

Developing the Training and Industry Partnership in Correctional Centres

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Abstract

East Gippsland Institute of TAFE and GEO have a long established partnership in the delivery of quality education within correctional centres. Currently EG TAFE provides education services at two GEO run Correctional Centres – one at Junee (NSW) and one at Fulham (VIC). At each centre EG TAFE provides different approaches to the delivery of industry based training. The integration of prison industries with relevant, on-the-job training at FCC, remains a foundation of the successful partnership between EG TAFE and GEO, and a unique model within the Australian corrections education environment. The Fulham model of integration between prison industry and training has staff operating in a dual role of trainer and production supervisor. This model of integrating training with industry has been identified by the Commissioner for Corrective Services Victoria – through the Bearing Point Review – as a model of best practice, and is unique in the Corrections Arena. At Junee a different model is in operation. There training staff operate parallel to the production industry to provide on-the-job training. A further development of the partnership is the running of specific industry OH&S programs as well as targeted pre-employment programs, tailored to meet client requirements for basic pre-employment skills and safety training on the equipment within the specific industries they are working in.

History and Background

Fulham Correctional Centre is located in East Gippsland, Victoria near the town of Sale. It is about two and a half hours drive east of Melbourne. The 777 capacity minimum to medium security correctional centre houses mostly mainstream prisoners with a smaller protection unit within the boundaries of the centre. Currently East Gippsland Institute of TAFE (EG TAFE) delivers 132,000 Student Contact Hours (SCH) to both the mainstream and protection prisoners. The profile of delivery is quite broad, incorporating a range of Adult Basic Education programs such as Certificate in General Education for Adults and Certificate in Spoken and Written English as well as a range of Vocational Education and Training (VET) programs including Information Technology, Engineering, Furnishing, Horticulture, Fitness and Automotive.

Junee Correctional Centre is located in New South Wales near the town of Junee, approximately 40 km north of Wagga Wagga in the Riverina. It is about half way between Sydney and Melbourne on the Olympic Highway. The 750 capacity minimum to medium security correctional centre houses mostly protection prisoners with some mainstream and remand prisoners as well. EG TAFE delivers 102,500 SCH across a broad profile similar to that at Fulham Correctional Centre.

In 1997 East Gippsland Institute of TAFE commenced a partnership with the private correctional centre provider, Australasian Correctional Management (ACM) to provide the education program at Fulham Correctional Centre. EG TAFE had already been providing education at Her Majesty's Prison Sale but this was to close with the opening of the new facility at Fulham, 10 km East of Sale. The contract with ACM to deliver training at Fulham Correctional Centre (FCC) provided new opportunities to expand the range of services offered and to explore innovative approaches to the delivery of VET in a correctional centre.

In 1998, building on the success of the already established partnership, EG TAFE was contracted by ACM to deliver the education programs at Junee Correctional Centre (JCC) in New South Wales.

In 1999, Sue Clifford, Manager of the Corrections Team for EG TAFE developed an integrated model of delivery of VET within prison industries which was implemented at FCC. The key feature of the proposal was to employ qualified trade teachers to operate a prison industry area allowing the functions of training and production to be integrated. A similar model was introduced at JCC in 2001.

The partnership with ACM, now renamed GEO, has remained strong and EG TAFE have undertaken further program development to support industry and employment across the two centres. The programs at both centres have evolved and changed. The implementation of the fully integrated model met with some challenges at Junee and currently a different model is employed there, but at both sites the underlying principle of integrating training into the workplace is still paramount and one espoused and supported strongly by both EG TAFE and GEO.

Integrated Training Models

In many Australian centres, prison industry operates separately from education. The prison industries are supervised and operated by correctional staff. Training occurs but the levels of skills acquired vary according to the type of industry, structure of the workforce and skills of the supervisors. Formal recognition or accreditation for skills acquired is frequently not available or the scope of training is insufficient to meet competency standard requirements.

From the education side, often the training providers are limited in the equipment they have available. Employment generally offers higher remuneration for inmates and education programs may not be as readily available to them if part-time employment is not an option. Specifically, at FCC, trainers were expected to use

the same equipment as industry but the opportunity to access this equipment was restricted and controlled by the demands of production.

Fulham Correctional Centre

Initially the integrated model was proposed for the Engineering and Timber Construction industries, but the plans were extended to include the Horticulture industry as well. New staffing positions, called Integrated Training Coordinators (ITCs) were developed. These positions had dual roles – supervision of production plus delivery of accredited training relevant to the industry area. EG TAFE employs the ITC staff, but GEO contribute an amount proportional to their production role to the wages of these employees. EG TAFE's Education Manager and GEO's Industry Manager jointly manage the positions.

