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The impact of teacher leadership traits and modeling on offender self-efficacy: A case study

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The Impact of Teacher Leadership Traits and Modeling
On Offender Self-Efficacy: A Case Study

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Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
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According to Bo Lozoff (1985), a lifer who has found his own way of doing time, prison systems “throughout the world are generally ugly, barbaric, counterproductive, and insane.” He has been directing a Buddhist based ministry for some time from the confines of his incarceration and wrote a book addressing the ways imprisoned souls can discover freedom within their selves through truthful meditation, yoga, and sharing. “I think we’d all love to stop lying to ourselves, screwing things up, and feeling vaguely incomplete, so this is what the book is about.”

This study is dedicated to all the inmate tutors and students who have passed through room 841, Serenity Correctional Center since I began teaching here in August of 2006. In essence, I have written about the way they have transformed my world view and challenged me to become a more effective teacher. Thanks, guys.
Acknowledgements

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I’d also like to acknowledge my husband, Christopher Winn Smith, who supported this whim of mine as he does every other single thing, and gave me much to mull over as I’ve observed him pursue his own adult educational goals. In addition, I’d like to thank all my anonymous co-workers who freely and enthusiastically participated in not only answering my questions, but providing hours of stories and running commentary on the daily goings-on in this small prison school.
Table of Contents

Dedication……………………………………………………………………………ii
Acknowledgements…………………………………………………………………iii

Table of Contents……………………………………………………………iv

Abstract………………………………………………………………………………v

Introduction……………………………………………………………………………1
  Purpose of study………………………………………………………………………2
  Background……………………………………………………………………………3
  Education, behavior modeling, and self-efficacy…………………………………10
Definitions………………………………………………………………………………13

Literature Review ………………………………………………………………………15
  • Social Cognitive Theory……………………………………………………………15
  Criminal Behavior and Change………………………………………………………17
  Teachers as Leaders……………………………………………………………………22
  Reentry…………………………………………………………………………………24
  Characteristics of successful education programs
  and educators………………………………………………………………………………25
  Prison educators………………………………………………………………………26

Research Methodology………………………………………………………………30
Description of the sample……………………………………………………………36
Limitations………………………………………………………………………………36
Conclusion and Data Analysis………………………………………………………39
Classroom management………………………………………………………………39
Leadership Qualities Observed……………………………………………………41
References………………………………………………………………………………50
Appendix I………………………………………………………………………………59

List of Figures
  Figure 1 – Second Chance Act/ Appropriations………………………………6
  Figure 2 – Initiatives in the Federal Bureau of Prisons…………………………7
  Figure 3 -- Relationship between Multiple Perspectives……………………15
  Figure 4 -- Social Cognitive Theory informs Other Aspects…………………24
  Figure 5 – Classroom management………………………………………………39
  Figure 6 – Leadership observed……………………………………………………41
Abstract

Educators of incarcerated adult males must be cognizant of their responsibilities to direct the classroom environment. Primarily, they should know that they are not only responsible for the content of their courses, but for motivating the offenders to change their minds about the philosophy and process of education. Not only should they base their success on student’s ability to pass the TABE (Test for Adult Basic Education) and GED (General Education Development), they also must measure their success on how offender attitude and behavior toward education has changed. By managing and adjusting the classroom, leading the tutors, and inspiring the students to achieve, successful teachers of incarcerated males have discovered that their results coincide with what will be expected from the offenders when released.

The purpose of this paper is to discover the impact of teacher leadership traits and modeling on offender self-efficacy. This qualitative research paper highlights the competencies that make for a successful prison educator primarily through interviews with prison teachers at Serenity Correctional Center (SCC). The content of the interviews are analyzed to determine the particular leadership skills employed by successful prison educators.
Introduction

The United States has the world’s highest incarceration rate. Almost 2.4 million people are spending their hours “doing time” as a result of criminal activity (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2010). Another five million are on probation or parole (BJS, 2010). One in every 46 adult Virginians is in prison, in jail, on probation, or on parole (BJS, 2010). Nearly 10,000 adults and 300 juveniles are released from Virginia prisons each year. Almost one-third of prisoners released are returned to prison within three years (BJS, 2010).

Research indicates a linkage between low levels of education and crime (Kutner, Greenberg, Jin, Boyle, Hsu, & Dunleavy, 2007; Porporino & Robinson, 1992). The skills and credentials that are acquired through formal education are important tools for navigating everyday life in the United States. Adults with low levels of education and literacy are more likely than adults with high education levels to have incomes that put them below the poverty level (Kutner, et al. 2007). Adults who have not obtained a high school diploma or any postsecondary education are also more likely to be incarcerated than adults with higher levels of education (Harlow, 2003). One aspect of rehabilitation has been completing high school through the GED. The Department of Correctional Education (DCE) is the governmental organization responsible for offender education in the Commonwealth of Virginia.
Purpose of study

However, the research is unclear on the extent to which high school academic education prevents recidivism, a common goal among the agencies involved in criminal justice. Nobel Laureate Professor James J. Heckman and his University of Chicago co-researchers Nicolas S. Mader and John Eric Humphries (2006) researched the connection between GED holders and labor market outcomes in the general population. After reviewing the academic literature, Heckman, Humphries, and Mader (2010) found that the GED is of “minimal value” and that only a small percentage of recipients use it to advance in school or in the workplace:

Although the GED establishes cognitive equivalence on one measure of scholastic aptitude, recipients still face limited opportunities due to deficits in non-cognitive skills such as persistence, motivation, and reliability. The literature finds that the GED testing program distorts social statistics on high school completion rates, minority graduation gaps, and sources of wage growth. (p. 1)

The researchers state that only 31% of GED recipients enrolled in a postsecondary institution and that 77% of those who did enroll only stayed for a single semester.

In the past decade, life skills and situational factors have become the focus of crime prevention (Reentry Policy Council Website, 2010). New programs that focus more on improving life skills are being promoted by corrections and community policing
organizations as one of the most important strategies in reducing recidivism (Reentry Policy Council Website, 2010). The gap between the Commonwealth of Virginia’s prior emphasis on GED education and the new focus on life skills and situation is intriguing.

The philosophical underpinnings of the American public education system are based on the idea that schools are primarily agents of cultural transmission (Dewey, 1916). Schools provide for the transmission of societies’ values and beliefs and the promotion of peer-group relationships (Dewey, 1916; Polito, 2005). Another social function that schools carry out is preparing people for work by teaching important skills and knowledge necessary for economic growth and stability (Dewey, 1916; Palmer, Bresler, Cooper, 2002). These mechanisms guide the political milieu in making decisions about how and where to spend taxpayers’ money. That the focus of offender education has changed from achieving a tangible diploma to acquiring positive social skills is based on academic research conducted over the past few decades (Polito, 2005; Rose & Voss, 2003). The significance of this political change for prison educators is important in that they may have to shift their focus as well. For this reason, the present study examines the components that make for a successful prison classroom primarily through qualitative interviews with prison teachers.

