Can prisons work? The prisoner as object and subject in modern corrections by Stephen Duguid. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000. 364.6 DUG

The author argues that the most effective change to prisoners occurs “when directed by ‘outsiders’ focusing on education rather than therapy or coercion … [T]hrough education programs prisons can provide for a more ‘natural,’ ‘organic,’ or ‘authentic’ process of self-transformation through empowerment, communication of values, and the formation of new interests.” (p. ix)

Community safety and recidivism in Australia: breaking the cycle of reoffending to produce safer communities through vocational training by Susanne Bahn. Maleny, Qld: eContent Management, 2011. [article] DOC 2011-054

“Research has shown that prisoner training and education can successfully address recidivism rates. Therefore, the cost of incarceration is reduced whilst the level of community safety is increased. However, Australian Vocational Education Training (VET) delivery in prisons requires improvement and a greater emphasis on holistic support from community groups is essential for successful reintegration.” – Abstract.


The countries covered in this overview of international practice are Australia (“Policy and cultural issues in Australian prison education” by Bob Semmens), Canada, China, England and Wales, France, Germany, Latvia, the Netherlands, Poland, Sweden and the United States. As the editor explains in the Introduction, education should be “an integrated part of penal practice”.


“Educating our [US] prisoners has proven to be the most effective and the least costly answer to reducing recidivism – and if we can reduce recidivism by even a modest 10% we can reduce our national and states’ budgets by $60 billion to $70 billion every year! We can reduce crime significantly and make our communities safer.” – Back cover.

note: The text of this 372-page book concludes at p. 102. The rest of the book, with the exception of some short statistical appendices, comprises listings of courses offered in the US.


This book, written by experienced correctional education instructors, identifies issues, problems and possible solutions associated with the education and training of juvenile and adult prisoners.

Formative assessment in adult literacy, language and numeracy by Jay Derrick, Kathryn Ecclestone and Judith Gawn. Leicester, UK: National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE), 2009. 374.1 DER

“This book provides practical ideas for teachers of adult literacy, language and numeracy in their day to day work of lesson preparation, teaching and assessment. Relevant for all levels and contexts, it focuses on basic principles of student-centred learning, teaching and assessment that put the goal of student autonomy at the heart of the process.” – Back cover.


The author examines the connections between Antonio Gramsci and Paulo Freire, two of the major twentieth-century thinkers on culture and education.

In the borderlands: learning to teach in prisons and alternative settings edited by Randall Wright. 3rd ed. San Bernadino, Calif: California State University. San Bernadino, 2008. 365.66 INT

“These essays illustrate the accumulated practical wisdom of teachers. In each chapter the authors share what they have learned through years of experience teaching ‘inside.’ Especially valuable to new educators, at the heart of their stories is their struggle to shape a professional identity behind bars, in the contested borderlands.” – Publisher’s website.


The report finds that although the department, in its rehabilitation of prisoners, addresses their “immediate health and welfare concerns … it does not formally assess the education and work needs of all prisoners.” (p. 2). The Audit Office makes a number of recommendations under the broad headings of “defining and measuring success”, “identifying risks and needs”, “access to programs and services” and “working with other agencies to improve reintegration.”

“Beginning in 1997, Inside-Out has been creating opportunities for social change through transformative education, involving individuals inside and outside of correctional facilities working together through dialogue and collaborative problem solving in classrooms behind prison walls.” – p. 134.


“Prison(er) education comprises key essays by leading prison education practitioners, academics and prisoners, including new work on how to evaluate the ‘success’ of education within prison by Dr. Ray Pawson of Leeds University, and Stephen Duguid of Simon Fraser University, Canada.” – Back cover.


“The chapters analyse some of the key features of imprisonment throughout Europe today, including the political, social and economic forces shaping prison policy and practice. Authors explore how people in prison are treated and portrayed and what future imprisonment should look like in terms of policy, population size, prison conditions and most importantly, its use.” – Back cover.


“The Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program brings campus-enrolled and incarcerated students together as classmates in postsecondary courses built around dialogue, collaboration, and experiential learning. Contributors to this book consider the broader lessons that Inside-Out provides for community-based learning praxis, prison education and postsecondary teaching in general, both on campus and in community settings.” – Publisher website.

Vocational education and training for adult prisoners and offenders in Australia: research readings edited by Susan Dawe. Adelaide: NCVER, 2007. 364.6 VOC

This book contains two sections, the first, comprising five chapters, looks at Australian and international research on the education of adult prisoners; one of the chapters, “Should education and vocational training be compulsory in corrections?” is written by Peter de Graaff, of the Teachers Federation. The six chapters in the second half of the book examine the progress made by jurisdictions in implementing the National Strategy for Vocational Education and Training for Adult Prisoners and Offenders in Australia.