The question occurred to me recently (October 2020) - Has there ever been a comparison study of canteens?

- Items Offered (staff, male, female, juvenile prisoners; city, county, jail, state, federal)
- Item Costs (Wholesale, street retail, canteen) factor in shipping costs - e.g., goods cost more in Alaska due to shipping costs.

Who operates the canteens?
Who benefits from the canteens?
What the outside vendor contracts permit and how the beneficiaries benefit. (e.g., permitted to increase prices every six (6) months; canteen profits exceeding a certain amount go into the government's coffers.)

All of this information should be available on-line, I would think.

Why would it be of interest?
There is the common perception that the outside vendors are taking advantage of their monopoly status to grossly overcharge the prisoners. For example - at Wakulla Correctional Institution, in Florida, the staff pay 50 cents for a bottle of water. The prisoners, however, are charged $1.02 for the same size bottle.

Another perception is that vendor contracts are granted to benefit “insiders”. That is, “Company A” gets the contract, even though “Company B” would be a better vendor, because certain individuals (e.g., the wife of a Department of Corrections bureaucrat) have a financial interest in “Company A”.

(The author is a former death row prisoner who has been serving time in Florida since 1971.)