Background

Senator Jim Webb of Virginia wants Congress to find ways to cut the prison population because of the rising costs to taxpayers. It costs nearly $30,000 to house an inmate for a year. Virginia Governor Robert F. McDonnell thinks that better coordination with re-entry programs is not only “the right thing to do” but can “improve public safety,
reduce victimization, improve outcomes for offenders returning to their communities and reduce recidivism” (Richmond Times Dispatch, 6/2010.) To accomplish this goal, the Governor created a council to work closely with the community college system, business, service agencies, and faith based organizations. Their task will be to spend their part of the 29.9 billion dollars from Second Chance Act money approved by the federal government. Signed into law on April 9, 2008, the Second Chance Act was designed to improve outcomes for people returning to communities from prisons and jails. This landmark legislation authorizes federal grants to government agencies and non-profit organizations to provide employment assistance, substance abuse treatment, housing; family programming, mentoring, victims support, and other services that can help reduce recidivism. In the on-line April 2010 National Reentry Resource Center (NRC) Newsletter, the matter of collaboration is adroitly addressed in their mission statement:

Improving the long-term success rates of people leaving prisons cannot be done by any agency alone. The critical intersection between incarceration and community is an opportunity for government and community stakeholders to come together and tackle one of the toughest challenges we face this decade: improving reentry outcomes. As reentry efforts are designed and implemented, understanding how to use partnerships and collaborate effectively can dramatically enhance outcomes.

(www.nationalreentryresourcecenter.org)
Central to the effort of the NRC is the matter of communication between entities and a determined effort to evaluate the efficacy of these programs. In order to be eligible to apply for the Second Chance Act funding, the organization must develop a reentry strategic plan, which includes a detailed implementation schedule as well as extensive evidence of collaboration with key public and private stakeholders (US Department of Justice, 2010).

McDonnell and the U.S. Department of Justice are on a theoretical track aligned with prevalent scholarship: The most current studies show a strong correlation between the pursuit of higher education, employment opportunities and a marked decrease in the numbers of those who return to life behind bars (Nuttall, Hollmen, & Staley, 2003). Providing a positive climate and a support network for offenders, both before and after they matriculate from prison, may change the manner they organize their gestalt in a way that increases their chance to stay out of prison by making choices leading to lawful behavior.

The legislation is designed to reduce the number of convicted felons who become repeat offenders, help make communities safer and ensure that former offenders successfully transition back into society by providing states and non-profit prisoner reentry organizations funding for job training, substance abuse treatment, mental health assistance and other supportive services to help ex-offenders reintegrate into the community.

Specifically, the legislation authorizes the money to be spent on improving existing state and local government offender reentry programs; creating competitive grants for innovative programs to reduce recidivism; strengthen the Bureau of Prison’s
ability to provide reentry services to federal prisoners; establish an elderly non-violent offender program, provide funds for grants for research and best practices relating to innovative drug treatment methods, causes of recidivism, and methods to improve education and vocational training during incarceration (US Department of Justice, 2010).

The programs that the Second Chance Act money will support must target criminogenic risk and needs factors that affect recidivism as can be seen in figures 1 and 2 below.

Figure 1 – Second Chance Act/ Appropriations
These criminogenic risk and needs factors that affect recidivism include history of anti-social behavior; anti-social personality pattern; anti-social cognition; anti-social associates; family/marital; school and/or work; leisure and/or recreation; and substance abuse (Bush, Glick, & Taymans, 1997; Cullen, F.T., & Gendreau, P. (2000). Another requirement for state and local jurisdictions when attempting to procure the federal funds is that the programs support comprehensive treatment services:

…that employ the cognitive, behavioral, and social learning techniques of modeling, role-playing, reinforcement, resource provision, and cognitive restructuring; educational, literacy, vocational, and job placement services; substance abuse treatment; housing, mental and physical health care services; veteran-specific services; programs that encourage safe, healthy,
and responsible family and parent-child relationships and enhance family reunification; and mentoring (Bush, Glick, & Taymans, 1997, p.28).

According to the latest studies from the National Institute of Corrections (NIC, 2010) and the National Reentry Resource Center (NRC, 2010), there is much more to preparing an offender for release than academic education: social and life skills as well as opportunity to succeed are key features upon which current corrective criminogenic phenomenon associated with the origin of criminal behavior thinking depends.

Taking the focus of reentry as pivotal to reducing recidivism is the nascent organization, the International Association of Reentry (formed also in 2005) whose primary goal is to encourage collaboration throughout the United States and progress toward world wide membership (Wilkinson & Rhine, 2005). Many educators believe that what are needed are more opportunities for collaborative learning about teaching in prison (DelliCarpini, 2008). Though the Correctional Education Association has set 40 as the number of annual continuing education hours a correctional educator must acquire (Correctional Education Association, 2004) the nature and quality of these workshops is something in need of further research.

**The need for education**

Evidence supports the notion that educational intervention has a positive influence on offenders (Anderson, Schumacker, & Anderson, 1991; Jancic, 1998; Jenkins, Steurer, & Pendry, 1995). Therapeutic programming directed at improving psychological and social skills such as substance abuse, self-control, self-knowledge, self-efficacy, family
dynamics and communication may be particularly beneficial to those substantially
deficient in academic skills (Windham School Systems, 1994) A prison classroom
teacher is one of the first and most important contacts an offender has in his/her quest to
rehabilitate. The effective qualities of a prison classroom teacher should be studied in
order to ensure this important step in therapeutic programming is staffed by highly
effective teachers using evidence-based practices. Little research has been published on
how a teacher impacts students in the prison setting, thus posing a gap in the multiple
perspectives necessary for a naturalistic and holistic view of prison educational culture.

This case approach provides a deeper understanding of the competency bundles
and professional personality traits of these educators by examining qualitatively the
thoughts and reminiscences of a few experienced teachers with five years or more in
service to the Virginia Department of Correctional Education. Cases are reported to
provide “as holistic a picture as possible of a particular society, group, institution, setting,
or situation” (Creswell, 2007; Fraenkel, J., and Wallen, N., 2009).

This qualitative research study of prison classroom teachers sheds light on the
unique emic perspective of prison teachers that cannot be seen or ascertained by outsiders
due to legal restraint for offender privacy protection. The collection of this data through
interviews with seasoned prison educators allows for the placement of information on
offender education into a larger perspective to crystallize this data into a coherent picture
true to the reality of a prison classroom.
Education, behavior modeling, and self-efficacy

Department of Correctional Education teachers and staff motivate students, model appropriate work behavior, reinforce socially acceptable group behaviors and facilitate a positive reinforcing environment (Clements, & McKee, 1968; McKee, 1998; Milan, 1974, 1988, 1999; Miller, 1997; Mulvey, 1993). McKee and Clements (1998) correctional learning theory is based on the behavioral psychology on the work of B.F. Skinner (1954) who applied the principles of positive reinforcement to the organization and delivery of academic matter. Drawing from the advances in behavior theory and its emergent applications to mental health and educational problems, McKee (1998) hypothesized that “sustained success experiences” would be a good antidote to “past failure as well as a positive preventative measure. Though McKee and Clements (1998) make a case for creating independent learners, they never quite tease out the root motivation that transforms dependent students into independent learners who are able to inhibit reprehensible conduct and demonstrate new behavior leading to success in free society.

Albert Bandura’s social-cognitive theory of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1994) and reciprocal determinism (Bandura, 1978, 1986), the mutual influence of the individual and the environment on each other, more thoroughly explains the desired phenomenon. Incarcerated students are really not that much different from free people and do respond to behavioral conditioning, yet they are also social participants in a learning environment and receptive to the modeling behavior of teachers with strong leadership skills. If this learning environment can be designed to increase each student’s self efficacy through
vicarious reinforcement of socially successful behaviors modeled by the teacher, a
decrease in criminal acts and recidivism should result. The functional value for the
offender is operable.

Even though the negative prison culture defines their daily lives, offenders are
given the opportunity through programs for learning new ways of thinking designed to
decrease criminogenic influences. “Thinking for a Change” is an integrated cognitive
behavior change program recently implemented in Virginia prisons to prepare an
offender for reentry. The program covers communication and thought process control
methods as key factors in regulating thought processes that induce stress and depression
that trigger criminal behaviors (Bush, J., Glick, B., & Taymans, J., 1997).

