MEETING THE VOCATIONAL EDUCATION NEEDS OF THE CORRECTIONAL POPULATION

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Project Manager: *Andrea M. Savada*

Authors: *Ly H. Burnham*
Ramón J. Miró

Editors: *Marilyn L. Majeska*
Andrea T. Merrill

Graphics: *Marla D. Woodson*

Federal Research Division
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Ly H. Burnham
Ramón Miró

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This research paper analyzes correctional education in the United States, particularly the role of vocational instruction in the overall delivery of educational services to the prison population. The first part of this paper profiles the adult prison population in federal and state correctional facilities and analyzes basic demographic and educational characteristics of adult inmates. The second part discusses the structure of the various correctional education delivery systems and the nature and extent of educational services in state and federal facilities. The third part of the paper reviews the most important federal legislation and programs affecting correctional education and their impact on instruction for state-incarcerated inmates.

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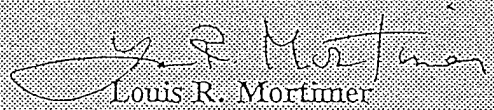


Louis R. Mortimer
Chief
Federal Research Division
Library of Congress
Washington, DC 20540-5220

Preface

This research paper analyzes correctional education in the United States, particularly the role of vocational instruction in the overall delivery of educational services to the prison population. The first part of this paper profiles the adult prison population in federal and state correctional facilities and analyzes basic demographic and educational characteristics of adult inmates. The second part discusses the structure of the various correctional education delivery systems and the nature and extent of educational services in state and federal facilities. The third part of the paper reviews the most important federal legislation and programs affecting correctional education and their impact on instruction for state-incarcerated inmates.

A variety of sources were used in the preparation of this report, including published reports and articles, books, and unpublished papers--several of which were retrieved from the Educational Resources Incorporated (ERIC) microfiche files at the Department of Education's main library. Staff at the Department of Education, the Bureau of Prisons, and the Correctional Education Association were consulted for information on survey data.

Table of Contents

Introduction

In the early 1990s, rates of incarceration rose sharply in the United States as a result of increasing levels of violent crime and the widespread application in several states of minimum mandatory sentencing guidelines. Federal and state correctional facilities faced a dual challenge in meeting their custodial responsibilities as they tried to accommodate the rising inflow of convicted felons while operating under tightening financial constraints. Within the context of strong anticriminal public sentiment and fiscal austerity, the provision of "secondary" inmate services such as education and counseling became increasingly difficult to guarantee. Further, where such services existed, their quality and availability could not be ensured.

Despite these difficulties, the belief that lack of educational achievement contributes to criminality was becoming more broadly accepted within the criminal justice community. As the U.S. economy evolved from that of an industrial society to an information-based society, academic and vocational aptitude and credentials were becoming the foundations of successful independent living for most adults. In recognition of this fact, and with the expectation that educational intervention in correctional institutions could have a positive impact on recidivism and inmate values, correctional administrators continued to expand educational services in juvenile and adult facilities. In addition to basic and secondary instruction, correctional facilities created new programs in vocational,

postsecondary, and special education.

Correctional Population Profile

At the end of 1992, the total population in U.S. correctional institutions under the jurisdiction of federal and state authorities reached 883,593--increasing at an average rate of close to 8.6 percent annually since 1980. The highest increase in the number of prisoners occurred in 1989 with an annual growth rate of 12.8 percent, followed by 12.2 percent in 1981 and 11.9 percent in 1982 (see table 1, Appendix). The total inmate population excludes people in local jails, on parole, or on probation, but it includes 18,191 state prisoners held in local jails--the overflow from overcrowded state prisons. Of the total, 80,259 inmates were held in federal prisons, whereas 803,334 inmates served their time in state prisons. The great majority of prisoners were men, accounting for 94.3 percent of the total; women accounted for only 5.7 percent. Between 1991 and 1992, the number of male prisoners increased at a faster rate than that of females: 7.3 percent versus 5.9 percent.[1]

Prisoners with sentences of more than one year, or sentenced prisoners, accounted for 96 percent of the 1992 total; the remaining 4 percent had sentences of less than one year or were awaiting trial in states with a combined prison-jail system.[2] There were fewer sentenced prisoners in federal institutions (9.1 percent) than in state institutions, but their rate of increase was higher than those in state institutions--15.9 percent versus 6.6 percent annually in 1992. In 1991 the rates of increase had

been 12.5 percent and 6.4 percent, respectively (see table 2, Appendix).

The U.S. average incarceration rate for sentenced prisoners set a new record in 1992 at 329 per 100,000 inhabitants. For men, the rate of incarceration was 636 per 100,000 inhabitants, but for women it was only 35 per 100,000 inhabitants.[3] In 1990 the average rate of incarceration was 306 per 100,000 inhabitants.[4] If the inmate population were to include those in local jails and those on probation or on parole, the rate of incarceration would be much higher. In 1990, for example, 2.4 percent of all the adult resident population, or 4,349,817 adults, were on probation, in jail, in prison, or on parole, yielding a rate of 1,734 per 100,000 inhabitants.[5]

In 1990, U.S. prisoners were largely African Americans (46.4 percent), followed by Whites (38.4 percent) and Hispanics (13.3 percent) (see table 3, Appendix). However, in federal institutions, Whites represented the majority of the prison population. American Indians/Alaskan Natives made up the smallest minority in state institutions but outnumbered the Asians/Pacific Islanders in federal institutions. A study in 1990 by The Sentencing Project concluded that nearly one-quarter of African American men in the age-group 20 to 29 was under the jurisdiction of the criminal justice system--in prisons or local jails, on probation, or on parole.[6]

There were more older inmates in state prisons in 1991 than in 1986; 32 percent were more than 35 years old in 1991, whereas

only 26 percent of the inmates were more than 35 years old in 1986. Those under age 35 represented 68 percent of the total in 1991, a decline from 74 percent in 1986 (see table 4, Appendix). In federal prisons, however, inmates under 35 years of age numbered only 48.9 percent in 1991.

Prisoners admitted to correctional institutions in 1989 were older than in 1985, especially in state institutions where statistics regarding age are currently available. Median ages of admission in 1989 were 31 years in federal institutions and 28 years in state institutions.[7] Four years earlier, inmates admitted to state prisons had a median age of 27.

