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TOPIC

“Ready, Set, Go: Educating for Good Lives”

Prior to the 1970's, it was believed that education and other rehabilitative programs in prisons helped reduce recidivism. However, this confidence was dashed in 1974 with the release of findings of a report by Martinson on rehabilitative programs conducted in American prisons between 1945 and 1967. The conclusions sent shock waves through the American penal system, waves that would eventually also be felt in Australia. Martinson's conclusion was that, "... with few and isolated exceptions, the rehabilitative efforts that have been reported so far have had no appreciable effect on recidivism." (Martinson, 1974)

The finding spawned pessimism about rehabilitative programs that was captured by the term "nothing works". The result was a change of emphasis in correctional management from rehabilitation to containment (Birgden, 2002).

Once the shock of Martinson's finding had begun to subside, renewed questions were raised over aspects of Martinson's analysis, followed by new attempts to discover whether anything does work with rehabilitative programs - the "what works" investigation.

Since the 1970's, and particularly in the last 15 years (Hollin, 2002), new understandings and rehabilitative approaches have been developed, which have been shown by research to be effective in reducing recidivism. According to Hollin, the rehabilitative gains have been modest (around 10%), but research suggests that a punitive, containment-based approach may actually increase recidivism (Hollin, 2002). One of the most significant conceptualisations developed in this period is the principles of risk and need. The risk principle identifies who is in the most need of rehabilitative services, and the need principle identifies which services are most required. This has led to the concept of dynamic risk factors (criminogenic needs, e.g., criminal associates, poor problem-solving skills) and static risk factors (non-criminogenic needs, e.g., low self-esteem, racial background) (Birgden, 2002). Criminogenic needs are dynamic because theoretically they can be changed through interventions, whereas static factors remain stable, and may not be directly linked to offending behaviour. Instruments such as the LSI-R were developed to identify these risk factors (Andrews, 2001). The risk/needs approach holds that it is most important to target criminogenic needs through rehabilitative programs, although some attention may need to be given to static risk factors if they impede progress in treatment (Birgden, 2002). Amongst the dynamic risk factors are such elements as employability and basic education skills.

It is important to note that with the risk management model, which, according to Ward is currently the dominant view of offender rehabilitation, "the primary aim is to avoid harm to the community rather than to improve offenders' quality of life." He claims that whilst this model works at the level of social policy, "it does not provide adequate guidance when working with individual offenders". (T. Ward, 2002)

During the last three decades much attention has also been focused on determining the rehabilitative effectiveness of correctional education, as

measured through recidivism. Before considering some of this research, it is important to say something about the use of recidivism to measure the effect of education. Gehring points out that recidivism is such a blunt instrument to test educational effectiveness (Gehring, 2000). It cannot measure incremental progress or improvement, it does not discriminate between the seriousness of a series of crimes a person might commit, nor does it take into account the length of sentence. Also, reduced recidivism does not itself measure a person's ability to function successfully in society (Lipton, 1975).

Furthermore, there is no one definition of recidivism in the literature. Different studies measure different things. Some measure re-arrest, some re-incarceration, and some re-conviction (Gerber, 1995). For example, in some studies recidivism is broadly defined as "returning to prison after once having been released" (Stevens, 1997), whilst in other studies it is narrowly defined, such as being re-sentenced to the same correctional centre (Burke, 2001). Studies also differ in terms of the length of time ex-offenders were followed-up. Some studies followed ex-offenders' progress for only three months, whereas others followed their progress over several years (Gerber, 1995). A study that followed ex-offenders for only three months upon release could produce very different results to one that had a follow-up period of several years, the latter casting a much bigger net in which to capture re-offending behaviour.

Notwithstanding the problems of recidivism as a measure of the success of educational programs, a significant body of research has shown that certain educational programs do help reduce recidivism. Specifically, these programs are Adult Basic Education, Vocational Education, and Life Skills (Adams, 1994; Cecil, 2000; Duguid, 1996; Gehring, 2000; Gerber, 1995; Hrabowski, 2002; K. A. Hull, Forrester, Brown, Jobe, & McCullen, 2000; K. A. Hull, Forrester, S., Brown, J., Jobe, D., and McCullen, C., 2000; Jancic, 1998; Kelso, 2000; Nuttall, 2003; O'Neil, 1990; Stevens, 1997; Ubah, 2002; Wilson, 1994).

Reporting on a meta-analysis of seven rigorous scientific studies, Gerber and Fritsch reveal that three of the studies show no correlation between education and recidivism, whilst the other four show strong positive correlations. Despite these mixed results they claim that since Martinson's publication in 1974, "we find few studies that show no correlation between prison education and recidivism." (Gerber, 1995) Adams, reporting on a follow-up study of education program completers released in 1990-1991 (n=120), found that success in post-release life and decreased recidivism were closely linked to educational attainment whilst in prison, and overall educational attainment. (Adams, 1994) Similar findings have been reported by the Arizona Department of Adult Probation and the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (Hrabowski & Robbi, 2000).

