.

We had been observing in the landscaping class (see Chap. 8) for several visits and felt we had gained a certain amount of credibility as innocuous visitors. It was clear to the inmates that we did not represent custody but that we had something to do with education. So I believed that my

request to interview an inmate after we had been conversing with Andy for a bit would result in a positive response. It was a surprise to me when he said, "Wait here," and then walked across the shop to talk to another group of inmates. I did not understand he was checking with his "shot-caller" (i.e., gang leader).

In a few minutes the shot-caller and two of his lieutenants walked over to me and Andy and asked us what we wanted. Andy explained we wanted to do an interview about the program and described our role as researchers. The shot-caller listened and said "ok" and again we were told to "wait here." In a few minutes a different inmate came over with the shot-caller who said, "This is the guy you'll interview."

I still believed I was in charge of the interview. I had a willing subject and I had a list of the kinds of questions we wanted answered. So I invited the young man into a smaller adjoining conference room (with a window to the shop) and introduced myself in ways that I knew from experience interviewing would put the interviewee at ease. He sat in the chair across the small table and listened as I brought out my digital recorder and began to tell him about the informed consent I would read to him. He slumped back in his chair, stared at the recorder, and was not at ease. He stared at me in silence and seemed not to understand what I had said. So I restated in my own words what was going on in order to be certain we were both on the same page. He said, "I'm good."

I took a shot at the first paragraph of the consent:

I hereby consent to be a participant in an evaluation project whose purpose is to explore how (teachers, parole officers, or administrators) think and feel about vocational education in California's prisons. I understand that the questions asked of me will help the researchers evaluate just how beneficial vocational education programs are for inmates. In addition, I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time during the interview. I also have been made aware that I can refrain from answering any question without penalty.

The inmate said, "I'm good." I continued:

I understand that there are no experimental procedures involved in this study and no physical risks. Potential discomforts may result for some who may have had negative educational experiences. On the other hand, I am also aware that by my participation some benefits may result such as the improvement of vocational education programs offered to inmates.

Again, the inmate replied, "I'm good." I continued to read the consent to him:

I have been assured that my privacy will be protected by the research team, to the full extent allowed by law. All identities will be referred to with the use of pseudonyms, and all information gathered during the course of this research will be stored in a manner that protects me and keeps my answers confidential. I understand that the researchers will ask for my consent to audio tape this interview. By consenting, I understand that all audio tapes will be transcribed verbatim for review at a later time. It is also my understanding that the audio tapes will be destroyed upon conclusion of this evaluation project. Finally, all data collected during the course of this study will be stored in a locked office, which will only be accessible by members of the research team. Any computers storing the data from this study will be password protected and any laptop computers used will never be left unattended or in an unsecured location.

Once more, he replied, "I'm good."

I then asked pro forma, "Do you have any questions? Do you agree to participate in this evaluation study?"

And again, he answered, "I'm good."

I then asked him about a more specific need to our interview:

(After reading this statement to the individual, give this form to him or her.)

What pseudonym would you like to use for this interview?

To this he answered, "No, I'm good."

I stopped and began to wonder if he would continue with the interview.

I asked, "So, would you like to do this interview now?"

And he replied, "No, I'm good."

I asked again, "So you don't want to do this interview?"

He said, "Right, I'm good."

I felt like an idiot. This young man had looked uncomfortable and tried to tell me he did not want to undergo this experience. But I was in charge and knew what to do, so I did it. What is more, I continued to learn what this experience meant over the term of our study and beyond. Reading Scott (1990) about the "arts of resistance" and "hidden transcripts," it became clearer that my linear conceptualization of me asking questions, and inmates giving me answers with the information I needed reflected the same logic as evidence-based research; that is, we are able to know

what to ask, what evidence is important, and what the evidence means. But I had no idea what this man was responding to, who he thought I was, or what his shot-caller had instructed him to do. I simply knew that I was in charge and I was asking the questions.

This inmate exemplified the “hidden transcript” (Scott, 1990, p. 25) of thoughts not to be revealed to people in authority by people who are completely dominated. He came to the interview, underwent a “ritual of homage” (Scott, 1990, p. 24), and escaped from the experience in compliance to the demands of those in power (me) and the requirements of his leader (shot-caller). The “public transcript” (Scott, 1990, p. 45) he gave was completely misunderstood by me until after 15 or 20 minutes of my persona as interviewer interacting unsuccessfully with his “public transcript performance” (Scott, 1990, p. 45) as a willing inmate. He was able to give me “euphemized power” (Scott, 1990, p. 56) by responding without resistance, allowed me to reinforce the hierarchy for the institution by participating, but in fact, gave real power to his shot-caller by resisting the interview in a passive and effective way. It was an exercise in the “Arts of Political Disguise” (Scott, 1990, p. 136), a subtle and oblique way of managing the domination of others.

Following this experience, it seemed clear that we needed more perspectives, a more complex model, and more than triangulation to understand what was going on. Who are these people? What do I know and what can I know about them and their hopes within the life-world of prison and beyond?

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Report: Discussion

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this evaluation was to determine whether the 12 vocational education courses in the study help to reduce recidivism among students. This occurs in the context of a recidivism rate that currently stands at 67.5% over a 3-year period after release according to the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, CDCR (2010). The recidivism rate has remained relatively stable over the past decade. With two out of every three parolees returning to prison within 3 years, the Legislature recognized with AB 900 and other policies dating back to at least 2005, that something must be done to reduce this rate.

In keeping with this theme, among the core goals of AB 900 was that the CDCR further develop strategies to implement rehabilitative programs for inmates, with the intended outcome being reduced recidivism and greater public safety. One key component of this strategy was vocational education. AB 900 instructs the CDCR to “implement a system of incentives to increase inmate participation in, and completion of, academic and vocational education consistent with inmate’s education needs” (Cal. Penal Code §2054.2).

The CDCR’s Office of Correctional Education (OCE) developed 19 new vocational education classes at eight prisons throughout California. The OCE emphasized vocational education partially because of the law’s demands, and partially because it is a successful approach for reducing

recidivism and improving parole outcomes for ex-felons (Aos, Miller, & Drake, 2006).

As the state's prison system was undergoing this change in mission and focus, the Legislature also required the CDCR to convene a panel of experts to complete an assessment of the institution and to identify evidenced-based methods for reducing recidivism. The result was the formation of the Expert Panel on Adult Offender and Recidivism Reduction Programming, who summarized their results in the report "A Roadmap for Effective Offender Programming in California" (Expert Panel, 2007). The Expert Panel (2007) also identified 11 evidenced-based recommendations that, if implemented, would likely result in less recidivism and more institutional efficiency.

Building from their 11 recommendations, the Expert Panel also developed the California Logic Model. The California Logic Model provided an administrative "roadmap" for the CDCR to follow as it further developed programming that could result in the successful reintegration of felons back into society. The California Logic Model identified eight steps for the CDCR to guide inmates through from initial classification at the beginning of their sentence to release on parole.

THE STORY OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN CDCR: REHABILITATION, SAFETY, AND SECURITY

In AB 900, California's Legislature stipulated that monies used for program development must be subject to evaluation. It is with this mandate that this study began to take form. Originally, this study was meant to be an examination of how these 12 courses helped to reduce recidivism. However, it soon became apparent that due to the way that CDCR collects data about inmates and classes, it was not possible to address this question using a standard experimental model. In addition, the short time covered by the study, the lack of information about parolees, and other problems that confronted the researchers compelled them to consider alternative methods to conduct the evaluation.

Since evaluating recidivism outcomes associated with vocational education (e.g., recidivism) was not possible, California State University, Chico (CSUC) and the CDCR shifted the study to one that focused on identifying what these programs do well and the barriers that prevent them from being as successful as they could be. In this light, the researchers attempt to "tell the story" of vocational education in California's prisons.

An administrator at the OCE helped explain why telling this story is important and how it is related to reintegration and ultimately public safety:

The story of vocational education in California’s prisons is the foundation of this evaluation. The research questions developed by CSUC and the CDCR, and especially the research question about the importance of the California Logic Model to vocational education, provide a starting point for understanding the important effect these classes have, their deficiencies, and the problems that prevent them from being more successful. These important findings are supplemented with information captured using qualitative research techniques including semi-structured interviews and structured and ethnographic observation of the classes. These sources shed light on the role of vocational education for inmate students while they are incarcerated, as well as after.

Taken altogether, the story of vocational education shows that the men and women who teach and administer these classes do a job in a difficult environment and they do it very well. The inmate students like the classes, respect the teachers, and develop marketable job skills. The story shows that every level of the CDCR recognized the value of vocational education to the prisons and the inmates—from Secretary Matthew Cate to Level 1 prisoners. However, significant bureaucratic and institutional barriers also exist, many of them emerging out of the tension between the needs for safe and secure custody policies and the need to conduct efficient and effective education programs. Based on the findings reported here, CSUC believes this tension prevents vocational education from reaching its full potential.

In what follows, a brief summary of the findings for each of the research questions is provided, followed by an examination of the key findings of this evaluation. Then recommendations of ways to improve vocational education in California’s prisons are discussed. Finally, limitations of the study, recommendations for future research, and a concluding remark will be made.

A REVIEW OF KEY ISSUES FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION COURSES

With a few notable exceptions, the majority of the vocational education classes included in this evaluation were well run and taught by teachers who cared about their profession and student learning in a prison environment. Many of the better classes were also found to have plenty of space and

supplies for student learning. Good classes were focused and student activity directed toward learning (or not distracting students who were trying to learn). The most outstanding teachers were found to be knowledgeable about their trade, gifted at sharing their knowledge to their students, and clear about their expectations from the students. The good teachers required the students be learning about the trade while in the class and did not permit students to become distracting or disrespectful. The rules of the class were clearly defined, and as a result, the teachers were highly respected by the students, and the class ran more smoothly and efficiently.

But, teaching vocational education in prison offers a litany of problems unique to the prison environment. Sometimes distracting and disrespectful students are assigned to the classes, disrupting the educational experience for everyone. At other times, inmate students take up valuable class space while not participating in the educational program. Prison lockdowns, designed to preserve safety and security, can be frequent and disruptive to the rhythm of a class. Often, classes are without supplies for extended periods of time, effectively bringing them to a halt. Adversarial relationships with custody staff also can be disruptive, because an effective class is dependent on the assistance of prison officers. Inmate movement, level of yard, personal problems experienced by inmates, prison gangs, budget cuts, and so many more factors conspire against vocational education being successful. In these contexts, vocational teachers accomplish great things that can, at times, change the lives of their students.

In the majority of cases, the courses and classes included in this evaluation were well conducted, and in some cases, outstanding. Poor or weak classes shared a number of problems, starting with the teacher. Teachers in weak classes were not engaged themselves, and they appeared to be inconvenienced by the students. Hands-on activities were rarely, if ever, offered. Lectures were essentially non-existent. Sometimes, these teachers were well-intentioned, but simply did not know how to be more effective in the role. Students in these classes were not engaged and rarely completed the course. Indeed, some inmate students reported that they felt trapped in such classes.

ISSUES INFLUENCING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

Whether the class was observed to be good, adequate, or weak, all vocational education courses are challenged by several issues that must be recognized by the OCE and CDCR.

First, the best vocational education classes (e.g., most efficient, most productive) were structured around project-based learning. In these classes, the teacher established work stations where inmate students could hone their skills after they had completed their bookwork. Moreover, the inmate students clearly indicated they liked the hands-on learning aspect of these vocational education courses. Students also knew exactly what was expected of them from their teacher and what they should be working on from one day to the next.

Second, the best classes had students working in groups. Many reported group work was an effective way for teachers to present the material to students at different stages of the curriculum. In this regard, it was also an effective way to deal with some of the problems associated with open-entry/open-exit policies of the classes. Work groups also allowed the teacher to take advantage of peer tutoring and mentorship—especially important given the number of directions the teachers were pulled in each day by the limitations of the prison environment. Another benefit of work groups was it helped to reduce racial tension among the inmate students. Unlike other aspects of prison life, the classes were racially integrated. For the most part, the inmate students generally left the politics of prison gangs for the yards or housing units. In fact, many inmate students told the researchers that the vocational education classes were a “safe zone,” where they could get away from the tension from the yard and work on doing something positive with their lives.

Third, a key factor in predicting success or failure of vocational education is whether the right student was in the right vocational education seat. In fact, except for having a good teacher, perhaps nothing is more important than getting the right students into the right classes. Assigning the right student to the right vocational education class was implied in the call for effective rehabilitative programming found in AB 900, the Expert Panel report (2007), and the Three-Judge Court Panel judgment (2009). The issue of having the right student in the right seat involves several factors that influence vocational education, including the Unit Classification Committee, admissions criteria, the Inmate Assignment Office, and the management of wait lists. In addition, the issue of open-entry/open-exit, CDCR policy, and legislative mandates that vocational education classes are fully populated influence this issue.