The rate of admissions to state prisons almost tripled between 1977 and 1989. The average annual increase jumped from 5.6 percent between 1977 and 1980 to 15.7 percent between 1986 and 1989, and then dropped to 3.2 percent in 1991 (see table 5, Appendix). The dramatic increases, especially between 1986 and 1989, were because of the increasing number of inmates sentenced for drug offenses.

In surveys conducted in 1986 and in 1991, the changes in societal makeup of state prison inmates varied by no more than 5 percent. Figures for gender and marital status remained about the same. More than 95 percent of state prison inmates were men; about 20 percent were married, more than 50 percent had never married, and about 30 percent were either divorced, separated, or widowed. In federal prisons, however, married inmates ranked the highest in terms of percentages--38 percent of the 1991 total,

followed by unmarried inmates (33 percent), divorced, and separated, or widowed inmates (29 percent).

Ethnic minorities accounted for 65 percent of the 1991 total state prison inmates, an increase of 5 percent over 1986. During the same period, the number of Whites decreased by 5 percent. About 31,300, or 4 percent, of the inmates were aliens, the majority of whom were Hispanic. Mexicans topped the list of Hispanics with 47 percent of the total. Cubans formed the next largest group with 10 percent, followed by Dominicans with 9 percent.

In state prisons, the number of unemployed persons arrested in 1986 was 31 percent of the total, increasing to 33 percent in 1991. In federal prisons, the percentage of persons who were unemployed in the year before their arrest was lower than that in state prisons, amounting to about 25 percent of the 1991 federal total.

The percentage of veterans--those with previous service in the armed forces--among state prison inmates decreased by 4 percent, from 20 percent in 1986 to 16 percent in 1991. State prisons held more inmates with an income of less than $25,000 than did federal prisons (see table 6, Appendix).

General education achievement and aptitude were lower among inmates than among the general population; moreover, disabled individuals were overrepresented in prisons compared with the general population. In 1991, 65 percent of adult state prison inmates lacked high school diplomas; 19 percent had attained less

than an eighth-grade level of education, while 46 percent had attended some high school but had failed to graduate. Only 34 percent of adult state prison inmates were high school graduates--12 percent of these had received some college-level instruction (see table 7, Appendix). By comparison, among the general population aged 25 to 64, 83 percent had completed high school and 23 percent had completed 4 or more years of higher education in 1991.[8]

Federal prison inmates were better educated than state prison inmates. Of the 1991 federal prison population total, 45 percent were high school graduates, and an additional 32 percent had some college-level instruction.

Although comprehensive statistics are unavailable, it is widely believed that between 20 and 40 percent of inmates experience some form of physical or learning disability. It is estimated that the incidence of disabilities among incarcerated individuals is three times that of the general population. Higher rates of disability have been reported among juvenile inmates than among adult inmates, although some of the difference may reflect more thorough testing and evaluation afforded to juveniles. A 1985 survey of administrators of state adult and juvenile facilities found that an average of 28 percent of juvenile offenders and 10 percent of adult inmates manifested some form of disability.[9]

Regionally, state correctional authorities controlled 51 (including the District of Columbia) jurisdictions of state

prisons grouped into four regions: Northeast (9), Midwest (12), South 17 (including the District of Columbia), and West (13). The region with the highest rate of increase in the number of inmates between 1991 and 1992 was the South with 7.5 percent; the Northeast had the lowest rate with 4.8 percent (see table 8, Appendix). Five jurisdictions showed a growth rate of more than 13 percent--led by Texas (18.4 percent) and followed by West Virginia (16.2 percent), New Hampshire (15.9 percent), Idaho (15.5 percent), and Wisconsin (15.4 percent). These rates exceeded those of the total federal and state prisons, which were 12.1 percent and 6.8 percent, respectively. The ten jurisdictions with the largest number of inmates accounted for more than 57.6 percent of the 1992 total of state inmates (see table 9, Appendix).

At the end of 1992, 21 jurisdictions reported overcrowding and thus had their inmates held in local jails.[10] This problem will be aggravated by the expected increase in the number of inmates in the near future. Using the lowest rate of increase--4.8 percent (the rate experienced in the Northeast region)--the number of inmates will exceed 1 million by the year 2000. The current average rate of increase of all state prisons for 1991-91 was 6.8 percent.[11]

The Correctional Education System

Educational programs are offered in about 90 percent of all adult correctional facilities, including those in the federal prison system, the 51 statewide systems, and the larger local

jails. All state and local juvenile correctional facilities housing inmates younger than the compulsory education age--generally 16 years--provide mandatory elementary and secondary education.

Most adult correctional institutions offer four core educational programs: Adult Basic Education (ABE), involving instruction to improve literacy, linguistics, and numeracy skills among the functionally illiterate; secondary General Education Development (GED), or high school equivalency; vocational training; and postsecondary academic programs (see table 10; table 11, Appendix). In addition, some juvenile and adult facilities provide special education services for physically challenged and learning disabled inmates as well as English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction. Many correctional systems also offer some type of life and social skills training to help inmates adjust to the postrelease environment.

A growing trend in federal and state corrections has been the coordination of education and work programs and, in some cases, their integration under a single management authority. Coordination of academic programs, vocational education, and prison work according to the Training, Industries, and Education (TIE) concept has been developed to reduce conflicts between programs, increase the effectiveness of correctional expenditures, and improve services to inmates. The federal prison system took the lead in implementing the TIE concept in 1982, when it established the Division of Industries, Education, and

Vocational Training to oversee both education and prison industries. By 1993, the TIE approach had been accepted in principle by most state correctional systems.

Structure of the Federal System

The Federal Bureau of Prisons (FBP) maintains the largest single correctional education system in the United States, with 84,000 separate course enrollments and an annual budget of $46.5 million in fiscal year (FY) 1991.[12] Administrative responsibility for educational services falls under the Division of Industries, Education, and Vocational Training, which manages prison industries, education, and vocational training in all federal prisons using the TIE approach. Each federal prison has an education department administered by an education supervisor who oversees all mandatory and voluntary education programs at the facility level.

Adult Basic Education (ABE) is the highest priority educational program within the federal prison system. The Crime Control Act of 1990 (P.L. 101-647) directed FBP to have a mandatory functional literacy program for all mentally capable inmates who are not functionally literate. The 1990 Crime Control Act also required non-English-speaking inmates to participate in ESL programs until they achieve an eighth-grade level of proficiency.