Correctional education has found a place within the broader rehabilitative framework as a means to equip offenders with the basic, vocational and life skills they often lack and need to limit the chance of re-offending. As such, it

targets specific dynamic risk factors that the risk/needs approach seeks to address, which probably accounts for its effectiveness.

Currently, correctional education may be seen as primarily about the reduction and management of risk, and promoting the wellbeing of society. This situation is outlined in Table 1.

Table 1: Education as a Risk Reduction Intervention

AIM	RATIONALE
To reduce re-offending behaviour	Reduce risks associated with lack of employability, life, basic education skills, Enhance social stability/welfare, Conserve public money, Reduce crime.
METHOD	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education programs based on the 'what works' literature. 	

From an educator's point of view, it may be reassuring to know that one can have confidence in a range of educational programs that 'work' in reducing recidivism. Yet, are there any risks in this confidence, and if so, what might they be? Perhaps the greatest risk is that correctional education becomes too focused on educational programs, and not enough on the students for whom those programs are intended.

Although the dominant view of offender rehabilitation currently centres on risk reduction and management, there is the recent emergence of a broader conceptualisation which incorporates risk/need, but extends into a more encompassing rehabilitative framework. Ward calls it the 'Good Lives Model', and it represents a major shift of emphasis towards rehabilitation (T. Ward, 2002; T. Ward, & Marshall, W, 2004; T. Ward, Brown, M, 2004; T. Ward, Eccleston, L, 2004; T. Ward, Stewart, C, 2003). The model acknowledges the existence of criminogenic needs, but regards them as blockages that prevent people from obtaining 'good lives' through pro-social means. Ward suggests that people have an innate desire for what he refers to as 'primary human goods'. These refer to "aspects of human functioning and experience that are judged to be beneficial to human beings and that thereby result in higher levels of wellbeing." (T. Ward, 2002) These primary human goods are identified as: life (healthy living and functioning); knowledge; excellence in play and work; excellence in agency; inner peace; friendship and community (including intimate, romantic and family relationships); spirituality (including purpose in life); happiness; and creativity. The relative weightings of these primary human goods is context specific, and people will seek to create 'good lives', dependent upon their ability to achieve the appropriate balance of the various primary human goods. If people do not have the necessary internal conditions (capabilities) and external conditions (opportunities and supports) to acquire the basic human goods through pro-social means, they will seek to acquire them through anti-social, criminal activity. In this case, this lack is

seen as a blockage and the deficits that gave rise to this blockage are criminogenic needs. The internal capabilities refer to such things as skills, beliefs, attitudes and values, and the external supports refer to such things as vocational skills, parenting skills, and the opportunity to pursue valued goals. The decision making process of the 'Good Lives Model' is illustrated below in Figure 1.