Other programs that address issues of drug abuse, parenting, life skills, and
educational attainment are offered by every prison’s counseling department, according to
the Department of Corrections website. The offenders’ ability to self-reinforce by
establishing performance standards for themselves that they have seen in their models is
paramount to success. Supervision agencies both inside prison and out on the street
should adopt behavioral management techniques as a goal of the organization. The
behavioral management techniques should “refer to actions that the staff use to achieve
offender-related and organizational-related outcomes. (Bush, Glick, Taymans, 1997)”

The prison classroom teachers are one of the offenders’ first models in this quest
to rehabilitate, and their role should be studied to ensure initial success of evidence-based
correctional programming. This change in the offender’s internal thinking corresponds to
Bandura’s conception of reciprocal determinism as they model their new behavior while
participating in programming.
Summary

The direct link between GED and recidivism is uncertain (Heckman, Humphries, and Mader, 2010). However, much current research shows a strong correlation between the cognitive behavioral management program *Thinking for a Change* and a reduction in the recidivism rate (NIC, 2005; Bush, J., Glick, B., & Taymans, J., 1997; Evans, 2005). The Commonwealth of Virginia under Governor McDonnell is a strong supporter of the Second Chance Act which promotes social cognitive behavior programs in the prison and community settings. Both current and future prison educators must possess more than content knowledge in order to help with the focus on life skills as important competencies that work to keep people from re-offending. Prison educators must teach more than algebra or grammar lessons; they must model the behaviors that lead to life success, discuss how and why education can help offenders manage their lives, and inspire their students to do so. This study seeks to identify perspectives of experienced DCE educators to inform current and future preparation of such educators. The impact of teacher leadership traits and modeling on offender self-efficacy will be examined.
Definitions

**Criminogenic:** Descriptive factors that influence a person who commits crimes (Latessa & Lowencamp, 2006).

**GED:** General Equivalency Diploma is an eight-hour exam administered to high school dropouts to establish equivalence between dropouts who pass the exam and traditional high school graduates (GED Testing Service, 2010).

**Functional value:** The utility of a particular behavior established when the observed behavior leads to positive consequences (Bandura, 1978).

**Literacy:** more precisely defined as a technical capability to decode or reproduce written or printed signs, symbols, or letters combined into words (Merriam-Webster, 2009).

**Offender:** the most recent term applied to offenders in Virginia. Prior to this custom, the word “inmate” was used. In this paper, the words offender, inmate, student, and offender are used interchangeably since this reflects real life terminology. (Latessa & Lowencamp, 2006).

**Probation:** is the act of suspending the sentence of a person convicted of a crime, granting provisional freedom on the promise of good behavior. A person gets probation in place of doing time locked up in a prison usually after committing one, two, or three minor misdemeanor offenses or one of the lesser felonies. If the offender violates the terms of this agreement, he or she is required to do the time (Latessa & Lowencamp, 2006).
Parole: is the release of an offender whose term has not expired on condition of sustained lawful behavior that is subject to monitoring by an officer of the law for a set period of time. In other words, the offender has successfully done his time and has worked to rehabilitate by following a treatment plan or avoiding institutional charges. The problem is that most offenders are released back into the same situation they left. (Latessa & Lowencamp, 2006).

Recidivism: is the term used to refer to a return to prison after a prior conviction and incarceration. (Latessa & Lowencamp, 2006).

Reciprocal Determinism: The mutual influence of the individual and the environment on each other (Bandura, 1978).

Self-efficacy: The sense that one can execute successfully a behavior required to produce a particular outcome (Bandura, 1994).

Social behavior: The tendency for an individual to match the behaviors, attitudes, or emotional reactions that are observed in actual or symbolic models (Bandura, 1986).

Vicarious Reinforcement: observation of positive consequences received by the model (Bandura, 1978).
The content of this study is grounded in multiple perspectives: 1) Albert Bandura’s Social-Cognitive Learning Theory (1986); 2) criminal behavior and change literature, and; 3) educator leadership traits. Bandura’s conception of self efficacy and reciprocal determinism are seen as primary factors for the motivation behind offender program success is measured by a reduction in recidivism rate. Figure 3 presents the conceptual framework informing this literature review and ensuing study:

Figure 3 -- Relationship between Multiple Perspectives

Social Cognitive Theory

In Bandura’s view, a three-way interlocking relationship between behavior, the environment, and internal events influence perception and action. The term reciprocal determinism means that events produce effects rather than a prior set of causal external
factors (Bandura, 1978, 1986). The assumptions of social-Cognitive Learning Theory are:

1. The learner can abstract information from observing others and make decisions about the behaviors to enact.
2. Reciprocal determinism explains learning.
3. Learning is the acquisition of symbolic representations in the form of verbal or visual codes.
4. Social-cognitive theory views learning as a different event from performance.

According to Bandura, individuals learn new behaviors through the observation of models and through the effects of their own actions. The essential purpose of modeled behavior is to transmit information to the observer. Another effect of modeled behavior is to strengthen or weaken circumscription when enacting particular behaviors (Bandura, 1978). In addition, modeling influences the individual to demonstrate new patterns of behavior that are important to socialization. The impact of modeling on perceived self-efficacy is strongly influenced by how similar the individual sees himself to the model. “The greater the assumed similarities the more persuasive are the model’s successes and failures “(Bandura, 1994, p33). On the “street” (an offender’s home and social environment), an offender’s role models may have contributed to his strong sense of efficacy and periodic success in committing crimes. Once incarcerated, the offender is surrounded by other criminals who also have been censured as a result of their criminal behavior (Milan & McKee, 1974; Milan, 1999).
Bandura’s ideas on the role of self-efficacy can be directly applied to prison educational theory. Self-efficacy, the belief that one can perform a behavior successfully, plays a pivotal role in an offender’s attempt to reorganize his thinking and make better choices. The staff who work with offenders both inside and out on the street in the programs funded by the Second Chance Act such as TFAC are the models who can precipitate the vicarious and self-reinforcement of positive life skills. In turn, the teacher qualities studied in the previous seminal works can be grouped into the five basic leadership practices as delineated by Kouzes and Posner supported by the social cognitive work of Albert Bandura.

*Criminal Behavior and Change*

Researchers have focused on causes of crime ranging from poverty to the philosophy behind offenders’ social outlook to an individual’s propensity to commit crime (Andrews, Bonta, &Wormith, 2006):

- History of antisocial behavior
- Anti-social personality
- Anti-social values and attitudes
- Criminal/deviant peer association
- Substance abuse
- Dysfunctional family relations

The more of these variables present, the greater the likelihood an individual will commit a crime. When these criminogenic characteristics are identified and addressed, the
likelihood of future criminal activity can be substantially reduced. (Lowencamp, Latessa, & Smith, 2006; Taxman, Young, Byrne, Holsinger, & Anspach, 2006).

While underlying issues such as the above six issues make certain individuals more likely engage in specific criminal acts, most often the actual behaviors are always sparked by “triggers”. A trigger is something that sets off a certain behavior in an individual at a particular time. Events or situations, people, places, or things can instigate possible criminal behavior. If these triggers can be mitigated, crime and drug use are less likely to occur (Lowencamp, et. al, 2006).

The challenge for supervision staff is that few offenders arrive at their first programming opportunities ready to understand their triggers, self-regulate their criminogenic deficits, and make conscious and permanent changes in their lives. In fact, many offenders deny wrongdoing and strongly resist the notion that they must change. The tendency is to approach supervision with an uncaring attitude, passing by the time with minimal effort or commitment to the sentencing or release goals. The behavior management approach recognizes that learning and sustaining new behaviors is part of public safety, and that the supervision agency should facilitate offenders’ movement through the change process (Lowencamp, et. al, 2006).

