



Integral Correctional Education

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

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This article is part one of an overview of Integral Correctional Education. It briefly introduces salient aspects of the field of correctional education, defines correctional education, introduces the Integral model, and outlines the historical periods of correctional education practice. A discussion of some core principles of correctional education is followed by some problems that afflict inmate students, correctional educators, and the communities they serve. The article ends by suggesting that these problems might be solved if governments recognized that—despite the public safety concerns they have generated—prisoners are still people. This humanistic solution can be embedded within an Integral approach to correctional education. In addition to supporting such humanistic solutions, the Integral approach also results in less partial, more efficient, and less costly solutions to identified problems. Interested readers can explore the next article in this series.

Definition of Correctional Education

Correctional education is the education of confined students in residential confinement institutions—juvenile facilities and adult prisons. It is closely allied with alternative education and the related field of prison reform, and is relatively eclectic. For example, correctional schools often include programming in adult basic education, vocational education, special education, cultural and social education or life skills, and postsecondary education. Yet there are various views about exactly what correctional education is or should be. The remainder of this section briefly presents these views.

There are three definitions of correctional education: (1) program-based, (2) situational, and (3) inherent to instruction for confined learners. Each definition is logical and coherent and suggests that the field has unique emphases; stage 1 represents the least mature understanding, stage 3 the most advanced. The premise of each definition is that correctional education is the education of learners in confinement institutions.



The first definition maintains that correctional education is an institutional program, and functions much like any other institutional program—the kitchen, the business office, the chaplaincy, institutional industries, etc. Supporters of this program-based definition sometimes discuss “corrections education” instead of “correctional education.” This slight spelling difference reflects a profound difference in meaning. The word “corrections” describes services provided by the agency that manages the institutions, while “correctional” describes anything that takes place within the institution (sometimes education is provided by an outside agency). Austin MacCormick, the founder of the modern correctional education movement, deliberately applied the term “correctional,” which is also the name of the Correctional Education Association and the *Journal of Correctional Education*. MacCormick’s term stuck.

The second is the situational definition—it holds that correctional education is education that takes place in a correctional institution. This implies that correctional education is no different from other fields of education, except that it is conducted within the walls or within the compound. Supporters of this definition identify professionally with the disciplines related to correctional education (English, elementary education, carpentry, etc.), rather than with the field of correctional education itself.

The inherent definition of correctional education applies structured learning/teaching strategies that interrupt asocial, nonsocial, or antisocial behavior and foster social learning and growth. This is the only definition that rests on the *correctional* dimension of the field. Adherents believe correctional education is an intervention strategy that helps people who want to “turn their lives around” or correct their behavior.

The inherent definition represents the possibility of social aspiration for populations that have traditionally not had or used equal access to educational opportunity, and of people who have lived in conflict with their communities. This definition suggests that all institutional programs must bend to the priority of preparing students for successful community life. It also suggests



that a more inclusive or comprehensive approach is needed to prepare them to attain their aspirations.

The Integral Model

Philosopher Ken Wilber has taken an enormous amount of cross-cultural research and created what is called Integral Theory or the AQAL model. Integral means inclusive, comprehensive, and indicative of the “big picture.” An Integral approach begins by acknowledging four of the most basic perspectives available to any individual: the interior and exterior of the individual and collective: intentional (subjective), behavioral (objective), cultural (intersubjective), and social (interobjective), or what can be summarized respectively as the pronouns “I,” “It,” “We,” and “Its.”

Advocates of the Integral approach therefore make a special effort to acknowledge and include as many perspectives as possible. They assume that all views have some *partial* claim on the truth, or they would have no proponents. Further, each element of the truth can be viewed through the four basic perspectives (the four quadrants), which in turn can be integrated with developmental levels, lines of growth, states of consciousness, and types of personalities. Therefore, a comprehensive Integral view would consist of “all-quadrants, all-levels, all-lines, all-states, and all-types,” which is often signified as AQAL. However, for the purpose of these three articles, our attention will be directed especially to quadrants and levels.