Fourth, it was found that motivated students were more likely to be successful students. Motivated inmates wanted to be in the class learning the trade and were prepared to do so. This means that the Unit Classification

Committee needed to do this job of identifying motivated students, and not just putting “butts in seats.”

Fifth, it was found that a good number (perhaps the majority) of vocational education inmate students are placed in classes where they do not belong. Inappropriate assignment of students to classes starts with the Unit Classification Committee and stems from at least three causes. First, inmate students are misassigned to a particular vocational education course, meaning they may want vocational education but not the specific class they are placed in. Second, inmate students are too often ill-prepared for the vocational education curricula offered by the CDCR in terms of adult basic education skills. Too many inmate students did not possess the requisite skills (e.g., literacy, numeracy) to be successful in vocational education, drawing vocational education teachers into the task of teaching reading and math. Inappropriately placed inmate students are a chronic problem for teachers’ classroom management. Frustrated and disengaged inmate students are also often likely to become distracting to the other students, disrupting their educational experience. Not only is the inappropriate placement of a student a problem for the individual, the teacher, and the other students, it can negatively affect the rehabilitative mission of the CDCR as a whole.

Sixth, teacher training and support raise other issues about the quality of vocational education in CDCR prisons. Vocational education teachers, while usually good at their jobs, also need on-going exposure to professional development programs rooted in trade-specific training opportunities. The ideal would be for teachers of the same vocational education class to be able to come together to discuss problems they may be experiencing, strategies they have tried in their classes that work well, and other pedagogical techniques that could be applied in other places.

Seventh, paperwork demands on teachers were a recurring theme in interviews, with most, if not all, teachers pointing out that recordkeeping kept them off of the shop floor for several hours per day. Most teachers complained about the volumes of paperwork they must complete and send to the Office of Correctional Education (OCE) at CDCR, NCCER, prison school administration, and prison administration. Inmate students complained about their teacher having to be in his or her office to complete the paperwork rather than in the class teaching.

A number of other obstacles and problems confronting vocational education deserve mention, but because of time and space considerations, they are not listed here. These issues include inmate movement problems,

sometimes strained relationships between custody and education, the personal problems of the inmates, lockdowns, budget cuts, class cancelations, and so on.

THE VALUE OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

This section concludes with a brief examination of the rehabilitative value vocational education courses provide inmates. There are three specific factions that benefit from providing vocational education to prisoners: inmates, prisons, and the public.

Vocational education allows inmates to learn a trade and hopefully gain employment upon release from prison. The vocational education courses included in this evaluation further assist the inmate students in this regard by providing certification from nationally recognized organizations signaling students' readiness to perform the job. In addition, vocational education allows students to signal their commitment to rehabilitating their lives and leaving a life of crime behind. However, vocational education does much more for inmates than simply improving the chances they find a job upon release and become economically stable. Participating in vocational education programs allows inmates to address other criminogenic needs, such as educational deficiencies. They are able to show their families they are working to better their lives; and for some, it provides them the first chance in their lives to taste success.

Vocational education is valuable to the prisons as well. Foremost, it keeps inmates occupied in a pro-social behavior. This keeps them out of the idleness of the prison yard, and somewhat insulates them from prison gang politics. Successful vocational education students also serve as models for other prisoners, and prison management becomes easier when inmates are focused on such programs. Vocational education contributes to a reduction of violence in prisons and better behavior of inmate students overall. Indeed, vocational education programming is such a great asset to prison administrators that every single one that was interviewed (formally or informally) indicated they would like to see it expanded at their institution.

Finally, offering vocational education to prisoners benefits Californians as a whole. For example, the results of the quantitative data and qualitative interviews indicated vocational education probably reduces recidivism, meaning fewer crimes in the state. As a result of providing vocational education, there is greater public safety helping the CDCR achieve one

of its chief goals. The reduction in recidivism also benefits Californians because of the reduced costs of running the CDCR with fewer inmates. For example, the study group ($n=4414$) was found to have a recidivism rate of 25%, while the non-programming comparison group's recidivism rate was 27%. This 2% reduction in recidivism amounts to \$8,722,000 in savings to the CDCR during the roughly 2 years represented by the data [if 27% of the study group recidivated, 89 more men would have returned to prison; $89 \times \$49,000$ average cost for incarceration (CDCR, 2009a)/year \times 2 years]. If all vocational education students represented in the data are combined ($n=5414$), there is a difference in recidivism of 3.3% less than the non-programming prisoners. In this case, the savings in incarceration costs total to \$15,190,000 over the same time period. Thus, even if the reduction in recidivism because of vocational education is minor, just 3.3% when comparing vocational education students to non-vocational education prisoners, the benefits are substantial for taxpayers, the inmates, and the public.

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Vignette: Educators Only Whisper in a Custody World

The passivity of the education administrators was at first striking, but I came to understand it as a normal response to a system where the concept of safety, as defined by custody officials, always holds sway. Custody was in charge and they held all information confidential. Lives could be at stake, they dramatically whispered.

This perspective at first appeared melodramatic. To make matters worse, correctional custody officers in green uniforms are closely watched by internal affairs custody officers in black uniforms. The black uniforms make sure the green uniforms are not involved with smuggling cell phones, drugs, and other contraband, which can be a very lucrative side business.

The dangers custody feared became more apparent when a librarian was stabbed in one of the prisons we visited. The incident emphasized that inmates are locked up because they are criminals, not simply the victims of poverty, poor education, alienating foster care, neglect, childhood abuse, and violence. They could hurt other people, and the librarian was just one victim of that convoluted world.

According to prison lore, a gang contract had been put out on a prison employee and an elaborate plan developed to carry out the contract. The outcome placed the librarian as a player in another Kafkaesque scene because she was not the target of the contract. But the inmates intent on stabbing the person identified by the gang arrived at the appointed location but went through the wrong door to the library. The intended victim was not there. Left on their own to figure out what to do next, they

decided they should stab someone, even if it was the wrong person. So the librarian was stabbed and killed. The entire prison went on lockdown to prevent further gang violence if inmates had contact with each other. Lockdown means every inmate remains in his cell. Inmate movement outside cells whether to eat, exercise, stand in line to get meds, or go to or from class is a chief source of problems for custody officials. There is little violence in a locked-down prison.

With such experiences in mind, education administrators inevitably deferred to custody officials. One vice principal crystallized the concept with the statement, “It’s a custody world.” Prisons are controlled and defined by custody officials. This results in a passivity among educators that gave me the impression that principals, vice principals, and teachers made few decisions. They wrote reports, accreditation applications, consulted with other officials, and moved paper around, but rarely pressed a particular instructional agenda with the warden. They seemed to have mastered the bureaucratic skill of waiting for orders. Unbuilt greenhouses as detailed in the “Greenhouse” vignette (see Chap. 8) only confirmed this perspective.

Passivity was most evident in situations where important educational decisions were made. Unit Classification Committee hearings serve as a prime example (see Chap. 10, pp. 149–154). When inmates enter the prison system, they are assessed and assigned to a level based on their danger of violence using a custody risk scale of I (low) to IV (high) that depends on commitment offense, sentence, gang affiliations, disciplinary record, and so on. After inmates arrive at a new prison, they meet with a board consisting of a counselor, custody captain, an educator, and any other appropriate experts such as medical personnel. The school principal is also invited. This purpose of this placement hearing, since the advent of AB 900, is to determine the most effective path toward rehabilitation for each individual inmate. The educational decisions in the conference should move the inmate toward the most appropriate GED (General Education Degree) and a vocational trade certificate. All this is determined in a hearing that lasts about 10 minutes for each inmate.

However, these hearing committees actually served another purpose not displaced even by legislation and Governor Schwarzenegger’s signature: the safe operation of the prison. The gestalt of the yards and prison gangs were the most important factors determining these “criminogenic” or educational needs. Inmates were placed expediently in a class with an opening so that no seat remained empty—educational goals were

peripheral. The educational representatives in placement hearings, left in the dark about what information custody officials knew about gang activity or other conditions on the yard, were relegated to making uninformed suggestions to a committee. Likewise, the inmates we interviewed believed their educational interests had nothing to do with the work of these placement committees—their goal was simply to comply and “do their time.”

For example, once while visiting a welding classroom in another prison, I had a conversation with an inmate student who looked as if he were studying the text intensely. I introduced myself to him and he was very willing to talk with me. I asked him if he used the new electronic welding simulator in the classroom. This simulator looked a bit like a video game with a rod that students manipulated as if they were actually making a weld. The student told me in broken English that he was already a welder on “the street” so he already knew most of what was taught in this class. His big problem was that he could not pass the written tests since he could not read English very well. He indicated that if he had a Spanish–English text that he could read for understanding in Spanish and then learn English at the same time, he would succeed in the course. He had already failed several tests in English and believed he did not have a chance to pass any other tests in English.

I found myself wishing that these principals would take a risk in the placement hearings. Their passivity in accepting the “custody world” left me frustrated and disappointed. To make matters worse, the areas where they spent their energy were narrowly focused on operational matters: How many days off could teachers take? Why did they take them on that day? From an operational perspective, these issues are important because they impact instruction. Yet one hopes that educational leaders would stretch beyond keeping the classrooms staffed as a mission for their professional lives.

Following these experiences, I expected that some relationship existed between the level of custody risk of the inmates in the prison and the degree of passivity exemplified by the principal and vice principal. In other words, it seemed reasonable that in the institutions that housed the highest risk Level IV inmates, the educational administrators would be the most passive; presumably starker custody requirements overpowered rehabilitative efforts through education. However, once again, prison surprised me.

One prison in our study was famous, even notorious, for the heinous nature of the inmates housed there. Prisoners who entered the prison system and were involved in violent behavior, intense gang activity, or posed

an increased threat to others and custody staff were transferred to this prison.

After we arrived at this dank place, we were met by the principal, a woman who wore warm pants and a jacket. She welcomed us and was eager to know what we wanted to see. When we were checked in through the security checkpoint, the principal addressed the officer by name saying, “Good Morning Officer _____” and introduced us as visiting researchers.

We spent time talking about the study as we walked through the gate and saw the yards for the first time. There were many smaller sections of yard fenced off for different groups of prisoners so they would not be able to form a large group and rush a door. This had been learned through an unfortunate experience in the past.

We visited a shop class with a very effective teacher, where the principal introduced us, again addressing the teacher by his name. She also introduced us to the correctional officer who was assigned to the classroom, also addressing him by his name. She then left us so we could observe.

Later, the principal led us to the educational programs being offered in the highest security section of the prison, in “administrative segregation” (i.e., solitary—see Chap. 17). As the principal took us up a flight of stairs, we ran into the assistant warden. He stopped and said, “Good Morning,” and the principal introduced us. He told us that he had not believed the program could work but the principal finally convinced him to try. That particular assistant warden is now the biggest supporter based on the results with the inmates. The principal explained to us what a huge difference it made to work with such an open-minded, dedicated, and caring individual as the assistant warden. She let him know our itinerary and indicated she could be available at any time even though visitors were present. He indicated he would see us again in the program we were on our way to visit.

When we arrived in the class, we were not exactly underground but it felt that way. We were surrounded by concrete, bulletproof glass, steel doors, and steel bars. When we entered the administrative segregation unit, we checked in with the checkpoint officers and issued standard stab-proof vests. The principal again greeted each of the officers by name and introduced us. An officer was appointed to serve as our guide and take us into one of the pods. These pods consisted of hallways radiating out from a central hub, like spokes on a wheel. The hub houses a console where an armed officer watches everything from above. That officer wore a helmet with a visor that extended below his chin. He wore a bulletproof vest

and had an automatic rifle slung across his chest. This officer was sitting in a kind of turret so he could easily swivel to see any of the hallways. There was no way to enter from below without first going through a kind of hatch that he controlled. The principal waved and said hello to him, also addressing him by his name. He smiled down and they exchanged greetings.

We were led into one of the hallways where four or five cells were lined up next to each other. Each cell held only one man who was clad in a kind of white underwear, long shorts, and a T-shirt. In the cell were a closed-circuit computer and monitor that provided the programmed learning that made the assistant warden so proud. Inmate students were making steady progress toward getting their GEDs using this equipment and program.

The cell itself was completely concrete and contained two bunks: a toilet, and sink. We saw through what looked like 4-inch steel bars into the cell from the hallway. We spoke with the inmate who told us about the program and how glad he was to have something to do in this cell.