Since 1982, the FBP has steadily increased mandatory literacy standards for inmates. Under the mandatory literacy program, all eligible inmates must enroll for 120 days in ABE or

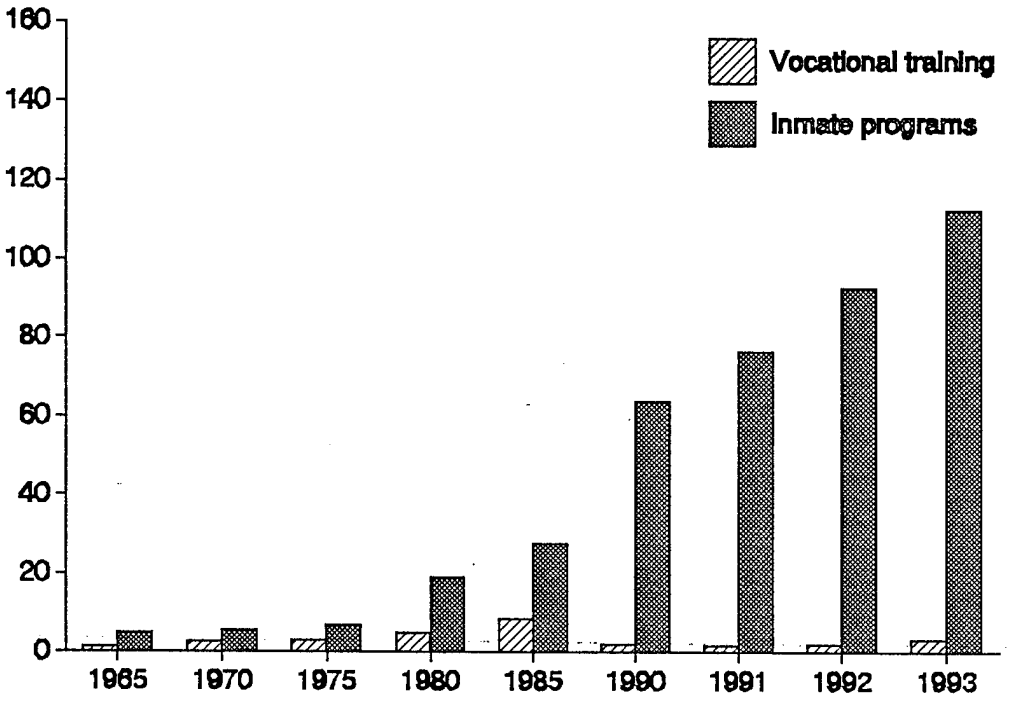
GED preparation courses. As an incentive to participation beyond the mandatory period, inmates must demonstrate reading and computational ability at or above a certain median level on the Stanford Achievement Test in order to advance beyond the entry-level pay grade in Federal Prison Industries, Inc. (Unicor) jobs. The minimum Stanford score was set at the sixth-grade level in 1982, raised to the eighth-grade level in 1986, and to the twelfth-grade, or GED, level in 1991.[13] Learning disabled and special-needs students are exempted from the mandatory twelfth-grade level requirement if they demonstrate a sustained effort to complete their coursework, continue in ABE classes for an extended period, and are recommended for a promotion by their work supervisor.[14]

Federal prisons also offer voluntary programs in postsecondary education, vocational training in over 40 vocational areas, and personal growth and guidance. Some on-the-job vocational training can also be obtained in the higher-skilled work assignments in Unicor and in facility maintenance jobs.

Over the past three decades, spending on inmate educational and recreational programs in federal prisons has increased steadily from approximately $5 million in FY 1965 to about $112 million in FY 1993. Spending on vocational education has remained relatively stable, however, reaching a high of approximately $8 million in FY 1985 and declining to about $2 million in FY 1991. Approximately $3 million was spent on vocational education for

federal prisoners in FY 1993 (see fig. 1).

Figure 1. Federal Bureau of Prisons Expenditures on Inmate Education, Selected Years, 1965-93
(in millions of dollars)



Source: Based on information from U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Digest of Education Statistics, 1993, (Washington: GPO, 1993, 365.

Despite the adoption of mandatory literacy standards in federal prisons, only a minority of eligible federal inmates are earning GEDs or achieving English-language proficiency. A March 1992 audit by the General Accounting Office (GAO) revealed that only 23 percent of the approximately 30,000 inmates without a high school diploma were enrolled in the literacy program. Bureau of Prisons records showed that approximately 9,600 inmates were exempt from the new literacy requirement, 2,397 had dropped out

after the required 120-day enrollment period, 3,300 inmates should have been enrolled in the GED program but were not, and the enrollment status of 6,300 inmates was unknown.[15]

The GAO audit also found evidence of inadequate enforcement by FBP of the twelfth-grade literacy requirement for promotion in Unicor jobs. Only about 39 percent of the FBP prison staff surveyed said that the requirement is checked always or almost always, 24 percent said most of the time, 10 percent said half the time or less, and 27 percent said they had no basis to judge.[16] In two of the three prisons visited by GAO auditors, a significant number of inmate case files examined showed instances of inmates being promoted without fulfilling the literacy requirement.

Finally, GAO also found frequent inaccuracies and omissions in FBP inmate prison education records, particularly with respect to course enrollments, withdrawals, and completions. Only about 36 percent of FBP staff surveyed considered the FBP's database on inmate prison education activities, the Education Data System (EDS), to be accurate to a very great or great extent.[17]

Structure of State Systems

At the state level, correctional education services are provided by a variety of agencies, which differ among the states in size, organizational structure, resources, and location within different state government departments. Preliminary results from a 1993 survey of state correctional education agencies by Daniel Sherman and Michael O'Leary of Pelavin Associates for the

Department of Education showed that 98 percent of state correctional systems offered some type of educational program. The average daily attendance in adult education programs in state correctional facilities among 29 states was approximately 3,800 inmates, representing about 25 percent of the total adult inmate population.[18]

In most states, separate agencies administer juvenile and adult correctional education. A 1990 survey of state correctional education agencies conducted by Thom Gehring of the New York State Division for Youth showed that there were 89 separate agencies administering correctional education in the 50 states and the District of Columbia; these included 38 statewide juvenile agencies, 38 statewide adult agencies, and 13 combined youth/adult agencies.[19]

The majority of statewide correctional education agencies operate under state departments of corrections, whereas only a small minority of correctional education agencies exist within state departments of education. In some states, correctional education agencies are also found within larger "umbrella agencies," such as state departments of criminal justice, youth services, or health and human services. Gehring's survey found that 70 percent of correctional education agencies are under state departments of corrections, 20 percent are under umbrella agencies, and 6 percent are under state education agencies.[20]

Amid the diversity of state correctional education agencies, three generic models of correctional education service providers

have emerged: traditional or decentralized systems, correctional education bureaus, and correctional school districts. All three models of correctional education currently function at the state level.

