

Education in Nordic Prisons

Prisoners' Educational Backgrounds, Preferences and Motivation

Ole-Johan Eikeland, Terje Manger og Arve Asbjørnsen (Eds.)

Åge Diseth
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Nordic co-operation

Nordic cooperation is one of the world's most extensive forms of regional collaboration, involving Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and three autonomous areas: the Faroe Islands, Greenland, and Åland.

Nordic cooperation has firm traditions in politics, the economy, and culture. It plays an important role in European and international collaboration, and aims at creating a strong Nordic community in a strong Europe.

Nordic cooperation seeks to safeguard Nordic and regional interests and principles in the global community. Common Nordic values help the region solidify its position as one of the world's most innovative and competitive.

Foreword by the Nordic network for prison education

The Nordic network for prison education was formally established on 1 January, 2006. Its members work in key positions in the correctional services and at the educational authorities with specific responsibility for prison education in the Nordic countries. The network was originally informal; our collaboration has actually been ongoing since the 1970s.

The current members of the network are: Kaj Raundrup, Danish Prison and Probation Service, Marianne Mäki, Finnish Criminal Sanctions Agency, Erlendur S. Baldursson, Icelandic State Prison Administration, Suzanne Five, Correctional Service of Norway, Central Administration, Torfinn Langelid, County Governor of Hordaland (liaison officer), Norway, Lena Axelsson, Swedish Prison and Probation Service, Head office, and Svenolov Svensson, Swedish Prison and Probation Service, Regional office for Western Sweden.

Training and education for inmates is a central theme in the legislation of each individual country, as well as in international conventions and recommendations. In some countries, the basic rule is that prison inmates have the same right to education as other citizens. But there is a need for more knowledge about the educational backgrounds and needs of prisoners.

It was for this reason that, in 2006, the Nordic network for prison education took the initiative to a Nordic survey of the educational background of prisoners. We contacted scholars from the relevant research environments in the Nordic countries, and filed a joint application for financial support from *Cirius Nordplus Voksen* in Denmark to carry out a study with the projected title: "Survey of educational backgrounds, rights to education, and motivation concerning education among inmates in Nordic prisons." Cirius is an authority within the Danish Ministry of Sci-

ence, Technology and Innovation that supports the internationalization of education and training in Denmark.

We were fortunate to be awarded Cirius funding for this joint Nordic survey. Each of the Nordic countries therefore produced a national report, on which this final joint report is based. The national reports provided new knowledge concerning the educational backgrounds of prisoners, and resulted in a great deal of attention being focused on the needs of this group by politicians, decision-makers, the correctional services, the educational authorities and the mass media. Research-based knowledge is essential to develop good, well-structured educational programs that satisfy the needs of the target group.

We also received funding from the Nordic Council of Ministers for translation of the report into English. It will be distributed to all ministries of justice and education in Europe, and we hope it will be a source of inspiration for similar studies.

The County Governor of Hordaland, Norway took responsibility for administrative coordination of the project. The research aspects of the project were carried out by the Faculty of Psychology, University of Bergen, in collaboration with the consulting group Eikeland Research and Teaching.

We are grateful to *Cirius Nordplus Voksen* for providing the financial support that enabled us to carry out the project. Our thanks also go to the Danish Prison and Probation Service, the Finnish Criminal Sanctions Agency, the Icelandic Ministry of Justice, the office of the County Governor of Hordaland, Norway and the head office of the Swedish Prison and Probation Service. Above all, we thank the group of Norwegian researchers who prepared and carried out the study.

Bergen, September, 2008

Torfinn Langelid

Liaison officer, Nordic network for prison education

Editors' preface

For many years, administrators responsible for prison education at national level in the Nordic countries have collaborated. This led to the formal establishment of the Nordic network for prison education on 1 January 2006. We soon felt the need to expand our cooperation on a knowledge-based platform. For this reason, the Nordic network for prison education sought collaboration with Nordic researchers, and in spring 2006 we filed a joint application with the *Cirius Nordplus Voksen* program to carry out a study with the working title: "Survey of educational backgrounds, rights to education, and motivation concerning education among inmates in Nordic prisons."

Cirius Nordplus Voksen allocated funding for a report based on data collection in each of the five countries, and now five separate national reports have been published, in addition to this joint report.

The individuals in the Nordic research group responsible for the preparation and carrying out of the studies are: Assistant Professor Associate Professor Peter Koudahl, The Danish School of Education, Aarhus University, researcher Leena Koski, Finnish National Board of Education, Professor Helgi Gunnlaugsson, University of Iceland, Professor Stefan Samuelsson, Linköping University, and Professors Arve Asbjørnsen and Terje Manger, both from the University of Bergen. The project administrator and coordinator was the County Governor of Hordaland, who at the appointment of the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, is national director of prison education in Norway. The scientific coordination was carried out by the Faculty of Psychology at the University of Bergen in collaboration with the consulting group Eikeland Research and Teaching.

We are grateful to *Cirius Nordplus Voksen* for supporting this project. Our gratitude also goes to the Danish Prison and Probation Service (Den-

mark), The Finnish Criminal Sanctions Agency (Finland), The Ministry of Justice (Iceland), the County Governor of Hordaland (Norway) and the head office of the Swedish Prison and Probation Service (Sweden) for their initiatives and their support to the project. Last but not least, we are indebted to all the staff members working in the prison and probation services and at the prison schools who made it possible for us to carry out our investigations, and to the prisoners who filled out the questionnaire.

The editors and authors of the individual chapters are responsible for the contents, and for any possible errors in the report.

Bergen, September, 2008

Ole-Johan Eikeland, Terje Manger, Arve Asbjørnsen, editors

Summary

The studies

Prisoners have rights concerning education and training, and these rights are regulated in international conventions and recommendations. The member states of the United Nations and the Council of Europe undertake to implement the conventions and recommendations to which they are parties, and the Nordic countries have thus incorporated the European Convention on Human Rights into their legislation.

In 2006 and 2007, extensive questionnaire surveys were carried out in Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden to study the educational backgrounds and needs of Nordic prisoners. Each national study was performed on a specified week.

In Denmark, the questionnaire was distributed to all 3,461 prisoners on the week in question, and the response rate was 69.5%. In Finland, the questionnaire was distributed to all 3,432 prisoners, with a response rate of 71.2%. In Iceland the questionnaire was distributed to all 119 prisoners, with a response rate 66%. The Norwegian prison population was 3,289. All prisoners received the questionnaire; and the response rate was 71.1%. In Sweden, because of the large number of prisoners in comparison with the prisons of the other Nordic countries, the questionnaire was given to a sample of prisoners: every fifth male prisoner and half the female prison population were selected, and the response rate was 93%.

Background information

In Nordic prisons, the average prisoner is in his or her thirties. Iceland has the youngest prison population, with an average age of thirty-one, while

Finland and Sweden have the oldest, with the average age being over thirty-six.

Sentence length for prisoners varies somewhat amongst the five Nordic countries. In Iceland and Sweden at the time of the survey, only four per cent of the prisoners were serving sentences shorter than three months, while the corresponding figure for Finland was 9.5%, for Denmark 12.6%, and for Norway 24.3%. In four of the countries, the proportion serving the longest sentences (five years or more) was over 20%. This applies to Sweden (21.4%), Iceland (23%), Finland (22%) and Denmark (23.1%, which also includes prisoners serving indeterminate length sentences). In Norway, in contrast, 15.6% of prisoners were serving sentences longer than five years.

The proportions of men and women prisoners were similar in the five countries. Between 94 and 95% of all prisoners at the time of the study were men. Ethnic origin, on the other hand varies. Finland has the highest proportion of prisoners who are citizens of the country where they are serving their sentences (92.6%). The corresponding figure for Iceland is 88%; for Norway 85.6%; for Denmark 84.3%; and for Sweden 74.6%. (In the Swedish study an additional factor registered was whether or not the prisoner's first language was Swedish. The figure for Swedish mother tongue was 62.5%.) Thus, according to our study, the prison population in Sweden consisted of more individuals of non-native backgrounds than the prison populations in the other Nordic countries.

Education

Although there are differences among the educational systems of the five Nordic countries, all have the same basic structure, with nine years of compulsory school (although for some older prisoners the compulsory number of years of schooling was seven), an upper secondary school system with both general and vocational training, and a higher education system with universities and other educational institutions. According to the study, between seven and sixteen per cent of the prisoners in the Nordic countries have not completed compulsory school. The highest figure in this respect was found in Iceland, 16%. Finland and Norway had the

lowest figures (7.2% in both countries), while in Denmark and Sweden every ninth prisoner had not completed compulsory school.

The proportion of prisoners whose highest completed level of formal education was compulsory school varied, from approximately one quarter in Finland to nearly half in Iceland and Sweden.

Denmark and Finland had somewhat higher proportions of prisoners who had studied at upper secondary level (meaning one, two or three years of upper secondary education or vocational training) than prisoners in the other Nordic countries. Fewest prisoners in Iceland had completed upper secondary education.

In Norway and Sweden, approximately one out of every ten prisoners had studied at level three (a university or other institute of higher education). Denmark had the lowest proportion of prisoners with higher education (4.2%).

Generally, our studies indicate that younger prisoners in the Nordic countries have particularly weak educational backgrounds.

The proportion of prisoners who were not participating in prison educational activities at the time of the studies was very similar in the Nordic countries. Iceland has the lowest proportion (55%), while Denmark has the highest, with three quarters of the prisoners not participating in any educational activities. In the other countries at the time of the studies, approximately two out of every three prisoners were not taking part in any formal or informal prison educational activities.

Iceland had the highest proportion of prisoners studying at level two, i.e. vocational or general upper secondary level. One out of every twelve prisoners in Finland (7.9%) was studying at compulsory school level. In Denmark one out of every nine (11.0%) prisoners was studying either at preparatory or general adult education level. Norway, Sweden and Iceland all had the most, prisoners studying at university or higher education level approximately 3%.

In the questionnaire the prisoners were asked to state the extent to which each of fifteen reasons had been important to them in terms of the decision of whether or not to participate in prison educational activities. The reason "To spend my time doing something sensible and useful" was clearly the main reason for prisoners in all five countries to decide to study in prison. The main reasons for *not* studying in prison were that the prison in question did not offer educational activities at all, or did not

offer courses that suited the prisoners, such as vocational training. Between one out of ten and one out of four prisoners in the different countries stated that they were not at all interested in studying while in prison.

Prisoners who were participating in educational activities were generally satisfied with their studies and with the teaching. Inadequate access to ICT equipment was experienced as the main problem with or obstacle to prison educational programs in all five countries, with the greatest dissatisfaction in this respect stated by prisoners in Iceland (65%) and Denmark (61%). Prisoners serving short sentences participated in prison educational activities less frequently than prisoners serving longer sentences.

Practical implications

Pursuant to the international legislation the Nordic countries have ratified, the rights of every group in society to education must be safeguarded. Prisoners are a diverse group, and this diversity must be taken into account when it comes to the organization of prison education. It is a particularly worrisome finding that many of the younger prisoners never completed compulsory school and have not attended upper secondary school. The prison and probation services and the education authorities must keep themselves up-to-date regarding the needs for education in correctional environments, and ensure that the education and training offered is adapted to those needs. Serving a short sentence may pave the way for continued criminality, so it is very important aspect that time behind bars does not mean interruption of ongoing education for young prisoners. One of the recommendations deriving from this report is that each of the Nordic countries must make vigorous efforts to involve all prisoners, irrespective of the length of their sentences, in prison educational activities.

Our findings from the part of the survey concerning prisoners who did not participate in educational activities in prison indicate that there are a number of circumstances preventing them from doing so. The main impediments are institutional. There is too little variation in the educational activities offered, and they are too poorly adapted to prisoners' needs. More vocational or professionally-oriented courses are particularly nee-

ded. Many prisoners also stated that they had not received information on what educational activities were available.

An increasing proportion of prisoners are qualified for higher education. This more opportunities must be opened up for prisoners to study at universities and other institutes of higher education, such as day release privileges to pursue studies and independent study with tutoring in prison.

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Introduction

by Terje Manger and Ole-Johan Eikeland

Individuals in prison have a right to education and training. This right is regulated in international conventions and recommendations. Because the member states of the United Nations and the Council of Europe have to implement the conventions and recommendations to which they are parties, the Nordic countries have incorporated the European Convention on Human Rights into their legislation. For many prisoners, utilizing this right to education and training has contributed to being able to turn over a new leaf in life. But a great deal still remains to be done in the Nordic countries as elsewhere before we will be able to state that the rights of all prisoners to education have been satisfied.

There are a number of strong reasons, beyond the purely legal ones, for providing educational activities for prisoners. On the basis of humanistic ideals, education – including education for individuals in prison – is an important facet of civilized society. There is an inherent value in the acquisition of knowledge and skills; it contributes to development of the human being. The Nordic countries also have a basic consensus concerning humane treatment of prisoners, in which education plays a major role.

Another justification for prison education is that it contributes to enabling people serving time to continue studying or to become gainfully employed once they are released. This is based on an assumption to the effect that education reduces recidivism, or return to a life of crime. It has long been questioned whether this assumption is empirically founded, both because there has been too little research in this area and because existing research has methodological weaknesses. For these reasons, chapter one below analyzes whether or not there is research-based support for the

claim that educational activities for prisoners have a positive impact on reducing recidivism.

Legislation concerning the prison and probation and educational authorities in the Nordic countries explicitly describes the rights of prisoners to the same access to education as other citizens, as well as the responsibility of the authorities to provide it. However, the framework for education in prison is very different from that applying to the rest of the school system. Negative aspects for prisoners include prison walls and controls, and the fact that pedagogical considerations often have to play second fiddle to security considerations. In the worst case, for these reasons, the prison environment may erode the very features prison education activities strive to build up. On the other hand, some aspects of being in prison may have a promoting effect on the learning abilities of students. For some prisoners, being in prison can provide the stabilizing structure that enables them to attend school regularly in a more drug-free environment. Many prisoners aspire to give a positive picture of their development to their families and their non-criminal friends and colleagues outside prison. It is essential that such individuals be offered educational activities that correspond to their needs.

Although Nordic cooperation has resulted in clear improvements in prison education in each of the collaborating countries, there is still vast potential for improvement. In 1999, the Nordic Council adopted a recommendation on prison education in a Nordic perspective, the aim of which was to investigate the possibilities of initiating collaborative projects in this area at the Nordic level. A Nordic project group, consisting of representatives from the prison and probation services and the educational authorities was appointed, and their work resulted in an updated comparative study of prison education in the Nordic countries. This report was published in 2003, and one of its conclusions was that the prison education available at the time did not correspond to the training needs of the prisoners. The project group also pointed out that prison education only accounts for a small fraction of the total cost of having a person in prison, and that increased investments in prison education would probably imply socioeconomic benefits to society. The group also emphasized the need for further cooperation starting from a shared knowledge base, highlighting the need for documentation and research.

This need implies an acknowledgement of the fact that we have too little knowledge today of the extent to which the legislated right to education is actually complied with in prisons. We need to know more about the educational backgrounds of prisoners, their preferences and motivation concerning education, and what circumstances impact on whether or not they choose to participate in prison educational activities. Individuals with weak basic educational backgrounds and consequently little if any study skills, also tend to be out of practice at using study techniques and learning strategies. We need to know more about the consequences of all this in terms of their learning abilities. Moreover, both the educational authorities and individuals working in prison education have had far too little systematic feedback from prisoners participating in the educational activities offered.

The Nordic national administrators with responsibility for prison education in the Nordic countries have developed good cooperation. To strengthen the positive functions of prison education, more knowledge-based cooperation is also needed, with international collaboration between administrators and researchers. This report presents the results of the first joint Nordic survey of prison education. The survey was made of a representative sample of prisoners in Sweden, and the entire prison populations in Denmark, Finland, Iceland and Norway during a specified time period. Chapter one below provides the previous research background, chapter two the research methods used in our studies. Chapters three through seven report on the findings in the five individual countries, and in chapter eight these findings are compared. Chapter nine provides an overall summary and discussion.

1. Research review, the education of prisoner

by Terje Manger, Ole-Johan Eikeland, and Arve Asbjørnsen

There are many important reasons for which prisoners should improve their education. From a socioeconomic point of view, educational shortcomings, resulting in poor opportunities on the labor market, make individuals who have served time in prison dependent on welfare benefits, thus increasing the burden on society (see, for example, Lochner & Moretti, 2004). In the personal and social perspectives, a weak educational background and low employment opportunities increase the risks of recidivism and harmful behavior, such as use of illegal narcotics, overconsumption of alcohol, and violence (see, for example, Steurer & Smith, 2003). Until recent years, we have had very little knowledge regarding the socioeconomic effects of education. We open this chapter by examining the question of whether education reduces criminality, providing illustrations from existing research. As mentioned in the introduction, we hypothesize that education does reduce recidivism, and we require research-based knowledge to confirm or reject this hypothesis. Next, we review existing research relevant to the subjects we investigated in the Nordic study, including literature on the educational backgrounds of prisoners, their expressed educational needs, study motivation, and learning disabilities. We also summarize research findings concerning how prisoners assess the available prison education, and their learning strategies. Our review refers to international research, with a particular focus on studies from the Nordic countries.

Does education reduce criminality?