Two cells away, the principal was leaning against the bars and speaking very softly, whispering through the bars to an inmate and listening to him intently. I walked over slowly and learned the story. This young man was tattooed on his neck and face and finishing the last weeks of a 10 year to life sentence. He was to be paroled in 3 weeks and, as the system required, would be given \$200 “gate money” and released back to the county of his crime, Los Angeles. He appeared to be upset, almost to the point of tears. The principal introduced me to him, addressing him by his name, and changed the subject to his use of the computer and the program. He explained he enjoyed the learning and felt he was close to earning a GED. We were then escorted to the exercise area at the end of the hall. It was a small concrete room outside, and looking up the 15-foot walls, one could just catch a glimpse of cloud or, if very lucky, sunshine.

She explained to me that this young man was 26 years old and had entered prison at 16. He was terrified to return to his neighborhood because he feared being killed by his gang or a rival gang if he did not rejoin and become an active member. The principal said she simply spoke reassuring words to him, but also told him she would advocate for him.

On the way out of the Ad Seg unit, walking down the tunnel-like hall, we passed a correctional officer sitting in a chair looking at what appeared to be the wall. As we came closer, we saw that he was watching a naked man lying down in a small cell. The principal introduced us to this officer addressing him by his name, and at that point, the assistant warden

appeared again. He asked us about our visit, and we shared how impressed we were about the system and programmed learning. Then we turned back to the officer and asked him what he was doing. He shared that he was waiting for the inmate to pass a pen that he had shoved up his anus. The inmate could see us through the glass. The principal moved further down the hallway. I quickly followed.

We exited and walked through the yards to the library. Along the way, we encountered several correctional officers and were introduced to each by name. In the library, a teacher and two porters (inmate assistants) managed a closed-circuit academic program that could help an inmate earn an Associate of Arts degree through a community college in Southern California. All courses, lessons, and work were to be accomplished individually by inmate students in their cells. We were introduced to the teacher and the porters as well. Each porter was addressed by his name with the respectful salutation “Mr.” We enjoyed an informative conversation about the way their program operated. The porters managed an extensive file system of student work and other assignments that could be taken while locked in a cell.

We continued to visit with the principal over lunch and learned about her background in the correctional system. She had been a teacher and recently completed an MA degree at a nearby state university. Her major paper addressed the issue of selecting and educating teachers for work in prisons. I asked her if she could share her paper with me, and she made a point of bringing it to us the next day in the parking lot. Her interest and questioning perspective combined with her desire to build a team across the education–custody divide was remarkable.

It was clear from the interactions I watched that this principal knew and respected every correctional officer she met. She saw herself on the same team with custody officials, not a member of a group with separate goals for inmates. She moved easily among inmates throughout the institution, whether in cells, the library, or classrooms. She knew the teachers and understood what they needed. I never sensed disdain for custody staff; neither did I sense passivity about her role in the institution. This principal worked with custody staff for the benefit of her students and did not relinquish power to them in ways that would foster the resentment we saw elsewhere.

Subservient passivity of education to custody within prison environments is the wrong response, but it is common for educators in the custody world. The institution described here contains the highest threat

level inmates including the violently insane, yet this principal was not subservient to custody officials. It might be said she held a servant attitude toward the ideas and ideals of each role: custody and education. And her adherence to each did not exclude the other. Like a good teacher, she treated custody staff as her students, as individuals to be understood not opposed. And once understood that she was able to elicit a kind of membership, *Gemeinschaft*, in the mission she carried into the prison: *rehabilitation through education*.

Report: Recommendations and Conclusion

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on this thorough evaluation of the 12 vocational education courses and 19 classes, several recommendations are offered. The recommendations come not only from the researchers' observations but also from the interviewees who were asked to offer suggestions that would make vocational education more efficient and effective.

Automate Data Collection: Following a recommendation made by the Expert Panel (2007), the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) should develop automated tools for collecting and sharing information. The inability of the CDCR to capture and share useful information between offices is a significant problem for the CDCR and certainly affected the collecting of institutional data for this research project. It undoubtedly hampers the CDCR's capacity to make "evidence-based decisions" about what they do. Delayed or insufficient information sharing from the reception centers to the prison schools, and between one prison school and another, compromises the rehabilitative plan for the inmates implied by "evidence-based programs." After all, when there is no evidence because records are missing or not shared, it is unlikely that the roadmap to rehabilitation can be successfully implemented.

In addition, the CDCR should seek to improve assessment and evaluation of student learning. This means developing or purchasing a basic web-based learning data management system to be housed at each institution

as an intranet. Data collection needs to be focused on high priority skills or benchmarks which can be used to evaluate students and plan programs. Teachers should obviously be involved in the design of the system and periodic analysis of the data. One of the most important criteria is that the time needed for data entry by the teacher needs to be limited—the teacher’s primary duty should be in the classroom, not data entry.

Blended Curricula: Vocational education should operate as a coordinated intervention program with other aspects of the prison. For example, if students are found to struggle in basic education skills (like reading), tutoring and training should be focused on this deficiency with the vocational education seats assigned to students who already have such skills.

However, a blended curriculum is more than insuring that there are qualified students in each seat. Vocational education should also be coordinated with plant operations to allow inmate students to gain real experience in the trade they are learning. The prison benefits by easing the constant demand on plant operations, which is constantly busy and behind.

California Logic Model: The CDCR should remain committed to the California Logic Model and fully implement all eight steps.

Celebrate Outstanding Teachers, Staff, and Administrators: The CDCR needs to acknowledge the talented people who work in correctional education. These people perform a critical job to the mission of the CDCR, often thanklessly. Reward the best educational employees in some fashion that goes beyond a plaque and a simple pat on the back.

Communication between Vocational Education Classroom and Parole Services: The California Logic Model assumes a coordinated continuity of services between classification at intake, what happens in the vocational education classroom, and programming at parole. As far as the researchers could tell, there is no formal feedback from parole services to education telling them how successful particular vocational programs are for getting jobs for students when they parole. The exchange of such general information between parole services and education needs to be encouraged at the headquarters level.

Community Connections: For vocational education to have the greatest impact on inmate students’ lives, to improve their economic stability, and to reduce recidivism, there needs to be a direct connection between the classes and jobs in the community. Partnerships need to be established between the CDCR and local employers willing to take parolees who have successfully completed vocational education. Incentives need to be offered

to these employers, such as current tax credits, for hiring ex-felons. A specific position at parole offices needs to be created to facilitate this process. If this is not feasible, parole agents must be made aware of which parolees have completed vocational education and what businesses are willing to hire them.

Disincentives: Remove in-prison disincentives that inmate students suffer because of their participation in vocational education. Prisoners who refuse rehabilitation programs and hang out on the yard and housing units have better access to the canteen, laundry, exercise yard, package pick-up, phone calls, and so on, than inmates in vocational education courses.

Incentives: With the passage of Senate Bill 18 XXX (2009) by the State Legislature, the promise of a 6-week time-credit is a significant incentive to inmates for completing vocational education. However, there are other reasonable incentives that could be adopted that would improve the effect of these programs for a greater number of students. Make sure vocational education inmate students can go to the canteen, get clean clothes, get packages, are first in line for showers and meals, have basic hygiene supplies such as shaving cream, toothpaste, and deodorant, and have family visits, just to name a few suggestions.

Expand Vocational Education: Every level of the CDCR employee, from senior administrators to wardens to school administrators, endorsed vocational education and suggested more classes should be created. All appreciated the benefits these programs offer the prisons and prisoners. What is more, expanding vocational education increases the number of opportunities that can be offered to prisoners. Several respondents recommended expanding into new fields such as green technology, fiber optics, and basic computer programming, especially in areas like animation and graphics.

Unit Classification Committee: Fix how the Unit Classification Committee currently functions. As it presently operates in many, if not most cases, the Unit Classification Committee is primarily concerned with custody issues; education concerns are secondary. Many see the Unit Classification Committee as a barrier to vocational education being as effective as it could be otherwise. Specific recommendations for the Unit Classification Committee included giving education a greater voice in the proceedings, easing the ability of education to either remove or transfer students from one class to another, and managing wait lists more transparently. The Unit Classification Committee should be the example of custody and education working together. Until it is, problems will persist in all rehabilitative programs.

Lockdowns: Devise a system where programming inmates are not negatively impacted when other inmates create a situation where the prison (or a yard) must be locked down but the programming inmates are not involved. Ideally, programming and compliant inmates should not have their classes disrupted in these situations. If maintaining programs is not possible in these circumstances, provide inmate students with their books and assignments to keep them current on their material and making progress. Compliant inmates during times of upheaval and lockdown need to be positively reinforced and supported, while at the same time maintaining the safety and security of the prison as a whole. Otherwise, prisons and prison programs like vocational education are at the mercy of the most disruptive inmates at any given prison.

Master Teachers: Take advantage of the most talented teachers in the CDCR and have them support new or struggling teachers. The master teachers can mentor new teachers who find teaching in a prison environment difficult. They can help new or struggling teachers devise plans for teaching, project-based instruction, and how to complete paperwork efficiently. Master teachers can also lead teams of effective teachers to investigate and solve the most difficult problems of practice and, thereby, continue to increase the success of education within the correctional environment.

Open-entry/Open-exit: Improve the open-entry/open-exit system of inmate assignment. Instead of the unpredictable system of placing inmate students into classes, recognize that while often little can be done to control the exit of students, a more systematic method of starting students in the classes would aid teachers in managing their classrooms and create a positive cohort effect which improves student learning.

Principal: Elevate the status of the prison school principal to being equal to an associate warden. This will accomplish three things. First and foremost, it will put education more on par with custody in the hierarchy of prison culture. Second, it gives the principal more autonomy and authority over education. Third, some of the complications related to having to report to two bosses—the prison associate warden over education and the Office of Correctional Education (OCE) in Sacramento—will be mitigated.

Program Fidelity: Continue to strive for program fidelity and uniformity throughout the CDCR. Ensure teachers are faithful to the proscribed curricula and evidence-based teaching practices.

Project-based Instruction: Methods should be devised to make all vocational education classes employ project-based learning and instruction.

This method should be systematic and repeatable. By creating cohort work groups, students should learn better, faster, and complete the classes in a more timely fashion. Moreover, project-based instruction aids teachers in dealing with groups at different points in the curriculum.

Right Student–Right Seat: Perhaps no other recommendation can have the most positive effect on vocational education than this one. Misplaced or inappropriately placed students in vocational education often disrupt classroom instruction. The better plan is to make sure the vocational education students want to be in the class, which should increase the probability they will be successful in the class.

Streamline Procurement: The CDCR and OCE should reduce the amount of paperwork required of teachers to purchase supplies for their classes. The amount of paperwork required to get basic supplies for vocational education classes is excessive and requires several levels of review before it is approved.

Teacher Training: Provide professional development opportunities for teachers that respond to authentic teaching and classroom management needs in the correctional setting. Professional development time for teachers should not focus solely on the latest security regulations. Topics such as evidenced-based classroom management techniques should be a high priority. The design and delivery of professional development should include high involvement and engagement from practicing teachers. Professional Learning Communities should be developed in prison schools as they are already in more conventional school settings.

LIMITATIONS

There are limitations to this evaluation that limit the generalization of the findings. Foremost, these limitations pertain to the selection of the sample. The courses and classes included in this sample were not randomly selected, meaning that the findings about the classes do not necessarily reflect other vocational education courses. The problem of sample selection is mitigated in some ways, but not eliminated, with regard to the qualitative interviews.

There are significant issues associated with institutional data reported, especially those pertaining to the classes. All quantitative data provided to California State University, Chico (CSUC), were incomplete in many ways thereby limiting what could be confidently reported by the researchers.

Also, because the sample was not scientifically drawn, the statistical results need to be interpreted with caution.

The study also was not a longitudinal evaluation of these vocational education courses. The legislation was poorly drafted, and it asked us (via the CDCR) to deliver a project that was not available. This limited how much could be learned about them or the students who take them. Most importantly, the recidivism rate of the students studied is unknown. Nor are the economic outcomes for these students known, despite the fact that this was a key “dependent variable” in AB 900 and the California Logic Model. Indeed, because the evaluation was not longitudinal, CSUC could not directly assess important outcomes such as knowledge acquisition and course completion.

Finally, the evaluation suffered from three work stoppages totaling 10 months during a 30 month period. Planned interviews, prison visits, and methodological strategies were canceled as a result. In the end, these work stoppages severely limited CSUC’s efforts on the evaluation. Nevertheless, in the face of these limitations, the researchers made the most of what information they had. The CDCR should also be commended for fighting to keep this project alive when it could have been easier to cancel the evaluation altogether.

