The Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program’s Impact on Academic Self-Efficacy

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Building on the work of Sarah Allred, a faculty/student research team studied the impact of an Inside-Out course on academic self-efficacy at a maximum-security men’s prison on North Alabama. Attention was also given to the demographic backgrounds of the students so that researchers could examine what, if any, role demographics played in the results.

Background

The article “Self-Efficacy: An Important Aspect of Prison-Based Learning” is the cornerstone of this research. In this publication, Allred recommended narrowing the focus to “academic self-efficacy” as well as measuring the demographics of the participants. A scale that was developed and used by Roth et. al. served as a basis for formulating academic-specific items.

Methodology

- Two groups of students, “Inside” (incarcerated) and “Outside” (U.N.A.) were admitted to the course
- Each population was equally represented
- Classes took place inside the prison
- The professor took on a facilitator’s role instead of a position of authority
- A correctional officer was present during every class
- Every student was called by their first name and the sharing of personal information was strictly prohibited
- Students participated in circle discussions
- An independent, small group project was the focus of the semester and consumed approximately ¼ of the course
- A pretest was administered to each population, separate of the other, within the first two weeks of the semester. It was read aloud to all students

Pretest Results

All students enrolled in the course elected to participate in the study after giving informed consent. Consistent with the hypothesis, Outside students are noted to have initially higher levels of academic self-efficacy.

Expectations

- We expect an increase in reported academic self-efficacy amongst both populations in the posttest results, congruent with prior research
- Many students from the previous year’s Inside-Out course expressed significant personal and academic growth as a result of their participation in the program in their written reflections