In decentralized systems, correctional education is provided and administered separately by each facility under the supervision of the facility warden. In place since the late 18th century, this method is the oldest organizational model of correctional education. It tends to confer a high degree of authority over educational decision making to the institutional administrator and places educational staff in a subordinate position in the institutional chain of command. Gehring's survey found 21 decentralized organizations at the state level, of which 13 were youth organizations, 6 were adult organizations, and 2 were combined youth/adult systems.[21]

The most common model of correctional education service delivery organization is the correctional education bureau, centralized in a state correctional education office. In a bureau, a state director of correctional education has authority to make recommendations on matters of education policy, and educational and institutional administrators may have parallel authority in educational decision making. In 1990, there were 50 state bureaus (including 2 in the District of Columbia), of which 20 were youth organizations, 22 were adult organizations, and 8 were combined youth/adult systems.[22]

Correctional school districts are another type of

centralized correctional education delivery system. Unlike most correctional education bureaus, they are recognized by state departments of education as Local Education Agencies (LEAs) based on staff qualifications, high levels of instructional quality, and adherence to state education laws and regulations.[23] As LEAs, correctional school districts are eligible to receive federal and state grants earmarked for LEA use directly from state education agencies, whereas bureaus, when eligible, must acquire such funds indirectly from the mainstream LEAs in which their correctional schools are located. Another important advantage of LEA status for correctional school districts is that it makes available sources of federal and state funding beyond those specifically set aside for correctional education. This expanded access to federal funding can be important for improving educational services for inmate subpopulations such as minors, young adults, women, disabled, and non-English speakers. In 1990, there were 18 state correctional school districts, of which 6 were youth districts, 9 were adult districts, and 3 were combined youth/adult districts.[24]

The use of contracted education services varies widely among state correctional agencies. In 1990, several state agencies contracted out 100 percent of their correctional education services; however, most state agencies--approximately two thirds--contracted out less than 10 percent of their educational services (see table 12, Appendix).[25] Among the minority of agencies that used more than 10 percent of their education

budgets for contracting, the average budgeted about 55 percent for contract services.[26] Although most state agencies contract to some extent, the average proportion of education funds expended on outside providers is only about one-tenth of total correctional education budgets. This suggests that contracting is important for certain types of educational programs, such as vocational training and postsecondary academic instruction, but that the majority of correctional education services are being administered directly by the public sector.

Juvenile Correctional Education

In 1992, all statewide juvenile correctional systems offered elementary and secondary instruction at residential facilities, and over 98 percent of the approximately 54,000 juveniles incarcerated in state facilities were receiving educational services.[27] In states reporting on the general academic performance of incarcerated juveniles, 16 percent of residents performed at the third-grade level or below, 25 percent performed at the fourth- and fifth-grade level, 41 percent performed at the seventh- and eighth-grade level, and 23 percent performed at the ninth- through twelfth-grade level. Only 7 percent of incarcerated juveniles performed above the twelfth-grade level.[28]

In addition to standard elementary and secondary education programs, state-incarcerated juveniles were enrolled in General Education Development (GED) preparation classes, vocational education programs, life and social skills training, special

education classes, and postsecondary coursework. In 1992, approximately 88 percent of juveniles were enrolled in standard elementary and secondary education classes, 12 percent attended GED preparation courses, 66 percent had vocational education classes, 74 percent received life and social skills training, 26 percent received special education services, and 9 percent received postsecondary-level instruction.[29]

Adult Basic and Secondary Education

Most academic programs in adult correctional facilities provide instruction in Adult Basic Education (ABE) and General Education Development (GED). In 1992, 88 percent of state adult correctional facilities among 15 states provided ABE and GED instruction. Approximately half of the states surveyed had mandatory literacy programs. In addition to the standard programs, approximately 54 percent of state facilities provided English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction.[30]

Data from four states reporting on general academic performance showed that 20 percent of state inmates in educational programs performed at the fifth-grade level or below, 36 percent performed at the sixth- through eighth-grade level, 28 percent performed at the ninth- through twelfth-grade level, and 12 percent performed above the twelfth-grade level.[31] The state average for daily attendance in ABE was 1,358 inmates, representing 9 percent of the total adult prison population and 36 percent of inmates enrolled in educational programs. The average statewide daily attendance in GED instruction was 950

inmates, representing 6 percent of the total adult inmate population and 25 percent of inmate education enrollments. The average rate of completion for inmates in GED programs was 69 percent. Daily attendance in ESL instruction statewide averaged 241 inmates, representing approximately 2 percent of the adult inmate population and 6 percent of inmates enrolled in educational programs.[32]

Vocational Education

The main objective of vocational education in correctional facilities has been to reduce the probability of recidivism by improving the employability of the inmate upon release. Vocational training has also been used to prepare inmates for prison work programs and, in some instances, is incorporated into on-the-job training. The availability and quality of vocational programs vary widely, however, from state to state. In many cases, vocational training has been integrated with prison industry programs and facility maintenance activities in order to defer costs.

Because of the relatively high capital costs of vocational training compared with other forms of education, the low levels of public support for spending on prisoner rehabilitation, and the stricter fiscal constraints on state correctional budgets, states have been increasingly hard-pressed to balance the individual vocational and academic needs of inmates with cost recovery and facility maintenance objectives. Within this context, the expanding use of the TIE approach represents an

effort by states to compromise among competing inmate, institutional, and societal needs.