Partially because of these limitations, and partially because of the overall importance of vocational education to the rehabilitative programming in California’s prisons, CSUC recommends that further research be conducted on vocational education. The next evaluation of vocational education should involve a random selection of the classes. It should be longitudinal so that research can assess the true impact of the program on the critical variables of recidivism and employment. The impact of specific kinds of teacher professional development on teacher practice and inmate student learning should be evaluated. Finally, future researchers should consider including Adult Basic Education courses in their evaluation in order to compare and contrast these important rehabilitative programs.

CONCLUSION

The following quotation comes from a long-time education administrator. In his words, the reason why vocational education is important to the CDCR, the prisoners it is charged to house, and the communities where these men (and women) will return to is the following:

PSA: And so we have, I think, as taxpayers, a responsibility to those inmates who would have a good chance of success on parole to offer some sort of range of programs to them. And these people, these inmates, these parolees, are your neighbors and they could be my neighbors and they actually could even be connected to your family or my family at some point in the future. And they have a history of not being successful in the public schools, really in a sense that the public schools don't have the resources to make them successful. This is kind of last chance.

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Vignette: Denial of Love and the Birds of Desert Rose

PART A

After long hours driving, we finally arrived at a bleak prison that the CO's and teachers facetiously called 'Desert Rose.' There were several interesting classes in this institution. One of the electronics classes we observed was taught by an experienced instructor who combined excellent management skills and modeled the kind of professional relationship inmate students would find from a supervisor. She had designed the classroom to take advantage of technology as a key facet of curriculum and included a good number of inmate student tutors for instructional support. The classroom was rectangular with work stations lining three of the four walls. Each station provided enough space for two students, one of whom could be a student tutor. The interior space of the classroom contained a permanent rectangular table. Workstations with space for both student and tutor lined all four sides of the table.

Instruction was delivered through self-guided tutorials, programmed learning that led to certifications upon successful completion. One wall was used to project PowerPoint presentations the teacher had designed herself. The exterior door to the yard was where the correctional officer (CO) stood on duty and sometimes moved to the adjoining classroom to supervise a different program. The interior door led to the teacher's office that also connected to the adjoining classroom. The space against the office wall contained the porter's workstation and files. The teacher had

organized the porter to work as a teacher's aide, significantly increasing her own effectiveness. The porter kept track of student tests and progress, managed hard copy paper-pencil work from students, and made sure that students were on task and engaged when they had questions or simply stopped working as a result of bad habits.

Our guide, a local vice principal (VP), led us to the classroom through the yard where many inmates walked or jogged around a dusty track. The CO inside the classroom unlocked and opened the door after communicating with the VP, and then urged us to come in quickly to avoid letting more flies into the room—this building was next to the garbage for the institution so the flies were thick in this area. The VP returned to his office leaving us with the CO, the teacher, and the inmate students, but not before making a joke about the flies being “the birds of [Desert Rose].”

Both the CO in this classroom and the teacher believed in what they were doing, though the CO indicated he could not “publically” support education for inmates since that might be seen as a betrayal of his fellow COs. Inmates and COs stood opposed to each other in the prison culture, and any “pro-inmate” stance would likely be interpreted as “anti-CO” and, therefore, a “betrayal.” It helped that he was senior in the ranks, and after more than 25 years as a CO, he had seen the hopelessness of the revolving door of prison for thousands of inmates. While he was not certain that education could result in a great amount of change, he also knew that something different had to be done if any improvement in recidivism was to take place. This kind of attitude expressed by a CO was rare but could make a big difference in the way the classroom ran. If inmate students knew the CO supported their attempts at education, many small barriers in prison routines could be overcome.

The teacher was excellent. She was deeply engaged in continuously improving the curriculum based on her understanding of an inmate student's background, skills, learning levels, and knowledge about the electronics. She listened to inmates and tutors when they were stuck in a misconception of content and helped them to move forward to the next step in the programs. This teacher was married to a CO and understood the challenges of education within the correctional system. She persisted in providing the most effective program possible.

In addition to the programmed learning loaded on the computers, the textbook for the course provided lessons in working effectively with people of all backgrounds and nationalities. While such lessons in gender diversity awareness were not observed by any of us in the research team,

the fact that this topic was addressed in any way made the curriculum one of the most successful in our team's curriculum evaluation early in the project. This teacher, as a female, provided an outstanding opportunity for inmate students to gain valuable practice in a work-like setting with a woman holding a supervisory role. This was an unusual experience for inmates who rarely held any job, much less a job with a female in charge.

But during our second visit to this prison, this teacher revealed a situation that had developed in her classroom and threatened the entire integrity of the class. Andy and I sat in her office looking through the one-way window to her classroom when she told us about her problem. One of the inmate students had developed a crush and written a love note to her. Normally, this would be handled by passing the note to the CO, who would in turn pass the note to the captain. The inmate student would be gone from the class within minutes, never to return. However, she knew there were other very important complications in this prison environment.

If the teacher passed the note to the CO or his captain, then every CO would know about it in very short order. This meant that her husband, also a CO, would know about this in the same time frame. The teacher knew her husband and understood the bunker mentality that permeated the ranks of COs. She also understood that the inmate student would not be let off lightly for making such overtures to the wife of any CO. Other COs at the prison might feel the need to protect the honor of their "brother" and take steps to "school" the former inmate student in the power hierarchy. This could be accomplished through a direct beating or through a contract with inmates to inflict revenge on the inmate student for crossing a forbidden line.

PART B

We munched our sandwiches, waving away the flies (birds), and listened to the anguished voice of this teacher telling us about this problem. It reminded me that I sometimes wondered about the need for love and sex that inmates apparently never experienced far from family or loved ones. Laws and policy were put in place to respond to or prevent homosexual rape, but what about love and sex? This topic never arose in our research questions. We thought about the most effective relationships between teacher and student and witnessed respect, active listening, and trust building among other attributes, but the non-fraternization rule stopped

further friendships. Perhaps we were also victims of a bureaucratic world we accepted as an unavoidable reality. Just because the rule is there, it does not mean the rule changes people. It became clear, once again, that reality in prison was unlike any other reality.

The issue of nurturing loving relationships again came to my attention when we visited a women's prison even though no women's prisons were included in our study. This institution was close to a men's prison where we were observing classes, so we received permission to drop in for a guided tour. I asked one of the COs on duty if the women ever received visitors. He responded that people rarely come to visit. These inmates betrayed, violated, and wounded family members and others in such extreme ways that no one wanted to be around them. Former relationships had been poisoned.

Yet, I thought, it seems reasonable that healing and rehabilitation are practically impossible to achieve without love and the development of deep and meaningful relationships. Since inmates cannot see any horizon due to the walls, I imagined they would look up to the sky often, as I would. I wondered if they would think about how their love for spouses, children, and family could soar over the walls like some kind of mythical bird and reach home. I thought of the lines in the country music classic,

On the wings of a snow white dove

I send you my own true love ...

The topic of family relationships in men's prisons was not a part of the vocational education research project. We did not consider this issue as it relates to vocational education or rehabilitation in general. Nor was it part of the bureaucratic thought represented in the Request for Proposal (RFP) so we left it alone. But the issue arose in different contexts and appeared to be important if inmate students were to find success. For instance, in some institutions, the only possible time to connect with family by phone came during class time. Inmate students had to actually give up any contact with home in order to complete the class.

The most dramatic expression of the issue came up once as a management problem around conjugal or family visits. At one prison we visited, family day was already in progress when we arrived. Tables were set out in front of the walls and mothers and children lined up to receive instructions and be checked in to see fathers. A large banner read "Family Visit Day."

The management problem happened at the same time the families arrived. We were walking inside the walls with our guide when the first alarm blared. COs ran in front of us shouting “down, get down,” and all the prisoners in blue that we could see dropped face down on the ground. (Early in the project we were told never to wear blue behind the wall because, in case of riot, anyone in blue and standing up was a legitimate target for the men with guns in the towers. White shirts and neckties, however, were a small source of comfort with the thought of bullets flying.) Meanwhile, some of the men whose families were visiting and some whose families had not come reacted to the pain of seeing what they were denied. They simply refused to comply and acted out, cursing at COs or not moving as they were directed. It seemed that the visits for some inmates only highlighted their misery. Our guide led us off the yard and into safety. The disturbance was quickly put down and it was safe again to move through the yard.

I had a hard time focusing on vocational education during the rest of that prison visit. Witnessing this psychic punishment was worse than seeing men chained and shackled inside individual cages awaiting transport. I continued to be drawn back to the image of birds flying high on desert winds and carrying hope over the walls. What inmate who understood the depth of punishment embodied in denial of love would not dream of flying away, soaring over the walls on the back of a wondrous mythical bird to be reunited with, perhaps, mythical loved ones and family?

PART C

Listening to the teacher work through her issue over lunch, we continued to wave and swat at the numerous flies that were impossible to keep out of the office and off our sandwiches and drink containers. Our teacher decided the only way she could solve the love note problem would be to contact the warden directly, bypassing the bureaucratic hierarchy. This was her only hope to protect the inmate student who victimized her, protect herself from the other inmate students who certainly were aware of the note, protect her husband from the culture of his colleagues, protect the CO who stood guard in her classroom as an advocate of education, and protect her career in this institution. As she explained her plan, she cursed, “Damn these flies! They are everywhere. We call them the birds of Desert Rose.”

This phrase has never left me. It serves as a perfect metaphor for any birds, mythical or otherwise, that inmate students could see or envision. Forget the snow-white dove or any other romanticized or noble bird that could carry love or hope over walls and across oceans or deserts. Flies from the garbage dump of the prison were the poetic birds for inmates and the only creatures unworthy enough, undeserving enough, and filthy enough to carry their hopes of love into the world during their sentence, their period of punishment. Of course, even metaphorical flies do not fly far. They live out their lives as inmates, in close proximity to the garbage dump.

We did not return to Desert Rose and did not find out what happened to the inmate student or the teacher. It was clear to me that the inmate student who wrote the love note did not express admiration for his teacher in an acceptable manner. And it was also clear that the behavior should result in a response. But the larger issue that arose through this incident, the idea that denial of love as punishment could result in rehabilitation, highlighted the contradictory expectations of prisons. How is the correctional system supposed to punish inmates through structured, deliberate denial of freedom and nurturing relationships while at the same time educate, habilitate, and prepare inmates for constructive lives as citizens, workers, and family members?

Vignette: Life Without Parole and “Could Be Worse”

This essay begins in February 2009 and picks up again in November 2011. In both months, I met and talked with prisoners in California who had been sent to prison with a sentence of “Life Without Parole” or LWOP in the acronym-plagued prison culture of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR). LWOP is the most severe penalty for murderers in California, exceeded only by the rarely used death penalty. It is a form of degradation California reserves for people who are convicted of particularly horrendous types of murder.

I do not, of course, meet such people very often in my daily life at California State University, Chico, where I teach Sociology. But from 2008 to 2010, I was involved in a study of vocational education programs in California’s prisons that was funded by the CDCR. There I met my first prisoner with an LWOP sentence in the unusual circumstances described below. When I later took my criminology class to Chowchilla Women’s prison for a standard tour, I met my second LWOP inmate. So that is the context for these stories: they are not only about punishment, but also about the human spirit and, in particular, optimism in the face of degradation and humiliation.

COULD BE WORSE!

I was taken inside the administrative segregation unit (Ad Seg) at a California state prison in the middle of the desert in February 2009. We went there to observe vocational education classes, but when we arrived,

we found the prison on lockdown due to gang activity. After talking to the vocational education teachers, we looked for something else to do. Our hosts offered us a tour of the Ad Seg—the jail within the prison known in prison jargon as “solitary” or “the hole.” After dressing in the stab-proof vests that all non-prisoners to the unit wear, we were brought into the building.

Ad Seg is the place where inmates from the maximum security Level IV yard are taken for punishment. To get there, you have to be a real problem: assault a guard, seriously assault another prisoner, be caught with a lot of drugs, or be a nasty gang leader. The Ad Seg unit at this prison had 200 beds. Inmates are bunked two to a cell and permitted outside for only 10 hours per week. When outside the cell, prisoners are handcuffed and shackled at the waist. The handcuffs are removed only when they are in the cell or in the outdoor exercise cage. If they must wait in the hallway for a lawyer appointment, medical appointment, or so forth, they are locked standing in 3 feet long by 3 feet wide by 7 feet high cages.

Meals are prepared by the officers and eaten either in a hallway or inside the locked cells. This is what makes Ad Seg so expensive. Tasks normally undertaken by prisoners for 8–19 cents per hour (e.g., cooking, cleaning, etc.) are done by well-paid custody officers in Ad Seg.