Previous research on the relationship between education and recidivism tends to have one important limitation: neglecting circumstances external to educational activities that impact on relapsing into crime. There are also problems associated with self-selection (only successful prisoners or ex-prisoners participate in the studies), and there has also often been poor follow up of participants after release (Sherman et al., 1997). In recent years, however, a number of methodologically satisfactory studies have been published. During the same time period, authorities in many countries have gained insight into the importance of having valid, reliable empirical data in order to posit an answer to the question of whether or not education in prison reduces relapsing into crime.

A meta-analysis is a study that examines a number of other individual studies, reporting the results as average findings (of all the studies included in the analysis). Both Chapell (2004), in her meta-analysis based on studies carried out between 1990 and 1999, and Wells (2000) in a meta-analysis based on studies carried out between 1987 and 2000, show that education in prison has a moderate but significant effect on recidivism. The individual study "The OCE/CEA Three-State Recidivism Study of Correctional Education" was planned in a way intended to eliminate most of the methodological weaknesses of previous studies (Steurer & Smith, 2003). This study, performed in the US states of Maryland, Minnesota and Ohio, included 1,373 individuals who had been released from prison and who had participated in educational activities while serving time, as well as a control group of 1,797 individuals who had been released from prison and who had not participated in educational activities in prison. These groups were followed up for three years, and all recidivism during that time recorded. The researchers controlled for a number of other factors beyond education that impact on recidivism. They found that individuals in Minnesota who *had* participated in prison education had significantly less recidivism than those who *had not*, with regard to the variables new arrests, new charges, and new imprisonments. The same applied to Ohio, while in Maryland, although the former prisoners who had participated in prison education had less recidivism than the control group, the difference between the groups was not significant. Another interesting finding in the study by Steurer and Smith was that

among former prisoners who were employed after their release, wage levels were higher for those who had participated in prison education.

In a follow-up study of one hundred repeat offenders in Swedish prisons, Rydén-Lodi, Stattin and af Klinteberg (2005) found that former prisoners who had not relapsed into crime after three years had stronger educational backgrounds than those who had been sentenced again. This research team also found that the former prisoners who succeeded best were those whose parents had had higher expectations that they would do well at school.

A number of studies from recent years all indicate that, for individuals who display antisocial or criminal behavior, education reduces the tendency to relapse into crime. This provides research-based grounds, beyond the legal and humanistic ones, for being concerned with the educational backgrounds and needs of prisoners.

Societal benefits of education

As indicated by the studies described above, the impact of prison education may be measured by following up and comparing prisoners who participate in educational activities with those who do not. Another method for appraising the effects of education on criminality can be seen in studies that investigate the impact of increasing levels of education on society, particularly among groups of people who are often outside the framework of schools and education. Lochner and Moretti (2004) analyzed potential savings to society in terms of reduced criminality thanks to the fact that the numbers of people completing upper secondary level schooling is on the rise. The authors distinguish between private (individual) and social (societal) benefits of education. Their study was based both on statistical data (from the United States) and self-reported criminality and prison terms from a large, nationwide American study of young people. Both sources of data supported the hypothesis that higher educational levels went hand in hand with significant reductions in criminality. Measured as economic values, there were numerous private benefits of more education and lower criminality. In addition, however, this study also indicated that the *social benefits* of education were even greater than the private ones. For example, the authors found that a one

per cent increase in the number of people between the ages of 20 and 60 who finish high school results in reduced crime and consequent societal savings of USD 1.4 billion. Lochner and Moretti's conclusion was that measures to prevent people from dropping out of school are extremely effective instruments of crime prevention.

Educational background and patterns of criminality

US studies indicate that the educational backgrounds of prisoners tend to be very poor. Tewksbury and Stengel (2006), for example, found that one out of every three individuals who participated in educational activities while in prison in the United States had not completed their 10-year compulsory schooling. Fourteen per cent had taken one or more college courses, and 3% had at least four years of college education. According to another study, 49% of the prisoners investigated had not finished high school, in comparison with 24% in the American population as a whole (Gathright, 1999). Haigler, Harlow, O'Connor, and Campbell (1994) found that 39% of the prisoners in their US study had lower educational backgrounds than their parents. Nordic studies completed to date indicate that prisoners tend to have low educational levels, although the proportion with no education at all is lower than the equivalent figure for the United States.

A study of the educational backgrounds of all prisoners in Norwegian prisons (Eikeland and Manger, 2004) showed that over 92% had completed compulsory school (seven or nine years depending on their year of birth). Thus nearly 8% had not. The findings in this study indicate that the school system has failed to be attentive to the needs of these young people. Most of them probably came from high-risk environments and may have displayed both antisocial behavior and criminality from early ages. This group of individuals who have shown major behavioral problems or antisocial behavior as early as in preschool or the early school years, is referred to by many researchers (including Fergusson, Horwood and Nagin, 2000; Granic and Patterson, 2006; Moffitt, Caspi, Harrington and Milne, 2002) as "childhood-onset offenders".

Criminality that begins early in life and late in life

Childhood-onset offenders can be described as having had risk-filled individual characteristics, often of a neurobiological nature, usually reinforced by growing up in high-risk family and social environments. In childhood and adolescence they got very little out of their schooling and were often absent. Their schools, in turn, were not able to help them (or were not interested in helping them). They also failed to get help from elsewhere. According to various life-course studies (such as Moffitt et al., 2002; Granic and Patterson, 2006), 30% to 50% of childhood-onset offenders display criminal behavior patterns as adults. They become “life-course-persistent” in their criminality (Moffitt et al.). A number of studies (such as Kratzer and Hodgins, 1999; Moffitt et al.) indicate that childhood-onset offenders are almost exclusively male. In their study of one hundred repeat offenders in Sweden, Rydén-Lodi, Stattin and af Klinteberg (2005) found that 49% of them were under the age of twelve the first time they were arrested for breaking the law, and one out of ten was as young as under the age of six.

According to a Norwegian study from 2004 (Eikeland and Manger, 2004), 11% of the prisoners had studied at a university or other institute of higher education, either as coursework or a degree program. This may indicate that there were prisoners who began their course of criminality after completion of quite a long course of education (upper secondary, vocational, or higher education). Such a trend may, in turn, indicate a new pattern, also identified in life-course studies, by which a substantial group of young people who displayed no particular problems in childhood begin to show antisocial behavior and criminality as young adults. Terrie Moffitt (see, for example, Moffitt et al., 2002) sees this type of later start as a by-product of modernization. These young people have generally had good relationships with their parents, schools, and friends earlier in life. Before they went astray into criminality, they developed prosocial behavior and acquired basic school knowledge. The majority of them finished high school, all of which makes it easier for them than for individuals who displayed serious behavioral problems and antisocial behavior in childhood to return to a law-abiding life. Data from recent studies (Moffitt et al., 2002) also give reason to be concerned, however, indicating that many of the late starters prove to remain on the shady side of the law into

their mid-twenties. Although they break the law less often and use less violence than the early-onset offenders, their offenses still result in the loss of valuable time they might have devoted to education and training. Because in the Western world the real "adult phase" of life (job and family) has been "postponed" today to nearly thirty years of age, young people sometimes have more problems during this extended youth today than young people had when adulthood began earlier. Other antisocial young people become their role models, and they become involved in criminality and drugs, which, to them, symbolize "adult privileges". Although young men are in the majority, the sex distribution is much less striking in this group than among "early starters," who showed antisocial behavior from childhood

So what are the consequences of early and late starts in course of criminality in terms of education as a rehabilitating factor? According to Natsuaki, Ge, and Wenk (2008), there are good reasons to consider finishing high school a positive turning point for young people who display antisocial behavior and criminality, precisely because a high school degree has the potential to open other doors, for example to higher education, the labor market, and making non-criminal friends. These authors found, in their own study from California, that the later the individual's first arrest had occurred, the more effective a turning point graduating from high school proved to be. In contrast, individuals who were arrested early (from the age of 12) did not derive any significant benefit in relation to continued criminality from graduating from high school. The authors find this finding to be in line with Moffitt's theoretical argument to the effect that for childhood-onset offenders life is so full of risk factors that reversing their antisocial behavior and criminality becomes more difficult (see, for example, Moffitt, 1993). In their case a *single* positive event (such as graduating from high school) can hardly be expected to lead to change unless other major improvements in the individual's life occur at the same time.

The education of women prisoners and prisoners from ethnic minority backgrounds

According to the Norwegian survey from 2004 (Eikeland and Manger, 2004), women in prison had more often completed higher education than men. This sex-related difference reflects a corresponding difference outside prison as well: the proportions of women and men in higher education are 60/40. It may also reflect the fact that women are, on average, older than men when they violate the law, and have therefore had time to complete more schooling. There is good support for this interpretation in the international research literature (see, for example, Chesney-Lind and Sheldon, 1998; Talbott and Thiede, 1999).

One of the other findings in the Norwegian study was that there were both groups among the prisoners who grew up in other countries than Norway who had no education at all, and also groups who have completed a program equivalent to upper secondary school gone on to higher education (Eikeland and Manger, 2004). There are many possible explanations for the very poor educational backgrounds of some individuals in this group of prisoners – some of them come from countries where there is only very little comprehensive schooling, and others come from backgrounds where they had serious problems from early childhood. The fact that other groups of prisoners from elsewhere than Norway have achieved high levels of education may be an indication that their antisocial behavior and criminality appeared later in life than those with poor educational backgrounds. Of course, in this group as well, criminality may arise owing to special circumstances in the individuals' countries of origin, such as unemployment and deprivation, or high levels of organized crime.

Prisoners' educational needs

According to one Danish study (Klewe, 2002), the dropout rate at adult education centers in the community is 45%, and it is estimated to be lower in prison educational activities (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2005). This study and others indicate that the generally weak educational background of prisoners results in a need and a desire for more formal education. The need for education also has to be seen in the context of whether

prisoners themselves request more opportunities to participate in educational activities (Skaalvik, Finbak, and Pettersen, 2003). In one Swedish study (Kriminalvårdsstyrelsen, 1996), nearly all the prisoners (98%) stated that they would like to participate in educational activities. Kunnari and Peltonen (1993, cited in Nordic Council of Ministers, 2005) found that 71% of the prisoners in a Finnish study wanted to participate in prison education. More than half of these prisoners wanted vocational training. In the Norwegian national survey from 2004 (Eikeland and Manger, 2004; Manger, Eikeland, Asbjørnsen and Langelid, 2006), 65.5% of the respondents stated that they would like to participate in prison education. Approximately 6% stated that they wanted to study at compulsory school level. The most frequently-requested type of upper secondary school level education was vocational training (23%) and apprenticeship or advanced crafts certificates (21%). Approximately 14% wanted to take university or higher education courses, while 12% indicated that they wanted to study a university degree program.

Both the documented weak educational backgrounds of many prisoners, and their clearly expressed desire to participate in educational activities confirm the need for training and education. These needs can be satisfied both via the educational activities offered in prisons and by assisting former prisoners in bringing their desires for education to fulfillment after release. It is of special importance to ensure continuity between educational opportunities in prison and after release (Pettersen, Skaalvik and Finbak, 2003; Ravneberg, 2003).

Motivation for education

Studies of motivational categories associated with education for prisoners put forward both theories and research results stressing the importance of individuals either passively beginning to participate in education or more actively making a plan to follow a course of study. Parson and Langenback (1993) found four underlying factors to prisoners' educational motivation: cognitive control (learning for its own sake), goal orientation (studying to achieve a specified objective), activity orientation (studying to have something to do or to pass the time) and avoidance (studying so as not to have to do something even less pleasant). Forster (1981, 1990)

found that prisoners with strong educational backgrounds tend to be positively motivated to study. They know why they want education and are equipped to achieve their aims, by using their previously acquired study techniques. In contrast, prisoners who have not completed their schooling in the past are mainly motivated to study as a way of alleviating boredom and disagreeable prison routines. They do not actively seek out education for its own sake or for its future value. Many individuals in this group, however, do eventually and gradually realize that serving a prison term also provides them with an opportunity to improve their education and stake out a “new road map” for their lives.

Motivational categories

In a study of prisoners in Ireland, Costelloe (2003) divided motivation into two general categories: push factors and pull factors. Costelloe’s hypothesis was that prisoners with weak or incomplete educational backgrounds are primarily motivated by push factors, while prisoners with stronger educational backgrounds are drawn by the pull. (In Ireland, even prisoners without formal school degrees are eligible to take higher education courses, and this particular study included prisoners with both weak and strong educational backgrounds.) According to Costelloe, prisoners participate in educational activities 1) to alleviate boredom, 2) to promote a sense of self-development, 3) to harbor a sense of personal achievement, 4) to improve their employment prospects on release, 5) to make their families feel proud, 6) to make constructive use of time spent in prison, 7) to help their case when back in court, and 8) to pursue old interests or develop new ones. In her interviews with prisoners, alleviating boredom was the reason most often given, usually together with self-development. The oldest prisoners, who were also the most privileged in terms of education, often stressed their desire to improve their occupational skills so as to be better prepared for the labor market after release. Thus this group was also the one most attracted to the benefits of educational activities. The youngest group, often school dropouts, often emphasized that for them, education was a way of passing the time. Education was, in other words, more of a push than a pull. For some, this motivation existed parallel with an expressed need to be better equipped for future

work. So prisoners with higher prior educational levels tended to have confidence in the potential of education to prepare them for the labor market, while those with weak educational backgrounds also had less confidence in the potential benefits of education.

Push and pull factors in relations to prisoners and education are all under a powerful influence of the situational context of the prison. On the basis of interview data and a questionnaire answered by a small sample of prisoners in Norway, Skaalvik et al. (2003) distinguished between two categories of situationally-related motivation: one in which prisoners want distraction from a situation they experience as extremely negative, another in which they focus on what they can achieve by participating in prison education. The latter includes gaining knowledge, formal competence, utility, and skills for daily living. Avoidance or distraction, for example from intolerable prison routines or prison work, is not the ideal motivation for learning. Still, prisoners who become involved in prison education for reasons of avoidance will thereby encounter a teacher, and the teacher will have the opportunity to stimulate their confidence in education as an important aspect of life, worth pursuing. In contrast, the first, more positive situationally-related type of motivation provides a more direct point of departure for learning, of which both the educational facility and the teacher(s) can take advantage.

Forster (1990), Costelloe (2003) and Skaalvik et al. (2003) all found the motivation of prisoners with a high educational background to be clearly linked to the value of education in itself, and its potential benefits for the person's own future. At the same time, they also found that the kind of motivation based on a need for distraction or on avoidance may still be the very first educational motivation these prisoners have ever experienced, so what appears initially to be a far from ideal type of motivation may be transformed into a positive point of departure for learning.

Competence in school subjects and learning disabilities

International studies indicate that prisoners have fairly high rates of reading, writing and arithmetic difficulties. The International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) in Ireland included a sample of 10% of the total prison population (N=3000) from 18 institutions (Morgan and Kett, 2003). Ap-

proximately half of the prisoners scored level one or lower (pre-level), in comparison with less than 25% in the general population in Ireland. Twenty-nine per cent of the prisoners had reading abilities at level three or above. When the prisoners were asked to report on their own experience of reading, writing and mathematics, approximately half responded that they had not had problems with these skills after leaving school, and only approximately every fourth prisoner reported having had substantial problems (“problems now and again” or “serious problems”). It should, however, be noted that IALS investigated literacy *skills*, rather than reading *disabilities*, so the reasons for shortcomings in terms of reading skills were not in focus.

In an American study of prisoners in Texas, Moody et al. (2000) found that the literacy skills of approximately 80% of the prisoners were so poor as to be non-functional in relation to the requirements of everyday life. In studies of word decoding skills, a frequently-used type of test for diagnosing dyslexia, they found that 48% of the prisoners had disabilities in this respect, and two thirds of them performed poorly on reading comprehension texts as well. Snowling, Adams, Bowyer-Crane, and Tobin (2000) found that when a sample of 91 British juvenile offenders between the ages of 15 and 17 were investigated on the basis of their knowledge of general, non-linguistic subjects, 8% displayed specific phonological difficulties typical of a dyslexia diagnosis.

In Sweden, it has been found that as many as 70% of prisoners had reduced literacy skills to the extent that they could be classified as having reading disabilities (Samuelsson, Gustavsson, Herkner, and Lundberg, 2000). These authors found, by analyzing the basic prerequisites for reading development and reading experience, that reading disabilities were primarily environment and experience-based. Dyslexia was not substantially more frequent than in the general population, approximately 12% (Samuelsson, Herkner and Lundberg, 2003). Herkner and Samuelsson (2005) studied the extent to which prison education contributed to increasing the written language competence of the prisoners, and found that the group who completed a general program in prison systematically demonstrated better competence in written communication than a control group that had not completed any prison educational program.

Prisoners' assessments of prison education

A research-based evaluation of prison education was carried out in Norway between 2000 and 2003. The results showed that most of the participants stated that they were benefiting from their educational activities (see, for example, Langelid and Manger, 2003; Skaalvik, Finbak, and Pettersen, 2003). According to one of the studies, the students emphasized the advantages of being in a classroom together with others, and were pleased with the individual attention they received. Both the students and the teachers experienced high levels of satisfaction with the learning environment (Ravneberg, 2005).

Claesson and Dahlgren (2002) found, in their assessment of educational activities offered under the auspices of the Swedish correctional services, that the schools run smoothly and the students have the opportunity to make their opinions heard. The teachers also stressed the importance of working individually with those students who were in greatest need of education. Lindberg (2005) showed, in his studies of women in Swedish prisons, that they assessed their educational opportunities as reasonably good, and the facilities as suited to their purposes, including the ICT equipment. Their main criticism was that they were not able to take web-based courses or complete full upper secondary school degree programs.