Despite statewide efforts to improve the quality and availability of vocational programs through TIE, the provision of vocational education services in correctional facilities has neither kept pace with the rapid increase in the correctional population nor expanded as quickly as other forms of education. In 1992, the average daily attendance in vocational education programs in adult correctional systems among 25 states was 1,102 inmates per state, representing about 7 percent of the total adult inmate population and 29 percent of those in education programs.[33] Results of a 1983 survey showed an average state enrollment of 877 inmates, representing 13 percent of the adult inmate population at the time.[34] Enrollment of juvenile inmates in prevocational and vocational programs is much higher than that for adults, averaging approximately 60 percent in state juvenile facilities.[35]

The figures for adults indicate that, although the absolute number of those enrolled in vocational programs may have increased, no significant change in the percentage of attendance at vocational instruction has taken place in the past decade. If, as some analysts suggest, as much as 50 percent of adult inmates could potentially benefit from vocational instruction, then a significant and growing proportion of the eligible adult correctional population is failing to receive such services.[36]

Vocational education programs in prisons have traditionally

experienced a variety of special problems. These include inadequate funding; insufficient recruitment, training, and retention of qualified vocational instructors; lack of adequate facilities and equipment; lack of incentives for prisoner participation; low standards of instructional quality; lack of programs relevant to job market opportunities; inadequate vocational placement for inmates; and sex discrimination in course offerings.[37]

Some of the problems encountered in developing vocational education programs in correctional facilities, such as inadequate funding, difficulty in recruiting qualified instructors, and low standards of instructional quality, are common to all forms of correctional education. Many states are unable or unwilling to pay the higher salaries needed to attract quality instructors to the difficult and sometimes dangerous correctional environment. Other problems, such as the lack or poor quality of equipment and instructional materials, as well as insufficient incentives for inmate participation, are common to most public-sector vocational education programs but are aggravated in the correctional environment by frequent competition between vocational education and prison industry programs.

Some of the problems related to the competition between prison industries and vocational education have been addressed through the TIE approach. In several states, joint ventures between prison industries and vocational programs have reduced costs by sharing equipment and raw materials and by reinvesting

industry profits in vocational instruction.[38] Linking prison industry salaries to educational achievement also tends to improve inmate participation. Some states, for example, Ohio and New York, have adopted the federal model of integrating educational and industry programs under a single management and financing umbrella in order to better coordinate the two types of activities.[39]

Sex equity problems have also been more difficult to resolve in vocational programs than in other types of programs because the obligation to offer women equal access to instruction in nontraditional occupations clashes with cost-effectiveness goals. In response to a wave of class-action suits by incarcerated women during the 1980s, more than a dozen states were forced under court order to reduce the disparity in the type and extent of vocational programs available to male and female inmates. These states were ordered to upgrade existing programs and to increase training in nontraditional occupations for women.[40]

Postsecondary Education

Postsecondary education programs for inmates have expanded steadily since the first college program was established in 1953. In 1989, approximately 27,000 inmates, representing almost 9 percent of the total state and federal prison population, were receiving some form of postsecondary instruction.[41] In 1992, postsecondary programs were available in approximately 90 percent of state correctional systems, with college-level instruction being offered in 51 percent of the adult facilities.[42]

Approximately 95 percent of inmates who received postsecondary instruction were enrolled in programs that were primarily vocational in nature.

Postsecondary programs were the most frequently contracted correctional education service, with community colleges directly administering two-thirds of all programs. In 1989, the overwhelming majority of these classes--83.3 percent--were held inside prisons; only 13.5 percent were offered through correspondence courses, telecourses, or other electronic media.[43]

Inmate participation in college-level programs has become heavily dependent on federal funding from the Pell Grant program. Although firm statistics are not available, the Department of Education estimates that the number of inmates receiving Pell Grant awards nationally has increased steadily and in 1991 represented approximately 1 percent of all Pell Grant awards.[44]

Special Education

Special education programs for learning disabled and physically challenged inmates have recently been introduced into the standard correctional education curricula. Special education is provided primarily in juvenile systems receiving federal assistance under Chapter 1 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and several sections of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Special education programs remain relatively rare in adult facilities, where most inmates are over the 21-year age limit for Chapter 1 and IDEA services.

In 14 states that reported on the incidence of disabilities among juvenile inmates in 1992, approximately 26 percent of the juvenile correctional population was identified as eligible to receive special education. Of these, 99 percent of eligible juvenile inmates were reported to be receiving special education services.[45] Among 10 adult state systems that reported on the incidence of disabilities, approximately 3 percent of all inmates and 13 percent of those receiving educational services were identified as eligible to receive special education services. Only about 20 percent of adult inmates identified in need of special instruction were actually enrolled in special education classes.[46] The provision of special education services among adult inmates appears to have expanded slowly, if at all, since 1985, when approximately 10 percent of eligible adults were reported receiving special instruction.[47]

Life and Social Skills Training

Most juvenile and adult correctional facilities offer some courses in life and social skills. In 1992, approximately 90 percent of statewide adult correctional systems and nearly all juvenile systems offered such classes to inmates. Training was provided to facilitate the inmates' adjustment to the postrelease environment. Coursework included such diverse subjects as health and nutrition, AIDS education, substance abuse prevention, consumer and personal finance, legal education, human interactions, and job searching and retention skills.

Problems in Correctional Education

Historically, correctional education has faced various administrative challenges from the prison environment. Within prisons, competition from custodial, security, treatment, and cost-recovery goals often hampers the ability of educational programs to fully realize their potential.

Correctional educators have noted several common administrative obstacles to effective instruction, such as conflicting scheduling of prison work and educational programs, greater monetary incentives for prison work than for education, subtraction of classroom hours from inmates' recreational time, frequent lockdowns, and high transfer rates. These conflicts are generally believed to stem from the differing roles and values of the various groups that compose prison society, the function of prisons in the United States--in which priority is placed on isolation and punishment over rehabilitation--and the scarcity of public-sector funding for correctional facilities.[48] Although such problems are believed to be widespread, little systematic research has been undertaken on the relationship between primary institutional operations and educational service delivery.

Federal Support for Correctional Education

Federal Legislation Affecting Correctional Education

Federal government support for state-level correctional education began in the mid-1960s under the 1965 amendments to the Manpower and Training Act, which designated secondary education and vocational training in prisons as a priority area. Since that time, most federal support for correctional education at the

state level has been provided through state allotments for broad categories of education programs. These allotments generally allow states to determine what proportion of funds, if any, will be expended on adult and juvenile correctional education programs.