The Quadrants

The quadrants are the most basic perspectives we can take when looking at any event. They are the interior and exterior of the individual and collective. So, “I” represents the interior of an individual (designated as the Upper-Left quadrant), while “It” is the exterior of an individual (designated as the Upper Right). And likewise “We” is the interior of a collective (designated as the Lower-Left quadrant) and “Its” is the exterior of a collective (designated as the Lower Right).



Each quadrant can be identified by its placement: Upper Left (UL), Upper Right (UR), Lower Left (LL), and Lower Right (LR). The UL quadrant (interior-individual) represents feelings and interpretations. The UR (exterior-individual) represents things that can easily be measured—it is behavioral and empirical. The LR (exterior-collective) represents the socioeconomic, political, institutional, legal, and overall relationships within systems. The LL (interior-collective) represents shared meaning, cultural, religious, and philosophical understandings between people.

In addition, each quadrant represents an aspect of reality known by what Habermas has termed a “validity claim:” an inherent criterion to help identify whether the things associated most directly with that quadrant are indeed true within that quadrant. The validity claim for the UL intentional quadrant is truthfulness. Our understanding of subjective realities depends on self-reports; the only test of such information is whether the person is being truthful. The validity claim for the UR behavioral quadrant is objective truth, according to the empirical, scientific meaning of the term. The validity claim for the LR social quadrant is functional fit—for example, the extent to which a socioeconomic organization fits with social experiences and professed aspirations. The validity claim of the LL cultural quadrant is justice or the extent to which group experiences are consistent with the group’s moral and legal parameters. (We might also note that “social” indicates infrastructure: exterior buildings, transportation and information systems, land use, and so forth. “Culture,” on the other hand, denotes value-oriented worldspaces: interior morés, shared expectations, perceived constraints, and so forth.) When all of this is combined into a single chart, the result is shown in figure 1.



Upper Left (UL)	Upper Right (UR)
<p>INTERIOR-INDIVIDUAL SUBJECTIVE/INTENTIONAL/“I”</p> <p>Validity Claim: Truthfulness</p>	<p>EXTERIOR-INDIVIDUAL OBJECTIVE/BEHAVIORAL/“It”</p> <p>Validity Claim: Truth</p>
<p>INTERIOR-COLLECTIVE INTERSUBJECTIVE/ CULTURAL/“We”</p> <p>Validity Claim: Justness</p>	<p>EXTERIOR-COLLECTIVE INTEROBJECTIVE/SOCIAL/“Its”</p> <p>Validity Claim: Functional Fit</p>
Lower Left (LL)	Lower Right (LR)

Figure 1. The Four Quadrants

Consistent with the Integral emphasis, the quadrants are all connected—the quadrant structure encourages us to be inclusive, to see interconnections. Another way of expressing this principle is to acknowledge that all exteriors (things and processes) have an interior, and everything in the universe is part of a whole. Subatomic particles are parts of atoms, which are parts of molecules, which are parts of cells, which are parts of organs, which are parts of organisms, etc. One way of recognizing these interconnections—to recognize that each thing exists by itself, and is also part of a larger thing—is to acknowledge that our placement of things in the respective quadrants is really just to facilitate consideration of it. There is a difference between the quadrant map and the actual territory; we want to use the quadrants to tease out relationships that otherwise might have gone unnoticed, but the system is not intended to replace reality. In fact, the Integral map is actually a performance of the territory. In other words, the map is not of a reality “out there,” but rather highlights aspects of one’s own awareness and the perspectives one can take (and what those various perspectives disclose). Having identified these caveats, a little time directed to illustrate the quadrants will demonstrate their usefulness to correctional educators.