Effective actions in reducing recidivism include cognitive behavior therapy (Andrews, Bonta, &Hogue, 1990; Gendreau, 1996; Gendreau, French & Taylor, 2002). Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) has consistently appeared as effective in reducing recidivism (Landenberger & Lipsey, 2005). This phenomenon has prompted a number of cognitive behavior curricula that target criminal populations. Doctors Jack Bush, Barry Glick, and Julianna Taymans have used this research in preparing the program Thinking
for a change: Integrated Cognitive Behavior Change Program (TFAC) with the support of the National Institute of Corrections. TFAC is becoming increasingly popular with implementation at some level in more than 45 states (NIC, 2006; Evans, 2005).

In TFAC behavior change is produced through a series of interactions that provide the offender with the opportunity to learn about his/her behavior and patterns, to acquire new skills to address problematic issues, and to develop the self-maintenance tools to ensure long-term success. The role of supervision staff is to facilitate this change process (Bush, Glick, Taymans, 1997).

The first objective for staff is engagement of the offender in the change process. This sets the premise for the offender assuming full responsibility for a pro-social lifestyle. Once a particular behavior has been initiated, it is maintained or discouraged by the consequences of the behavior on one’s attitudes, values, and beliefs (Bandura, 1986; Andrews & Bonta, 2006). For offenders to be retrained to exhibit pro-social behaviors, they must be given the opportunity to learn prosocial skills and attitudes. Researchers have consistently identified behavior modification programs to be one of the most effective forms of correctional interventions aimed at reducing recidivism (Dowden & Andrews, 2000; Garrett, 1985; Lipsey, Chapman, & Landenberger, 2001; Wilson, Bouffard, & MacKenzie, 2005; Wilson, Gallagher, & MacKenzie, 2000).

It should be clear as well that offenders are responsible and accountable for their own actions, including the willingness to change. Offenders cannot be treated as passive participants whose only hope is to be showered with services, nor misfits incapable of leading capable lives. The behavior management model rejects both of those views. It does not permit supervision staff to stand idly by until offenders are “ready” to change.
their behavior. Instead, it demands that staff proactively work towards motivating offenders to change and that offenders proactively participate in the change process or face consequences (Bush, Glick, Taymans, 1997).

In a recent study, *Violent Offenders: Appraising and Managing Risk*, the researchers (Quinsey, Harris, Rice, and Cormier, 2006) argue that community risk management can be improved by combining what is already known from three areas of inquiry: the prediction of violence, the study of decision making and clinical judgment, and the literature on treatment outcomes and program evaluation. This important criminogenic information informs the practices teachers use to foster learning in offenders since keen knowledge of the phenomenon behind the criminal mind and milieu helps prison teachers diagnosis and plan instruction strategies and leadership modalities. The authors (2006) argue:

… that although these literatures certainly can induce predictive, therapeutic, and supervisory nihilism among practitioners, more recent developments offer grounds for some optimism, particularly when an integrated approach is taken. Finally, we hope to show that the type of technological or engineering work that is necessary to improve practice provides information that can also inform scientific theory (p. 3).

This book includes an historical perspective of the management and treatment of offenders, a synopsis of the methods and philosophies guiding incarceration management, the recent scientific studies of recidivism, and appendices and rubrics. The primary aim
of this book is to give practitioners research based information that will help them make decisions on whether or not to release a man into society.

The researchers base their research on thirty years of practice in Oak Ridge, a psychiatric facility in Ontario for men. They describe their Social Therapy Unit as a place that emphasized “verbal, insight-oriented, emotionally evocative therapy” (p. 30) where the offenders learned better how their behavior affected their peers. The underlying educational philosophy is based on a Gestalt perspective and attempts to teach the subject how to recognize problem sets and reorganize or reconstruct their sensory experience for a socially acceptable solution.

After years of research and study (Quinsey, et. al., 2006) arrived at an explanation of offender behavior that formed the basis of their scoring guide. Because many of the patients habitually exploited and manipulated others, both the duration and intensity of social interactions were deliberately enhanced so that these exploitive behaviors became obvious to both the patient himself and others and so the long term consequences of these anti-social styles of interaction could not be escaped (Quinsey, et. al., 2006, p. 30).

Apparently, these studies form the scientific basis for the detailed scoring guides in the appendices that purport to help practitioners and decision makers manage the risk of recidivism. The researcher also mentions that previous studies indicate that low-educational attainment has been found to be positively but weakly associated with recidivism.
**Teachers as Leaders**

As Dan Rather has said, “The dream begins with a teacher who believes in you, who tugs and pushes and leads you to the next plateau, sometimes poking you with a sharp stick called truth.” In essence, excellent teachers are exemplary leaders. From analysis of thousands of personal-best leadership experiences of ordinary people, the authors of *The Leadership Challenge*, James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner (2007), have distilled from their “collective experience” five practices that epitomize leadership that they offer “as guidance for leaders as they attempt to keep their own bearings and steer others toward peak achievements” (p. 174) The authors claim that these five practices have “stood the test of time” and “aren’t the private property” of anyone that they have studied. They are behaviors that effective leaders engage:

- Model the way
- Inspire a shared vision
- Challenge the process
- Enable others to act
- Encourage the heart

These five leadership practices can be illuminated by Bandura’s theory of self-efficacy and reciprocal determinism and used as rudimentary coding in an ethnographic rendering of how prison educators motivate and lead their students to changing their minds, their behavior and helping them to see the benefit. Kouzes & Posner (2007) say that “Success in leading will be wholly dependent upon the capacity to build and sustain
human relationships that enable people to get things done on a regular basis” (p. 177)

Determining how an individual is able to work well in society is one of Bandura’s primary areas of research. He uses the term “efficacy builder” to describe role models who engage in “guided mastery treatment”, which is a proactive euphemism for teaching: (1994)

Successful efficacy builders do more than convey positive appraisals. In addition to raising people’s beliefs in their capabilities, they structure situations for them in ways that bring success and avoid placing people in situations prematurely where they are likely to fail often. They measure success in terms of self-improvement rather than triumphs over others.

(p.3)

Whether or not the training received while incarcerated becomes imbedded in the offender’s cognitive conditioning has yet to be directly correlated with the recidivism rate according to the National Institute of Corrections web site (10/15/2010). However, many studies show that specific offender deficits are associated with criminal activity, such as lack of employment, lack of education, lack of housing stability, and substance abuse addiction (Lattessa & Lowencamp, 2006). These activities can be ameliorated by aggressive reentry programs, according to experts from the National Reentry Council (2010). Figure 4 reiterates the conceptual framework that informs the educator and offender interaction within prison education.
Reentry reaches far beyond the confines of corrections (Petersilla, 2003; Rhine, 2001; Taxman, et. al. 2003; Wilkinson, Buckholtz, Seigfried, 2004; Travis, Visher, 2005; Nurse, 2004). There was an initial $19.8 million dollars designated in 2005 by the U.S. Department of Labor under the President’s Reentry Program given to thirty urban faith based and community organizations to provide services, housing assistance, and treatments programs. The Second Chance Act of 2005: Community Safety through Recidivism Prevention program provided further impetus to the popular correctional movement emphasizing rehabilitation over punishment (Linton, 2009). The amount of money appropriated to fund programs for the Second Chance Act was $25 million in 2009 (Reentry Policy Council, 2009).
Characteristics of successful education programs and educators

Preparing the offender to reenter society before he leaves the prison confines is key to success (Vacca, 2004). Having a GED, work certificates and especially, college class work helps those with felonious records prove to potential employers that they have changed their behavior in some way and are rehabilitated (NRC, 2010). Educated offenders are less likely to return to prison (Clark, 1991; Allen, 1988; Ripley, 1993; Blake & Sackett, 1975). Students also want their efforts to be rewarded (Gordon & Weldon, 2003; Mageehon, A., 2003; Moeller & Rivera, 2004). They require teachers who are interested in them and believe that their work is important in order to feel like what they are doing will make a difference when they get out.