The cells are by my rough estimation perhaps 10 feet long by 8 feet wide, have two bunks, a sink, and a toilet. The two bunks are concrete with a 3- to 4-inch thick mattress. Inmates are housed by race. Showering is down the hall and twice per week. They shower one at a time.

Inmates brought into Ad Seg are isolated for their first three bowel movements in a special cell. This is done so they cannot smuggle drugs, weapons, or other contraband into the unit. Then they are assigned to a cell. To be removed from the cell, they put their hands through a window for cuffing and are always accompanied by a guard when outside. They are moved around their area in their underwear. If they are being let out for their exercise, the cuffs are removed after they are in the outdoor cage, which actually looks like a dog run.

The 10 hours of exercise per week are in an outdoor exercise cage of about 15 feet wide by 30 feet long, and perhaps 7 feet high. The cage is open to sun for half of its area and shaded on the back half. The cement on the ground is well polished because one form of exercise the inmates really like to do is polish the concrete with a wet rag.

When we came into the exercise cage area, there were three inmates in two adjacent cages, which is the focus of this essay. Two, in their late

twenties, shared one exercise cage—they were also cellmates. Another younger inmate was in the adjacent cage. All looked white, though I suppose they could have been Hispanic. We started to talk to one of the inmates who shared the cage with his cellie (cellmate). He had a 37 year to life sentence and was really interested in our study about vocational education in prison. He believed the parole board required a lot of classes and a BA degree before they would authorize his release. He had a Mohawk haircut and a pierced nipple. (I wanted to point out to him that a better strategy than a BA might be to avoid doing things that get you sent to Ad Seg in the first place, but thought better of it.)

Gradually I drifted over to the inmate in the adjacent cage. He was small, dressed in a T-shirt and boxer shorts and had bandages on his knees. He had a small goatee and was missing his two front teeth. At first, he was hesitant to talk to me but warmed up after pleasantries. His favorite phrase seemed to be “Could be worse!” that he said with a smile and some cheer, as in “How are you?” Answer: “Could be worse!”

I asked him how old he was—he was 21. He said that he had been locked up for 3 years after being arrested at the age of 18. He spent 3 years in the Los Angeles County Jail until being sent to this prison the previous November and already he had done something to get himself put in Ad Seg. He told me that he was from a particular neighborhood in Los Angeles, but only from south of some particular street. Indeed, he noted, the first time he ever went north of that street was when he was arrested and taken to the LA County Jail. He told me he liked to read vampire novels.

I asked him how long his sentence was. He responded, “Life without parole!” I think he noticed the surprised look on my face. There are only about 3000 prisoners in California with such a long sentence, and he was still smiling when telling me this. His response to my surprised look was his trademark “Could be worse!” This surprised me again. How, I thought, could it be worse? This 21 year old was 3 years into a sentence that would last probably 50 or 60 years. He had killed someone in a particularly vile fashion in order to get the sentence in the first place. Then he had done something really bad in prison to get himself arrested again and put into Ad Seg. He was 21 years old and had the next-to-worst-sentence California offers. On a good day, he would be in a maximum security Level IV prison in some desert. On that good day, he would be pressured to be part of a prison gang, maybe work in the prison kitchen, do dishes, and clean the floor with a mop that has a handle. And unless

he was transferred to another prison on a bus in daylight, he would likely never see a tree for the entire time. On a bad day, he would be arrested and be stuck in another cell in Ad Seg where someone would be counting his bowel movements. To this Ph.D., it was obvious that things could not get much worse.

Ok, I did not tell him all that, but I did manage to stutter out, “But how could it be worse? You’re in on a life without parole sentence, and in here, in a cage!”

But he thought the answer was obvious. What could be worse than this? “Hey, I don’t have the death penalty!” Uh, yeah, good point, I guess, and I am the one with the Ph.D.?

The next question I asked him was about his legs. They were covered with red burn scars from the feet up to the bottom of his boxers. He told me the burns occurred in an auto accident where his legs were burned by gasoline after which he was arrested (apparently he was fleeing the police). He was proud that he recently had surgery to permit him to walk again—grafts had been taken from his stomach (he showed me the patches where the skin had been taken) and put onto the back of his knees so that his legs could straighten out again. He was actually quite pleased with this condition. “After all,” he said, “could be worse!”

I have spent some time on the Internet trying to figure out who Mr. Could-be-Worse is. I Googled around but could not find any murderers who met his description: Murder in 2006, 3 years in the LA County Jail, conviction in November 2008, born about 1988, and severely burned upon arrest following a police chase. I could not find him in any of the newspapers.

This brings up a final point about prison: things never are as they seem, and manipulation and deception are normal and routine. Officers and prisoners are agreed on this. So what do I really know about this guy? He was locked in a dog kennel in one of California’s maximum security prisons, was small, young, and severely burned. As for the rest, I have only his word.

WE NEED THE DEATH PENALTY FOR THE TRULY
EVIL—I HAVE SEEN ABSOLUTE EVIL—SOME PEOPLE
INDEED ARE WORSE!

I took my criminology class to the Central California Women’s Facility in Chowchilla in November 2011 where I met my second LWOP prisoner. At the end of the tour, we asked the lieutenant if we could talk to inmates. He brought out two women who were part of the leadership liaison for

the prisoners and administration. As it turned out, both women had life sentences. One had been in prison since 1994 and had a plain old life sentence. She later told us she was 42 years old. The other woman, who appeared older (perhaps she was 50) was down for a sentence of “Life Without Parole.”

Unlike the 21-year-old LWOP prisoner in the desert, this inmate was a respected part of the prison leadership. Indeed, as our guide indicated, he really liked working with such inmates because they are among the more stable in the prison. Lifers are less likely to cause trouble for the custody officers and can even control the more volatile younger prisoners. After all, as another prison officer pointed out to me, the lifers are there for good and regard it as their home. They do not want their home defiled by the antics of young hooligans.

One of the Chico State students asked the two women a classic question about whether criminals are born or made that way by society. This is when we got a rather strange response from the LWOP woman. She responded that she believed in the death penalty because there are some people so evil that they are irredeemable. She went on to add that she had seen true evil at Chowchilla (it houses the “condemned row” in California for the 19 women who, in 2009, were awaiting execution). This, I mused, was an unusual answer from someone who had just missed the death penalty herself.

I suspect this is ultimately a relative statement. Status, and ultimately a sense of self-identity, is established relative to whomever you can plausibly compare yourself. In essence, for the LWOP inmates I met, the death penalty provides reassurance that there is something worse than themselves. This is a very human reaction I suspect—all of us at some level are comparing ourselves to those around us and concluding that we are at least a little better than the others. I guess to go on with life we need to believe that things could be worse, even when we are in the “hole” of one of California’s prisons.

SECTION III

Evidence-Based Decision-Making and the Rise and Fall of Rehabilitation in California's Prisons 2005–2012

THE POWER OF EVIDENCE-BASED DECISION-MAKING

We went into this evaluation with the hope of doing a good job and providing the evidence “decision makers” need in order to make sound evidence-based decisions about curricula and vocational education. This, in turn, would be focused by the “criminogenic” needs detailed in the Expert Panel’s (2007) report (see Chap. 6). During the evaluation, we became big fans of the many people who work hard to make vocational education work in prisons. Indeed we remain fans of the idea that rehabilitation works and should be part of any correctional program.

We also remain convinced that evidence-based decision-making is preferable to the alternative: the seat-of-the-pants decisions made in previous decades when guards or wardens assigned inmates to vocational education courses without considering job markets. For example, wrangling, upholstery, and dry cleaning all were funded long after demands for the trades disappeared from the labor market. Or when frustrated voters used the popular baseball metaphor “three strikes and you’re out” rather than evidence-based data to assign 25 years to life prison sentences. In the rational world of evidence-based planning of our massive bureaucracies, whether they are schools or prisons, good decisions are based on evidence and facts. But, they are not enough. We once thought that evidence-based research is enough by itself. Now we think something different.

Things other than evidence matter in the administration of a vocational education program in a prison. Most important is the first part of our thesis (see Chap. 1) that points to the fact that “schools” in prison cannot be divorced from the fact that they exist in a prison. Research design cannot assume away prison from a study of vocational education in prison, as evidence-based research design assumed. If nothing else, the results of our evaluation are an indictment of administrative linear reasoning that underpins the current fad for evidence-based decision-making, whether it is in the context of schools, prisons, or elsewhere. You cannot assume a simple cause (provide vocational education) and effect (lower recidivism rates) in social science research.

The consequences of such linear reasoning, not only for our small study but also for the administration of California prisons in general, is the conclusion falling out of our study more so than the specific recommendations for improving vocational education described in Chap. 15. Without paying attention to the prison bars, little is likely to be relevant, and the problems associated with recidivism and rehabilitation are not addressed. As our interview to told use “It’s the state Penn not Penn state”. To understand why this is the case, it is necessary to return to the basic assumptions underlying our initial contract to do evaluation research with the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) the second part of our thesis that refers specifically to the problems inherent to doing evidence-based contract research. We once thought that this was possible, but now we think that the assumptions behind such evidence-based research are inherently flawed.

THE THREE ELEPHANTS RETURN

At the beginning of this book, we wrote about the “three elephants” that were not part of our study; yet raised questions about the reliability and validity of what we were trying to do. The three elephants were:

1. The classes were conducted in a prison, and not in a school.
2. The prisons that conducted the classes we observed were, as the US Supreme Court observed, overcrowded to a point where the conditions our “students” lived in were “cruel and unusual,” and, as a result, would unlikely to lead to any type of significant learning.
3. During the majority of our evaluation, the CDCR was in the grips of major budget cuts caused by the Great Recession of 2008–2009, which cut back funding for the classes, our study, and everything else in the prisons.

Thankfully, two of the elephants in California's prisons have faded. The inmate population peaked at 172,000 in 2008 when our study began and has declined to about 117,000 today (early 2015). It is expected to decline further—to a point where the prisons will “only” be at 137% of design capacity. Likewise, the effects of the Great Recession are receding, and money has begun to flow to the CDCR in a more predictable fashion.

But that still leaves the biggest elephant in the room for education. The CDCR still is, first and foremost, an administrator of prisons, not schools. This does not mean that vocational education programs should not be conducted in prisons, nor does it mean that programs should not be evaluated, even by people like us. What it does mean is that planning and evaluation need to reflect the context the classes are conducted in: the context of incarceration. Incarceration brings with it prison gangs, lockdowns, anal cavity searches, sudden inmate transfers, fraternization rules, mental health issues, bologna sandwiches, and pill lines. “The Hole” (administrative segregation), the culture of “just doing my time” for prisoners, and retirement at 50 for guards are also part of this context. Little of this has anything to do with education as typically framed—or as our study framed it—but at the same time, it has everything to do with what happened in the vocational education courses we evaluated.

THE LINEAR ASSUMPTIONS OF EVIDENCE-BASED DECISION-MAKING

Evidence-based decision-making assumes that “programs” can be designed and implemented independently of the broader context. Repeatedly as described in Chap. 2 (p. 20), we were told by CDCR administrators that “we are about programs, programs, programs.” This is why we were hired to evaluate a specific program (i.e., vocational education as an education and curriculum problem, not a prison problem). As AB 900 instructed:

This bill would require the department to determine and implement a system of incentives to increase inmate participation in, and completion of, academic and vocational education, consistent with the inmate's educational needs, as specified.

This bill would require the department to conduct assessments of all inmates that include, but are not limited to, data regarding the inmate's history of substance abuse, medical and mental health, education, family background, criminal activity, and social functioning. The assessments shall

be used to place inmates in programs that will aid in their reentry to society and that will *most likely reduce the inmate's chances of reoffending*.

This bill would require the department to develop an Inmate Treatment and Prison-to-Employment Plan. The plan should evaluate and recommend changes to the Governor and the Legislature regarding current inmate education, treatment, and rehabilitation programs to determine whether the programs provide sufficient skills to inmates that will likely result in their successful employment in the community, and *reduce their chances of returning to prison after release to parole*. (emphasis added)

Embedded in AB 900 is a linear behavioristic reasoning. It assumes that a desired result can be achieved if a program is designed well and uses the tricks of administrative alchemy effectively, which in the case of the vocational education programs will “reduce the inmates chance of reoffending and reduce their chances of returning to prison after release to parole.” We suspect that this happened at some level. But in the language of evidence-based studies, we were never able to “prove” or “demonstrate” these goals were met because, despite the contortions undertaken to quantify and “operationalize” this variable in Chap. 10, the data needed were not available.