<p>INTENTIONAL Rationale for the Work</p>	<p>BEHAVIORAL Classroom Instruction</p>
<p>CULTURAL Professional Identity</p>	<p>SOCIAL Administration</p>

Figure 2. Domains of Correctional Education

In figure 2, the rationale for the work is portrayed as an intentional (UL) phenomenon. Correctional education is uniquely concerned with rationale—a situation that should be expected whenever people are removed from their families and normal settings. They tend to focus on the need to understand what happened to them and why. Working in confined settings also prompts many staff to look for the meaning in their everyday practice. This combined inmate and staff effect tends to make prisons and juvenile facilities places where many people are more concerned about why things happened to them than what actually happened. For example, a person who is stabbed in a prison might fixate on why it happened. This rationale-oriented emphasis is one of the factors that make correctional education a unique field of education.

Every field of education has a unique emphasis: *special education* is teaching/learning strategy oriented; *elementary education* is socialization-oriented; *secondary education* is qualifications-oriented; *vocational education* is skills/competencies-oriented. The emphasis of *correctional education* is the search for meaning or rationale, but it is also an eclectic discipline: in addition to its own emphasis, correctional education contains the other emphases of related fields.

The behavioral (UR) quadrant is the domain of classroom instruction. This is the arena that should be the core of our daily work, where teacher expectations—goals and objectives—interact



with and help shape student learning. Under this heading, we associate curriculum, classroom logistics, activities, and interactions.

The social (LR) quadrant is the reality of the socioeconomic system; its validity claim is “functional fit.” It is about resources, both human and material, and is reflected most concisely in the budget, the province of administration. Many correctional educators focus mostly on funds assigned to equip and stock their classrooms—this is an accurate but partial view. Correctional educators themselves are essential resources (denoted “personnel” in budgets), as are the physical plant in which they teach and the furniture that occupies those spaces (capital outlay), the procedures by which students come to and leave their classes, and the services of volunteer tutors.

The cultural (LL) quadrant is associated with professional identity. In this domain, we consider professional networking, such as that which occurs through Correctional Education Association conferences, contact with persons at other locations who provide similar services, and the reading and writing of professional journals such as the *Journal of Correctional Education*. Many correctional educators report that the most difficult aspect of their work is resource inadequacy, but evidence suggests it is actually professional isolation that exacerbates most of the problems experienced by education providers in this most difficult setting. For example, most of us never encountered a person with a degree in the field of correctional education rather than a related field; most correctional educators do not know the authors or titles of the field’s definitive books. Even if we encountered it, many of us would not recognize a program that is consistent with the great themes of correctional education. As a group, correctional educators tend to be poorly prepared for the work, and this condemns us to reinventing the wheel whenever we are challenged by a problem that impacts teaching and learning.

There are a number of issues that practitioners must address when they put student learning at the center of their professional lives: the problem of criminals with job skills and the different



emphases of education in the local schools and confined settings. In addition, there are concerns that often intervene to make teaching and learning difficult in the confinement setting. Correctional education resources are frequently diverted to non-education priorities; institutional educators tend not to be prepared through useful preservice for their work in correctional education (so they have no concept of the history of the field, no tools to solve the intense problems they face daily); and the correctional setting is typically staffed with personnel who have an anti-education disposition (or who are not sure that education for inmates can or should be provided).

All these concerns can be placed in the quadrants. Thus, thinking about the quadrants as representing the four domains of the field can facilitate clarity about correctional education: rationale for the work (intentional or UL), instruction (behavioral or UR), administration (social or LR), and professional identity (cultural or LL). The next two articles will help us sort out concepts associated with the quadrants and thus provide a framework for three different but related perspectives on the same work: those of correctional teachers, students, and administrators. However, our current focus will continue to be a brief summary of correctional education concerns about teaching and learning.

When Student Learning Is Not a Priority

Not all correctional education experiences are helpful. Most institutional school programs are administered by jailers, not educators. Qualified educators often are not in charge of key educational decisions. Central among these are decisions about the school curriculum, spending funds that are earmarked for educational purposes, and the hiring and firing of education personnel. Although a minority of institutional education programs are structured like real schools—with qualified educators making these decisions—most merely look like real schools.