The organization of educational activities also has its importance. One Danish study from as early as 1979 concluded that more day release privileges for studying were to be recommended (Andersen, Holstein and Skadhauge, 1979). Another conclusion of this study was that repeat offenses were less common among former prisoners who had had day release privileges than those who had not. It is beyond the scope of such a study to draw conclusions concerning whether the reasons for the positive finding was the day release privileges per se or whether the individuals granted day release privileges had a lower risk of recidivism than others.

A number of studies from the United States indicate that prisoners evaluate the education they are offered in prison positively. Gee (2006) found that prisoners were generally satisfied, although they would have preferred both more activities and a wider range of options. Moeller, Day and Rivera (2004) concluded that the prisoners in their study were highly satisfied with their prison education. Their preferences were a strong

focus on reading and mathematics, at the same time as they wanted to keep the largest possible number of ordinary school subjects on the schedule. They also requested more books, more help from the teachers, and better ICT equipment in the classrooms. Tewksbury and Stengel (2006) found that the students taking vocational programs made more positive assessments of the quality of the training than the students studying general educational programs. The vocational students were also more positive about their teachers, at the same time as they requested more help from them in the classroom. The prison education students in the study by Edwards-Willey and Chivers (2005) requested a better library and better ICT equipment.

Learning strategies among participants in prison education

According to Kearney and Tacker (1994), good study strategies contribute to success. In their study of incarcerated youth at a correctional center in the United States, Sheridan and Steele-Dadzie (2005) found that the students benefitted most from oral presentation of material and from opportunities to express what they had learned and use their skills orally. The authors of this study also stressed the importance of individually-adapted teaching programs for these students, and that their particular learning strategies must be taken into account.

Motivational factors and the learning strategies used are closely intertwined. Pintrich and DeGroot (1990) use the term "motivated strategies." Irrespective of what learning strategy students use to learn, it is important that it be motivated. According to Pintrich and DeGroot, using "cognitive strategies" and "self-regulating strategies" is a particularly good indication that the individual has found appropriate ways of learning. Cognitive strategies are useful for information processing, and include being able to use one's own words to describe what is to be learned. Self-regulation includes being able to repeat something one has read and ask oneself monitoring questions. Asking questions is a more fruitful objective of reading than simply counting the number of pages read in a day.

It is of interest to measure both the motivation and learning strategies of prisoners, both to determine what learning strategies they use and as a basis for taking action. Actions may include adapting the teaching to the

learning strategies of the prisoners and giving them opportunities to practice more appropriate learning strategies.

The objectives of this report

The objectives of this report were to survey the educational backgrounds and needs of Nordic prisoners. We have studied their own opinions about their competence in terms of traditional school subject matter and their learning disabilities. We have also investigated their motivation concerning education, and the learning strategies used by prisoners who participate in educational activities. We also asked prisoners to evaluate the educational activities in which they participated.

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2. Methods

by Ole-Johan Eikeland

Two questionnaire studies were carried out in 2004 and 2006 to establish the educational background and needs of the prison population in Norway. The methods used in the Norwegian surveys and in developing the questionnaire from 2006 formed the methodological basis for the studies performed in the other Nordic countries. The questionnaire used in Norway in 2006 (Eikeland, Manger, and Diseth, 2006) was the same questionnaire used in the four other Nordic countries, although of course in translations to their respective languages and with other necessary adaptations. In three of the countries (Denmark, Finland and Iceland), as in Norway, the entire prison population was studied (the target groups being all prisoners at the relevant point in time). In Sweden, where the prison population is larger than in the other countries, a random sample of prisoners answered the questionnaire. The study in Iceland was not carried out on exactly the same date in all prisons.

Exclusion criteria and the studies

In all five countries, to be eligible to participate in the studies, a prisoner had to be of legal age, i.e. have had his or her eighteenth birthday. Permission to conduct the studies was obtained from the authorities when required. Research ethics councils were consulted and their guidelines complied with. "Prisoner" was defined as an individual who had been convicted of a crime and was incarcerated or in remand. In Sweden, no remand prisoners were included. Prisoners in both open and closed institutions were included.

In four of the five countries, the questionnaire was administered during the same period of time in all the relevant prisons. The researchers had one or more liaison officers at each prison, who coordinated the study, i.e. distribution and collection of the questionnaires.

The Norwegian target population was all 3,289 prisoners during the period 2 to 9 February 2006. Of them, the questionnaire was distributed to 3,172, and returned by 2,255. Thus in Norway 71.1% of the prisoners to whom the questionnaire was distributed responded. This questionnaire was available in both Norwegian and English.

In Denmark the study period was 9 to 12 January 2007. The target group consisted of all 3,461 prisoners, and the questionnaire was distributed to all of them, with 2,405, or 69.5%, responding. This questionnaire was available in both Danish and English.

The Finnish study was carried out between 11 and 17 December 2006. Of the 3,432 prisoners, the questionnaire was distributed to 3,187, and 2,269, or 71.2% responded. This questionnaire was available in Finnish, Swedish, English, and Russian.

In Sweden, the study was carried out between 13 and 19 November 2006. Owing to the large number of prisoners in Sweden, the choice was made to carry out a random sample study instead of a population study. Every fifth male prisoner and half the female prison population were selected, giving a sample of 960 inmates. However, 67 of them chose only to respond to the introductory questions in the questionnaire. These were the background questions, and thus provided a basis for an analysis of dropouts. The net sample in the Swedish study thus consisted of 893 prisoners. Only a Swedish language version of the study was used.

In Iceland the study was carried out in the five prisons on five different days between 20 October and 7 November 2006. The questionnaire was distributed to all 119 prisoners, of whom 78 responded, giving a response rate of 66%. The questionnaire was available in Icelandic and English.

The total response rates in the five countries in which the population studies were made were extremely similar, ranging from 66% in Iceland to 71.2% in Finland, whereas the response rate in the Swedish sample study was 93%. In contrast, the response rates varied from prison to prison in all five countries. At some prisons it was 100%, at others as low as 35%. One explanation for non-response was that the prisoner was, for

legitimate reasons, absent from the prison, or not at the prison in question, during the study period. Such reasons included having been granted a leave, as well as illness and court appearances. Some prisons have special characteristics relating to their particular population, such as a specific type of criminal background, length of sentence or security level, and therefore, have their own specific “cultures,” affecting the attitudes of both prisoners and staff. In both Denmark and Norway, prisons near cities with universities and other institutes of higher education tend to more often be the object of research studies, etc. than other prisoners, and the environments may gradually become “saturated” in terms of being subjected to studies. In other words, there are both individual and structural circumstances affecting the extent to which the researchers conducting these studies succeeded in motivating the prisoners to participate.

The structure and content of the questionnaire

Basically, the questionnaires used in all five countries were identical in structure and similar in content, including: personal information, highest level of education completed, any educational activities in which they were currently participating in prison, their educational needs, their motivation in terms of participating in (more) educational activities in prison, and their self-reported learning disabilities. Prisoners who were participating in educational activities were asked to evaluate them and to describe any problems they might be experiencing in conjunction with them. An established instrument was used to investigate the prisoners’ learning strategies (Pintrich and DeGroot, 1990). A second established instrument was used to determine the different reasons given priority by the prisoners for participating prison educational activities (Skaalvik, Finbak, and Pettersen, 2003). Prisoners who were not participating at present were asked to explain why.

Most of the questions had standardized response alternatives. Each country adapted the questions and response categories when necessary owing to differences in the prison systems of the five Nordic countries.

The validity and reliability of the questionnaire

Prisoners are a heterogeneous and special group, coming from many countries of origin and cultural backgrounds. Their individual personal resources vary considerably as well. Many prisoners have not completed their education, some have never begun it. Of the latter, some have serious literacy disabilities: some prisoners who are illiterate, and others do not know the language of the country where they are incarcerated. All these factors constitute challenges in relation to carrying out a study of this kind, and motivating the prisoners to participate. The quality of the data may also be skewed or diminished if some prisoners fail to understand the questions and the possible answers, or by the way in which they respond, in spite of the fact that prisoners were offered assistance if they had problems reading and understanding the possible responses. The prison situation itself may have made prisoners feel compelled to answer, and thus to say things they were not really capable of knowing. There are also factors in relation to this population that may distort the non-response figures. Although in most cases the response rate appears quite high, it is possible that there is underrepresentation of groups of prisoners we would very much like to have included, those with the weakest educational backgrounds and those with learning disabilities.

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3. Denmark

by Peter Koudahl

The Danish contribution to the joint Nordic report, “*Nordic Prisoners. Educational backgrounds, Preferences and Motivation*”, is based on a questionnaire survey performed between 9 and 12 January 2007. The questionnaire was distributed on 9 January 2007 to every prisoner in a Danish prison or remand center or staying at a halfway house under the auspices of the Prison and Probation Service., a total of 3.461 individuals. The questionnaire was returned by 2.405 prisoners, making the response rate 69.5%. Our non-response analysis indicates that prisoners unable to read and understand Danish are probably underrepresented in the material as returned.

Eighty-four point three percent of the prisoners stated that they were Danish citizens, 0.7% that they were citizens of one of the other Nordic countries, 6.2% that they were citizens of another European country, and 6.9% stated that they were citizens of a country elsewhere in the world. It can be assumed on the basis of the non-response analysis that the proportion of prisoners in Danish prison with mother tongues other than Danish is larger than indicated in our study.

The respondents comprised 2,302 male and 92 female prisoners, which corresponds to 96.2% of all the male and 3.8% of all the female prisoners. There were 11 prisoners who did not state their sex.

The average age of the respondents was 34, range 18 to 76 years.

Thirty-nine per cent (N=938) stated that this was their first incarceration.

Sixty point five per cent (N=1,456) stated that they had previous incarcerations.

Twelve point six per cent were serving sentences of less than 3 months, 28.4% between 3 and 12 months, 35.8% between 1 and 5 years, and 23.1% were serving sentences of more than 5 years (N=2,145).

Of the 260 respondents who did not answer the question concerning the length of their sentence, 240 were in remand and thus awaiting sentencing (See Koudahl 2007).

Before presenting our analyses, we provide a brief overview of the regulations applying to educational activities in prisons and at remand centers in Denmark.

Regulations governing prison education in Denmark

In Denmark, prisoners have a “duty of occupation”, either work, participation in a program (such as behavior modification or drug or alcohol treatment) or education/training while serving a sentence. Thus prison education is on an equal footing with the other types of activities in the sense that prisoners are paid the same remuneration for participating in educational activities as in any of the others.

The activities offered in Danish prisons are regulated in the Act on Enforcement of Sentences (Ministry of Justice 2005). Exactly what educational courses are offered is determined in accordance with the Preparatory Adult Education Act (FVU) (Ministry of Education 2005) and the ordinance on General Adult Education (AVU) (Ministry of Education 2006). Thus the Prison and Probation Service offers educational activities according to the same guidelines that regulate the work of all adult education centers (VUC). Some prisons also offer courses at the Higher Preparatory (HF) level, as well as specially adapted courses for dyslectics. Not every subject is offered at every prison, however. Prison education is free of charge.

The aim of Preparatory Adult Education is to provide adults with opportunities to improve and supplement their basic reading, spelling, and written communication skills, as well as their oral comprehension skills, and their knowledge of basic mathematics, with a view to providing them with access to further education as well as to reinforcing their possibilities of participating actively in all aspects of civil society. Teaching at Preparatory Adult Education level is divided into two subject areas: “Reading, spelling, and written communication” (FVU-reading, steps 1–2), and “Oral comprehension, arithmetic and basic mathematics” (FVU-Mathematics, steps 1–4). General Adult Education corresponds to grades

9 and 10 in Danish compulsory school, offering core subject area courses in Danish, mathematics, English, German, French, social studies and the natural sciences. The following optional subjects can also be offered: art, Danish as a second language, ICT, philosophy, history, media, psychology, and cooperation and communication. Each subject is divided into levels, the highest of which concludes at a level equivalent to general adult education, step 1, in the sub-elements mentioned above. An examination is given for completion of each level. Prisoners whose particular circumstances indicate that it would be useful to them can also take part in independent studies or web-based courses. The individual closed prisons import teachers to teach at Higher Preparatory level. Day release privileges allowing prisoners to participate in educational activities outside the prison are very common in open prisons. Such privileges are granted in accordance with the provisions of chapter 9 in the Act on Enforcement of Sentences, and always on a case by case basis. According to statistic provided by the Office of Enforcement of Sentences of the Directorate of the Prison and Probation Services, approximately 100 prisoners per day in Danish prisons exercise day release privileges. According to figures from the same source, between August 2004 and August 2005 a total of 135 General Adult Education diplomas and six certificates of participation from the Adult Education Centre of the Prison and Probation Service were issued, and between 1 August 2006 and 31 July 2006, the corresponding figures for Preparatory Adult Education were 339 Preparatory Education diplomas and ten certificates of participation. Thus between 1 August 2005 and 3 July 2006, a total of 621 participants (by civil registration number) were taking part in preparatory adult education and 331 in general adult education in Danish prisons, although any given prisoner may have participated in more than one course during this period. The Danish prison schools have a total of approximately 80 full-time teachers as well as varying numbers of teachers on an hourly basis.

Education for individuals in remand

Education is also available for remand prisoners in Denmark, in other words to individuals in custody who have not yet received their final

judgment. The objective is to kick start the educational process as quickly as possible for every incarcerated individual.

These educational activities are optional for remand prisoners, who are not subject to the activity commitment since they are not convicted prisoners, and the subjects offered are mainly very basic courses in Danish and mathematics. Beyond the possibility of achieving concrete results in terms of learning, there is the aim of motivating these individuals to continue their education when and if they are transferred to a prison.

Remand center educational activities are taught either by local teachers or teachers from prison schools. Approximately half the remand facilities in Denmark do not have separate classrooms, and the standard of the educational facilities in remand centers that do have them is often poor.

Educational backgrounds

The prisoners were asked about their educational backgrounds. The multiple choice alternatives included 15 categories plus “other educational activities”. The answers can be seen in table 3.1. A comparison of the age groups indicates that the younger the prisoner, the shorter his or her educational background. This is partly explained by the chronological fact that the older a person is the more time he or she has been able to spend in school and, disregarding all other contributing factors, this results in older people having higher educational levels. Of the group 18–24 years old, 16.1% of the respondents in our study had not completed any educational level, not even compulsory school.

The non-response analysis indicates that the number of prisoners with no education at all is probably even larger than our study shows. At Statistics Denmark (www.dst.dk), 0.0% of the total Danish population is registered as having “No education”.

**Table 3.1. Highest level of education completed by age group.
Figures given indicate percent**

	Age group 18–24 N=492	Age group 25–34 N=755	Age group 35–44 N=476	Age group +45 N=336	Total N=2,068
No completed education	16.1	1.5	8.0	8.0	11.5
Compulsory school (through grade 10)*?	39.3	30.9	29.5	31.7	33.8
Preparatory course for higher education	9.2	15.5	13.1	14.4	13.0
Vocational training, basic program	23.0	19.9	13.5	8.1	16.5
Full vocational program/certificate of completed apprenticeship	12.6	25.3	34.6	30.8	26.6
Relatively long Bachelor's or Licentiate degree program*	0.4	1.3	2.5	5.1	2.0

* Includes completed upper secondary school, the Higher Preparatory Degree (HF), Higher Commercial Degree (HHX) and Higher Technical Degree (HTX). A small number of prisoners who completed both a preparatory program and a vocational program, either basic or full/apprenticeship, are included in both categories.

According to our analyses, relatively more women prisoners than men had completed a preparatory course for higher education, while relatively more men prisoners had completed a vocational program. More than one out of ten women prisoners had completed a relatively long upper secondary or higher education program, as compared with men, where only three out of every hundred male prisoners had a degree from such a high educational level.

Table 3.2 provides an overview of the educational levels completed by all prisoners by country of upbringing.

Table 3.2. Highest level of education completed, by country of upbringing (N=2,337)

	Denmark N=2.000	Rest of the Nordic region N=19	Rest of Europe N=97	Rest of the world N=160	Total N=2.276
No completed education	10.9	0.0	10.3	19.4	11.5
Compulsory school (through grade 10)*?	34.5	36.8	25.8	31.0	31.0
Preparatory studies for higher education	11.1	26.3	30.9	24.8	13.0
Basic vocational course	17.9	10.5	8.2	6.4	16.5
Full vocational program, completed certificate of apprenticeship	26.4	26.3	14.4	10.8	26.6
Relatively long bachelor or licentiate program*	3.4	5.3	8.2	9.6	2.0

* Includes completed upper secondary school, the Higher Preparatory Degree (HF), Higher Commercial Degree (HHX) and Higher Technical Degree (HTX). A small number of prisoners who completed both a preparatory program and a vocational program, either basic or full/apprenticeship, are included in both categories.

As can be seen, there is overrepresentation of prisoners with no completed education coming from countries outside Europe. Among prisoners who grew up mainly in Denmark, nearly 11%, failed to complete an education corresponding to having passed the final examination for compulsory school.

Although the analysis does not indicate major differences in educational level in relation to country of upbringing, the figures for prisoners from outside Europe (“rest of the world”) stand out. The prisoners from this category include both those who have most often failed to complete an education corresponding to having passed the final examination for compulsory school, and those who most often have a degree from a relatively long educational program, i.e. upper secondary, university or higher education.