Papers outlining this model were presented at the IFECSA Conferences, in 2001, by Sue Clifford, the then Corrections Education Manager for EG TAFE and in 2003 by Sue and Brett Thomson, who at that time coordinated industry training at Fulham. Some of the basic principles underlying the original model were that all prisoners to be employed in areas supervised by ITCs would also be enrolled in nationally accredited curriculum modules. The training would be driven by the needs of the industry. Initial training would occur in basic generic skills, equipment handling and occupational health and safety before prisoners would move into production. A correctional officer would be stationed in the industry area to manage prisoner movement and security. The ITCs would supervise prisoners employed in their area, but they would not be directly responsible for security. This allows the roles of custodian and trainer to be separated. While Sue and Brett have moved on a great strength of our model is that today, at Fulham Correctional Centre the integrated model continues and varies little from the original proposal.

Junee Correctional Centre

The Junee model mirrored the Fulham model in many ways, however there were some distinct differences. At Junee the Industry Training delivery was managed separately from the general VET and Adult Basic Education delivery, whereas at Fulham, management of both delivery areas was integrated. At Junee the ITCs were employed by ACM and EG TAFE contributed towards their wages. Thus the ITCs at Junee were also Correctional Officers and had previously been employed as Industry Supervisors.

At Junee Correctional Centre the integrated model was disbanded in 2002. One primary difference with the Junee arrangement was that the ITCs were also correctional officers and as such they were required to carry out the functions of custodial officers. This led to some conflicts in their job role and at times correctional duties took precedence over educational duties. The role of custodian also conflicted with the role of educator. It was hard to establish good educational rapport with prisoners if they knew that later that day the same person could be involved in a security role such as pat downs or searches.

EG TAFE did not abandon the idea of integrating training into industry at Junee. Today we have industry-based trainers who have full access to the production floor, but they do not have a role in production supervision. The trainers conduct on-the-job training and workplace assessment in industry as well as conducting small classes in an education facility located next to the industry production area. This training facility has areas for Engineering (welding), another small workshop and two small classrooms. This arrangement allows our trainers a deal of flexibility in the training strategies they can use. They can work alongside a student on the workshop floor, conduct sessions in the training workshops, show a training video or run a theory class in the classroom. The breadth of skills and underpinning knowledge required to gain competency can be achieved despite the restrictions of a limited production items in the industry area. This model of workplace training and assessments allows production and training to occur in parallel. Currently we deliver training in the industry area in engineering, furnishing and transport and distribution.

As well as these programs based in the main prison industry we also deliver hospitality training in the prison kitchen and horticulture and outdoor equipment training to grounds workers. A particular success in this area has been in horticulture training. The horticulture teacher at JCC has delivered accredited training to workers in the prison protea plantation enabling successful harvesting of the protea crop. Currently the JCC's kitchen is undergoing refurbishment. The new kitchen will include a number of new machines. Before the kitchen begins operation the hospitality teacher will conduct training on the new equipment. This has many benefits – the prisoners will have the skills to operate the machinery safely and efficiently, which will benefit the operation of the kitchen by reducing risk of injury to workers and damage to equipment. At the same time the prisoners will receive qualifications to enhance their employment opportunities on release.

The basic principles underlying this model are that prisoners employed will be enrolled in nationally accredited modules and receive basic induction training in Occupational Health and Safety and safe machine operation specific to their work area. The TAFE teachers work closely with GEO supervisors in each area to identify skill shortages and training requirements. Job allocation in the industry area reflects the level of training received and as inmate employees progress with their training they are also able to progress through pay scales i.e. the more training they do, the more pay they can get.

As well as offering training in skills specific to industry production, EG TAFE also run communication modules within the industry training facility. As workers can move out of the production area to the education area with no loss of pay they are much more willing to undertake these modules than when they were delivered outside the industry area.

Pre-Employment Programs

In early 2003 the industry production area at JCC and the industry education team faced a crisis as a key production area ceased. The dilemma facing the education team was how to maintain delivery hours in the face of a reduced workforce in industry. Through this challenge the education team at EG TAFE, in consultation with GEO, and with strong support of GEO management developed a Pre-Employment Program. The aim of this program was to provide basic / generic skills for any inmate wishing to be employed at JCC. Then, once employed, the inmates would be expected to undertake specific training relevant to their work area. The program was made a pre-requisite for employment and consisted of modules related to:

- Occupational Health and Safety
- Workplace Induction
- First Aid
- Asset Maintenance
- Food Hygiene

These modules aligned with the main employment areas of the centre – Industry Production, Unit Maintenance (cleaners) and the Kitchen. This program has undergone some refinement necessitated by changes to training packages, centre requirements, staffing issues and room availability. It now operates as a 3-day program with a key aim to deliver a set of skills and knowledge that will prepare prisoners for work within the centre that meets both the needs of the prisoners and the needs of the centre management. It is still compulsory for prisoners to complete this program before they can be employed. Once employed inmates then undertake occupational health and safety training specific to their area of employment. It is a condition of ongoing employment that this training is completed. The pathway from induction, through training, into employment ensures that education is an integral component of the operation of the correctional centre.

At Fulham a similar program exists where all prisoners new to the centre undertake an induction program, which includes Occupational Health and Safety, Manual Handling and Food Hygiene. These Pre-Employment Programs provide an important role in inducting new prisoners into the centres. The prisoners gain skills and understanding to enable them to work safer as well as become aware of the range of education programs that are available within each centre.