For example, many institutional education programs only have vocational courses that are needed to manage the facility: auto repair (to maintain state cars), welding (to do institutional maintenance), culinary arts (to staff the kitchen), and so forth. Even the academic programs reflect the warden's ideology toward education: emphasis on the elementary grades, with few secondary courses (the GED is often the only route to secondary completion) and no postsecondary programs at all. The schoolrooms are often remote from each other and use an assortment of facilities not designed for teaching and learning, a sign that education is not prioritized (broom closets, corridors, shower rooms, with standardized testing in noisy dining areas). Additionally, a standard problem in many facilities is that the institutional superintendent can use the funds assigned to education for other purposes—a new parking lot, overtime for correctional officers, new uniforms, etc.

Many institutions have far fewer teachers assigned than are shown in the budget, with the personnel costs “rolled up” and diverted to other priorities. Inmates' time in school is subject to interruptions by almost any institutional employee who needs the inmate to work in a shop or come to sign papers or be briefed on some new regulation.

Most institutions have several educational programs; only a few have full, well-rounded school programs. Yet most inmates can be transferred at any time to another facility in the system, regardless of the educational programs offered there. In summary, continuity of inmate student learning is almost never an institutional priority, and correctional systems are reluctant to conceptualize transfer systems that would help students complete the education programs they are able to start.

Almost no correctional educators were professionally prepared to work in correctional education, nor do they have access to the literature of the field of correctional education. As a result, they have to “reinvent the wheel” whenever they encounter a classroom problem. A symptom of this is that many correctional teachers do not apply a student-centered approach in their classrooms.



Rather, they apply a curriculum or teacher-centered approach. Drill sheets frequently are used as a procedure to make it appear that individualized learning is being pursued. Teachers are confused about the attributes of a good school program, alienated from colleagues in the local schools and colleges and therefore vulnerable to anti-education institutional influences.

Unfortunately, the combined sentiments of various groups contribute to the institutional anti-education hostility. This is fueled by: (a) many correctional officers, who frequently express the view that education is nothing more than an attempt to “coddle” criminals (which is not true—learning is hard work); (b) inmates themselves, who were typically turned off by the education they received as children; and (c) institutional managers, whose priority has to be public safety and the health of the inmates and staff. In brief, prisons were not designed as schools, and few people are sure whether they can, or should, function as schools.

A Remedy Not Often Considered

The problems that afflict correctional education appear myriad and complex. However, many of these problems are driven by misperceptions. For example, most of the structural problems could be satisfactorily addressed if governments, decision-makers, and communities recognized that prisoners are people, despite the problems they caused prior to their incarceration.¹ This concept was articulated during the 1950s by Kenyon Scudder, the reform warden at a large and innovative West Coast prison without walls—the title of his book was *Prisoners Are People*.

This changed attitude would bring an array of present practices into question. If prisoners are people, should not institutional schools be organized like other schools, with educators in charge of curriculum, the education budget, and educational personnel decisions? Should not continuity of student learning be built into these “inside” schools, as it is in the local schools in our communities? Should not teachers be prepared for the special challenges they meet in the workplace? Should not prison teachers be good people, instead of merely loyal to the



institutional superintendent—and should not they be able and willing to help confined students become engaged in learning? Should not an effective, efficient, humane, and cost effective system be implemented?

To answer all these questions affirmatively, requires only that citizen voters, decision-makers, and correctional educators approach their work in an inclusive way, through a more effective, compassionate, and comprehensive—an Integral—approach to correctional education. Anything less will merely perpetuate the abuses already experienced, and endanger the public safety that results from the unchecked cycle of crime.



Endnotes

¹ How individuals perceive criminals depends on the developmental level of the perceiver. Preconventional, conventional, and postconventional levels of development perceive criminals in markedly different ways. Stress and fear can also invite regression in one's developmental "center of gravity." Here the stereotypes and fear generated by media coverage of the "anonymous criminal" are of little service and often serve to escalate the public's fear.



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