Since the 1960s, state-level adult correctional education has been funded in part by legislation dealing with state-administered vocational education programs, including subsections of the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA), formerly the Comprehensive Education and Training Act, and, more recently, Sections 225 and 417 of the Carl B. Perkins Vocational Education Act, as amended in 1990. Funding for adult correctional education is also available through the Adult Education Act, Chapter 1 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), and various subsections of the Higher Education Act, such as the Pell Grant program. In 1992, the average state grant for adult correctional education provided under the Perkins Act among 33 states surveyed was approximately $175,000; the average state grant provided under the Adult Education Act among 29 states was approximately $235,000; and the average state grant under Chapter 1 among 37 states was about $329,000. Accurate data for the average amount of Pell Grant awards per state were unavailable. The total amount of funding from federal sources among 35 state adult correctional agencies averaged $857,000 per state.[49]

The most important federal laws affecting juvenile correctional education have been Chapter 1 of the Elementary and

Secondary Education Act (ESEA); the Neglected or Delinquent program--known as the "N or D" program; Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)--formerly the Education of the Handicapped Act; and the Perkins Act. The "N or D" program under ESEA Chapter 1 provided $36 million in 1991 for services to youths under 18 who lacked a high school diploma and were engaged in correctional education programs in state-operated juvenile and adult correctional facilities. About 18,000 youths, or about half the eligible population in facilities receiving Chapter 1 funds, were receiving "N or D" services, and approximately 12,000 disabled youths in correctional facilities were served by IDEA funds.[50]

In 1992, the average state grant for juvenile correctional agencies under Chapter 1 among 30 states surveyed was $586,000 per state, while the average Perkins Act grant was $103,000 among 24 states. Information on the average IDEA and Pell Grant funding per state was unavailable. The amount of funding from all federal sources for juvenile correctional agencies among 27 states averaged $807,103 per state.[51]

Approximately 85 percent of the cost of correctional education programs is borne by the states, funded primarily through conventional line items in Department of Corrections annual budgets; 15 percent is covered by a variety of federal sources, of which 24 percent is derived from Perkins Act funding.[52] The average Perkins Act state grant was approximately $175,000 in 1992.

Federal legislation governing the use of federal funds to finance correctional education differs for adults and for juveniles. Adult correctional education laws grant the states significant discretionary authority over the distribution of federal funds. For incarcerated juveniles, however, federal law guarantees equal access to state educational services.[53] As a result, the flow of federal funds for correctional education is more stable and proportionally much higher for juvenile inmates than it is for adult inmates. In 1992, the average amount of federal expenditure on juvenile correctional education was approximately $800 per inmate per year; the corresponding level of federal spending on adult correctional education was approximately $55 per inmate per year, or about 7 percent of federal spending on juveniles.[54]

Spending from all sources on juvenile correctional education is also proportionally much higher than for adults. The higher level of expenditure per inmate on juveniles reflects several differences between juvenile and adult correctional education: higher percentages of enrollment in educational programs among juvenile inmates, corresponding to the greater applicability of compulsory education requirements for juveniles; more frequent provision of high-cost services to juveniles, especially vocational and special education; year-round enrollment of juveniles in several educational programs simultaneously so that juveniles spend more hours per week in classrooms than adults; and the priority given to juvenile programs in state and federal

funding of correctional education.

The Perkins Act Correctional Set-Aside

A major innovation in federal support for correctional education began in 1984, when the Perkins Act mandated a set-aside of 1 percent of basic state grants for programs for criminal offenders in correctional institutions. Congress approved this provision of the act with the intention of expanding federal support for adult and juvenile correctional education to all states and increasing the size of allocations to states that were already receiving Perkins grants.

Section 225 of the 1990 Perkins Act requires state boards of vocational education to distribute the set-aside to one or more designated state corrections education agencies. Special consideration in the use of grants is given for providing services to offenders soon to be released, establishing programs in facilities without such programs, expanding programs for women, and improving equipment and instructional materials.[55] The total amount of correctional set-aside funds in FY 1993 was approximately $10 million.[56] Section 102(c) of the 1990 Perkins Act also contains a "hold harmless" provision, establishing a floor level of expenditures on corrections education and other programs at FY 1990 levels.

In addition to the 1 percent set-aside, several other sections of the Perkins Act are potential sources of federal funding for correctional education. Among the most important are Section 417, which authorizes the expenditure of approximately $2

million on national demonstration programs for federal correctional institutions;[57] Section 201, which endorses spending on professional development programs for corrections educators[58]; Section 222, which authorizes spending on programs to eliminate sex bias and stereotyping in the provision of secondary and postsecondary education[59]; Section 343, which allows spending on technical education programs[60]; Section 418, which endorses dropout prevention programs[61]; and Section 420, which authorizes spending on demonstration projects for the integration of vocational and academic learning.[62]

Impact of the Perkins Act on Correctional Education

Available survey data indicate that the Perkins Act has had a significant positive impact on the implementation and administration of vocational education programs in state correctional facilities. Among 31 statewide adult correctional agencies that reported on their receipt of Perkins funds in 1992, approximately 13 percent of adult inmates were being reached by the 1 percent set-aside. Statewide juvenile correctional agencies that reported on their receipt of Perkins set-aside funds estimated that 60 percent of juvenile residents had been assisted by the Perkins Act. Although data on the use funds was unavailable, a 1987 survey suggests that most state correctional agencies used Perkins money to purchase computers and to upgrade instructional materials.[63]

State correctional administrators concur, however, that the Perkins Act could be improved substantially if several changes

were made. Such changes include clarifying state use of funds; restoring previous set-asides for adult, disabled, and disadvantaged inmates; and requiring each state vocational education board to include a corrections representative in their deliberations.