Our conclusions do not indicate that vocational education “does not work,” but instead show that the type of linear evidence-based reasoning the CDCR inevitably returns to does not “work.” We think this is illustrative of three problems inherent not only to the vocational courses studied but also to assumptions embedded into AB 900 by the CDCR, the Legislature, and the governor.

First, we could not isolate effects and causes for something as non-specific as “chances of reoffending” or “likely result in their successful employment.”

Second, we made a mistake by assuming we could control the collection of data in an institution such as the CDCR where custody and punishment are the dominant values, not education or research.

Third, our evaluation assumed that the education programs would be an island of rationality in the oftentimes chaotic prison world independent of the economic shifts occurring throughout California and the world.

How each of these three problems emerges is summarized below.

Isolating Cause, Program, and Effects

AB 900, the legislation paying for the vocational education programs we studied, assumed that there could/should be a connection between

program incentives/disincentives and recidivism. This idea is very specific in the enabling legislation, and in most of our interviews, CDCR staff, teachers, and inmates spoke in such terms. But is what we observed as simple as what we heard? We think not. Incentives and disincentives were not the main reasons that so few inmates completed the vocational education programs and recidivated (or not). The reasons had more to do with the nature of the prison, especially lockdowns, inmate transfers, inmate assignment policies, and general living conditions (i.e., environmental conditions created by the prison often recast proffered incentives and disincentives into obtuse unintended consequences). These factors greatly impacted the ability of inmates to finish programs, more so than the selection of curricula, insistence on hiring credentialed teachers, or other measures undertaken by the prisons and evaluated in our studies.

Assumptions of Control

Underneath the language of AB 900, as well as from our inmate interviews, is an assumption that given enough time, money, and willpower the institution can reduce recidivism rates. This is possible, but only if you “assume away” all that is not controlled for. But with our study, as with most social research, no such vacuum exists. There was always a prison context: prison administrators struggled with a lack of promised data for our study (p. 36), lawsuits about medical care and racial desegregation in the prisons (pp. 29–30), changes in policies for “violating” parolees, delays due to irregular funding, or the broader collapse of funding for California’s prisons following the 2008 economic crisis (p. 24). The premise behind AB 900 was that such “externalities” could be assumed away. We gathered evidence for our study about the relationships between vocational education and recidivism with this assumption in mind: we could isolate the relationship between the two variables and then report to the CDCR about how much money vocational education in prisons was saving the state.

This is why our conclusions in Chap. 15 focused on issues like teacher training, curriculum choice, and so forth because that is what the CDCR, who funded our study, wanted to hear. However, in doing so we explained away the analysis of the proxy data findings (see Chap. 10, pp. 192–196) that indicate that the more vocational education, the more likely inmates were to be arrested within 3 years of release. We think this result was flawed due to the low quality of the data for measuring recidivism and the

problematic use of “proxy” data. So explain away we did—the result the CDCR wanted for its own policy-making purposes.

But more than a condemnation of the CDCR, this is a problem with the very concept of the relation asserted by the California State Legislature between vocational education and recidivism in AB 900, as well as the actual nature of available evidence. This is not only a problem of AB 900; it is a result of a failure to differentiate between statements of principles and “science” as such. This problem is found in many of the institutions where reforms based on evidence have been enacted in recent years with perhaps the most prominent being *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) (see Chap. 2, p. 51).

Education as an Island of Rationality in Prison (It is Not)

Prisons are what Erving Goffman (1961) called “total institutions,” and this included the schools within them. This means that, more so than other institutions, prisons are mini-worlds unto themselves in the same way mental institutions, army boot camps, refugee camps, and isolated monasteries are. Assuming that prison schools are just another school subject to the same management principles as everywhere else is a strange assumption to make. Education as an island of economic rationality separated from the broader nature of the prison is wishful thinking irrespective of what the Legislature asserted in AB 900.

Nevertheless, these assumptions were embedded in our study; for example, when it came to identifying a timeline for completing our contract and ignoring needs driven by a world of lockdowns, quick and sometimes overnight transfers, arbitrary assignment needs, prison gangs, and especially the catch-all “overcrowding.” Without control of such situations, it is something of a fool’s errand to assume that vocational education could directly affect either recidivism or post-release employability, much less be evaluated in the terms stated in our contract. But we also found that while the prisons had all the characteristics of total institutions, particularly from the perspective of inmates, nevertheless, the capacity to act was buffered by broader social forces.

Are these conditions unique to prisons? Of course not. Indeed, as specified in Chap. 2, many of these same assumptions about the power of evidence, testing, and bureaucratic planning omnipotence underlie planning for schools, which are also isolated from the broader society albeit to a lesser extent.

CALIFORNIA PRISONS 2007–2011

Our study of vocational education occurred in the context of the Great Recession of 2008–2009. At the beginning of the project, there were great hopes that California’s prisons would become a new kind of institution, able to sustain high imprisonment rates, while idealistically addressing dreams for the possibilities of rehabilitation as a permanent solution to the imprisonment problem. Such assumptions were at the heart of AB 900, and as a result, plans were created to spend hundreds of millions of dollars annually to fund new classes into the future. Teachers were hired, curricula purchased, and policies established. But when government finance collapsed in 2008–2009, the new vocational education programs were among the first to be cut. When this happened in the middle of our study, it revealed to us not only budget problems, but also a number of systemic problems that were papered over in a time of optimism. These included problems of crowding, the limited reasoning behind the California Logic Model, the underlying problems created by the need for “security first,” and the competing demand of routine over an effective education programs.

Crowding

The prison crowding created by the “get tough” policies of the 1980s and 1990s affected all operations in prisons. In the case of vocational education, crowding at its most basic meant that the prisons were no longer manageable. Tensions rose as facilities became congested. Classrooms became dormitories and even World War II era facilities and Quonset huts unsuitable for housing became classrooms as described in Chap. 8. Overall, we observed that management of the classes suffered too. At its most basic, principals and wardens could not maintain the flexibility of having open seats in classes in order to accommodate the most appropriate students. Instead, as described in Chap. 10, Unit Classification Committees focused on the more immediate concerns of controlling gang activity, segregating prisoners by race and risk status, security lockdowns, and the needs of staff running the prison. In a security-driven world, this even meant that anal cavity searches could become routine parts of classroom protocol, as students moved from secure yards to classrooms in less secure areas of the prison.

Perhaps the most prescient observations was made by a warden who complained to us that crowding meant he could not maintain discipline by leaving free spots in “the hole” for misbehaving inmates. Even “the hole”

was full at his prison and unavailable to house any inmate who might commit a new crime. The same principle applied to seats in vocational education courses. For that matter, given the need to design facilities to a particular capacity, the same problems would be expected in the infirmary, school classrooms, canteen, eating facilities, and any other area within the prison. Design capacity is about more than just beds—it is also about matching and aligning resources with needs in the most effective way possible.

But perhaps the most ironic effect of the crowding for the vocational education classrooms was a new cadre of elderly “three-striker” prisoners who did not have ties outside prison. Assigned terms of 25 years to life, the result is a cohort of prisoners for whom the CDCR facilities is home as many of our informants told us. Outside the classrooms, we observed this had implications for gang discipline—a number of long-serving lifers were the core of gang leadership. But inside classrooms, a situation was created where teachers encouraged the involvement of long-termers in order to stabilize classes. And indeed they did—“lifers” contributed to the overall stability of the classes as described in interview transcripts, our observations, and the statistical data generated for the Office Services class that had such a high proportion of elderly students, most of whom were “on task,” but few of whom would be released before retirement age, if ever. In other words, their excellence as inmate students would never meet AB 900’s goal of promoting employment upon release. But lifers are indeed great students!

The Rise and Fall of the California Logic Model

The California Logic Model was created to legitimize the policies of rehabilitation and evidence-based decision-making. The resulting product did move the large CDCR bureaucracy toward a new priority, with a notable shift in the “theory of action.” But this shift also challenged decades of entrenched thought that assumed prisoners were inherently incorrigible, and that incarceration was primarily for deterring and preventing future crime, not rehabilitation.

In this context, Governor Schwarzenegger’s move to recast the Department of Corrections as the Department of Corrections and “Rehabilitation” was indeed ambitious. But it is also not surprising that we observed the inertia of an older organizational culture that was designed to implement a penal code, construct facilities, and hire human resources with the older goals in mind. The recasting of the CDCR as a “rehabilitation”

institution in the few years after the shift was done mainly on paper—matching facilities and human resources with the new penal code was not done yet.

The CDCR sought to control the change and did so using the traditional responses of a bureaucracy seeking to expand while also protecting preexisting interests. This is reflected in the lock-step fashion we observed as the CDCR responded to political pressures with appeals to a “logic” model. But such models are more than simple logic untethered to politics, values, or emotions. What we observed in 2008–2011 as California sought to reform its prisons was a combination of politics, values, and emotions, and not new “logic” models.

It was in this context that it was claimed that the proposed solution was rational, clear, and easily understood. With the imprimatur of the Expert Panel (2007), the CDCR adopted a plan that could actually work: the California Logic Model. Upon entering the system, inmates were to be assessed; placed in prisons and programs that would address their educational, social, and criminogenic needs; prepared for reentry to society, work, and family; and paroled or released to the guidance of local law enforcement. The simplicity of the vision and design of the activities were attractive because it did not challenge the preexisting assumptions behind the three-strikes law, incentives and punishments, racial segregation, security, or the autonomy of powerful wardens and CDCR staff. Nowhere in AB 900, or for that matter in our interviews, were these issues raised by CDCR staff, prisoners, or CDCR teachers as being issues that were the true source of their problems in vocational education.

It is as if Gould’s (1995) warning that dominant theories act as strait jackets that limit our ability to ask out-of-the-box questions came true on a huge scale. The California State Legislature, the staff of CDCR and Office of Correctional Education (OCE), and the majority of citizens who fell under the spell of expensive “get tough” policies were blind to the key issues that we faced behind the walls of California prisons. A “Logic Model” becomes illogical in the context of such externalities.

Security First

As described in Chap. 4, historically the corrections system in California consisted of independently run institutions under the all-powerful, centralized paramilitary control of the warden. A warden in charge of thousands of criminals needs the authority to make immediate decisions even about

vocational education programs. Prisons have historically offered educational programs, but the chief promise of prisons is to provide security, whether to the public, prison officers, or other prisoners. Traditionally, the educational programs were successful for correctional administrators and staff because they provided constructive outlets for inmates and, therefore, the reasoning went, served the needs of the institution. For instance, a prison farm could grow food for the inmates and a prison shoe repair shop could repair shoes for inmates and staff alike. However, if the new purpose of corrections in California under AB 900 is to rehabilitate inmates so they can reenter society and earn a family income, it cannot be based on their training in occupations such as farm labor or shoe repair. Such professions are low-paying and perhaps obsolete. But they reflect the needs of the security-side.

On the other hand, missing are the basic things that make for good pedagogy: access to library books and internet facilities, access to tools and materials, a quiet place to study and reflect, a tension-free classroom, and an environment where students readily mix with each other. It also includes routine grouping of students by ability and interests—a goal frustrated by classification, lockdown, security policies, and not being able to have a group begin class at the same time, study the same thing at the same time, and graduate at the same time. None of these things are possible when security is the priority and not education, pedagogy, or learning.

ROUTINIZATION OF EDUCATION

AB 900 required that corrections provide evidence-based programs to train inmates for jobs that will provide support to them and their families after parole. In response, the CDCR purchased vocational curricula from the National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER) that had been tested and acquired with reference to the best practices of vocational education as conducted in community colleges. In each course, students went step-by-step through the well-designed programs. Each student was expected to learn about the trade and work in hands-on activities to practice the actual skills described in the reading. Expert teachers grouped their inmate students in the classrooms (shops) and in project-based learning groups. In the highest quality classes, the inmate students learned valuable collaboration skills and the practical knowledge needed for the trade itself.

However, what we found was that, despite attention given to best practices, evidence, and, in particular, AB 900, these programs in the end had

little relation to what could be done in a prison. Routinization of education practices may work very well in a school, but prison routines are fundamentally different.

BUDGET CRISES

Underlying the problems we observed in vocational education were the budget crises in California. AB 900 created vocational education programs during a time of plenty, but they were implemented in a time of austerity that played out as California struggled with successive budget crises. Vocational education and other “optional” programs in the prison system were disproportionately cut relative to “necessary” programs that included court-mandated medical care, security, and the political necessity to continue enforcing California’s three-strikes law.