The Pre-employment programs provide a key component of induction at both JCC and FCC and following completion, prisoners then move into other areas of the prison and undertake employment, offender development programs, education or combinations of these.

Challenges

One of the key challenges with the ITC arrangement at Fulham is maintaining the balance between the demands of production and training. If the industry

production focus is on a high volume, low skill item, the time available for training is limited, as is the scope of training available. An Industry Manager (GEO) and an Education Manager (EG TAFE) jointly manage the ITC positions. For the model to operate successfully it is vital that both managers have an understanding of the scope for production and training within the industry areas. A good working relationship is essential between these positions.

Integrating training with industry means that when an industry changes, the training program must be adjusted to fit in with different products, production schedules and/or machines. As well, when training packages are reviewed, the challenge is to align the competencies with current industry production.

A key component of the success of these delivery models is communication between GEO and EG TAFE. For example EG TAFE management attend regular meetings with GEO industry management. On a day-to-day basis the trainers in industry work closely with the industry supervisors and manager to support the production with appropriate training (JCC) and to develop production schedules and training programs (FCC).

Relation to Theory and Policy

There is no shortage of literature that extols the value of education within the prison community. While it is generally acknowledged that education has a role in reducing recidivism, the exact nature of the effect of education is not defined.

A key document driving policy and practice in prison education is the *National strategy for vocational education and training for adult prisoners and offenders in Australia* (ANTA 2001).

In Victoria the *Corrections Long Term Management Strategy* was released in 2001. While this did not contain specific references to education and training in Victorian prisons it is shaping current policy. This along with the *Bearing Point Review of Education and Training Provision in Victorian Prisons* released in 2003 and the *Offender Management Framework: Prisons and Community Correctional Services* from 2004 has led to the development of the *Education and Training in Victorian Prisons Policy Framework* the draft of which has been circulated in 2005.

Recent reports and projects from other states have also examined the role of education and training in prisons.

The main direction seems to be toward integrating vocational education and training with other programs and services offered within prisons to increase employment opportunities for prisoners on release and to reduce their risk of re-offending.

We do not propose to undertake a detailed literature review here, but instead wish to identify where our delivery fits with current thought and to demonstrate that the

models we implement have some basis in current thought and fit within current trends in policy.

The NCVET report *To train or not to train. The role of education and training in prison to work transitions* (Giles et al, 2004) identified that '*prisoners undertaking training ... expect better labour market futures ... than those who are undertaking non-vocational education courses or work only.*' They also noted that '*Prison work on its own, even that involving commercial endeavours, is not seen by prisoners as being an entry to a career outside prison.*' By situating our training and assessment within commercial prison industries the training will enhance the skills developed during their employment and provide recognition of those skills through formal qualifications and increase the opportunities for employment on release.

Callan and Gardner (2005) in *Vocational Education and training provision and recidivism in Queensland correctional institutions* reported that '*..many prisoners put the opportunity to earn extra income through prison jobs ahead of spending time in vocational education and training programs.*' They also reported that there were difficulties associated with the use of workplace assessments in the prison's commercial workshops. These difficulties included meeting AQTF criteria, organisational issues, and the need to employ extra staff to facilitate workplace assessments.' Situating training within an industry or area of employment removes the barrier of income and inequity between rates for different activities within a prison. While we agree that difficulties can arise undertaking workplace assessments in prison commercial workshops, we have been able to achieve this. One of the key factors is developing the partnership between industry management and supervisors and education staff.

The Bearing Point Review of Education and Training in Victorian Prisons (Bearing Point, 2003) recommended that integration between work and education and training be increased. The GEO/EG TAFE model at Fulham Correctional Centre was highlighted as '*one location where these arrangements are highly integrated.*' One of the recommendations to guide the policy framework to follow on from the review was that '*Where possible education staff should be collocated with prison industries and other program staff to facilitate the integration of training into the prison setting.*'

The draft Corrections Victoria Education and Training in Victorian Prisons Policy Framework identifies the role of industries to:

'Offer a realistic training ground for prisoners which, as much as possible, provides an authentic work environment.' It also identifies that where possible, prison industries '*allow prisoners to achieve recognized competencies*'.

It goes on to state that in order to meet the theoretical principles underlying it, that the integration of education and industries should occur. We hope that our experience demonstrates that this approach can occur.

Conclusions

Delivering education in a prison setting presents many barriers; some of them physical, some operational and others attitudinal. By situating training within an industry area, whether by having ITCs in the joint role of industry supervisor and education provider or by having trainers working in partnership with production supervisors on the production floor, many of those barriers are reduced. All stakeholders benefit from these partnerships – education providers, the correctional centre team, prisoners and ultimately the community through improved employment prospects for prisoners on release and subsequent reduction in recidivism.

A key factor behind the successful implementation of our programs has been a willingness of GEO from upper management through to industry, operational and administration staff to support innovations and work closely with EG TAFE staff to overcome difficulties along the way.

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