Scope of educational activities

Seventy-six per cent of the prisoners stated that they were not participating in educational activities while in prison (N=1,999). This figure is

subject to uncertainty in various respects, such as that there were 406 non-responders. Table 3.3 below shows the scope of educational activities among the prisoners, but the high non-response rate to this question must be borne in mind, as the figures given in the table only reflect the responses given. The percentages do not include the prisoners who did not answer the question concerning whether or not they were participating in educational activities. Had they been included, the non-participation percentage would probably have been higher.

As made clear above, most of the prisoners who were participation in educational activities were working on very basic school skills, which is also clear from the figures concerning Preparatory and General Adult Education. A relatively large number completes the “Higher Preparatory Course”. According to our data, the majority of the preparatory adult education students are from the younger age groups, the majority of the participants in educational activities are studying at preparatory adult education level, and the majority of general adult education students among Danish prisoners are between the ages of 25 and 34. All this is in accord with the finding that the prisoners who have not completed compulsory school are mainly among the youngest prisoners.

The fact that the majority of general adult education students among Danish prisoners are between the ages of 25 and 34 indicates that many prisoners of these ages have not achieved schooling equivalent to having passed the final examination from compulsory school. According to our other analyses, relatively speaking, twice as many prisoners from “The rest of the world” (45.6%, N=57) and “Europe” (57.1%, N=21), participate in studies at preparatory adult education level than prisoners who grew up in Denmark or another Nordic country. Only 2 prisoners from “Nordic countries” were participating in preparatory adult education studies. There is no significant difference, in this respect, from the other categories.

According to the responses, 83 prisoners were participating in vocational training at either the basic or full program level. However, because eight prisoners responded that they were studying at both these levels, the correct number is probably 75 rather than 83. Of these, 67 had less than one year of their sentence left to serve, while the remainder had between one and five years remaining. As a rule, in order for a prisoner to be able to participate in vocational training, (s)he must have been granted day

release privileges and thus be eligible for educational activities outside the prison.

Table 3.3. Educational activities in relation to the age of the prisoners. Figures in per cent

Educational activity	Age group 18–24	Age group 25–34	Age group 35–44	Age group 45+	Total 626
Preparatory adult education, reading	30.4	25.4	20.3	10.1	136
Preparatory adult education, mathematics	33.3	27.8	19.0	7.1	126
General adult education, step I	21.3	34.7	16.0	8.0	73
General adult education, step II	16.4	38.4	17.8	15.1	73
Special education/ education for dyslectics	16.7	29.2	25.0	20.8	24
Vocational training, basic course	42.3	34.6	5.8	1.9	52
Vocational training, complete program	29.0	45.2	6.5	6.5	31
Preparatory course for higher education (upper sec., Higher prep, higher comm., higher tech).	16.1	41.9	21.0	9.7	62
University level education	0.0	40.0	20.0	40.0	25
Other educational activities*	12.1	42.9	22.9	15.0	140

* Comprises a large number of activities of different types, some more resembling hobbies than education. The most frequent are computer-related courses, labor market training (short, vocationally-related courses) and other similar courses.

The majority of participants in basic vocational training were in the youngest age group; 52 from this group were in vocational training.

It is also interesting to note in this context that 630 prisoners – corresponding to 26.2% of the total number of prisoners – stated in our study that, given the option, they would want to participate in prison vocational training (See table 3.5). Table 3.4 presents participation in educational activities in relation to length of sentence. The table indicates that prisoners with short sentences mainly participate in preparatory adult education, while prisoners with longer sentences usually participate in general adult education. Correspondingly, prisoners with short sentences tend to be

those who most often participate in vocational training or further and higher education.

Table 3.4 Educational activities by length of sentence. Figures in per cent

Length of sentence	< 3 mo. N=17	3–12 mo. N=71	1–5 yrs. N=201	> 5 yrs. N=147	Indefinite sentence N=18
Preparatory adult education, reading	35.3	36.6	29.9	16.3	27.8
Preparatory adult education, mathematics	18.8	39.4	23.5	20.4	27.8
General adult education, step I	6.3	7.0	17.4	20.4	16.7
General adult education, step II	11.8	7.0	18.5	16.6	11.1
Special education, such as courses for dyslectics	6.3	5.6	6.0	2.7	5.6
Vocational training, basic course	18.8	9.9	14.1	8.8	0.0
Vocational training, full program	25.0	5.6	5.0	8.2	0.0
Preparatory course for higher education (upper sec., Higher prep, higher comm., higher tech).	12.5	4.2	10.0	22.4	16.7
University level education	18.8	2.8	3.5	7.5	11.1
Other educational activities*	12.5	36.1	26.7	29.7	26.3

* Courses and programs involving computers, labor market training courses and similar programs are most frequent. There are also some more hobby-like activities.

Prisoners' educational preferences

One of the questions to prisoners was what educational activities they would like to begin while serving their sentences, with the multiple choice answers covering a wide range of options, plus a category of "other educational activities". The most frequently-selected options were IT courses, labor market programs and seafarer training. These responses indicate that only an insignificant fraction of prisoners were interested in either courses for dyslexics or university-level studies. Therefore, these categories were not included in our further analyses. Reading and mathematics were also merged into a single category in relation to both preparatory and general adult education.

As mentioned above, educational activities are also offered to remand prisoners in Denmark, i.e. to prisoners whose sentences have not yet been

determined. These prisoners were asked what types of educational activities they would consider beginning while serving their sentences. The results are shown in table 3.5, where educational needs are classified by reason for incarceration.

Table 3.5. Educational needs classified by reason for incarceration. Figures in per cent

	Remanded (N=440)	Sentenced (N=1,403)	In safe custody (N=19)
Preparatory adult ed., combined (reading and math)	12.7	10.7	18.9
General adult ed., combined (steps I and II)	9.5	8.3	18.9
Vocational training, basic course	27.9	23.6	21.4
Vocational program, full	27.3	22.5	17.9
Vocational education – combined	30.3	25.2	21.6
Preparatory for higher ed (upper sec., higher prep., higher comm., higher tech).	13.3	11.2	7.1

* The category "Vocational education – combined" comprises prisoners who stated that they would like to take both the basic and full vocational training programs. These prisoners are listed only under "Vocational education – combined".

According to our analyses, a relatively large proportion of remand prisoners stated that they would like to participate in educational activities. One explanation might be that they were already involved in studies when they were arrested, and are eager to resume it. Comparisons indicate that women prisoners expressed more interest in preparatory studies for higher education than men prisoners who, in contrast, often expressed the need for vocational training. Table 3.6 displays the prisoners' expressed educational needs in relation to age.

Table 3.6. Educational needs in relation to prisoners' ages. Figures in per cent

	Age 18–24 (N=421)	Age 25–34 (N=627)	Age 35–44 (N=387)	Age 45+ (N=274)	Total (N=1,917)
Preparatory adult ed., combined (reading and math)	10.8	12.1	10.7	7.5	14.2
General adult ed., combined (phases I and II)	9.2	9.4	8.8	5.7	11.1
Vocational training, basic course	31.8	28.5	16.3	5.3	24.7
Vocational program, full	32.5	28.4	17.1	10.2	23.5
Vocational education – combined	40.0	30.9	17.5	11.5	33.0
Preparatory for higher ed (upper sec., higher prep., higher comm., higher tech).	17.3	13.1	8.5	7.3	11.7

According to our analyses, the far most frequently-requested category of educational activity was vocational training. Depending on method of estimation used, between one quarter and one third of the prisoners stated that they would prefer to be able to begin or complete a course of vocational study.

The classification by age group indicates that the younger the prisoners, the larger the proportion wanting to begin educational activities, with the exception of Preparatory Adult education level studies, where a slightly larger proportion of the 25–34-year-olds than the 18–25-year-olds are interested in getting started with studies. The fact that the oldest prisoners are those with the lowest interest in beginning educational activities is in line with the fact that, on average, the oldest prisoners also have the strongest educational backgrounds.

It should be noted that the interest in starting a course of vocational training was by far the most frequently-cited preference, expressed, for example, by 40% of prisoners between the ages of 18 and 24. Educational preferences in relation to length of sentence can be seen in table 3.7.

Table 3.7. Educational preferences by length of sentence. Figures in per cent

	< 3 mo. (N=219)	3–12 mo. (N=490)	1 to 5 Yrs. (N=608)	5 yrs. or more (N=311)	Indeter- minate (N=86)
Preparatory adult ed., combined (reading and math)	7.0	11.0	12.1	11.2	13.5
General adult ed., combined (phases I and II)	3.7	7.4	9.6	12.0	8.7
Vocational training, basic course	15.7	22.2	27.7	27.4	28.7
Vocational program, full	12.9	20.8	25.5	28.1	27.6
Vocational education – combined	15.5	23.9	29.2	29.6	30.8
Preparatory for higher ed (upper sec., higher prep., higher comm., higher tech).	5.9	8.9	13.1	16.7	18.6

The general indication is that prisoners with the longest sentences are most often those who state they want to be involved in educational activities while serving their sentences. Nearly one out of every three prisoners with a sentence longer than five years stated they wanted to study a vocational training program that would be realistic to complete during incarceration from the point of view of the length of the program. Presumably the prisoners with the shortest sentences expected to resume studies or a job upon release, which may explain their relatively limited expressed educational needs.

Study skills and disabilities

We asked the prisoners what if any problems they had with reading, writing mathematics, ICT, and other study skills, because these skills are essential to being able to pursue a course of education, and thus to improve one's prospects on the labor market.

Table 3.8. Self-assessed IT, reading/writing and mathematics skills. Figures in per cent

	ICT skills N=2,263	Reading/writing skills N=2,283	Mathematics skills N=2,297
Very poor	14.1	3.1	4.7
Poor	17.1	7.9	12.1
Average	38.6	30.8	36.7
Good	20.9	34.0	31.2
Very good	9.3	24.3	15.2

It is known that when asked to rate their weaknesses in a questionnaire, respondents tend to underestimate them (See Olsen 2001). It may therefore be assumed that the prisoners' self-reported difficulties in this study probably reflect greater difficulties than shown here.

The prisoners' answers concerning their own skills in the areas of IT, reading/writing and mathematics can be seen in table 3.8. Nearly one out of every three prisoners assessed his or her own ICT competence as "poor" or "very poor." A very similar proportion stated that their ICT skills were "good" or "very good." Almost 60% stated that their reading and writing skills were "good" or "very good."

The non-response analysis indicates that this figure may be lower than shown, since a greater proportion of the prisoners with poor reading and writing skills than of the prison population as a whole returned the questionnaire. The number of prisoners who stated that their mathematics skills were "good" or "very good" was somewhat lower.

The prisoners were also asked to rate their literacy or numeracy disabilities. The responses can be seen in table 3.9, and indicate that over 40% of the prisoners experienced themselves as having some form of problem with their numeracy skills, while approximately 30% stated that they had some form of literacy disability. Table 3.10 relates these difficulties to the various age groups.

Table 3.9. Numeracy and literacy disabilities. Figures in per cent

Degree of disability	Numeracy disability N=2,317	Literacy disability N=2,319
None	57.5	69.8
Some	35.6	24.8
Serious	6.9	5.4

Table 3.10. Literacy disabilities by age group. Figures in per cent

Degree of disability	Age group 18–24 N=486	Age group 25–34 N=749	Age group 35–44 N=475	Age group 45+ N=329
None	67.5	73.6	70.1	77.8
Some	27.0	21.9	24.6	17.9
Serious	5.6	4.5	5.3	4.3

It is a general trend that in the material, that the younger the prisoner the greater his or her self-rated literacy disabilities. Thus 67.5% of the prisoners between 18 and 24 stated that they had “no” literacy problems, while the corresponding figure for prisoners 45 and over was 10% higher. This findings confirm the trend found in other studies, that the younger the prisoners, the greater their self-rated problems in relation to all aspects of education. Of the prisoners who stated that they had “some” or “serious” problems, 33.3% (N=1,162) stated that they had been examined or tested for these problems, and , 43.8% (N=1,163) that they had been given help (special education or other support) with solving them.

Prisoners’ motivation to participate in educational activities while serving their sentences

The prisoners asked about their motivation to participate in educational activities while serving their sentences. They were offered 15 multiple choice statements, and asked to asses each one as “Very important,” “Somewhat important,” or “Not important.” The question was phrased as follows: “How important were these reasons for you in starting on the program you are now involved in? Please tick one box on each line (for each statement).” The findings may be seen in table 3.11.

Table 3.11. Reasons for participating in prison educational activities. Figures in per cent. (N=736)

	Very important	Somewhat important	Not important
1. To spend my time doing something sensible and useful	73.1	23.4	3.5
2. To be better able to cope with life after my release	61.8	21.3	16.9
3. To learn about a subject	60.9	29.1	10.0
4. To make it easier to get a job after I'm released	60.6	21.6	17.8
5. To make it easier for me to avoid committing crimes after I am released	59.4	15.9	24.7
6. To satisfy my desire to learn	54.5	33.8	11.6
7. To make this educational program a bridge to more education after I am released	53.5	25.2	21.3
8. To pass an exam or improve a previous grade	50.2	27.3	22.5
9. To make serving time easier	48.0	35.8	16.2
10. Because it is better than working in prison	36.7	26.4	37.0
11. To improve my self-esteem	36.4	33.9	29.6
12. To get more free time during the day	35.8	28.9	35.3
13. Because I wanted to be part of the social environment at the school	22.3	32.4	45.2
14. Because I was encouraged to study	10.5	19.1	70.3
15. Because I had friends going to school	7.8	17.8	74.4

The overall picture is that prisoners participate in educational activities to use their time in a meaningful way, because they have the impression that education will help them cope better after release, and because they want to improve their basic knowledge. Apparently very few of the prisoners had been encouraged to study.

We made a factor analysis to gain a better overview of the prisoners' reasons for participating in educational activities. In it, we grouped the types of factors that were statistically correlated, mainly using a component analysis technique (Varimax rotation) and Kaiser's criterion to select factors (i.e. factors with a weight over 1.0). The results of the factor analysis indicate that prisoners who participate in educational activities do so mainly on the basis of three main categories of motivation.

Table 3.12. Motivation for education, factor analysis

Motivational categories	Reasons for participating	Weight of factor
Importance of education for my future	To be better able to cope with life after my release	0.781
	To make it easier to get a job after I'm released	0.729
	To make it easier for me to avoid committing crimes after I am released	0.715
	To make this educational program a bridge to more education after I am released	0.699
	To pass an exam or improve a previous grade	0.689
	To learn about a subject	0.488
Situational-determined and social functions of education	To get more free time during the day	0.696
	Because I had friends going to school	0.653
	Because I was encouraged to study	0.646
	Because I wanted to be part of the social environment at the school	0.619
	Because it is better than working in prison	0.615
	To improve my self-esteem	0.454
Contribution of education to making time in prison meaningful	To spend my time doing something sensible and useful	0.764
	To satisfy my desire to learn	0.654
	To make serving time easier	0.604

According to our factor analysis, the main source of motivation for participation in prison educational activities was that the prisoners assess education as of value to them in the future. The second most important source of motivation was the situational and social functions, and the third was the impact of education on using the time in prison in a meaningful way. The significance of the first category was nearly twice as great as the other two.

Table 3.13 shows the prisoner's motivation for participating in educational activities while serving their sentences classified by age groups.

Table 3.13. Classification of reasons given as “very important” motivational factors by age group. (N=736)

	Age group 18–24	Age group 25–34	Age group 35–44	Age group 44+
1. To spend my time doing something sensible and useful	71.3	74.7	70.3	78.7
2. To be better able to cope with life after my release	59.5	63.5	69.2	45.3
3. To learn about a subject	52.1	64.3	64.0	67.1
4. To make it easier to get a job after I'm released	63.7	61.2	65.3	46.2
5. To make it easier for me to avoid committing crimes after I am released	63.7	60.1	60.7	39.4
6. To satisfy my desire to learn	42.9	53.9	64.2	68.7
7. To make this educational program a bridge to more education after I am released	62.7	54.7	57.4	38.7
8. To pass an exam or improve a previous grade	61.2	52.9	46.3	29.0
9. To make serving time easier	42.7	48.8	47.9	50.6
10. Because it is better than working in prison	30.8	39.8	29.6	30.0
11. To improve my self-esteem	34.0	33.5	40.7	35.1
12. To get more free time during the day	38.4	37.1	26.9	26.8
13. Because I was encouraged to study	27.0	20.7	25.5	12.5
14. Because I was encouraged to study	9.9	9.5	12.0	5.9
15. Because I had friends going to school	7.9	7.2	5.7	3.0

These findings indicate that among older prisoners educational activities were mainly a way of passing the time. Although for older prisoners there was no motivation in terms of either learning more or improving their prospects on the job market, the idea of learning and of being part of a learning environment were motivational factors in themselves, associated with using the time in prison in a sensible, constructive manner. The contribution of their educational activities to preventing relapsing into crime appeared to be of only marginal significance as a motivational factor.