This raised a question: in a world where education programs are always a low priority, is there any time or place where the sustained effort needed to reorient a vocational education program would have been possible? In a world competing for tax dollars, the commitment to “optional” programs like vocational education in prisons is likely to be short term. Nevertheless, establishing new vocational education programs in a place like the CDCR involves identifying curricula, hiring and developing a teacher corps, constructing vocation-appropriate classrooms, and otherwise establishing the bureaucratic routines necessary for higher quality programs—something that probably cannot be done in less than 5–10 years. Would the CDCR ever have a funding window long enough to permit such development? In a world where not even public schools have such a luxury, this strikes us as unlikely. In the practical world of the CDCR where the needs of vocational education are trumped by the demands of a prison, this means that administrators, legislators, and others need to lower their expectations.

The Importance of the Vocational Education Study

Having said all this, our study, first and foremost, was an evaluation of a specific curriculum and program. What were our findings on this count? A brief overview should be included here before we return to the broader question about the nature of evidence-based evaluation, which is at the heart of this book.

Assessment and evaluation of inmate student learning was a powerful component of the vocational education programs from the NCCER.

Following completion of reading assignments, inmate students passed written tests to show they had mastered content. Next, inmate students passed hands-on performance evaluations, such as constructing a frame for a bathtub in a plumbing class, installing wiring in an electrical class, or any other practical tasks. In this respect, the core curriculum was successfully implemented for many inmates despite the inherent difficulties of teaching in a prison environment.

Consistent with project goals, courses were divided into units of study. After passing both written and performance evaluations for each unit, an inmate student received a letter confirming this accomplishment from the NCCER. The letter was posted on a secure website for the inmate student's family or prospective employer. As knowledge and skills developed, motivation to continue was provided with this well-planned structure for recognition.

The most successful teachers from the perspective of the program were those who followed prescribed steps and recorded data from students' exams in a timely manner. In this way, administrators would know which inmates were making progress and which were not. Armed with this information, correctional administrators could find out why learning was not taking place, or they could remove recalcitrant inmate students and replace them with individuals who possessed a higher motivation and capacity to learn. The problem with this approach, however, is that report writing came to be identified with "good employee," which in turn was conflated with "good teaching." Tests were the tool the accountability system demanded administrators use because the results could be "seen" (Scott, 1999). In this respect, the flaws were the same as found in test-driven public schools (see Chap. 3). In the accountability system itself, NCCER data became a substitute for any other method of defining or understanding teaching and learning in classes. The data and reports became synonymous with vocational education in the minds of administrators. This emphasis on report writing is endemic to other bureaucracies for that matter (Wilson, 1989) and it is not surprising that it became prevalent in the prisons too where physical compartmentalization is at its most intense.

THE OVERT CURRICULUM

At this stage, the CDCR sought out external evaluators (e.g., our evaluation team) to investigate their programs and determine the impact on recidivism. Our team was hired and our first deliverable was to be a

“Curriculum Evaluation.” Of the many questions we had for the CDCR, what was meant by a “Curriculum Evaluation” seemed to us obvious. But hidden in this question were undiscussable theories of action. From our perspective as academics, curriculum is a topic of tremendous depth and can be studied from numerous perspectives and ideologies. At its broadest, curriculum is viewed as “all of the experiences the student has under the aegis of the school” (Eisner, 1994, p. 26). Slightly narrower is the term “curriculum” derived from the Latin, *currere*, the course to be run.

After the CDCR conducted a brief literature review, we were told that the curriculum consists of just four elements. First was the *planned curriculum*, which consisted of the textbooks, the lesson plans, and the knowledge and skills that are intended to be imparted to students. Second was the *taught curriculum*. Third was the de facto *curriculum* that is actually delivered given the setting; group dynamics of the class; the skills, knowledge, dispositions of the teacher; and the materials provided for the course. Fourth was the *experienced curriculum*, which by this definition was how teaching and learning were actually received and interpreted by the “students” in the prison context. Finally, we added a fifth element, the *learned curriculum*. This consisted of the collection of knowledge skills and dispositions actually acquired by the students. In order to deliver a “Curriculum Evaluation,” it appeared we would need to spend time understanding at least the four facets of curriculum that we identified (English & Larson, 1996; McNeil, 1996) even though, as we pointed out, this is narrower than more traditional definitions.

However, it quickly became clear that the CDCR and the legislature were not really concerned with elements 2, 3, and 4 of the curriculum; they were only interested in what was *planned*, not the curriculum that was taught, de facto, or experienced. AB 900 stated that the CDCR was to adopt evidence-based curricula to teach job skills to inmates, and our job, from the perspective of CDCR administrators, was to be an objective, outside team who could tell the legislature that the CDCR had complied with the law. Implicit was the “undiscussable”—the theory that evidence-based education in the form of programmed learning was the solution to the problem of recidivism. Tony’s prediction at our first meeting in 2006 over coffee where he suggested we would be hired to tell the CDCR what they already knew was coming true—not surprising perhaps, given the basic assertion in “Campbell’s Law” (see Ravitch, 2012; Waters, 2012, pp. 176–181) that when data are used to evaluate a program and its given

consequences, program implementation is adjusted to meet the criteria measured.

Nevertheless, in order to meet the need and fulfill the terms of our contract, we applied a Technical Education Curriculum Assessment (TECA) framework (Keiser, Lawrenz, & Appleton, 2004a, b, c) in the form of rubrics that were validated in the vocational education literature. Valuable information was gathered about the attributes of each program. Each text (e.g., the curriculum) was read multiple times and rated against the rubrics. Programs were rated and quantified on a 1–4 scale. As expected, the first deliverable (the Curriculum Evaluation) was greeted with delight by the CDCR. It was immediately posted on their website and, as academics, we took pride that our work stood next to the work of other well-known and respected scholars (see Dick et al., 2009).

TELLING THE STORY OF VOC ED IN CALIFORNIA’S PRISONS

With these developments, we thought that it became more important than ever to tell the story of vocational education in the CDCR. But the most straightforward answer to the CDCR’s inquiry as to the effect of vocational education on recidivism was stymied by the “the lack of quantitative data” needed to measure recidivism and post-incarceration employment, which is the independent variable at the center of AB 900. Delays and changes in leadership and staff at the OCE kept our requests for these data on the backburner. So we agreed simply to tell the story as it came forth. Much of our pride in this book is based on Andy’s courage to hold to this standard, as well as the final data dump in October 2010, 2.5 months before the report was due.

Left Out: The Hidden Curriculum: Cops, Prison Teachers, Strip Searches, Prison Politics, and Layoffs

But much was left out of the evaluations we did for the CDCR that would have shown how vocational education classes were conducted, organized, and the results achieved by the classes. Much of what was left out was relevant and just five of the features will be summarized here: Cops, Prison Teachers, Strip Searches, Prison Politics, and Layoffs.

Cops In prison slang, “cops” are the CDCR-hired officers who patrol the grounds and run the prison. Cops wear the green CDCR uniform with a

stab-proof vest, have pepper spray, and batons, and can order all prisoners on a yard into lockdown and/or to lie on their bellies at a moment's notice. They can also order strip searches and search a prisoner's belongings for contraband, which is plentiful in the prison environment—sometimes because the officers themselves have smuggled it in on behalf of the prisoners.

But the correctional officers' (COs) job in prison is indeed difficult, requiring an acute awareness of prison culture and the many situations that can be encountered on the job. Two cops may be assigned to patrol a yard with several hundred prisoners or perhaps to supervise just one or two prisoners in "the hole." Cops have measured contact with the prisoners—communicating and working cooperatively together in order to keep the prison running, while also avoiding too chummy relationships that could result in formal charges of "fraternization" from either the CDCR or the same (but more informal) charge from one of the prison gangs. Cops and prisoners need each other, but there is a mutual wariness. Both assume that the other is always lying, or to paraphrase the wry joke we heard several times, "How do you know a prisoner is lying? His lips are moving." Inmates of course feel the same way. Each group also fears betrayal by its own kind.

The job of a prison officer is difficult—the best officers are excellent observers of people and social interaction, which is how they anticipate riots and other disturbances. They are also in an emotionally draining job where alertness is highly valued and necessary given they are disliked by most of the prisoners they come into contact. Many cops count the years and days until they can retire at age 50, to enjoy a post-retirement life they believe will end 5–7 years later before succumbing to a heart attack, stroke, cancer, or some other stress-related condition. The inherently tense relationship between cops and prisoners is extraordinarily difficult; given the daily realities, it is one that is central to inmate student well-being, both in class and especially on the yard, dormitory, or cell.

Teachers Unlike cops, vocational education teachers are "civilians." They do carry a battery-powered "panic button" on their belt that can be used to quickly summon an officer; however, they rely more on their relationships with the inmate students to maintain order and respect in the classroom. In all our time in the classroom, we never observed a teacher using a panic button, even though we did observe a number of orders for a particular yard to be locked down.

Teachers typically have good relations with inmates, which sometimes gives the illusion that they are “normal” teachers. They are not, though. They are informal experts at developing respectful relationships with individuals who are otherwise deprived of rights and respect. These teachers use “respect” to develop cooperation in classroom routines instead of complying with orders from the administration. More importantly, they develop trust with a group of individuals who, from any evidence-based perspective, are untrustworthy. Operating at this level, some teachers are able to build students skills and attitudes so they can work cooperatively on complex tasks. This is no small achievement.

But the teachers are not evaluated on this capacity. Rather, their days are dominated by “paperwork,” even though the best laid lesson plans are likely to be disrupted by lockdowns and the demands of prison security; inmate students grouping themselves by race, and often wrestling with problems of literacy; students transferring in and out of class, regardless of their progress in the curriculum. In short, it is not a typical teaching job.

Strip Searches We observed one classroom where inmate students were strip searched because they moved across security zones. During the day, they were potentially strip searched many times (e.g., before class, at noon in order to go to lunch, after lunch to return, and finally to go back to their cell). To a certain extent this is understandable—weapons can be and are made in woodshops and metal shops. But the pedagogical benefits of routine anal cavity searches are distracting at best for the “learner.”

Prison Politics California’s prisons are dominated by prison gangs and so are the vocational education classrooms. In inmate interviews, there were allusions to gang control. Our interviews with inmate students were sometimes cleared with the gang leader (or “shot caller”) of the classroom. We can only imagine what other activities in the classroom needed to be “cleared.” We also cannot imagine how gang participation in the classroom could contribute to the quality of the learning. And yet, this variable is not part of our evaluation.

Layoffs We met many teachers in our study who were excited about their work and looked forward to teaching their classes. We also met a few who were feeling worn down by threats to their employment security; they

spent the time either marking days until retirement or searching for their next job. Scared teachers do not make the best teachers. This was a chronic problem in the cash-strapped prisons we observed in 2008–2011. One of the darkest days of our study came in October 2011 when we were invited to a meeting of prison schools where 3-month layoff policies were described.

Evidence-Based Research in Prison

In the attempt to isolate the many variables that impact inmate student experience in prison, program evaluation as a stand-alone appears to ignore the most salient. Strip searches before and after class are not reflected in the time allocation in a program pacing guides that are part of the purchased curriculum. Nor are they a lesson in humiliation and loss of personal agency; strip searches serve as a daily reminder that one is in prison to be punished rather than to be educated. This is not to say such searches are not needed. It is simply important to understand the impact prison security has on inmate student education.

Prison is a Custody World, Even for Academic Researchers

Prisoner politics is always present despite the improved climate of classrooms over the cellblock or life on the yard. When gang trouble erupts, much of the class may be bussed to another institution overnight, or a lockdown might hold inmate students of a specific ethnicity and gang affiliation in their cells until the crisis passes. From a researcher's perspective, perhaps the most instructive element of interviewing inmate students was the common practice of the class "shot caller" who selected the individual we would interview.

From the perspective of program delivery, the sudden and dramatic layoffs of most teachers of the vocational programs we studied brought into question the capacity of the CDCR to accomplish any rehabilitative goals in a sustainable manner. The prison environment by its very nature subordinates education goals to those of security, which trumps all other considerations. The results will necessarily be more expensive per student than the same program outside of prison, and the quality of the course will be lower. After all, it is not a school, it is a prison—it is a "custody world."

LIMITATIONS IN QUALITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE DATA

The landscaping curriculum Bill (our curriculum expert) considered one of the finest scored the lowest on the TECA rubric and was summarily dropped from program offerings to inmates by the OCE. This story has already been related in more detail in the story of Greenhouses described in Chap. 8, but to recap quickly, we saw broken or not yet assembled greenhouses at almost every institution. Why this equipment could not be used due to security reasons was never explained to us, and this seemed strange at a cost of almost \$50,000 per greenhouse. Yet in one soon to be extinct landscaping course, the inmates cobbled together their own greenhouse made from metal bookshelves, plastic sheeting, light bulbs, drip irrigation lines, and extension cords. They proudly showed us how they were growing seedlings that were to be planted outdoors in their garden area. Such intrinsically motivated activity runs counter to assertions about security offered in the correctional system.