There are important considerations in improving prison education in a manner that will increase the success of reentry. How are prison educators trained? What is important to learn? What unique skills are necessary for a teacher of offenders to possess? Vacca (2004) and Chappell (2002) studied twenty-five successful educational programs consistent with current adult education best practices in both prisons and jails from all over the United States and discovered four common qualities.

- The programs are learner centered: cognizant of diverse learning styles, aware of wide literacy range, respect for cultural diversity.
- The programs use instructional materials meaningful to the students.
- Instruction is engaging, interesting and motivating.
- Offenders see themselves as students first, deserving of respect.
Prison educators

DelliCaprini (2008) says that “programs must create and implement an evaluation plan that collects both qualitative and quantitative data that is used in the evaluation of the effectiveness of teaching and learning. “ DCE prohibits the direct study of offender behavior directly (see Appendix I.) However, this researcher is able to discuss matters with the other educators in the facility. DCE educators routinely discuss the myriad of ways in which offenders are motivated and the effect on their progress. DCE educator culture of social determinism aids in feelings of self-efficacy as prison educators. Prison educators getting together and sharing their techniques and stories can inform the leadership qualities effective teachers possess.

Collaboration in the form of tutor/student relationship is also at the root of successful educational interventions. Margaret Shippen (2008) says that her study of two reading programs in a prison in Alabama showed the power of tutoring is the shared significant social implication of the relationship between an inmate tutor and inmate student (2008). P.M. Geraci shows in his study that training the tutor creates a stronger level of trust between tutor and student (2000). Another important reinforcer in the classroom is success (Gredler, 2009; Gunn, 1999). All of these factors—effective teachers, trust, success-- are extant in Albert Bandura’s social cognitive theory of learning.

Griffin (1980) begins his article “Competencies of the Correctional Educator” by shedding the remnants of “traditionally accepted notions developed elsewhere” that corrections is punishment, psychiatric therapy, hard labor, industrial production, or hand-
holding. In fact, he states emphatically that “The time has finally come for us to stand up and say aloud that corrections is re-education, and that our role is central in it” (1980, p. 316). Discussing the moral implications of criminal activity, Griffin posits that “The task of the correctional educator is to intervene in such a way that the offender ceases or diminishes these actions. The process, by which he does so, is correctional education, and the correctional educator must define himself or herself in these terms” (1980 p. 317). According to Griffin, the required competencies for correctional educators are twofold:

…being competent to bring their students to a given level of proficiency in a given subject area” and “being competent in helping correct the kinds of cognitive deficiencies which contribute to the faulty decision-making process of offenders, decision-making processes which lead to decisions for action which cause harm and injury to others (1980, p. 318).

Though the article purports to examine the teacher’s qualities, it really gives much more attention to the factors surrounding why offenders offend. Most of these reasons revolve around the faulty perceptions of reality criminals seem to hold which cause them to commit crime. Again, Griffin suggests that it is the educator who can develop competencies strong enough to negate the criminal mind. However, Griffin never specifically details the actual skills, knowledge and abilities that demonstrate how this process is supposed to work.
A very useful and pivotal article that directly addresses educator qualities is Ashcroft, Eggleston, and Gehring’s (2007) work on educational teacher characteristics, *Handbook for Correctional Education Leaders: Correctional teacher skills, characteristics, and performance indicators*. This study examined experienced correctional educators who were considered successful by their peers including: juvenile facilities, adult vocational classes as well as academic programs in Canada. The handbook provides a comprehensive list of general skills and characteristics and positive performance measures within the correctional education setting. Educators and administrators attended forums over a twenty year span and answered questionnaires eventually arriving at detailed analysis. There is an extensive list that is very useful that includes concrete examples of each characteristic, skill and element. Each characteristic is broken down into specific examples of how that characteristic manifests in teacher behavior. Each skill is delimited in specific ways in which that skill is utilized in the classroom with students. Every element of classroom management is explained. These skills exemplify best practices in classroom management, adult learning theory, and leadership studies.

**Conclusion**

Prison teachers who proactively supervise offenders would have a better opportunity for success if they understood and embodied Kouzes and Posner’s (2010) five leadership qualities. Programs such as Teaching for a Change and GED would also be more effective if staffed with personnel who embody these five positive leadership qualities. One of the first steps in TFAC is to engage the offender in the change process by
transforming the role of supervision staff from law enforcers or social workers to behavior managers in a structured process. This process begins with assessment, case planning, and repeated assessment which allows staff to craft and modify supervision plans and behavioral contracts necessary to maximize impact on offender behavior and recidivism reduction (Bush, et.al 1997).
Research Methodology

The academic literature on prison education is scant compared to the field of educational research. Much of it centers on the concept of recidivism and whether or not the rate at which offenders commit crimes after release and wind up back in the prison system can be ameliorated by formal education while incarcerated. Though the recidivism rate is an important concept viewed by law makers and politicians as an indication of the efficacy of the system, it is not the only barometer of prison program success as discussed in the literature review.

Qualitative analysis studies have become more prevalent and useful in education, social work, management, health care, nursing, and social media. Qualitative research designs are proving significant for exploring problems relative to adult education (Babchuk, 2009; 2010). Qualitative researchers possess a humanistic and naturalistic philosophical orientation and are comfortable with ambiguity. They are willing to take risks and are ambitious and dedicated enough to take on the substantial commitment required to conduct qualitative research. A qualitative researcher must be flexible, tolerant and able to see things from multiple perspectives. As had been emphasized, the researcher must be able to “stand comfortably at the intersection of art and science” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, pp. 4-6; Creswell, 2007, p. 41; Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 13; Merriam, 2009, pp. 16-18).

One of differences in qualitative and quantitative research is the handling of the ethnographer’s identity in the field and how the data and analysis are conveyed. John Brewer says that “It is a myth to see ethnographers as people without personal identity, historical location, and personality who would all produce the same findings in the same
setting (2000)”. It is appropriate and common for qualitative researches to use the personal “I” or “we” when referring to their method rather than “this researcher” (Van Maanen, J. (1988). John Van Maanen explains different approaches to writing about social phenomenon by using categories such as confessional, impressionistic, and realist tales. A short length ethnographic example by Maanen is ‘The Smile Factory: Work at Disneyland” where he was once employed and subsequently fired. He gives a very thorough explanation of the corporate culture at Disney and frankly discusses his own experience there.

Many other examples of current ethnographic composition style can be seen in recent articles in the *Journal of Ethnographic & Qualitative Research*. For instance, the authors of “Juvenile Delinquent Girls Reflect on Learning in Schools and Other Suggestions” use these phrases when writing about their methodology: We conducted, we analyzed, we coded, we interpreted, we grouped and summarized (Ritzman, M., Sanger, D., Stremlau, A., Snow, P., 2010). A survey of other articles in this journal reflects a similar writing style. Therefore, you will notice that I include this natural manner of writing especially in the methodology and analysis sections of this research paper.