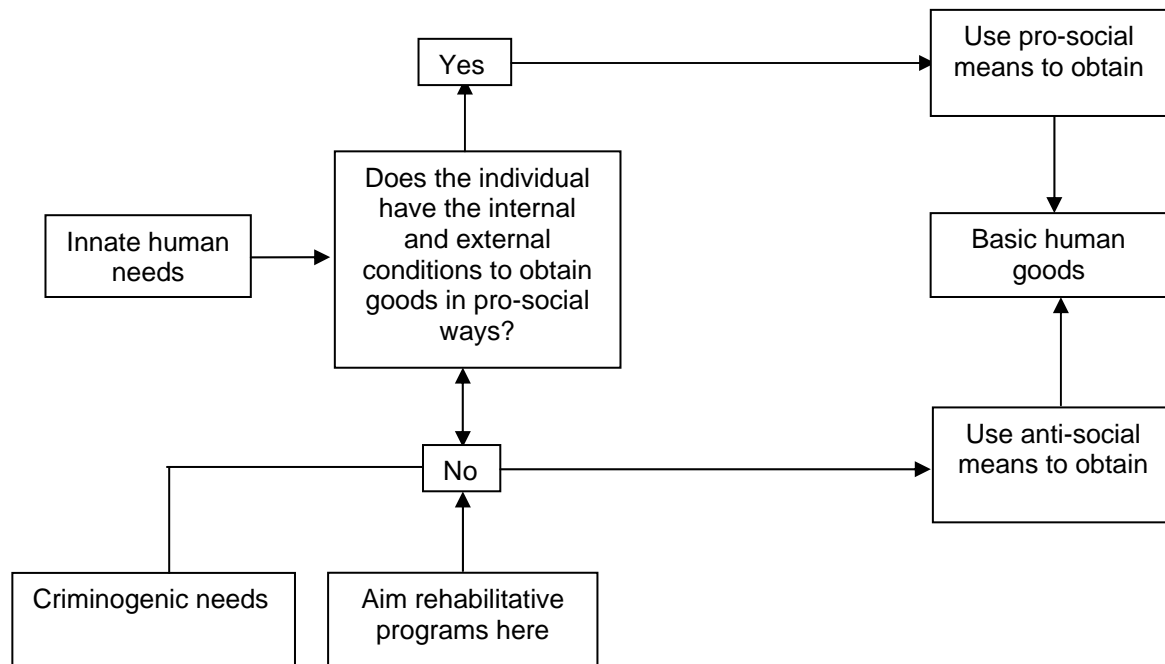


Figure 1: Decision-Making Process in the Good Lives Model.

Like the risk/needs approach, the Good Lives Model advocates identifying criminogenic needs and seeking to remedy them, but the model goes much further in suggesting that rehabilitation should seek to assist offenders to acquire through pro-social means the basic human goods they need to live good lives within the contexts they will likely experience upon release. Rehabilitative programs would do this by firstly detecting criminogenic needs (internal and external conditions), and secondly by developing a plan that will equip offenders to pursue primary goods in a different way. It is argued that if ex-offenders have the internal and external conditions they need to acquire the human goods to live good lives in pro-social ways, they are much less likely to return to criminal activity.

What are the implications of the Good Lives Model for correctional policy in general, and for correctional education in particular? In general, the Good Lives Model calls for a significant cultural shift in the meaning and process of rehabilitation. Gendreau claims that the relatively recent return from a punishment to a rehabilitation model is one of the most significant events in modern correctional policy (Birgden, 2002). Based on the 'What Works' literature, the risk/needs approach focuses mainly on risk management and

community protection. According to Ward, this is not enough. He claims that, "...rehabilitation based on risk management alone may result in offenders who, although they may have a reduced risk of re-offending, are also without friends or meaningful employment and have a reduced sense of personal identity." (cited in Birgden, 2002)

Birgden points out that, for the judiciary, to lean towards a rehabilitative model and impose treatment-based rather than punitive-based sentences is seen as leniency and a mark of weakness (Birgden, 2002) What she argues for is the creation of a correctional system "that is responsive to offenders", both in terms of the judiciary and correctional policy. This is a call for a major and significant cultural and procedural shift in the way offenders are treated and rehabilitated.

From an educational perspective, the Good Lives Model calls for a focus that is more on the person than the program. The role of correctional educators is not primarily to deliver accredited programs, but to promote positive life change in offenders. If this change is significant enough, it will also result in a decrease in offending behaviour and a reduction in recidivism. Again to quote Ward, "a necessary condition for the reduction of offending is the installation of ways of living that are more fulfilling and coherent. Individuals are unlikely to refrain from offending if their lives are characterised by an absence of valued outcomes. Thus...in order to rehabilitate offenders it is necessary to instill in them the skills, knowledge and resources to live different kinds of lives." (Ward, 2002) This is the 'big picture' of what we are striving for in correctional education. We are not just teaching offenders how to read, how to manage money, how to be better parents, or how to get jobs. We are working to help them achieve more fulfilling, responsible and rewarding lives as good citizens, good parents, good partners, and good workers. People who are able to contribute productively to the well-being of a democratic society.

It is important to remember that promoting life change is not something that can be 'done to' offenders. Prochaska makes the point that without readiness on the part of the participant, interventions are generally ineffective (Prochaska, 1986). Rehabilitative efforts, whether they be educational or otherwise, are unlikely to be effective if the offender does not really want them, is not ready for them, or is not ready to leave their criminal lifestyle. Based on Prochaska, coercing offenders to attend educational or other rehabilitative programs is unlikely to lead to good rehabilitative outcomes. If they believe they can still achieve 'good lives' by criminal means, they are unlikely to be ready for rehabilitation.

Determining readiness is important in the Good Lives Model. Readiness is a factor involving three dimensions: the person, the program, and the context. In the model, personal readiness is generally framed within the context of readiness to engage in particular rehabilitative programs (Howells, 2003; M. McMurrin, Tyler, Pat; Hogue, Todd; Cooper, Katie; Dunseath, William; McDaid, Darren, 1998; M. McMurrin, Ward, T, 2004; T. Ward, Day, A., Howells, K., Birgden, A., 2004; Williamson, 2003). Program readiness, or responsivity, is essentially concerned with adjusting treatment delivery in a

way that maximises learning. (Ward et al 2003). Contextual readiness refers to the capacity of the social and physical environment to support learning and personal change. There can sometimes be a pressure within correctional environments to utilise programs and program staff as a way to provide supervision for offenders, thus reducing the load on custodial staff. This can lead to coercion of offenders to participate in programs for which they have no real interest or readiness. Such practices are unlikely to produce a reduction in recidivism, and may undermine the effectiveness of programs for those who are genuinely ready to derive the most benefit from them.