Or maybe it does not. Shortly after we visited, the five strawberry plants the inmates had germinated in their greenhouse and planted in the garden were pulled up by correctional officers. This was due to the concern that inmates might secretly cook up an alcoholic drink called pruno. Or maybe it was not. Later we heard from inmates that the elimination of the five plants was directed as much toward the teacher as to the students because he had been involved in a complaint against a cop. This teacher let us know that after the offending cop was disciplined and returned to work, his students warned him to be wary of certain areas within the prison where he might run into trouble; other inmates might hurt this teacher in order to win favor with the cop and his colleagues because he lost the complaint case. While an attack on strawberry plants appeared to be a minor insult, inmate students believed they and their teacher were the intended targets of a disheartening, if not disabling, action on the part of the mutually supportive cops. But then who knows how much of this was true—everyone lies in prison!

Limitations in Quantitative Data

It was clear from our instructions from the CDCR that they preferred quantitative to qualitative data, on the common assumptions that numbers are “hard” data and everything else is not. Or, to put it into the jargon of the prisons (and modern public administration), statistics are

“evidence” while gut feelings (qualitative data) and thick description are not. As researchers, we agree fully that numbers and statistics are an important part of many studies. Indeed, both Tony and particularly Andy taught social statistics repeatedly. However, all three of us question whether numbers are inherently more valid and reliable as “evidence” than are qualitative data or even the “gut feelings” of seasoned professionals. Rather, they are complementary and mutually reinforcing.

To a large extent, our more general approach to “mixed data” was borne out in our study. The CDCR produces many numbers, but strangely could not produce numbers about what happened to students who took vocational education courses after they were paroled. Did they get a job in the field they trained in? Were they rearrested? We could never get even raw data files that might have answered these questions despite the presumed emphasis on rehabilitation.

The CDCR wanted us to do something with the data they had provided from other classes they had been conducting (not our vocational data). We were able to come up with a “proxy variable” for how many vocational education students were recidivating as measured by returns to the CDCR (this left out any who were arrested and did not get returned to the CDCR for another sentence, including those who may have been arrested by county Sheriffs or in other states).

When we did this, we found a result that we (and the CDCR) did not expect or want—those who had had vocational education courses were slightly more likely to be returned to the CDCR for a second time. This result flew in the face of every piece of qualitative data, opinion, and interview we had conducted, which seemed to support the thought that vocational training was one of the best investments prisons could make in reducing recidivism. This opinion was backed up by other studies that indicated that the relationship between vocational education and recidivism was as expected—there was a slight positive correlation between taking a vocational education course while in prison and lower recidivism rates (see Chap. 10, pp. 192–194).

Lack of Recidivism Data

The CDCR has trumpeted California’s high recidivism rate for the past few decades as being among the highest in the nation. And such a fact provides an excellent rhetorical strategy for asking the Legislature for more money to fund prison operations. Indeed, there is a financial incentive for

the CDCR to report a high recidivism rate. Higher rates increase the public's concern about crime and, accordingly, can be effectively used to make pleas for more money as indeed Campbell's Law predicts.

However, when we looked closer at the recidivism data, we began to question its accuracy. This recidivism rate is a product not just of what inmates do but of how parole agents respond to violations in parole conditions. During the last 15–20 years, because of efforts by the California State Legislature and the CDCR, enforcement of parole restrictions became stricter. Parole violations in California occur when a paroled prisoner violates any number of restrictions on their freedoms that parole boards require for early release. At its most basic, it involves checking in periodically with a parole officer. But more importantly, it also means that any parolee is subject to search without probable cause at any time by any peace officer. Common violations that might trigger a rearrest and an extra-judicial return to state prison include the use of alcohol, association with felons, petty crime, illegal drug use, and so forth. This is the most common reason for recidivism in California. The next most common cause for recidivism is a new arrest for a new crime.

So who or what is responsible for California's high recidivism rate? Is it an unusually high rate of criminal reoffense, or is it the more aggressive use of incarceration in response to parole "write-ups?" The Legislature in AB 900 assumes the former is the case. They reason that California's judicial system responds in the same way to wrongdoing as every other state, but California's parolees simply have a higher rate of offense. But this is a case of comparing apples to oranges because each state has different laws and regulations governing rearrests.

THE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF APPLIED RESEARCH IN A PRISON LIFEWORLD

While we were satisfied we met the requirements of our contract to provide a Curriculum Review that fit into the framework understood by the CDCR, we firmly believe there is much more to the story. We wanted, and still want to know, how inmates can be rehabilitated or, as one warden adamantly stated, "habilitated" for the first time in a prison.

With our own "boots on the ground" inside correctional institutions, we gained a deep sense of the human lives bounded within that world. We often saw that "lifeworld" not as nurturing but simply surreal.

One minute, an inmate was not trusted to exit the shop classroom without a complete strip search for contraband tools. The next minute, in another classroom, he was encouraged to handle tools that could easily serve as weapons.

The Necessity for Behaviorism, with All Its Limitations

Given the Kafkaesque climate where “everyone lies,” the need for simple, behavioristic rules, including rewards and incentives, was a straightforward way to ground the setting in a seemingly concrete reality. Inmates and correctional officers would know and understand what was expected of them, and they could learn to predict responses to their actions at a basic level. Given the nature of the prison environment, this is important. Despite our critique of behaviorism, we cannot offer recommendations that would make a prison classroom as effective as a vocational education classroom at a community college. In such contexts, attention can be paid to the developmental progress of the student, which is difficult to do in prison.

*Inherent Conflicts of Interest: The Weakness of
Evidence-Based Research*

The two questions we asked at the outset of this study remain today: What theory of rehabilitation and education does the CDCR apply? What questions does that theory generate and what data can be used to provide answers to the questions?

We know that evidence is based on theory. Theory guides the development of questions that result in the collection of data in order to prove or disprove a postulate under the theory (Gould, 1995). We found the theory that guided the insertion of vocational education classes into prisons was obviously well intended but incomplete because it did not include the prison itself.

The environment within prison included many variables that affect inmate students (i.e., how they learned) and teachers (i.e., how they taught), which are beyond the implicit behavioristic theoretical framework the prisons use. It was as if an Olympic runner trained by exercising only one leg. Likewise, there was much more evidence to be understood than the quality of the curriculum purchased, teachers hired, and facilities created and evaluated with the TECA rubric.

The Elephant in the Room: It Is a Prison!

We close with one of the foundational questions that arose in our study: Is it possible to combine education and rehabilitation with punishment? Time and again, we felt we were living out a reoccurring act in a trite version of a Kafka play. Teachers came to work and stayed all day even when no students showed up to class because they were in lockdown. Placement hearings were held where the educational needs of inmates were discussed, but the undiscussed safety and security needs of the institution were the subtext, and the inmates themselves were mute. Inmate students were expected to follow a prescribed program that originated with a system-wide Logic Model of rational interventions to fix diagnosed problems. Yet, in order to attend class, those same inmates had to give up the minimal yet meaningful incentives in prison life such as showers, phone calls from home, opportunity to buy toothpaste, or a prison job.

AND FINALLY A BIT OF EVIDENCE-BASED REASONING:
WHAT WE THOUGHT BEFORE ABOUT EDUCATION
IN PRISONS

We were fans of schooling in prisons. We believed in the power of education to contribute to effective rehabilitation both by the imparting of skills and by habituating prisoners to middle class norms. At a gut level, we knew that rehabilitation works—that treating prisoners as people with a future in society is far better than looking at them all as irredeemable.

As described in the report itself (Chap. 6, p. 171), we also think that certifications are important “signals” to employers that a former inmate is ready to add value to a business. Having this signal is far better than not having it.

We still think that vocational education in prison is a good idea and an effective use of tax-payer dollars for those who are in prison for limited sentences. But this is no longer all we think. We know that prison populations are far more difficult than spreadsheets at the main office may indicate, and that quality of programming cannot be the same as it is in an institution designed for education, such as a community college.

What We Now Think About Education in Prisons

Now we know that the quality of education in prison can never be as high as that outside the prison—prisoners are better served taking community

college classes at a community college rather than in an institution run primarily as a custody institution. Having said that, we still think it is a good idea to have vocational (and other) classes in prisons. We also know that such programs, even if they are only marginally successful, can have great human and financial savings for the prison itself and society. As one administrator emphasized to us (Chap. 10, pp. 196–197), a vocational education class that brings recidivism/crime rates down just 5% will more than pay for itself in a prison system like California’s where it costs \$49,000 per year to house an inmate. And this does not include the benefits of having a 5% lower recidivism rates for the inmates, their families, and their communities.

But we also know that it is important to recognize that conditions in prison are not conducive to the delivery of rehabilitation programs, and, as a result, such programs are likely to be more expensive to run, have lower graduation rates, and be of lower quality than courses in community colleges from which accredited curricula may be borrowed. The conditions of the prison overwhelm the capacity of even the most skilled teacher to deliver comparable classes. There are not the opportunities for workplace-based teaching, and the open-entry/open-exit policy means that cohorts cannot be taught the same curriculum together in an efficient fashion. Continuity is inevitably lost due to unpredictable lockdowns and other class cancellations, and the need for “security first” means that the most appropriate students cannot be assigned to the right classes. And then there are the issue of gangs and security measures which chip away at “teaching time.” All such factors limit the capacity of both teachers and students to focus on vocational education instruction.

However, prison-based classes have other advantages to the prison as well—notably they are an island of peace in an often-times chaotic world. The classrooms we observed, even with the occasional disruption (see Chap. 7, pp. 103–108), were conducted with professionalism. Teachers and administrators worked hard to see that this happened—we encourage all efforts to support them in continuing to do this. However, at the end of the day, it is still a prison.

What We Thought Before About Evidence-Based Research in Prison

We were (and are) fans of evidence-based research whether in corrections, in the schools, or in any other human endeavor. It is always better to collect data in a systematic fashion before making decisions. We believed (and

still believe) that the systematic collection of data contributes to sound decision-making. We also knew that inevitably values, political calculation, and “gut” feelings necessarily intrude into administrative decision-making in any bureaucracy. In the case of the CDCR we knew that this would happen at the level of Sacramento headquarters or in the CDCR classrooms spread around the state.

In this context, we saw our job as generating “evidence” in a way that decision makers could make informed decisions based on the political and administrative charges they had. Our goal was to generate evidence that can be used to think about a problem; in this case, the use of vocational education programs to bring down recidivism rates. We believed we could do this independently and professionally, while acknowledging our commitment to disciplinary requirements that we be independent of political pressure.

What We Now Think about Evidence-Based Research in Prison

We were surprised at the focus the CDCR took in writing and rewriting our proposal in a fashion that would generate “evidence that we can use to make decisions” as opposed to “evidence that can be used to think about our problems,” which is what we wanted to offer. The writing and rewriting of this program went on for all 3 years of the project and culminated in the demand that we bring the report down to a “brief” level that could be more easily consumed by CDCR executives (see Chap. 2).

As a result of our CDCR study, we are now more skeptical of the belief that a close relationship between a funder and a researcher can ever be truly “independent.” We too liked the money that we could earn by travelling around the state and meeting the many interesting people from the CDCR. However, such a relationship always introduces what Gould called the “strait jacket” of agency bias (p. 287), a bias that is formalized with Campbell’s Law (p. 45).

Because of this experience, we are much more skeptical of agency-sponsored research. The collection of evidence is important to decision-making, as every manager and administrator knows. But, agencies also have an interest in preserving themselves and their prerogatives, as Max Weber, James Q. Wilson, James Scott, S.J. Gould, and a succession of other scholars have established. This paradoxical observation reflects the tension that we experienced throughout our evaluation of vocational education in California prisons. The tension was caused by the fact that the CDCR

has an interest in preserving its own programs and therefore its life as an agency, at the same time as it needs “evidence” to make informed rational decisions about change. During the life of our project and our relationship with the CDCR, we wobbled between concerns about both the agency’s need to preserve itself including its schools, its need to monopolize data, and its need to satisfy the legislature with an evidence-based report. This all had to happen at a time when the funding for prisons was contracting rapidly. These pressures tugged and pulled within the CDCR, and our small and relatively insignificant research project was pushed and pulled with it. We firmly believe that political tensions inherent to public organizations, be they prisons, schools, the military, water projects, or any other government program, are at the heart of all sponsored sponsored research. Consumers of such sponsored research need always be aware of such bias.

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