*Rubrics for qualitative method*

Creswell (2007) systematically outlines five approaches to qualitative study acquired from his experience in researching, teaching and mentoring students on qualitative methods. These five ways of obtaining data are: narrative, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study. This is an ethnographic case study.
Another useful rubric when doing qualitative research specifically in education settings is *Ethnography for Education* written by Christopher Pole and Marlene Morrison. They suggest five principle common characteristics of educational ethnography:

- A focus on a discrete location, event, or setting.
- A concern with the full range of social behavior within the location, event, or setting.
- The use of a range of different research methods which may combine qualitative and quantitative approaches but where the emphasis is upon understanding social behavior from inside the discreet location, event, or setting.
- An emphasis on data and analysis which moves from detailed description to the identified concepts and theories which are grounded in the data collection within the location, event, or setting.
- An emphasis on rigorous or thorough research, where the complexities of the discrete event, location, or setting are of greater importance than overarching trends or generalizations (Pole, C., Morrison, M. 2003).

These five ethnographic characteristics along with Creswell’s data approaches helped frame the scope of this study.

In qualitative research, there is a “socially constructed nature of reality, an intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry” (Cresswell, 2007). The researcher seeks answers to questions about how social experience is created and given meaning. They think they
know something about society worth telling to others, and use a variety of forms, media and means to communicate their ideas and feelings (Babchuk, 2009, 2010).

In order to be employed by the Virginia Department of Correctional Education, one must sign a confidential agreement not to discuss matters pertaining to the offenders (appendix I). I attempted to seek permission to observe the teachers in their classes but was told that is not permissible.

The emphasis is on qualities of entities and on processes and meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured in terms of quantity, amount, intensity or frequency (Cresswell, 2007). The interview questions explore a career teaching in a prison, presented as a case study in one correctional center, informed by the interviews.

The teachers were sent a list of questions to answer and the tutor essays were unsolicited informal essays. During one week, seven educators seasoned were explained the nature of the study and asked if they were willing to participate. Later in the week they were given the interview questions gleaned from various HRM textbooks (Rossi, Lipsey, & Freeman, 2004; Rothwell, 2005; Swanson, 2007). Five of the educators enthusiastically agreed. The interview questions were returned over a two month period. After the interviews were analyzed, they were destroyed. Out of eight tutor essays three were randomly chosen as representative of the experience. After these artifacts were collected, I then evaluated their reflections in light of leadership skills, classroom management, and overall perception of their vocation.

As an academic teacher for the Department of Correctional Education in Virginia for five years, I have had much contact with the population at Serenity Correctional Center. Over two hundred fifty students have passed through this classroom. There is a
positive classroom climate that is professional and nurturing. The reputation of the classroom and teacher is “serious but caring” as one tutor put it. “Ms. Allen is willing to do all she can to help you help yourself, but she can also be a Pit Bull,” states another tutor who has worked for her since the beginning, August, 2005. Yearly evaluations by my supervisors support the efficacy of my classroom upon the offenders. Just this week I was told that because of my work and dedication I have been nominated and received the status of Master Teacher.

This particular classroom is loosely organized according to a business or militaristic modules on an ordered environment that promotes success; Research by social-psychologists and educators point to several factors in the male make-up indicating competition and group leadership as major motivating factors in both individual and group behavior (Van Vugt, M., De Cremer, D., and Janssen, D., 2007).

Evolutionary scientists argue that human cooperation is the product of a long history of competition among rival groups. There are various reasons to believe that this logic applies particularly to men. In three experiments, using a step-level public-goods task, we found that men contributed more to their group if their group was competing with other groups than if there was no intergroup competition. Female cooperation was relatively unaffected by intergroup competition. These findings suggest that men respond more strongly than women to intergroup threats. We speculate about the evolutionary origins of this gender difference and note some implications (p. 20).
A mixed method qualitative ethnographic study triangulated by quantitative analysis of TABE results, survey of inmate student attitude, teacher and tutor evaluations (formal and informal) compared with correctional officers and other DCE teachers, interviews, and roster of students who have eventually received a General Education Diploma is the best way to take a picture of this environment and discover why and how it incubates the type of student who is motivated to work toward higher educational goals. However, the only information I have been allowed to share must be free of any reference to particular students and may only be gleaned from Serenity Correctional by interviews with co-workers who freely choose to participate in interviews outside of the Department of Correctional Education. I cannot include charts, field notes, or evaluations in the printed form of this study as it is against DCE policy (See Appendix 1). In essence, the reader will have to trust that I have done all the work and have accurately portrayed the triangulation aspect of the particular classrooms here at Serenity. What you will find is a wealth of ethnographic information gathered through the interviews.

The initial purpose of this paper was to explore classrooms in a Virginian prison over time and glean what insight this qualitative study may provide into how high risk level incarcerated males learn, what motivates them, and what skills teachers and tutors possess who show success with their students measured by an increase in test scores and General Education Diploma achievement. However, the only approved method of research was to interview the experienced teachers at Serenity Correctional Center.
Description of the sample

Serenity Correctional Center was built in 1985 to house level four and five male inmates. The scale for institutions begins at levels one and two for inmates not likely to try to escape and who have fewer than five years to serve; three and four for inmates who have longer sentences and some social problems; five and six for criminals who are serving life or multiple life sentences or who have major problems following the rules (DOC).

The inmate students in this particular school are varied in their age, race, history, and sentence length. Generally speaking, a typical class demographic shows an average age of 33 with a range of 18 to 64 years; an ethnographic split of 70 percent Black (African-American) and 30 percent white or other. Initial grade point average upon enrollment must be at least 6.0 as indicated on the TABE.

Enrollment in the classroom is revolving and all year around. From a waiting list, the teacher enrolls students every week to keep the total class size at 15. There are four periods in a day. Students remain in class for an unspecified period of time. The average is eight months with a range of one day to two years.

The teachers who work here must hold a valid teaching certificate. They range in ages from 36 to 65. All have been employed by DCE for more than five years. The sample who agreed to be interviewed represents 72% of the teaching staff.

Discussion of internal and external validity, reliability, generalizability, and Limitations.

The threats to the validity of this study reside mainly in the observational quality of the ethnographic aspect. The study was conducted and controlled by the teacher. Because of
security concerns, it is not possible for outsiders to observe this group without changing their daily behavior; they are a suspicious group. It takes years to build relationships and reputation with inmates, staff, and correctional officers. The researcher of this study, who is also the teacher, has worked in correctional education for over five years, four of those at Serenity Correctional Center. I have developed healthy working relationships with my tutors, many students, officers, and have a reputation in the school for my dedication. Because of this long standing relationship, I am a component of the group and am able to observe and record without unduly affecting the behavior of the offenders or officers. It is a natural setting already in place. As previously stated, I was not allowed to conduct formal observation inside other teacher’s classrooms, so my principle gave permission to interview the teachers who wanted to participate. A series of questions was developed and administered to the teachers who responded in writing. Informal conversations with the teachers clarified the written interviews.