When asked to evaluate the effects of eight major aspects of the 1990 Perkins Act--as compared with earlier versions of the act--on the delivery of vocational education services, state directors of adult correctional education programs rated five aspects as negative, one aspect as positive, and two provisions as having no effect. Among those provisions of the act considered negative were the removal of previously established set-asides for adult, disabled, and disadvantaged inmates; new allocation rules for funding LEAs; the ambiguity of the "hold harmless" provision; and the lack of a mandate to include correctional personnel on state vocational education boards. The only change in the Perkins Act considered positive was its new emphasis on integrating vocational and academic education. New requirements for annual statewide program evaluations and implementation of performance standards were considered to have no significant impact on educational service delivery.[64]

Echoing the views of state correctional administrators, some analysts have argued that permissive language in the Perkins Act regarding state use of grant funds has reduced the potential positive impact of the act with respect to correctional education.[65] They assert that under current allocation rules,

some states have been able to interpret the 1 percent set-aside as a ceiling on spending instead of as a minimum to be used in conjunction with other sections of the Perkins Act, as was originally intended by Congress. As a result, there has been a more even distribution of resources nationwide because all states are now obliged to spend 1 percent of their Perkins grants on correctional education. However, there has been a net loss of funds for correctional systems in those states that misinterpreted the law or opted to divert funds to other programs by allotting only the set-aside to corrections.[66] In some of these states, the "hold harmless" provision has been interpreted narrowly as applying only to the 1 percent set-aside, while funding from other sections of the act applicable to correctional education has been reduced.[67]

Correctional administrators believe the diversion of funds to noncorrectional programs could be prevented if the Perkins Act were to become more explicit with respect to its funding of correctional education. This could be achieved by adding more set-asides for correctional populations. Corrections officials also argue for the restoration of their seat on state vocational education boards, as mandated in the original Perkins Act.[68]

Future Challenges to Correctional Education

Demographics on correctional facilities and U.S. economic trends point to unprecedented challenges for the future of correctional education. Current and probable future characteristics of the prison population, most notably the

overrepresentation of low-income minorities, the functionally illiterate, and the disabled, will, in conjunction with growing skill requirements of the postindustrial economy, generate strenuous new demands on prison education programs. An estimated 40 percent of inmates lack a consistent employment history before their incarceration, indicating a lack of skills needed to acquire and maintain employment.

Coinciding with the transformation of the job market, U.S. prisons in the 1990s have become receptacles for the groups that are the least prepared to compete in the postindustrial economy, namely, young African American and Hispanic males, high school dropouts, and the learning disabled. Because of their low median levels of education, these groups are expected to be the least competitive job seekers in the emerging job market.[69]

Between now and the end of the century, projections of occupational structure show a marked increase in the average skill levels of the U.S. workforce. According to a 1987 study by the Hudson Institute and the Department of Labor, new job creation will occur primarily in medium- and high-skilled occupations requiring a high school diploma and some postsecondary instruction.[70] Of all the new jobs created over the 1984-2000 period, more than half will require some education beyond high school, and almost all will be filled by college graduates. The median number of years of education required for the new jobs created between 1984 and 2000 will be 13.5, compared with 12.8 for the workforce in 1984 (see table 13, Appendix).[71]

In comparison, the number of low-skilled jobs and jobs in traditional industrial occupations will grow slowly or will even decline. There will be practically no job growth for the unskilled. Jobs with low language-skill ratings, such as machine setters and manual labor occupations, will decline by more than 7 percent between 1984 and 2000.[72] Low- to medium-skill service-sector jobs will increase, but these jobs will require workers to read and understand directions, add and subtract, and speak and think clearly.

To improve their cognitive abilities and meet the higher standards for employability, the current generation of prisoners will require a combination of basic life-skills training, academic instruction, and relevant work-based vocational education. New demands will be placed on state and federal correctional facilities to incorporate multicultural education approaches, ESL instruction, and vocational assessment and labor market analysis into the prison curriculum.[73]

Conclusion

During the past decade, the U.S. state and federal prison population has doubled, and the number of Americans under some form of correctional supervision has exceeded 4.3 million, or about 2.4 percent of the adult population. At current growth rates, the federal and state prison population will exceed 1 million inmates by the end of the decade. Education services have expanded in most correctional systems during the past 10 years, although not sufficiently to keep pace with the increasing number

of adult inmates. Approximately 25 percent of the adult prison population is receiving some form of educational service, and approximately 7 percent of the overall population is enrolled in vocational education programs. Despite the introduction of new programs, a significant and growing proportion of eligible inmates is not receiving educational services. Moreover, some forms of vocational instruction risk becoming obsolete because of changing occupational patterns and correctional demographics.

State and federal prisons have developed new organizational models and adopted new strategies for coordinating educational and cost-recovery objectives. The integration of prison work and educational programs in federal and some state prison systems has helped reduce conflicts within institutions and generated funding for upgrading educational services. At the same time, mandatory literacy standards have been raised, and standards for instructional quality have been tightened in a growing number of facilities classified as Local Education Agencies.

Federal support for prison education has increased during the past decade. Several problems persist, however. Problems include inadequate funding, lack of federal leadership, lack of coordination in the disbursement of federal funds, and vagueness in the federal law mandating set-asides for adult correctional education.

Correctional demographics and changes in the U.S. occupational structure present new challenges for correctional education systems seeking to produce employable former inmates.

The overrepresentation of disadvantaged individuals and high school dropouts in state correctional facilities will require prisons to introduce innovative approaches to correctional education. At the same time, skill levels will need to be increased, and employability and life-skills training will need to be added to vocational curricula. Federal and state prisons seeking to have a positive effect on the life chances of inmates and to contribute to reducing rates of recidivism will need to experiment with new pedagogical and administrative approaches to education in a very restrictive environment.

Appendix: Tables

List of Tables

Table 1. Total Number of Prisoners and Annual Growth Rate of Prison Population, 1980-92

Year[1]	Number	Annual Growth Rate[2]
1980	329,821	n.a.
1981	369,930	12.2
1982	413,806	11.9
1983	436,855	5.6
1984	462,002	5.8
1985	502,752	8.8
1986	545,378	8.5
1987	585,292	7.3
1988	631,990	8.0
1989	712,967	12.8
1990	773,124	8.4
1991	824,133	6.6
1992	883,593	7.2

[1] As of December 31.
[2] In percentages.

n.a.--not applicable.

Source: Based on information from U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Prisoners in 1992, NCJ-141874, Washington, May 1993, 1.

Table 2. Annual Change in Number of Sentenced Prisoners in Federal and State Prisons, 1987-92

Year	Federal		State	
	Change	Percentage	Change	Percentage
1987	2,992	8.2	35,601	7.4
1988	2,584	6.5	42,207	8.1
1989	5,061	12.0	70,493	12.5
1990	3,235	6.9	54,590	8.7
1991	6,293	12.5	43,826	6.4
1992	9,010	15.9	48,336	6.6

Source: Based on information from U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Prisoners in 1992, NCJ-141874, Washington, May 1993, 3.