Among the youngest prisoners, the primary motivation appeared to be strongly associated with the possibility of raising their grades and going on to other education upon release from prison. The younger prisoners appeared to associate participating in educational activities more with not relapsing into crime on release more strongly than older prisoners. The

social aspect of education also seems to have been more important to the younger than the older prisoners. The differences between the findings concerning the youngest age group and prisoners between 25 and 44 were minimal. In the latter group, education was associated primarily with coping better upon release. This, in turn, appears to have been associated both with the importance of prison education in terms of going on to other education after release, and of getting a job. Comparing these results with those of the factor analysis, it becomes clear that the meaning-creating motivational factors were particularly important to older prisoners, while the trend was that the younger the prisoner the less importance he or she attributed to these meaning-creating motivational factors. However, younger prisoners had motivational categories relating to the impact of prison education on their future lives. Situational and social aspects of education also appeared to be more important to the younger prisoners in comparison with the older ones.

These findings are a logical extension of the fact that the prisoners in the youngest age group had the weakest educational backgrounds, and thus, objectively speaking, the greatest need for education.

Prisoners' assessments of current educational activities

The prisoners who were participating in educational activities were asked to assess the activities and the conditions under which they were available. There were 12 statements, to which they were asked to state the extent to which they agreed (See table 3.14).

The general level of satisfaction with the educational activities offered at prisons and remand centers was not overwhelming. Nearly 60% of the prisoners answered "somewhat disagree" or "disagree" in relation to the following statement: "I am satisfied with the teaching." Cross-tabulation indicates that the most dissatisfied prisoners were in the age group 45+. In that group, 40% disagreed with the statement: "I am satisfied with the teaching," at the same time as this age group also agreed to a large extent (54.3%) with the statement "The requirements are too tough." This was also the group that disagreed most strongly (44.1%) with the statement: "The teaching is suited to my needs."

By way of comparison, only 27.2% of the prisoners in the age group 18–24 shared this opinion. In absolute figures, these findings indicate that the vast majority of prisoners felt that the demands were too high, that some of the subjects were too difficult, and that forms for the teaching were unsatisfactory. As many as 43.3% disagreed completely with the statement: “I am pleased with the educational program.” In contrast, a very large proportion of the prisoners assessed access to ICT equipment as satisfactory. More than 60% responded “somewhat disagree” or “completely disagree” in relation to the statement “There is inadequate access to ICT equipment.”

Table 3.14. Prisoners’ assessments of ongoing educational activities. Figures in per cent. (N=674)

What is your view of the educational program you participate in during sentence?	Completely agree	Somewhat agree	Unsure	Somewhat disagree	Completely disagree
1. I am satisfied with the teaching	18.2	11.6	13.6	29.7	29.8
2. The requirements are too tough	43.3	19.3	21.3	10.2	5.9
3. The prison makes it possible to get an education	24.4	11.7	16.7	21.8	25.5
4. The amount of work is just right	18.2	10.9	22.4	27.4	21.1
5. The requirements are not tough enough	20.8	14.3	26.4	21.1	17.5
6. Some of the subjects are too hard	36.4	18.1	24.9	11.5	9.1
7. There are too many lectures	42.3	18.3	22.4	11.2	5.8
8. The teaching is suited to my needs	18.9	11.6	16.4	25.6	27.4
9. There is too much group work	50.3	14.6	24.4	6.3	4.6
10. There is inadequate access to ICT equipment	20.5	5.5	13.1	11.8	49.0
11. The teachers have good ICT skills	15.9	7.5	39.9	15.2	21.4
12. I am pleased with the educational program	18.7	5.6	17.2	15.2	43.3

Problems concerning participation in educational activities

The prisoners were asked whether being in prison gave rise to problems associated with the educational activities in which they were participating. More than 60% stated insufficient access to ICT equipment as the single circumstance that gave rise to the most problems associated with participating in educational activities while in prison. This finding is surprising, since only 26% of the respondents answered “agree” or “somewhat agree” with the statement “Inadequate access to ICT equipment.”

Table 3.15. Prisoners' evaluations of circumstances that cause problems in relation to their educational activities. Figures in per cent (N=580)

Problemcausing circumstances in relation to their educational activities	Per cent
Inadequate access to ICT-equipment and facilities	60.7
Disturbances in prison	35.9
Transfer while serving my sentence	33.4
Prison security routines	28.3
Inadequate access to literature	28.3
I will have finished my sentence before I finish my education	27.8
My own arithmetic or mathematics problems	16.4
My own reading or writing problems	15.2

If prisons only were examined, and remand centers excluded, the figure varied from prison to prison, ranging from 27.3% to 80%. This may indicate that prisoners' access to ICT equipment varies widely from one prison to another. In absolute figures, 352 prisoners stated that “Inadequate access to ICT-equipment and facilities” was a problem in relation to their educational activities, although only 37 of these 352 respondents also stated answered “agree” or “somewhat agree” with the statement “There is inadequate access to ICT-equipment and facilities” (Table 3.14), which may indicate that the respondents understood these questions differently (alt: had misunderstood one or the other of these questions*). One possible explanation is that the prisoners considered the question to which table 3.14 refers as being specifically about the computers in the prison classrooms, and the question to which table 3.15 refers as a more general question about the prison as a whole. Interviews with prisoners indicate that they tend to experience the fact that they are not allowed to have computers in their cells – in other words to use ICT equipment outside

school hours – as a problem in relation to their educational activities (see, for example, Koudahl 2006a).

Reasons for not participating in prison educational activities

Prisoners who stated that they were not participating in any educational activities were asked to give their reasons. Our analysis indicates that the most frequent reason for not participating in educational activities was that they had not been informed that this was an option.

The numbers varied in relation to the reason for incarceration, in that more remand prisoners than others stated that they had not been informed that it was possible to participate in educational activities.

Table 3.16. Prisoners' reasons for not participating in educational activities by type of facility. Figures in per cent (N=1,640)

	Remand	Sentenced	Safe custody	Total
I don't receive any information about educational possibilities	49.4	35.7	26.3	38.8
This prison does not offer any educational programs suitable for me	35.5	36.8	52.6	36.6
I am not interested in getting an education in prison	15.3	24.9	31.6	22.6
The conditions for school and studying in the prison are poor	15.8	19.9	47.4	19.3
I already have enough education	8.3	14.6	5.3	12.9
I believe that I have too many learning problems	7.8	9.2	31.6	9.4
Education is not worth the effort	2.0	3.3	15.8	3.3
Other reasons	21.6	22.9	15.8	22.7

* The most frequently-given reason was that there was too little time left of the sentence/the sentence was too short.

In absolute figures, one fourth of the total number prisoners (630) returned the questionnaire, and nearly 4 out of ten of these respondents stated that they were not participating in educational activities. In absolute figures, 600 of the prisoners stated that the prison did not offer educational activities that suited them.

Prisoners' learning strategies

The prisoners were asked about their learning strategies, in other words to assess the ways in which they prepared, worked with the material, studied for tests, etc. They were given 27 statements and asked to rank them on a scale from one to five, from "completely disagree" to "completely agree". It is beyond the scope of this report to present the results of these questions in table form, but they gave quite a clear picture of the learning strategies of the prisoners, indicating that education in Danish prisons and remand facilities has a somewhat different point of departure than other adult education in the community.

The findings indicated that Danish prisoners generally do not have much confidence in their being able to complete an education, and certainly not with good results. The prisoners often considered themselves poorly equipped to participate in educational activities, and in fact they do not like "education" as such. Moreover, they were not particularly interested, and did not consider it very important to understand what they were being taught. This may be explained in terms of the fact that many of the prisoners did not really understand what they were reading. In contrast, most of them seemed to take their educational activities quite seriously, as many responded that they tended to get very nervous when there was a test coming up that they would forget what they had learned, and that they focused more on how badly they might do on the test rather than on achieving good results. Their preparations for tests were apparently unfocused and inconsistent.

In light of these responses, prisoners appear to be ill equipped for education. This may, in itself, pose an obstacle for any individual to finding educational activities meaningful and interesting. Most of the prisoners did not try to obtain an overview of problems and subjects when they were studying a certain subject area.

As many as 71.2% of the respondents stated "completely disagree" in relation to the statement: "I prefer class work that is challenging so I can learn new things."

Over 90% marked that statement with "completely disagree" or "disagree" This response may imply that the vast majority of prisoners prefer educational activities with which they are familiar, and the content and

level of which they will immediately master, using methods they recognize and feel comfortable with.

Considering these results along with the fact that nearly every third prisoners stated that (s)he would like to participate in vocational training, there may be a gap between the educational preferences of the prisoners and the educational activities currently offered.

Another possible explanation of these distinct findings may be that the prisoners quite simply have a very matter of fact, realistic picture of their relationship to education, and that they generally lack the self-confidence needed to become involved in educational activities. As mentioned above, previous research shows that a large proportion of prisoners have very negative prior experience of compulsory school, that they have probably experienced a number of failures from being unable to live up to expectations at compulsory school in terms of subject knowledge and personal characteristics, as well as that many of them had either been suspended from school or changed schools for various reasons.

Discussion and summary

Denmark has ratified a number of international conventions and agreements concerning citizens' access to education, including the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, article 26 of which stipulates that:

(1) Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

(2) Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

(UN Declaration of Human Rights, 1948)

The declaration stresses that access to fundamental education must be offered to all citizens, that it must be adapted to the needs of every individual and contribute to his or her development, focus on respect for the

rights of others, and on human rights and fundamental freedoms. Education is thus intended to contribute to enabling every individual to acquire basic skills, so as to be an active citizen, not least on the labor market. Education is also intended to contribute to enabling every individual to share in the community of values that makes up society.

It is clearly stated in the European Commission Memorandum on Lifelong Learning (European Commission 2000), which forms the basis of most educational policy in Denmark, that every citizen is to be involved in processes of lifelong learning, education, and competence enhancement, in order to satisfy the current and future needs of the contemporary and future labor market in a global economy which, in turn, is a prerequisite for having a satisfying, substantial, family life and leisure time environment. Education and learning are also emphasized as prerequisites for the optimal functioning of European democracy, in which knowledgeable, active, participatory citizens take part.

The Danish Prison and Probation Service's definition of educational activities in Danish prisons concretizes some of these overarching ambitions in relation to the context in which they exist, i.e. prisons and remand centers, and in relation to the very special situation of prison students, namely being behind bars. Their text includes the following (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2005):

1. The Directorate will strive to ensure that prisoners are given the opportunity to exercise their civil rights and to the greatest possible extent are given equivalent opportunities (...)
2. On the basis of the "proximity principle", the Directorate will strive to disburse resources so that all prisoners have the same educational options.
6. The Directorate will strive to ensure that the educational activities offered are adapted to the needs of the prisoners.

The very fact that, at a given time, a prisoner is incarcerated and therefore excluded from participation in the education and adult education offered in the community, places very high demands are placed on the education and training offered in prisons. These demands concern both the specific courses and programs offered and overarching pedagogical and didactic adaptation of the teaching given, as well as the qualifications and compe-

tence of the teachers, who are responsible for educating such a special group of students under extremely particular conditions.

Today, when education appears to be an increasingly indispensable asset for being active on the labor market, the educational system of the Prison and Probation Service must see it as a key mission to ensure that when prisoners are released they are not in a weaker position in relation to being able to get an education and a foothold in the world of employment than they were prior to being deprived of their liberty.

In light of the fact that it is one aspect of the mandate of the Prison and Probation Service to help prisoners lead a life free from criminality upon release, and that education is known to play a key role in this respect, our study indicates that prison educational authorities and educators need to: ensure that every prisoner is informed about his or her opportunities for – and right to – participation in educational activities while in prison. Our study indicates that a large number of the prisoners are not aware of these opportunities and rights.

One decisive factor is that the content of the educational activities must be adapted to the competence and qualifications of the prisoners who are the potential students. This means, in relation to prison educational activities, that practical, vocationally-oriented activities should play a greater role than more theoretically-oriented courses (see, for example, Koudahl 2004/06). In light of the results of the study, there appears to be every reason to give greater priority to offering prisoners the option, depending on the length of their sentences, to begin or even complete a vocationally-oriented program.

The fact that so many of the respondents stated that they would like to be able to take vocational training while serving their sentences (40% of the prisoners in the age group 18 to 24, for example,) indicates that many prisoners feel a need for types educational activities not currently available.

It is worth noting in this context that research into how adults best learn and can be motivated to participate in longer educational programs indicates how important it is for the participants to experience the educational activities as both of immediate relevance to them and as feasible for them to complete successfully. In other words, practical vocational training can serve as a good point of departure to encourage prisoners to start to study more traditional school subjects (such as reading, writing, mathematics and foreign languages).

Our study also indicates that from an educational point of view, prisoners' situations are substantially worse than the population as a whole. This makes it essential to further improve the opportunities for all prisoners to feel confident about their basic skills. This is not to say that prisoners should be forced to participate in educational activities, but that there must be sufficient capacity so that all prisoners who so wish should be able to participate in educational activities while serving their sentences.

Teachers must also be given continuing education, so as to be even better equipped to provide educational activities for prisoners who, in relation to their general situation, motivation and past experience of education, etc., differ considerably from adults participating in other educational activities in the community.

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4. Finland

by Leena Koski

Brief description of the prison and probation system

In Finland, the Criminal Sanctions Agency, under the Ministry of Justice, is responsible for criminal policy pursuant to guidelines issued by the Ministry.

The Criminal Sanctions Agency was established in 2001 and is a key government authority in the prison and probation sector. It is responsible for enforcement of community service sanctions and prison sentences. Its main task is to regulate the activities of the Criminal Sanctions and Prison Services.

Table 4.1. Number of closed and open prison facilities and places in Finland

Closed prisons:	16	Places:	2,492
Open prisons	9	Places:	1,031
Total	25		3,523

Table 4.2. Prisoners by sex and number of places

Men:	3,284	Places for male prisoners:	3,252
Women	236	Places for female prisoners:	271
Total	3,520		3,523

The number of prisoners with non-Finnish backgrounds was 296.

Table 4.3. Short and long sentences

	<3 months	3 to 12 months	1 to 5 years	> 5 years
1 February 2008	150 (5.5%)	619 (21.2%)	1,361 (46.7%)	613 (21%)

The Prison Service is part of the penal system. The Prison Service enforces prison sentences and conversion sentences for fines issued by courts of law, as well as enforcing remand decisions.

The latest legislation on enforcement of sentences came into effect on 1 October 2006, at the same time as a reform of the structure of the Prison Service, which is now structured as five regional prisons and one national health care unit.

Brief description of prison education

The educational authorities are responsible for educational activities in the prisons, which is to be in line with education offered through the public educational system. Prison education is given by teachers otherwise employed at schools for adult upper secondary education, vocational training, professional education centers for adults, and institutes for new and special education. A few prisons also have staff teachers. Approximately 250 individuals teach part time or full time in Finnish prisons. The same qualification requirements apply to them as to any other teacher. Some teachers only teach in prison schools, others who teach both at schools in the community and in prisons. In addition, some 100 prison staff members also serve as teachers and guidance counselors for prisoners. However, these individuals are not trained or qualified teachers.

Prisoners' rights to education

Pursuant to chapter article 8 of the Finnish Prisons Act, prisoners have the right to participate in educational activities offered at the prisons or in the community. The Finnish Constitution (GL 731/1999) guarantees every individual a subjective right to basic education free of charge. The Prisons Act also stipulates that prisoners who have not completed their basic compulsory education have a right to education other than basic education, although as a commitment of the national government rather than as

a subjective right. Every individual, even if destitute, is guaranteed equal opportunities to education even beyond compulsory level, and to self-development (see chapter 2 article 16 of the Constitution).

The Basic Education Act, the Upper Secondary School Act and the relevant ordinances stipulate the general rules governing basic education. The rules governing vocational training are to be found in the laws and regulations on vocational education and training for adults. According to article 18 of the Act on Vocational Training (630/1998), apprenticeship contracts offered to prisoners in conjunction with their work in the prisons is not to be based on work agreements. Apprenticeship contracts may deviate from the regulations concerning, for example, work agreements, working hours, and vacation.

Prisoners' participation in educational activities

On a daily basis, prisoners use an average of 10% of their time for studies. A total of approximately 1,700 prisoners participated in educational activities in 2007. In addition, an average of 54 prisoners had day release privileges for studies in the community. The objective of The Prisons Act (767/2005) is to improve prisoners' abilities in terms of living a life free from crime. Their abilities to cope with life and adjust to society are to be promoted while they are serving their sentences, and relapses into crime are to be prevented. Helping prisoners readjust to society is stressed as an important aspect of the individual plans structuring each prisoner's sentence time. Education is an essential instrument in overall rehabilitation of prisoners. Prisoners with weak educational backgrounds participate in prison educational activities. These are to be in accord with the prisoner's individual plan. Special priority is given to encouraging prisoners to become motivated to participate in educational activities whose educational weaknesses or lack of vocational skills are seen as preventing them from becoming integrated in society. Education is regarded as a factor that reduces recidivism in this group of prisoners.

The providers of the educational activities are in charge of accepting prisoners for education. Any prisoner who satisfies the criteria for new or special education is eligible to participate. The national curricula adopted by the Finnish National Board of Education apply to prison education (and to competence based and the relevant curricula). The Prison Service

draws up an individual plan for every prisoner who participates in educational activities. For students in special needs education, a plan is also drawn up concerning how the studies are to be organized.

Wages at a generally agreed level are paid to all prisoners who work in open prisons, while to prisoners who work in closed prisons a "work allowance" is paid. There are three remuneration levels for the work allowance, depending on how demanding and long-lasting the work, study or activity is and on the prisoner's individual achievement, are also paid to prisoners who participate in preparatory work, education, or any other activity organized or approved by the prison.