Ronald J. Chenail, after analyzing the history and current measures of quality in qualitative research in his comprehensive article “Getting Specific About Qualitative Research Generalizability”, posits in his judgment that:

Qualitative researchers should be overt as to their stance on generalizability, clarify their perspective on generalizability conceptually, and then generalize operationally in a consistent and coherent manner (2010).
My stance on the Generalizability of the data I’ve gathered from this small group of seasoned teachers is that the leadership qualities they already possess that have allowed them to be successful in the field of correctional education are the same qualities possessed by successful leaders in the business world. In this case, the particular easily lends itself to the general in a manner that illuminates the importance of adult leadership qualities as indicators of role model success. This is no random group of teachers: they were chosen based upon their long term employment in the correctional setting. These are not your average students: they are criminals and anti-social by definition. The degree to which these leadership skills can be studies and compared to teachers in areas outside of the correctional setting cannot be ascertained. However, we could expand this study and replicate it by studying the leadership qualities in other prison educators across the planet.
Conclusion and Data Analysis

*Classroom management*

Vacca (2004) and Chappell (2002) studied twenty-five successful educational programs consistent with current adult education best practices in both prisons and jails from all over the United States and discovered four common qualities: learner centered, meaningful materials, engaging instruction, offenders see themselves as students. Using this rubric in analyzing the teacher responses from the interviews regarding the management of their classrooms, the data fits into the chart according to whether or not the central description is consistent with the teacher or tutors’ description in the self-reporting interview. The forth area asks that the students see themselves as students first which is impossible to ascertain given the research restrictions. (See Confidentiality Statement, Appendix I)

Figure 5 – Classroom management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Smith</th>
<th>Sole</th>
<th>Poppins</th>
<th>Hammer</th>
<th>Wells</th>
<th>Priest</th>
<th>Farmer</th>
<th>Ellington</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The programs are learner centered: cognizant of diverse learning styles, aware of wide literacy range, respect for cultural diversity.</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The programs use instructional materials meaningful to the students.</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instruction is engaging, interesting and motivating.</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Smith and Pippins, both academic teachers, note that their classrooms orient around the concept of personal learning plans based upon TABE scores. “We use these subcategories in organizing a written plan so that the student can direct his own progress with the help of a trained tutor,” says Smith. Pippins, the special education teacher who enrolls those students scoring initially between the 0 to 5.9 scale, spends over two thousand dollars a year in specially designed reading, math, and language materials for adults needing remedial training. She also includes a daily journaling activity and responds to each entry.

Sole, Business Software instructor ensures that his program is learner centered by granting to the student autonomy in achieving objectives: “I serve as a resource for providing the student with the environment, atmosphere, materials, equipment, and assistance to promote his success…” He also provides the “the best equipment and industry standard software” which is meaningful to the students as they know these things reflect the real world of work on the outside. Wells, principle and former business software teacher employs former students as aides to help each student achieve his individual, daily goals. Since most prison education classrooms operate on a rolling enrollment, the system is designed to encourage individual learning plans. The classes typically are small enough and include a number of tutors to make one-on-one teaching/learning the rule rather than the exception.

The Department of Correctional Education provides significant funds for its vocational and academic teachers to use in purchasing contemporary educational materials designed for adult learners. For example, the average academic teacher is
allowed $1,500 annually to spend on materials; special education teachers are budgeted $2,500; the vocational teachers are given more than enough to purchase books and supplies. These instructional materials are meaningful to the students as they are the same materials used in other adult settings. For example, the business technology teachers use the most up-to-date, user friendly textbooks that are used in community college classes to teach Microsoft Office Suite. The academic teachers use Steck-Vaughn, Contemporary, McGraw-Hill GED and PRE-GED textbooks in addition to videos, posters, and Adult education computer programs such as Aztec, GED 21st Century, and Encarta. The students are assigned their own materials and given as much paper, pencils, white boards to accomplish their goals.

Instruction at Serenity Correctional Center is as engaging; interesting and motivating as possible in this setting. The teachers are evaluated on the number of students they graduate from their programs which gives them incentive to broaden their cache of skills. In addition, all teachers are required not only to keep their teaching certifications valid, but to accomplish at least 40 hours annually of the teacher training of their choice. The Department of Correctional Education has a training department that regularly schedules professional opportunities for training.

Leadership Qualities Observed

The authors of The Leadership Challenge, James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner point out that the women and men they met during their research are the everyday heroes of our world and that leadership is not something you find only in few charismatic individuals at the highest levels of organization: “We consider the women and men we’ve met in doing
our research great people, and so do those with whom they’ve worked. It’s because there are so many—not so few—leaders that extraordinary things get done on a regular basis, especially in extraordinary times (2010)” Serenity’s correctional educators and tutors are a few of these ordinary exemplary leaders who embody most of the five characteristics in their daily lives. The data from the interviews is analyzed according to the following chart that breaks down the leadership practices into behaviors:

Figure 6 – Leadership observed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practice</th>
<th>Commitment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model the way</td>
<td>1. Clarify values by finding your voice and affirming shared ideals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Set the example by aligning actions with shared values.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspire a shared vision</td>
<td>3. Envision the future by imagining exciting and ennobling possibilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Enlist others in a common vision by appealing to shared aspirations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenge the process</td>
<td>5. Search for opportunities by seizing the initiative and by looking outward for innovative ways to improve.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Experiment and take risks by constantly generating small wins and learning from experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enable others to act</td>
<td>7. Foster collaboration by building trust and facilitating relationships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. Strengthen others by increasing self-determination and developing competence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage the heart</td>
<td>9. Recognize contributions by showing appreciation for individual excellence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. Celebrate the values and victories by creating a spirit of community.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Encourage the heart. Twice a year, November and March, graduation is scheduled. The students are encouraged to invite family members. On the morning of the graduation, several administrators from Richmond show up, a few wearing their caps and gowns. The students have been adorned with bright blue caps, gold tassels, flowing blue gowns, and they march into the packed visiting room to the familiar commencement score. You can feel the reverence, excitement, and pride that permeate the day. A special guest speaker addresses the graduating class with heart-felt words of wisdom and praise. The students are called by name and one by one come to the podium to shake hands with the DCE superintendent and receive their diploma. Afterward, students, family members, staff, and important guests sit down to a special meal of fried chicken on the bone sandwiches, chips, lemonade, and pieces of graduation cake. You would think this was your average high-school graduation.

However, the scene is far from ordinary in this prison atmosphere. Rarely does staff eat with offenders and their families. The offenders are not served such a delicacy as fried chicken; their “meat” usually comes in the form of something unrecognizable such as “turkey baloney” or “sausage patty”. Cake is unheard of, especially the homemade kind with icing and decoration. A packet of lemonade can only be bought on commissary for a day’s wage. The students’ individual achievements are recognized in this graduation ceremony. The entire school celebrates the values and victories by creating a rare spirit of community.

Enable others to act. The phenomenon of reciprocal determinism is the basis for strengthening students and developing competence inside the prison classroom. When an
offender witnesses the success of others and is reinforced positively for his own learning behavior, his sense of self-efficacy is increased. Wells hallmarks “structure and benchmark goals” that create an atmosphere for students to be accountable for their own success; Competence in reaching the goals “will build character and is demonstrative of a typical working environment that they may find in the business world.” More importantly, Wells points out that it is “critical to provide students with an opportunity to be leaders themselves …by asking them to help teach newer students some of the things that they have learned.” Hammer, Smith, Pippins, and Sole also use an array of peer tutoring techniques in fostering collaboration in the classroom that builds an atmosphere of trust and facilitates the relationships necessary for individual success. In addition, every year the tutors participate in a three day tutoring/literacy workshop and earn a certificate from Proliteracy America.

**Challenge the process.** The atmosphere at Serenity Correctional is one of innovation supported by immediate supervision: Sole was able to phase out his obsolete shoe repair class and begin computer technology. Wells, former teacher and principal, says that “it is critical that the instructor be willing to be re-trained constantly to stay ahead of the curve.” He proves opportunities for his teachers to further their education and actively supports their efforts as much as possible given the administrative restrictions. Allowing Smith to incorporate GED students into her pre-GED classroom, supporting and following through with the addition of GED 21st Century computer program on all academic computers are just a few of his more recent accomplishments. Just last week he attended training that will allow him to score the GED tests on site. He continues to “search for opportunities by seizing the initiative and by looking outward for
innovative ways to improve”, a manner of action that inspires his teachers. He strengthens the efficacy of his teachers by increasing his own skills, modeling the desired behavior. This atmosphere of innovation passes through the teachers to their students as evidenced by the number of students who graduate from programs.