Offenders may be ready to learn certain skills or knowledge, yet may still believe they can live 'good lives' by becoming more skilled criminals. Equally, offenders may not be sufficiently skilled to participate in certain types of programs, but they may be ready from the perspective of motivation and intent to live "different kinds of lives". Clearly, it is our professional responsibility to determine a student's academic readiness to participate in certain educational programs. But it is equally important, if not more so, to determine an offender's readiness to make positive, rehabilitative life change. Knowledge of this allows educators to provide a service that is 'responsive to offenders' (Birgden, 2002), better able to help those who are actually ready to engage in the change process. This is important in all correctional centres, but especially so in remand centres, where the opportunity to help those in custody is limited in time.

Determining offenders' readiness for change is a particularly important issue for correctional education. Teachers cannot assume that participation in education programs indicates a readiness for life change. Some offenders participate because they want and are ready for change. Others participate because they want to appear ready for change, believing there is some advantage in doing so. Some participate out of compulsion. Others because it gives them something to do, or they have an interest in, say, computers or art, or because it helps them adjust to the correctional environment. It is possible that teachers may have more direct contact with offenders who are actually not ready for change than other program professionals. Therefore, identifying readiness for life change is vital if correctional educators are going to be able to match appropriate programs to where people are at in terms of change.

The current focus in correctional education is on reducing risk, and hence recidivism, by delivering educational programs of a sort that find validation through the 'what works' literature. A positive life change focus of correctional education would also seek to reduce risk and recidivism. However, it would rely not just on the educational programs themselves, but also on the offender's readiness to make such change. There would be a strong student focus in determining which programs are most relevant for where students are at in terms of readiness for change. This is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Education as a Positive Life Change Intervention

AIM	RATIONALE
To promote positive life change	Assist inmates' personal development, Assist inmates develop a more socially and personally acceptable worldview, Help inmates to live more balanced, socially-responsible lives, Help inmates break free from the criminal lifestyle, Enhance social welfare, Reduce crime.
METHOD	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education programs that are informed by individual readiness for change and that support individual personal growth and development. 	

In a positive life change focus, the educator must have much more than a battery of accredited courses that 'work'. A holistic understanding of the inmate student is required, as well as an understanding of the change process itself. Specifically, there needs to be an awareness of the student's readiness to make positive life change - an understanding of what needs to change, what the inmate wants to change, and what he is ready to change. This is shown in Figure 2.

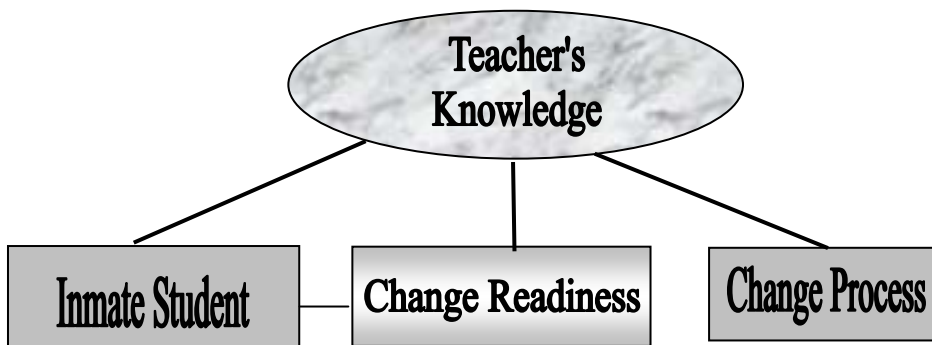


Figure 2: Domains of Teacher's Knowledge in Personal Change Focus of Correctional Education

Educating people in a correctional environment affords an opportunity to help people make changes they may want and be ready to make, but would otherwise not have the opportunity, resources or support to make on their own. It provides what Birgden calls a "teachable moment". It may be possible to enhance their motivation for change through such techniques as motivational interviewing, but identifying those who are already ready for change is an important first step. Without such knowledge, education is really a hit and miss affair. In the end, some people will be helped, as demonstrated in the literature. Yet, education might be much more effective if it were

tailored to the specific needs of individual students, according to their level of readiness to change in rehabilitative ways. This is what the Good Lives Model is about – not just remedying criminogenic needs, but helping offenders make a plan for fulfilling and good lives when they are released. Correctional education can play an important role in making those lives a reality.

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