Courses offered

Prisons offer general education at the both compulsory and upper secondary levels and vocational training at upper secondary level. In recent years, these courses have increasingly come to be supplemented with rehabilitation education and counseling, at a level preparatory to vocational training. The prison work opportunities and the counseling available in this context are practical work experience components of the vocational training. The prison work supervisors give workplace guidance counseling. External educational facilities are responsible for the theoretical components. Prisoners can also take independent study courses offered by popular education centers and others, and university level courses. Preparatory courses in reading, writing and mathematics are arranged for the Roma prisoners who have particularly weak learning abilities. Prisoners with non-Finnish backgrounds are offered Finnish language lessons.

The study

The Finnish National Board of Education was responsible for carrying out the study in Finland between 11 and 17 December 2006 in the form of a questionnaire distributed to all prisoners. The original (Norwegian) questionnaire was adapted to Finnish conditions by the Finnish National Board of Education, for example in terminology and classification of different types of education. Some of the questions were only answered

by prisoners who had participated in or were participating in prison educational activities. Participation in the study was voluntary.

Because the vast majority of prison education programs leading to degrees in Finland are arranged, in accordance with educational policy guidelines, by various providers of educational activities, it was beyond the scope of this study to compare factors relating to the prisons that have full-time teaching staff employed with the other prisons. Only a very few prisons have both their own full-time teaching staff and educational activities arranged by external providers.

Implementation of the study and response rates

For prisoners participating in work or other prison activities, the questionnaire was answered on work or activity time, while for prisoners who for some reason were not participating in any activities, an “activity allowance” was paid for the time it took them to answer the questionnaire. The liaison officer kept a list of how many questionnaires were distributed in Finnish, Swedish, Russian and English, respectively, in relation to the total Every prisoner who was in prison at the point in time in question received a questionnaire.

The annual statistics of the Criminal Sanctions Agency indicate that on 16 December 2006 there were 3,432 prisoners in Finnish prisons. A total of 237 prisoners were unable to fill out the questionnaire at the time. A total of 3,185 questionnaires were distributed, of which 2,269 were returned. Thus for the entire material of questionnaires distributed, the response rate was 71%. The questionnaires were sent to a total of 32 prisons/units, 31 of which returned them. Four units had a response rate of 100%, while at four others it was less than 50%. At nearly 60% of the prisons, the response rate was over 70%, and the average response rate per prison was also 70%.

The respondents

The target group included remand prisoners, prisoners serving sentences converted from fines, and ordinary prisoners serving time in Finnish prisons between 11 and 17 December 2006. Of the 2,269 who returned the questionnaire, 1,690 (74%) were serving sentences in closed prisons, and

579 (26%) in open prisons. Of the prisoners who stated their sex, 92.9% were men and 7.1% women. Of all the respondents, 92.6% were Finnish citizens, and 91.5% were native Finnish speakers. The largest age groups of respondents were the 25–34 (40.2%) and 35–44-year-olds (27.4%). Of all the respondents, 18.2% were over the age of 44. Divided by reason for incarceration, 83% were serving ordinary prison sentences, 12% were in remand, and 5% were serving sentences converted from fines. Of all the respondents, 8.9% stated that they had spent their childhood in another country than Finland. Only 3%, or 77 of the questionnaires distributed in Russian or English were returned. In consideration of various background variables, the percentages of respondents correspond reasonably well to the ethnic backgrounds of the prisoners.

Prisoners' educational backgrounds

The educational backgrounds of the prisoners were surveyed using a question in which they were asked to mark the level of schooling they had completed or had participated in. They were also asked to mention levels they had begun but had dropped out of, and there was space for an open-ended answer for adding any courses they considered not to fit into the educational activities listed. There were nearly twice as many responses to the question concerning educational background as there were respondents.

Of all the respondents, approximately 6% had either not completed any educational level or had not completed compulsory school. A study by Kumpulainen and Saari indicates that approximately 1% of everyone in Finland who left compulsory school between 2001 and 2005 did not receive any final grades. This indicates that more prisoners have failed to complete compulsory school than the corresponding figures for young people in the general population. Eleven per cent of the respondents had completed upper secondary school, and 5% had successfully completed the matriculation examination. (In the Finnish educational system it is possible to complete upper secondary school without taking the matriculation examination). The proportion of prisoners who had completed the upper secondary school matriculation examination was very small in comparison with the age group 19–21 in the general population, more

than 50% of whom have completed upper secondary school or the matriculation examination in recent years.

Of the respondents who had vocational training, 29% had pursued vocational studies, 19% had a vocational upper secondary qualification, 12% a further vocational qualification, and 4% a specialist vocational qualification. Some respondents had ticked all the boxes relating to vocational training, one third only one alternative, and 15% two or more. The terminology for vocational training may also have led to erroneous answers. It is difficult to overview the structure of vocational training, with its various levels of qualification, which can be completed either in accordance with a curriculum, as independent degree programs for adults, or as apprenticeship training.

Table 4.4. Educational backgrounds (N)=2,269

No schooling	Compulsory school	Upper secondary school		University or higher education degree programs	
No completed education	Compulsory school, seven years (previously) or nine years (today) (2,240)	Completed upper secondary school matriculation examination	Vocational upper secondary qualification, further vocational qualification, and specialist vocational qualification	Degree from professional institute or university of applied science	Degree from a university or institute of higher education
(143)	(2,052)	(1,149)	(1,017)	(125)	(38)
6.3%	90.4%	5.0%	44.8%	5.5%	1.7%

* Of all respondents, 98.8% stated that they had completed compulsory school. There is therefore a discrepancy in the statistics. This absence of agreement can probably be explained in terms of the 188 prisoners who stated that they had completed both seven and nine-year compulsory school. This may, in turn, either be attributable to terminological confusion or to the fact that some of the prisoners may both have completed seven-year compulsory school and have completed the nine-year curriculum. Against this background, we estimate the number who have completed nine-year compulsory school to be 94%.

It is clear from our statistics that fewer prisoners than the proportion of the general population have completed vocational training. In the general population, in the age group that completes compulsory school, 39% go on to vocational training (Statistics Finland, 2007). In the general population of Finland, in the age group 25–64, 43% have completed either upper secondary or vocational education (OECD 2006).

Fewer than 10% of the prisoners had degrees from or had studied at universities or institutes of higher education. In comparison with the general population, this indicates a low educational level among prisoners, since according to OECD statistics one third of the age group 16–64 had higher education degrees.

Sex and age distribution

We found a statistically significant correlation between sex and educational background ($\chi^2(5) = 24,510$, $p = 0.000$), such that men had stronger educational backgrounds than women (Table 4.5). Women prisoners tended to have completed compulsory school plus the supplementary year and other education. The table below presents educational background in relation to completed education and sex.

Table 4.5. Educational background by sex (N)=2,205

Educational background	Men (2,048)	Women (157)
No education completed	80 (3.9%)	5 (3.2%)
Seven or nine year compulsory school, Supplementary year	488 (23.8%)	46 (29.3%)
Upper secondary vocational education	1,046 (51.1%)	60 (38.2%)
Matriculation examination or general upper secondary studies	72 (3.5%)	5 (3.2%)
Degree from university or institute of higher education or studies at this level	137 (6.7%)	6 (3.8%)
Other studies	225 (11.0%)	35 (22.3%)

The level of education completed increased with age (see Table 4.6). Half the respondents in all age groups had some form of vocational training. In the age group 25–44 “Other studies” was a frequent response.

The majority of the prisoners (93%) grew up entirely or mainly in Finland. Only 4 individuals (2% of the prisoners) had spent their childhood or adolescence in another Nordic country, which makes it impossible to draw conclusions about their educational backgrounds. Prisoners who had spent their childhood or adolescence in Finland, elsewhere in Europe or elsewhere in the world had most often, relatively speaking, completed vocational training. Prisoners who had spent their childhood or adolescence elsewhere in Europe had the greatest relative level of university or

higher education, and those who had spent their childhood or adolescence in Finland had the lowest relative level of university or higher education.

Table 4.6. Educational background by age (N)=2,218

Educational background	18–24 (313)	25–34 (892)	35–44 (605)	44+ (406)
No education completed	12 (3.8%)	39 (4.4%)	28 (4.6%)	5 (1.2%)
Nine year compulsory school, supplementary year	110 (35.1%)	195 (21.9%)	102 (16.9%)	124 (30.5%)
Upper secondary vocational education	151 (48.2%)	453 (50.8%)	321 (53.1%)	189 (46.6%)
Matriculation examination or general upper secondary studies	14 (4.5%)	40 (4.5%)	17 (2.8%)	7 (1.7%)
Degree from university or studies at this level	9 (2.9%)	59 (6.6%)	47 (7.8%)	30 (7.4%)
Other studies	17 (5.4%)	106 (11.9%)	90 (14.9%)	51 (12.6%)

Table 4.7. Participation in prison educational activities

Education	(N)=2,269	%
I am not participating	1,447	63.8
Training and guidance for rehabilitation purposes	155	6.8
Compulsory school	181	3.6
Upper secondary program or courses	107	4.7
Vocational courses or program	343	15.1
Professional studies/program	9	0.4
Non-matriculating university or higher education courses	10	0.4
University or higher education Degree program	0	0.4
Occasional hobby courses	75	3.3
Roma language or culture	18	0.8
Finnish for immigrants	17	0.7
Other studies	104	4.6

Prison educational activities

The majority (nearly 64%) of our respondents stated that they were not participating in prison educational activities (table 4.7). Those who were participating usually took some kind of vocational training (15%), This category also includes guidance and counseling for training and rehabili-

tation (6.8%). Fewer respondents stated that they were taking compulsory or general upper secondary level courses or hobby courses. The latter include arts and crafts and music.

The type of course most often mentioned as “other studies” was computer studies. There were no other clearly distinguishable groups.

Sex and age distribution

There was a statistically significant correlation between sex and prison educational activities ($\chi^2(4) = 30,643$, $p = 0.000$) showing that women participated more often than men (table 4.8). Men who participated in prison educational activities more often studied at upper secondary level (18%). Women more often participated in “Other studies” (14%).

Table 4.8. Prison educational activities by sex (N)=2,036

	Male (1,891)	Female (145)
I am not participating	1,262 (66.7%)	96 (66.2%)
Compulsory level studies	147 (7.8%)	14 (9.7%)
Upper secondary level studies	350 (18.5%)	10 (6.9%)
University and higher education	31 (1.6%)	4 (2.8%)
Other studies	101 (5.3%)	21 (14.5%)

Although there is no statistical correlation, our findings indicate that it was the youngest and the oldest age groups, below 18 and above 44, who most often did *not* participate in prison educational activities (see table 4.9).

Table 4.9. Prisoners participating in prison educational activities by age (N)=2,049

Age group	18–24	25–34	35–44	44+
Number	82	312	196	91
Per cent	29	37	35	25

Differences in relation to length of sentence

The question regarding length of sentence proved to be difficult to answer for various reasons, one of which was that a prisoner could be serving parallel sentences. The non-response rate to this question was quite high.

Table 4.10. Prisoners participating in prison educational activities by length of sentence (N)=1,868

	< 3 mo. (170)	3–12 mo. (476)	1–5 yrs. (810)	> 5 yrs. (412)
I am not participating	154 (90.6%)	392 (82.4%)	502 (62.0%)	185 (44.9%)
Compulsory level studies	11 (6.5%)	29 (6.1%)	79 (9.8%)	34 (8.3%)
Upper secondary level studies	3 (1.8%)	32 (6.7%)	168 (20.7%)	141 (34.2%)
University and higher education	0 (0%)	4 (0.8%)	14 (1.7%)	16(3.9%)
Other studies	2 (1.2%)	19 (4.0%)	47 (5.8%)	36 (8.7%)

There was a statistically significant correlation between sentence length and participation in prison educational activities ($p=0.000$). Prisoners serving sentences of less than three months participated least often, and prisoners serving sentences of more than five years participated most often (table 4.10).

Mother tongue

The respondents included 2,046 prisoners with Finnish mother tongue, 33 with Swedish mother tongue, with 59 Russian mother tongue, and 105 respondents with a mother tongue other than those given above. Of all the respondents, 72% (1,434) stated that they were not participating in any prison educational activity. Respondents who did not have Finnish mother tongue were the group who participated most often in prison educational activities (47%), relatively speaking. Most of the activities offered in Finnish fell under the heading of education and counseling for the purposes of training and rehabilitation, and vocational studies. Four per cent (87) of the Finnish mother tongue respondents and 11% (12) of the respondents with a mother tongue other than Finnish participated in apprenticeship training.

Educational preferences

We used a question in which a number of alternative possible courses and programs were listed to survey the educational preferences of the prisoners. Respondents were allowed to state more than one preference, and there was also space for an open-ended response. Of those who responded to this question, approximately two thirds (62.8%) stated at least one

educational preference, and only one third of the respondents stated that they did not wish to participate in any prison educational activities at all.

Table 4.11. Educational interests and preferences (N)=2,269

Educational preferences	(N)	%
I do not want to participate in any prison educational activities	757	33.4
Complete compulsory school education	104	4.6
General upper secondary courses	84	3.7
Complete general upper secondary school program	90	4.0
Vocational studies/Vocational courses	587	25.9
Vocational upper secondary qualification	329	14.5
Further vocational qualification	286	12.6
Specialist vocational qualification	142	6.3
Studies at University of applied science	90	4.0
Single courses, university or higher ed.	90	4.0
Degree from university or higher ed	74	3.3
Other studies	213	9.4

The main educational preference of the respondents was vocational training (table 4.11). The most common preferences were vocational courses, preparatory courses for the vocational upper secondary qualification (26%), and courses leading up to the vocational upper secondary qualification (15%). Between 3% and 4% was interested in general upper secondary, applied science, or university education. A total of 104 (just under 5%) of the respondents stated that they would like to complete compulsory level education.

We found no statistically significant correlation between the educational preferences of the respondents and their educational backgrounds. The 29 respondents who had no education at all or who had never completed compulsory level education were most interested in studying at that level. Of the respondents who had no education or only compulsory level education, 215 stated that they would like to go on to general upper secondary education. Two hundred and seventy-two respondents who had previously participated in upper secondary education (general or vocational) stated preferences in relation to that level. These respondents were often interested in vocational training. The preferences of the 137 respondents who had some university or higher education studies were mainly

general upper secondary (23 respondents) or higher education (25 respondents). However, there were no statistically significant differences.

Table 4.12. Educational activity preferences by educational background (N)=2,027

Educational preferences	(N)	%
I do not want to participate in any prison educational activities	755	37.2
Studies related to compulsory level education	60	3.0
Studies related to general upper secondary level education	897	44.3
University or higher ed.	196	9.7
Other studies	119	5.9
Total	2,027	100

Sex and age distribution

We found no statistically significant correlation between the prison educational preferences of women and men respondents. The age group that responded most often to the question on educational preferences was the age group 25–34, followed by the age group 35–44. The age groups least interested in participating in prison educational activities were the oldest and youngest ones. The correlation between educational preferences and age was statistically significant ($\chi^2(16) = 37.121, p = 0.002$).

Self-rated skills: ICT, literacy, and numeracy

The respondents were asked to rate their knowledge and skills in relation to ICT, literacy, and numeracy, on five-point scales. Just over one third assessed their ICT skills as poor, and the same proportion as average. One fifth considered their own skills good or very good. Respondents with weaker educational backgrounds consistently regarded their ICT skills as less good than respondents with stronger educational backgrounds, with the exception of respondents who had vocational training, who rated their ICT skills as very good or good more often than respondents with other educational backgrounds. None of these differences, however, was statistically significant. Today, ICT skills are a basic prerequisite for managing one's affairs, studying, or working. To obtain good ICT skills, it is also necessary to have access to state-of-the-art computers, which the study by Koski and Mäki (2006, p. 46) indicates is not the case in Finnish prisons.

Table 4.13. Self-rated reading/writing, mathematics, and ICT skills

	Very good	Good	Average	Poor	Very poor
ICT skills	116 (5.2%)	367 (16.6%)	872 (39.4%)	568 (25.7%)	289 (13.1%)
Literacy	474 (21.3%)	939 (42.1%)	699 (31.3%)	95 (4.3%)	23 (1.0%)
Mathematics	221 (9.9%)	680 (30.5%)	939 (42.1%)	297 (13.3%)	93 (4.2%)

We found a correlation between learning difficulties in mathematics on the one hand and poor ICT skills on the other. There was a corresponding correlation between (ICT skills and literacy as well. Women (average 2.56 on a scale from 1 to 5) rated their own ICT skills lower than men did (average 2.77). The older age groups, from 35 and up, rated their ICT skills as less good than the younger respondents. This difference was not statistically significant.

Generally, the respondents rated their literacy skills as better than their skills in mathematics. The men's self-ratings their own literacy skills (average 3.76) was poorer than the women's (average 4.10). In contrast, the men generally rated their skills in mathematics as better (average 3.32) than the women (average 2.90). Our findings also indicated that the older age groups rated their own mathematics skills as better than did the younger age groups. We found no statistically significant correlation between educational background and literacy skills. The vast majority of the respondents rated their skills as average. There was an indication that respondents with stronger educational backgrounds rated their skills as better than did respondents with weaker educational backgrounds.