Table 3. Prisoners by Ethnic Group in Federal and State Prisons, 1990[1]

Ethnic Group	Federal		State		Total	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
White	25,553	45.0	249,376	37.9	274,929	38.4
African American	15,597	27.4	316,283	48.0	331,880	46.4
Hispanic	14,346	25.2	81,152	12.3	95,498	13.3
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	864	1.5	5,607	0.9	6,471	1.0
Asian/Pacific Islander	461	0.8	6,410	1.0	6,871	0.9
TOTAL[2]	56,821	100.0	658,828	100.0	715,649	100.0

[1] As of June 29, 1990.
[2] Figures may not add to totals because of rounding.

Source: Based on information from Louis W. Jankowski, Correctional Populations in the United States, 1990, NCJ-134946 Washington, U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, July 1992, 50.

Table 4. State Prison Inmates by Age-Group, 1986 and 1991
(in percentages)

Age-Group	1986	1991
17 or younger	1	1
18-24	27	21
25-34	46	46
35-44	19	23
45-54	5	7
55 or older	2	2
TOTAL	100	100

Source: Based on information from U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Survey of State Prison Inmates, 1991, NCJ-136949, Washington, March 1993, 3.

Table 5. Number and Average Annual Increase of Inmates Admitted to State Prisons, 1977-91

Year	Number	Average Annual Increase*
1977	135,526	n.a.
1980	159,288	5.6
1983	221,180	11.6
1986	273,402	7.3
1989	423,897	15.7
1991	466,285	3.2

n.a.--not applicable.
*In percentages.

Source: Based on information from U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Survey of State Prison Inmates, 1991, NCJ-136949, Washington, March 1993, 3.

Table 6. Federal and State Inmates by Income Level in Year Before Arrest, 1991
(in percentages)

Income Level	Federal	State
No income	3	3
Less than $3,000	19	12
$3,000 - $9,999	30	23
$10,000 - $24,999	33	35
Over $25,000	15	27
TOTAL	100	100

Source: Based on information from U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Selected Results from the 1991 Federal and State Surveys, Washington (forthcoming).

Table 7. Federal and State Inmates by Level of Education, 1986 and 1991
(in percentages)

Level of Education	State 1986	State 1991	Federal 1991
Less than eighth-grade	21	19	9
Some high school	51	46	14
High school graduate	18	22	45
Some college or more	11	12	32
TOTAL*	100	100	100

*Figures may not add to totals because of rounding.

Source: Based on information from U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Survey of State Prison Inmates, 1991, NCJ-136949, Washington, March 1993, 3.

Table 8. Number and Annual Growth Rate of Inmates in State Prisons by Region, 1991 and 1992

Region	1991	1992	Annual Growth Rate*
Northeast	131,866	138,156	4.8
Midwest	155,917	166,339	6.7
South	301,866	324,454	7.5
West	162,876	174,385	7.1
United States	752,525	803,334	6.8

*In percentages.

Source: Based on information from U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Prisoners in 1992, NCJ-141874, Washington, May 1993, 2.

Table 9. Jurisdictions Having the Largest Number of Inmates, 1992

Jurisdiction	Region	Number of Inmates	Percentage of Total State Inmates
California	West	109,496	13.6
New York	Northeast	61,736	7.7
Texas	South	61,178	7.6
Florida	-do-	48,302	6.0
Michigan	-do-	39,019	4.9
Ohio	-do-	38,378	4.8
Illinois	Midwest	31,640	3.9
Georgia	South	25,290	3.2
Pennsylvania	Northeast	24,974	3.1
New Jersey	-do-	22,653	2.8
TOTAL		462,666	57.6

Source: Based on information from U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Prisoners in 1992, NCJ-141874, Washington, May 1993, 4.

Table 10. Institutions Offering Various Educational Programs by Type of Correctional System, 1987
(in percentages)

Educational Program	Juvenile Systems	Adult Systems	Consolidated Systems
Adult Basic Education	0	84	62
Chapter I	80	35	41
Voluntary literacy	0	56	60
Mandatory literacy	0	28	7
Secondary vocational	62	60	34
Postsecondary vocational	6	26	48
General Education Development preparation	83	83	85
Secondary academic	82	36	60
Postsecondary academic	2	39	42
Apprenticeship	1	25	17

Source: Based on information from Lee Norton and Brian Simms, The Status of Correctional Education in the United States: A Report of the 1987 Annual Survey of State Directors of Correctional Education, Columbus, National Center for Research in Vocational Education, Ohio State University, 1988.

Table 11. Inmates Enrolled in Various Educational Programs by Type of Correctional System, 1987
(in percentages)

Educational Program	Juvenile Systems	Adult Systems	Consolidated Systems
Adult Basic Education	0	11	8
Chapter 1	60	3	3
Voluntary literacy	0	4	5
Secondary vocational	60	8	9
Postsecondary vocational	n.a.	4	9
General Education Development preparation	24	9	10
Secondary academic	94	6	12
Postsecondary academic	n.a.	5	7

n.a.--not available.

Source: Based on information from Lee Norton and Brian Simms, The Status of Correctional Education in the United States: A Report to the 1987 Annual Survey of State Directors of Correctional Education, Columbus: National Center for Research in Vocational Education, Ohio State University, 1988.

Table 12. Correctional Education Budget Directed to Contract Service Providers by Type of Correctional System, 1990
(in percentages)

Type of Correctional System	0	"Small" Percentage 1 or less	2 to 5	6 to 10	More than 10	Total
Juvenile	10	4 5	7	1	10	37
Adult	4	3 6	4	7	14	38
Consolidated	1	2 0	0	1	8	12
TOTAL	15	9 11	11	9	32	87

Source: Based on information from Thom Gehring, "Results of a Nationwide Survey: Correctional Education Organizational Structure Trends," Journal of Correctional Education, 41, No. 4, December 1990, 180.

Table 13. New Jobs Created According to Level of Education, 1984 and 2000
(in percentages)

Level of Education	1984	2000
8 years or less	6	4
1-3 years of high school	12	10
4 years of high school	40	35
1-3 years of college	20	22
4 years of college or more	22	30
TOTAL*	100	100
Median years of school	12.8	13.5

* Figures may not add to totals because of rounding.

Source: Based on information from Hudson Institute, Workforce 2000: Work and Workers for the Twenty-First Century, Indianapolis, 1987.

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