Envision the future by imagining exciting and ennobling possibilities. Enlist others in a common vision by appealing to appealing to shared aspirations.

**Inspire a shared vision and model the way.** All of the teachers stated that the technique they employ to motivate, lead, and encourage students is by setting the example themselves. Honesty, dependability, adhering to structure and policy are just a few of the behaviors the teachers discussed in their interviews. Displaying sound ethics is probably the most important competency needed by professional prison educators. Successful prison teachers not only possess a strong sense of ethical responsibility but they impart these values to their students by talking about them, insisting they are followed in their classrooms, and rewarding those who succeed.

*Recommendations for future research and implications for practice.*

To better understand the milieu in which educators must operate, the political culture of prisons should be examined. In this researcher’s experience in the Virginia Department of Correctional Education and through conversations with teachers and administrators during conferences and learning opportunities, the consensus is that most of the educational systems are treated by many Department of Corrections officers and staff as unwanted “guests” of the correctional facility. Even though it is widely known that work programs and counseling classes such as anger management, life skills and
education have been shown to keep the prison population occupied and less inclined to riot, the officers themselves are skeptical of providing offenders with education (Latessa, & Lowencamp, 2006). The requirements to be a correctional officer are minimal: a high school diploma and a base level of physical prowess. The pay is quite low. For example, the starting pay for a correctional officer is $24,000. (Virginia Department of Corrections Job Site, 2010).

In the researcher’s experience teaching in a prison and in conversation with prison educators within Virginia, many potential students initially view education as a waste of time and irrelevant to their lives, as reinforced by prison culture and lack of family support. They are told that even when they do get out, they can’t get a job because of their felonious prison record. This is true, and a conundrum when thinking about the bleak future most of these men are encountering. Many insist they will have to go back to dealing drugs or stealing. Some have ideas of becoming their own business owner, which is a good way to convince them that learning more about math and language can help them in the long run. But it is a hard road to drive for both students and teachers.

Gehring and Sherwin (2007) sum up the caustic effect of political ideology on the underlying philosophies that have created and sustained one of the largest per capita prison populations in the world. They charge that at the core of incarceration philosophy is corporate greed, a socialistic system “designed to promote the well-being of the wealthy rather than the poor “(p.351). They go on to explain how, in addition to a political history that includes slavery, is a propensity to blame the criminal solely for his crime and not include the effect of societal marginalization. As previously discussed, many prison education programs are evaluated solely on that particular state or region’s
recidivism rate which seems to be difficult to pin point as there is not an accepted
definition of the term (Moeller, M. & Rivera, B., 2004). The researchers stress that, “The
constant pressure that correctional educators experience to justify programs with
recidivism rate can result in misinformation, analogous to the often-cited tendency of
criminals to tell lies” (Gehring & Sherwin, 2007 p.353). The comparison is difficult to
decipher. After a brief overview of the history of corporations and their rise to stardom,
the researchers address the social consequences of business ideology. This article
explores the fallacy of using recidivism data as a measurement of correctional education
success. Gehrig draws the conclusion that “recidivism is a flawed measure of correctional
education success” (p. 374) by using his philosophical versions of conceptual common
sense, research, and morality to support his claim.

One of the main problems is that a firm and universally accepted definition of
recidivism had not been adopted until recently, a reality which skews prior national and
regional data (Reentry Policy Council Website, 9/15/10). Also, the manner in which
crime, arrest, incarceration, community milieu, parole, and re-finding affect one another
is difficult to measure. There are just too many variables.

Gehring (2000) lists some strategies that may help future recidivism studies: 1) come up with an accepted and universal definition of the word; 2) establish pilot
programs and then observe and measure them; 3) maintain the emphasis on preparing the
inmate for community outside; 4) schedule regular meetings to monitor the studies. He
stresses that public attention has focused on the common sense element of the issue,
neglecting the research-oriented, program development, and moral elements. There is
room in this new field for much study and analysis that will help prison educators
discover appropriate ways in which to measure success that is not dependent on recidivism data.

A classroom in prison is a cornucopia of possibilities. State paid staff, teachers, correctional officers, wardens and counselors all serve as role models to offenders as they do their time. The individuals who go to work in prisons are the people who model employment behavior and pass on their attitudes to the inmates. There are many more studies to be done on the effect of paid staff behavior and modeling on worker inmates. The field of Human Performance Technology would be well served to look into this rarely tapped subject matter. However, the constraints of policy and the protection of offender privacy will be issues to overcome.

Offenders and prisons are topics often arising in media. CNN and other stations have tabs marked justice or crime in order to make it easier for people to peruse. We all see how politicized is the climate surrounding incarceration. Crime is a hot topic from local elections to national race for the presidency. We know what a massive economic commitment America has in the operation of its prisons and the maintenance of its offenders and the safety of its public (Mauer, & Chesney-Lind, 2002).

The offenders are fully aware of the manner in which they are portrayed in media. It is a frequent topic of conversation. Many deserve the fear and paranoia the populace has when thinking on them or the nature of their crimes; and many offenders truly do become rehabilitated and deeply regret the consequences of their choices.

Most offenders spend hours in the law library researching their own case and becoming quite adept at law by the time of their release. They know the deck is stacked
against them but many are hopeful they will be able to secure that full time well paying job and stay out of the streets, not succumb to the temptation to do more crime.

Governor McDonnell of Virginia recently has delivered some important and highly politicized statements highlighting the importance of reentry as a factor in the success of the newly free to stay that way. Billions of dollars are being spent on programs supposedly designed to reduce recidivism by increasing the population and professionalism of reentry programs. Further studies on the efficacy of his newly appointed council will be interesting to read.

Ashcroft, Eggleston, and Gehring's (2007) monumental work on educational teacher characteristics, *Handbook for Correctional Education Leaders*. *Correctional teacher skills, characteristics, and performance indicators* could provide a useful rubric researchers could use to study prison educator competencies at work. The appendices may be very useful for scientific case studies of certain classrooms and teachers. However, due to the restrictive atmosphere in the Virginia Department of Correctional Education and the ethical concerns of University Research Review Boards, it has proved impossible for me to directly study the teachers’ performance within their classroom environments. Perhaps, in the future, those in charge of offender education will be more willing to allow researchers into the classroom to directly study the relationship between offender students and prison teachers.
Appendix 1 – Confidentiality Agreement signed yearly by DCE teachers

I acknowledge and understand that I have access to confidential information regarding employees, students, inmates, and the public. In addition, I acknowledge and understand that I may have access to proprietary or other confidential business information belonging to the Department of Correctional Education. Therefore, except as required by law, I agree that I will not:

- Access data that is unrelated to my job duties at the Department of Correctional Education;
- Disclose to any other person, or allow any other person access to any information related to the Department of Correctional Education that is proprietary or confidential and/or pertains to employees, students, inmates, or the public.

Disclosure of information includes but is not limited to, verbal discussions, FAX transmissions, electronic mail messages, voice mail communication, written documentation, “loaning” computer access codes, and/or another transmission of data.

I understand that the Department of Correctional Education and its employees, students, inmates, public, staff or others may suffer irreparable harm by disclosure of proprietary or confidential information and that the Department of Correctional Education may seek legal remedies available to it should such disclosure occur.
Further, I understand that violations of this agreement may result in disciplinary action, up to and including, my termination of employment.
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