Self-rated difficulties with literacy and numeracy

Three quarters (or 1,700) of all the respondents (N=2,230) rated themselves as having no problems with literacy (table 4.14); 19% of all the respondents (439) considered themselves as having a small amount of difficulty with literacy, and 3% (74) of all the respondents stated that they had serious difficulties. This same proportion stated that their learning difficulties were keeping them from studying. The men (average 1.27) stated that they had literacy difficulties more often than the women (aver-

age 1.20). These findings are in line with other studies, which indicate that literacy difficulties are more common among men. (For example, *Utvärdering av inlärningsresultaten 2/2002*, Utbildningsstyrelsen). However, although we found no statistically significant correlation between educational background and literacy difficulties, there are still indications that such difficulties are more often found among individuals who either have no education at all or only compulsory schooling.

Table 4.14. Self-rated literacy and numeracy difficulties

	None	Some	Serious
Literacy difficulties	1,717 (77.0%)	439 (19.7%)	74 (3.3%)
Numeracy difficulties	1,372 (61.6%)	649 (29.1%)	206 (9.3%)

It is difficult to say anything conclusive about the reasons for and consequences of background factors such as literacy problems, but many studies indicate that these are more common among prisoners than the general population. In a study by Salo (2006, 20) nearly half (43%) the prisoners he investigated had substantial literacy difficulties, while only 8% of all the pupils in the last year of compulsory school, i.e. an equivalent group, had literacy difficulties. Salo also found word decoding difficulties, a sign of dyslexia, in one third (33%) of his respondents, and difficulties indicative of insufficient practice and unfavorable circumstances in 10% of his respondents.

According to their self-ratings, 61.6% (1,372) of our respondents had no problems with numeracy, while 9.3% (206) stated that they had serious difficulties, and 29.1% (649) that they had some difficulties. The women (average 1.72) stated more often than the men (average 1.46) that they had difficulties with numeracy. This difference is statistically significant, and is in line with other findings, which also indicate that women consider their numeracy skills to be less good than men (See, for example, *Utvärdering av inlärningsresultaten 2/2002*, Utbildningsstyrelsen). There was also a statistically significant correlation between poor educational background and numeracy difficulties. More than half the respondents stated that they had no difficulties in either literacy or numeracy, while 11% rated themselves as having some difficulties with both, and just under 2% as having serious difficulties with both. Thus there is a statistically significant correlation between literacy and numeracy difficulties.

Support in alleviating difficulties

Of all the prisoners who stated that they had learning difficulties, approximately every fourth one (23%) had been tested, while 77% remained untested. Nearly 40% of the prisoners who rated themselves as having learning difficulties had received no help for these problems. Approximately 15% were getting some kind of special education. Another study found that of prisoners who were participating in vocational training, approximately 9% had received special education at some point (Kumpulainen and Saari 2006, p.85), as compared with prisoners studying at compulsory level, where some 22% were receiving some kind of special support (Kumpulainen and Saari 2006, p. 38).

Reasons for participating in prison educational activities

Prisoners who had participated in an educational activity were asked to assess the importance of various factors in relation to their decision to participate. The most frequently-stated reason was to use the time in prison constructively. Two thirds of the respondents (69%) stated this as a very important reason, and one quarter (26%) as relatively important. According to roughly the same proportions the urge to satisfy one's desire to learn (62%) or to learn a new subject (62%), and to improve one's prospects in life after release (69%) were also very important reasons. Only approximately one out of ten did not consider these to be important reasons to take up studies. More than half the participants in educational activities (59%) stated that studying in prison because it was better than working in prison was an important or relatively important reason.

Table 4.15. Motivational categories: reasons for deciding to participate in prison educational activities and the importance of each factor (N)=667

Motivational category	Reason for starting to study in prison	Importance of motivational category
Learning new things	To satisfy my desire to learn	0.91
	To learn about a new subject	0.76
	To spend my time doing something sensible and useful	0.69
	To pass an exam or improve a previous grade	0.43
Social and situational factors	Because I wanted to be part of the social environment at the school	0.77
	Because I had friends going to school	0.69
	Because I was encouraged to study	0.55
	To get more free time during the day	0.53
	To improve my self-esteem	0.46
	Because it is better than working in prison	0.46
Changing the future and influencing it	To make it easier for me to avoid committing crimes after I am released	0.88
	To be better able to cope with life after my release	0.59
	To make it easier to get a job after I am released	0.51

Other very important reasons for deciding to participate included the desire to make serving time easier (51%), to improve one's prospects of getting work after release (45%), and the desire to pass an exam or improve one's grades (41%). However, approximately one quarter (26%) did not state the desire to pass an exam or improve one's grades as important reasons for deciding to participate. Approximately every fifth respondent (22%) did not consider the possibility of improving their job prospects a motivational factor for deciding to participate (table 4.16). According to the factor analysis, reasons for deciding to participate in prison educational activities can be divided into three motivational categories: the desire to learn new, useful things while in prison, social factors, and the desire to change, or at least influence, the future.

Table 4.16. The respondents' own views of their motivation for deciding to participate in prison educational activities

	Very important	Relatively important	Not important
Learning new things			
To satisfy my desire to learn	506 (62%)	250 (31%)	57 (7%)
To learn about a new subject	488 (62%)	235 (30%)	63 (8%)
To spend my time doing something sensible and useful	561 (68%)	212 (26%)	46 (6%)
To pass an exam or improve a previous grade	316 (41%)	249 (33%)	199 (26%)
Social and situational factors			
Because I wanted to be part of the social environment at the school	120 (16%)	260 (34%)	377 (50%)
Because I had friends going to school	107 (14%)	236 (31%)	427 (55%)
Because I was encouraged to study	119 (16%)	247 (32%)	397 (52%)
To get more free time during the day	198 (26%)	244 (31%)	330 (43%)
To improve my self-esteem	229 (29%)	307 (39%)	252 (32%)
Because it is better than working in prison	187 (24%)	273 (35%)	316 (41%)
Changing and influencing the future			
To make it easier for me to avoid committing crimes after I am released	358 (46%)	220 (29%)	193 (25%)
To be better able to cope with life after my release	531 (67%)	174 (22%)	90 (11%)
To make it easier to get a job after I am released	363 (45%)	271 (33%)	177 (22%)

Approximately two thirds of the respondents stated that the possibility of learning new things and using their prison time constructively were very important motivational factors for the decision to participate. Only very few respondents stated that these factors were not important. Many of the respondents stated that social factors, making social contacts or making friends at school were not important factors for the decision to participate. Half the respondents stated that making social contacts was not an important reason for deciding to participate, and more than half (56%) stated that making friends was not an important factor. Only one tenth (14%) saw making friends, and slightly more (16%) saw social contacts, as important reasons for deciding to participate.

Of the situational factors, raising one's self-esteem and preferring studying to working in prison were very important factors for deciding to study for approximately one quarter of the respondents, and relatively important for approximately one third.

In relation to changing and influencing the future, the most important factor for deciding to take up studies was wanting better control over one's life after release. Two thirds of the respondents found this a very important reason for deciding to study in prison, while only one respondent out of ten said that it was not an important reason. Approximately half the students found improving their prospects on the job market and avoiding relapsing into criminality very important, and another third found these relatively important reasons for deciding to take up studies.

Only about one out of every four respondents stated that wanting to go on studying after release was a very important reason for deciding to start studying while in prison. One third stated that this was not an important factor in the decision to start participating in prison educational activities.

The differences in the importance attached to the various factors by the different age groups were statistically significant with regard to the social and situational factors ($p = 0.005$). In the age group 35–44, these factors were more often a motivation to participate in prison educational activities than in the other age groups, whereas they were of least importance to the decision in the younger age groups (18–24) (degree of explanation 1.9%).

Opinions also differed in relation to educational background between those who had completed compulsory school and/or the supplementary year, and those who had completed other studies. The desire to learn something new while in prison or because learning is constructive were distinctly more often given by those who had completed compulsory school and/or the supplementary year, than among those who had completed other studies. The difference of opinion concerning both these factors (to learn a new subject and to satisfy my desire to learn) was statistically significant among these two groups ($p = 0.005$) (degree of explanation 2.4%).

Reasons for not participating in prison educational activities

Of all the respondents, 1,447 (64%) stated that they were not participating in any prison educational activity. Of all those who returned the questionnaire, only 9% (208) were of the opinion that it is not possible to study while in prison, and thus the vast majority considered it possible to study while in prison.

Table 4.17 displays the most common reasons given by prisoners for not participating in prison educational activities. These include the absence of suitable courses and that the respondents had not received sufficient information study options. These answers indicate that there were prisoners who were simply not interested in prison educational activities. There was a statistically significant correlation between educational background and the decision not to participate in prison educational activities ($\chi^2(5) = 50,865, p = 0.000$). Prisoners with weaker educational backgrounds were, on average, less inclined to take part in prison educational activities than prisoners with stronger educational backgrounds.

Still, it was clear that the prisoners set store by education, since only 1.8% of the respondents stated that they had decided not to participate because education was unnecessary. Another 3.4% stated that their learning difficulties prevented them from studying. This figure is in contrast with the findings of Salo (2006, p. 20) that 43% of the prisoners in his study had learning disabilities. The respondents' self-ratings of their learning abilities were very positive.

Some of the other main reasons stated for not participating in prison educational activities were: too short a sentence to consider studying, substance abuse withdrawal program, being over retirement age, choosing work instead of studying, participation in a program for substance abusers, in remand, awaiting judgment, illness or other personal impediment, as well as not feeling the need for studies at the time of the study. Reasons relating to the prison facilities were often mentioned, the most common being that the staff had somehow kept the prisoner from participating.

Table 4.17 Reasons for not participating in prison educational activities (N)=2,269

	(N)	%
This prison does not offer any educational programs	208	9.2
This prison does not offer any educational programs suitable for me	441	19.4
I do not receive any information about educational possibilities	307	13.5
The conditions for school and studying in the prison are poor	177	7.8
I am not interested in getting an education in prison	238	10.5
I already have enough education	71	7.5
Education is not worth the effort	40	1.8
I believe that I have too many learning problems	77	3.4
Other reasons	436	19.2

The prisoners experienced the staff's attitude toward educational activities as negative. They were also critical of prisoners being transferred between prisons and thus having to interrupt their studies. Prisoners who already had a fair amount of education and a job to return to after release sometimes experienced that there was nothing to be gained from studying.

Prisoners' evaluations of their educational activities

In the factor analysis, it became eminently clear that two factors were considered more important than others: the quality of and the level of demands in the educational activities. Inadequate access to ICT equipment and low demands did not feature either of these dimensions. The prisoners who stated that the demands were too tended to have high self-esteem in relation to studying.

The vast majority of students (approximately 60%) were satisfied or generally satisfied with the quality of the educational activities, and with the various factors (table 4.18). Only approximately every fifth respondent was dissatisfied or somewhat dissatisfied with the quality of the educational activities. The investigation carried out by the Finnish National Board of Education concerning vocational studies and the evaluation of open and closed prisons supports our conclusions regarding prisoner satisfaction with the educational activities available.

The majority of prisoners also assessed their teachers' ICT skills as good. A sizeable proportion of the respondents (41%) stated that they were unable to evaluate their teachers' ICT skills. This may be attributable to their having no experience of computers as part of prison educational activities. Approximately one out of every five respondents was

dissatisfied or somewhat dissatisfied with the quality of the prison educational activities. One out of every five respondents also answered that they were unable to have any opinion about the other statements, with the exception of the work load, where one out of every four respondents said they were unable to have an opinion.

There was a statistically significant difference between the groups who stated that they had none, some, and serious literacy difficulties, in terms of how they assessed the quality of their prison educational activities ($p = 0.003$) (degree of explanation 1.8%). Prisoners with serious literacy difficulties were clearly more negative than others about the quality of the prison educational activities. The students judged the level of demands as appropriate or basically appropriate. According to the vast majority of the respondents, the level of demands was appropriate, the balance between lectures and group work was reasonable, and the individual subjects were not too difficult. More than half of the respondents stated that the level of demands was not too high, and only one out of ten that the demands were somewhat too high. It appears that certain subjects were much too difficult for some respondents. Approximately one quarter of the respondents (24%) stated that at least some subject were much too difficult, and approximately the same proportion that they were unable to have an opinion about whether there was a good balance between lectures and group work, or whether certain subjects were too difficult or the demands too high.

Table 4.18. Percentage of responses concerning the quality and level of demands of the educational activities

Opinion	Completely agree	Somewhat agree	Unsure	Somewhat disagree	Completely disagree
I am pleased with the educational program	81 (12%)	58 (8 %)	141 (21 %)	221 (32 %)	187 (27%)
I am pleased with the teaching	63 (9 %)	67 (10 %)	151 (22 %)	223 (32 %)	190 (27%)
The teaching is suited to my needs	64 (9 %)	64 (9 %)	155 (23 %)	204 (30 %)	193 (29%)
The prison makes it possible to take an education	41 (6%)	84 (12%)	134 (19%)	187 (27%)	247 (36%)
The work load is just right	40 (6%)	84 (12%)	165 (24%)	229 (33%)	177 (25%)
The teachers have good ICT skills	61 (9%)	47 (7%)	278 (41%)	124 (18%)	170 (25%)
Requirements					
Too many lectures	212 (31%)	185 (27%)	208 (31%)	45 (7%)	28 (4%)
Requirements is too tough	218 (32%)	195 (28%)	182 (27%)	61 (9%)	29 (4%)
Some subjects is too difficult	139 (20%)	154 (23%)	225 (33%)	102 (15%)	61 (9%)
Too much group work	214 (32%)	153 (23%)	223 (33%)	56 (8%)	29 (4%)
Others					
Inadequate access to ICT equipment	64 (9%)	57 (8%)	134 (20%)	90 (13%)	338 (50%)
Requirements not tough enough	86 (12%)	134 (20%)	270 (40%)	115 (17%)	73 (11%)

Women prisoners stated that they were of the opinion that the level of demands was quite appropriate, while the men stated that the demands were too high or a little too high. There was a statistically significant difference between the sexes with regard to the level of demands ($p = 0.006$). Students with some or serious literacy difficulties experienced the level of demands as too high. The differences between the groups were statistically significant ($p = 0.000$) (degree of explanation 4.9%). Respondents with some or serious numeracy difficulties also found the level of demands too high, while respondents with no problems in relation to

mathematics rated the level of demands as appropriate. These differences were statistically significant ($p = 0.000$) (degree of explanation 6.4%).

The students' opinions concerning problems associated with the educational activities

A total of 822 respondents stated that they were participating in some kind of prison educational activity (including hobby courses). The clearly most frequently-experienced problem was inadequate access to ICT equipment while studying. Of all the participants, more than one third (38%) considered this a problem. The next largest problems were being moved to a different prison and inadequate access to literature.

Only a very few students considered literacy or numeracy difficulties to be a problem. And only one out of ten students considered distractions or prison security arrangements to be detrimental to their studies.

Table 4.19. Per cent of problems associated with prison educational activities

Problem	(N)	%
Inadequate access to ICT equipment	313	30
Transfers between prisons	149	14
Inadequate access to literature	137	13
I'll be released before I can finish my education	113	11
Distractions in prison	100	9
Security routines in prison	94	9
My problems with arithmetic and mathematics	87	8
My problems with reading and writing	62	6
Total	1,055	100

Discussion of the findings from the national survey

Of all the prisoners, approximately 6% had no education or had not completed compulsory school

Of the respondents, 151 or 7% stated that they had taken part in tenth grade, the transitional year between basic and upper secondary education in Finland. In the population as a whole, an average of 1.4% of the participants in the final year of basic education go on to the transitional year (Kumpulainen and Saari 2006, p. 33).

Eleven per cent of the respondents had begun or completed general upper secondary studies, and 5% had passed the general upper secondary school matriculation examination (A comparison between the number of prisoners who had graduated from general upper secondary school and passed the matriculation examination with the corresponding figure for the age group 19–21 in the general population between 2000 and 2005 indicates that although more than 50% of this age group complete a general upper secondary education today, the number of prisoners who have their general upper secondary education is very small (Saari and Kumpulainen 2006, p. 60). Twenty-nine percent of the prisoners had completed vocational training, 19% had a vocational upper secondary qualification, 12% a further vocational upper secondary qualification, and 4% a specialist vocational qualification. Sixteen per cent of the respondents had degrees in applied science. In the general population, 39% of compulsory school graduates go on to vocational training (Statistics Finland 2007). Upper secondary education, general or vocational, is completed by 43% of the population of Finland between the ages of 25 and 64 (OECD 2006, p.36). Thus it is clear that, on average, prisoners in Finland have less vocational training than the general population.

Fewer than 10% of the prisoners had studied at a university or institute of higher education or had such a degree. In comparison with the number of people who passed the general upper secondary school matriculation examination in the general population in 2005, of whom just under 40% continued on to applied science or other higher education, very few prisoners had completed higher a education program (Statistics Finland 2007). This figure was also low in comparison with the general population in which, according to OECD statistics (2006), more than one third of the age group between 16 and 64 had a higher education degree.

Participation in prison educational activities

The planning of and information concerning the educational activities must be improved.

Sixty-four percent of the respondents stated that they were not participating in any prison educational activities. There is a link between this lack of interest in participation and weak educational backgrounds. The most common reasons stated for not participating in any prison educa-

tional activities were that there was no suitable activity on offer or that not sufficient information had been given about the educational opportunities. Respondents also stated that they felt uncertain about or unaware of the educational opportunities. Women prisoners had weaker educational backgrounds than men prisoners but, in contrast, more often participated in prison educational activities.

When asked about their interest in participating in prison educational activities, 40% of the respondents stated that they were not interested in participating in any prison educational activities. The most frequent reasons stated were lack of opportunities, absence of suitable activities, and insufficient information about the opportunities. The study made by the Finnish National Board of Education also supports this indication of the restricted range of educational opportunities on offer. Some of the respondents also stated that they already had sufficient education.

Yet as a rule, respondents' attitude toward education was positive. Only 2% stated that they regarded education as unnecessary. The respondents were very optimistic in their self-ratings of their study skills. Only 3% rated their learning difficulties as an obstacle to studying.

Most of the respondents who were participating in prison educational activities were taking some kind of vocational training (15%). Respondents with literacy difficulties participated proportionally more often in prison educational activities than respondents who rated themselves as not having any such difficulties. Students who had difficulties in mathematics participated less often in prison educational activities than respondents who did not have such difficulties.

There has been an increase in the range of prison guidance and counseling activities for rehabilitation purposes, so today there are quite a lot of such activities offered. Eleven per cent of the respondents stated that they participated in guidance and counseling activities, while only about 1% of the students participated in basic vocational training. Our findings do not permit any conclusions to be drawn concerning the content of the prison guidance and counseling activities for rehabilitation purposes that were on offer. In 2006, 16% of all prison educational activities offered in Finland were of a rehabilitation nature, and there were 273 prisoners participating in these activities. Many prisoners also participated in the transitional course between compulsory and upper secondary school.

Educational preferences and motivation

The vast majority of educational preferences expressed were for vocational courses and programs. The most-frequently requested type of activities were vocational courses (26%), the further vocational qualification (14%) and the vocational upper secondary qualification (13%). These findings clearly indicate that the vocational training on offer was insufficient.

It is also necessary to offer compulsory level education for prisoners. Some 6% of the prisoners had no education or had interrupted their compulsory education, and just under 5% of the respondents stated that they would want to complete their compulsory education. The educational background of prisoners was lower than of the population as a whole. This also applies to vocational training.

The vast majority of the students stated that they experienced prison educational activities as constructive, and many stated this as one of the main reasons for deciding to participate. The urge to satisfy one's desire to study and to study new subjects, as well as to use prison time constructively were all very frequently stated reasons for deciding to participate. In relation to factors about the future and influencing the future, the students most often stated that they had decided to start participating in prison educational activities in order to get better control over their lives after release.

The desire to learn new things and make constructive use of their time were given particularly often as important motivating factors by students with serious literacy or numeracy difficulties. For this group, social and situational factors were of little importance, whereas for students with no difficulties, social and situational factors were often given as motivating factors for deciding to participate.

Learning skills and disabilities, and help provided

Respondents who participated in prison educational activities had more positive in their own self-images, and stated that they had fewer learning difficulties than would have been assumed on the basis of previous statistics and findings. Only 3% of the respondents stated that they had serious literacy difficulties, while one fifth stated that they had some difficulties. The figures for numeracy were somewhat higher, with approximately one tenth of the respondents stating that they had serious difficulties, and just

under one third that they had some difficulties. Women respondents stated more numeracy difficulties than men, and they also rated their own skills as poorer, while the situation concerning literacy difficulties was the opposite.

Tests carried out in the placement units when risk and needs assessments are made are clearly an important way of determining prisoners' study skills. Only one out of four prisoners who stated that they had learning difficulties also stated that they had been tested. It is also clear that many prisoners need special educational support. Many (40%), of those who rated themselves as having learning difficulties had never been given help for them.

The prisoners' average assessment of their own ICT skills was quite negative. Just over one third self-rated their skills as poor or very poor, and only one fifth as good. Respondents with learning difficulties or weak educational backgrounds more often than others rated their own ICT skills as poor, while respondents who had completed vocational training rated their ICT skills on average as good or very good.

Not all prisoners have opportunities while in prison to improve their ICT skills. Since they ought to learn to retrieve information, it is a problem that there is too little access to ICT equipment in relation to all prison educational activities. The prisoners also stated that they did not have sufficient opportunity to use computers during their prison educational activities. More than one third of the students stated this as a problem associated with prison educational activities. They also stated that there was inadequate access to literature. This problem was the second most frequently stated problem associated with prison educational activities.

The students' views of their own learning situations and skills

Our study indicates that the students did not have a realistic picture of themselves as learners. Nearly half the students had a positive picture of themselves in the study environment, and only approximately every tenth student rated him or herself as a clearly poor student. The students' educational backgrounds influenced their pictures of themselves as participants in prison educational activities. The stronger their educational backgrounds, the better their self-image. Students with serious literacy or nu-

meracy difficulties had clearly less positive self-images, on average, in relation to the study situation. Younger students also rated themselves as poor students more often than older students, an important factor to take into account. Participants in prison educational activities who had completed compulsory school and the supplementary year experienced the level of demands as too high more often than other participants, and men more often than women. In terms of the participants' self-image, it is important to offer opportunities to improve basic skills during incarceration. Many studies have found that self-confidence is an important factor in relation to learning.

The vast majority of the participants in prison educational activities rated themselves having efficient, effective learning techniques and styles. Comparing this finding with their previous educational backgrounds, there is reason to question the realism of their own picture of their learning skills.

The quality of the prison educational activities

Participants in prison educational activities were satisfied with the quality of the teaching. Only every fifth respondent was dissatisfied, or dissatisfied to some extent, with the quality of the teaching. The previous evaluations and surveys made by the Finnish Board of Education showed similar findings.

Continuing to study after release

Paradoxically, the students assessed the teaching as useful and interesting on the one hand, but the importance they attached to continuing to study after release was low, on the other. They experienced their prison educational activities as quite separate and isolated. One explanation may be that, according to the previous studies made by the Finnish National Board of Education, there has been too little emphasis on creating continuity between prison educational activities and educational activities in the community. Another explanation may be that most of the prison educational activities offered were in quite short units, seldom with a view to taking a complete program. It may be assumed that well-planned use of the time in prison will contribute to improving the individual's situation

after release. The opportunity to study outside the prison on day release privileges might promote prisoners' interest in continuing to studying after release.

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Läst 25.8.2007.

Vankeinhoitolaitoksen ja kriminaalihoito-
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lähiajan toimintalinjat 1998.

5. Iceland

by Helgi Gunnlaugsson and Bogi Ragnarsson

Summary

- This study summarizes the responses to the questionnaire distributed to all prisoners over the age of 18 serving sentences in Icelandic prisons between 20 October and 7 November, 2006. Of the 119 prisoners, 78 returned the questionnaire, giving a response rate of approximately 66%. Of all the respondents, two were women and six were of foreign origin.
- A total of 12 of the respondents had not completed any level of schooling or education (15.6%) and an additional 16 (20.8%) stated that they had not completed compulsory school. This makes a total of approximately 36% (28 of 77). Beyond these respondents, 21 (27%) stated that they had only completed compulsory school, while 17 (22%) had completed an upper secondary level vocational program, 4 (5%) had completed a general upper secondary program, and 7 (9%) had a degree from a university or other institute of higher education.
- A total of 12 respondents who had studied at upper secondary school had chosen preparatory program for higher education, 12 a general program, 10 a vocational program, and 4 a preparatory subject for higher education.
- A total of 27 respondents, or more than one third of all those who participated in the study, stated that they were participating in some prison educational activity while 44, or 62%, were not participating in any prison educational activity at the time of the study. More than half of the respondents who were studying in prison were doing so at upper secondary level. Three respondents were studying at

university level, and four were working with graphic design, computer technology or in the construction sector.

- Various programs are offered at upper secondary level. Vocational studies were popular, and more than one third were studying general, theoretical, and social science subjects.
- Of the 44 prisoners who were not participating in any prison educational activity, 17 (39%) stated lack of information as the main obstacle to being able to participate, while 12 (27%) described the main obstacle as poor conditions for studying in prison.
- A total of 22 prisoners stated that they would have liked to study at upper secondary level, while only 13 stated that they were not interested in taking advantage of the prison educational activities.
- The majority of the respondents (70%) rated themselves as not having any reading or writing difficulties.
- More than half of the respondents rated themselves as having numeracy difficulties.
- Slightly less than one third of those who acknowledged having difficulties with reading, writing or mathematics stated that they had been given help with these problems.
- A total of 9% rated their own ICT skills as very poor, approximately 22% as poor, just under 31% as average, just under 25% as good, while 13% rated their ICT skills as very good.
- Approximately 45% of the respondents who were participating in prison educational activities regarded studying in prison as extremely important for improving their prospects on the labor market after release.
- The vast majority of the respondents who were participating in prison educational activities (85%) regarded their studies as an important way of using their prison time constructively. More than half stated that education would facilitate the process of returning to civil society, and the same proportion that prison education was an important way of preparing to continue studying after release.
- Only 5% of those who were participating in prison educational activities rated studying as important in order to more easily be assigned work in prison.
- Only 20% of the prisoners stated that greater freedom was an important reason for participating in prison educational activities.

- Approximately 70% of the prisoners who were participating in prison educational activities rated increased professional knowledge as an important reason for their decision to study.
- Approximately 70% of the prisoners who were involved in prison educational activities rated studying as an important factor for being able to avoid relapsing into crime after release.
- The prisoners' evaluations of the quality of prison education revealed that 58% were satisfied with the educational activities offered in the prisons.
- The majority of the prisoners (70%) rated access to ICT equipment as inadequate.
- Several factors can be mentioned as explaining why prisoners interrupted their studies. The most important ones were the teaching facilities in the prisons and personal reasons.

Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to present and discuss the Icelandic findings as clearly as possible. The administration of the Icelandic part of the Nordic project was carried out by the national Prison and Probation Administration and the Ministries of Education and Justice in cooperation with the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Iceland. A questionnaire was distributed to every prisoner in Iceland during the period from 20 October to 7 November 2006. More than one third of the respondents stated that they were participating in prison educational activities. A much larger percentage reported that they were interested in participating. A variety of reasons were given for not taking advantage of the opportunities offered. The most commonly-mentioned reasons were that there was too little information about prison education and that the educational and study conditions were poor (Ragnarsson and Gunnlaugsson, 2007).

It should be mentioned that there is an Icelandic interview study (Eggersdóttir, 2006) with a focus on the benefits of educational programs in prison. The findings of this study indicate that participation in prison educational activities had various positive effects for prisoners. Qualitative methods were used to interview five former prisoners who had participated in prison educational activities. The findings clearly indicated

the value of participation in prison educational activities, in spite of the fact that the small sample size made it impossible to generalize from the conclusions.

Educational opportunities in Icelandic prisons

According to article 19 of the Icelandic Education Act, all prisoners have the right to participate in education and vocational training alongside other activities while they are serving time. Participation in traditional educational activities may replace prison work, such that every classroom hour is equivalent to an hour of work. The prison school headmaster has the right to relegate any prisoner who does not participate normally in the study situation, but he must have the support of the prison inspector to do so. Each prison orders and purchases textbooks, which become the property of the prison.

Prison educational activities help prisoners relax, rid themselves of stress, express themselves, and develop both mental and physical skills. Good teaching helps the students to have more positive attitudes and higher ambitions. Participating in educational activities helps prisoners to feel more like ordinary citizens, and gives them contact with the community outside the prison walls (Eggertsdóttir, 2006). This, in turn, makes their time behind bars more tolerable, and reduces the possible negative impact of a prisoner's own personal problems. It must be noted, however, that the voluntary nature of the educational activities and the fact that they are considered as on an equal footing with prison work are prerequisite for achieving these positive effects (European prison rules nr. 78/1987). Thus, according to the Council of Europe, the aim of prison education should be the same as for any adult education (Council of Europe, 1990), to offer each individual the opportunity to learn, which is a basic human right. In January 2008, a report was published by the Icelandic Prison and Probation Administration and the Ministries of Education and Justice concerning education for inmates in Icelandic prisons (Menntamálaráðuneytið, 2008).

The study

The results presented below reflect the responses to the questionnaire study carried out between 20 October and 7 November 2006 among all prisoners over the age of 18 in Icelandic prisoners. Every prisoner received a letter stating that the study was going to be carried out on behalf of the Ministries of Education and Justice and in collaboration with the national Prison and Probation Administration, and that it was part of a joint Nordic study, as well as that the Faculty of Social Science at the University of Iceland was responsible for performing the study. Pursuant to Icelandic law, the data protection authorities (DPA), were informed about the study.

Table 5.0. Number of prisoners in Icelandic prisons in 2006 and response rates

Prison	Date	Number who responded	Number of prisoners	Response rate
Skólavörðustíg prison	20 Oct.	5	12	42%
Kópavogsbraut prison	24 Oct.	6	11	55%
Kviabryggja prison	27 Oct.	13	14	93%
Akureyri prison	31 Oct.	5	9	56%
Litla-Hrauni prison	7 Nov.	49	73	67%
Total:		78	119	66%

Educational levels

As may be seen in table 5.1, 12 individuals had not completed education at any level (15.6%) and another 16 (20.8%) had only completed compulsory school, giving a total of approximately 36% (28 of 77). Thus a large number of the prisoners only had compulsory school education at most. Eight respondents stated that they had attended but not completed upper secondary school.

Table 5.1. Have you completed any of the educational levels mentioned below?

Educational level	(N=77)
Have not completed any education	12 (15.6%)
Compulsory school, not final exam	16 (20.8%)
Compulsory school	21 (27.3%)
Upper secondary school, general orientation	17 (22.1%)
Upper secondary school, vocational orientation	4 (5.1%)
Had completed university or higher education	7 (9.1%)

Ten prisoners reported that they had completed a specialization. Eight prisoners stated that they had completed vocationally-oriented training or an internship, and one respondent reported having only completed upper secondary school. Seven respondents had completed a degree at a university or other institute of higher education. Prisoners appeared most often to have interrupted their education between secondary and upper secondary education, and particular attention therefore needs to be paid to providing compulsory level education. When the backgrounds of the prisoners are examined in relation to educational level, it is clear that the majority of prisoners would be likely to participate in upper secondary level education.

Examining the relationship between age and educational background of prisoners under the age of 25, table 5.2 shows that approximately 18% had not completed education at any level. 29% had completed compulsory school, 12% had completed a vocationally-oriented upper secondary level program, 18% had completed a general upper secondary program, and none had completed university or higher education. In the age group 25–34, approximately 11% had not completed education at any level, 24% had completed compulsory school, 19% had completed a vocational upper secondary level program, 8% had completed a general upper secondary program, and 14% had completed university or higher education. In the age group 35–44 approximately 21% had not completed education at any level, 14% had completed compulsory school, 14% had completed a vocationally-oriented upper secondary level program, 14% had completed a general upper secondary program, and 14% had completed university or higher education.

Table 5.2. Correlation between age and educational background

	Age groups (N=76)			
	< 25 (N=17)	25–34 (N=37)	35–44 (N=14)	45+ (N=8)
Have not completed any education	3 (17.6%)	4 (10.8%)	3 (21.4%)	2 (25.0%)
Compulsory school, not final exam	4 (23.5%)	8 (21.6%)	3 (21.4%)	1 (12.5%)
Compulsory school	5 (29.4%)	9 (24.3%)	2 (14.3%)	3 (37.5%)
Upper secondary school, general orientation	2 (11.9%)	7 (18.8%)	2 (14.3%)	1 (12.5%)
Upper secondary school, vocational orientation	3 (17.6%)	4 (10.8%)	2 (14.3%)	1 (12.5%)
University or institute of higher education	0 (0.0%)	5 (13.5%)	2 (14.3%)	0 (0.0%)

In the oldest age group, 25% had not completed any educational level, 37% had not completed compulsory school, 13% had completed an upper secondary vocational training program, and 13% had completed a general upper secondary program, while none of the prisoners over the age of 44 had completed a university or higher education program.

None of the prisoners outside the age group 25–44 had completed a university or higher education program. A total of seven prisoners who returned the questionnaire had completed a university or higher education program. This trend may be explained by the fact that young prisoners were too young to have been able to complete higher education, and that older prisoners had not had many educational opportunities. The trend appears also to hold true from the point of view of comparison of the numbers of respondents with weak educational backgrounds in the different age groups. Seventy per cent of the prisoners under 25 and 74% of the prisoners over 44 had completed compulsory school at most, while fewer than 60% of the prisoners between 25 and 44 had such limited educational backgrounds.

In general, the respondents grew up in Iceland (table 5.3), and relatively few were of foreign origin. This statement should, however, be interpreted with caution, as many of the prisoners of foreign origin in Icelandic prisons were prevented from participating in the study owing to the language barrier.

Table 5.3. In what country did you spend most of your childhood and youth?

Country	(N=77)
Iceland	69 (89.6%)
Lithuania	6 (7.9%)
Ethiopia	1 (1.3%)
Vietnam	1 (1.3%)

An examination of educational background by age group, as shown in table 5.4, indicates the age factor as important. Some 59% of the prisoners under 25, and 87% of the prisoners over 44 stated that they were not participating in any prison educational activity, while the corresponding proportion was far lower in the age group between 25 and 34 (46%).

Table 5.4. Participation in prison educational activities by age group

	Age group (N=76)			
	< 25 (N=17)	25–34 (N=37)	35–44 (N=14)	45+ (N=8)
I am not participating in any prison educational activity	10 (58.8%)	17 (46.0%)	8 (57.1%)	7 (87.5%)
Compulsory level	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Upper secondary level vocational program	2 (11.8%)	4 (11%)	3 (21.5%)	0 (0.0%)
Upper secondary level general program	5 (29.4%)	15 (40.5%)	2 (14.2%)	1 (12.5%)
University or institute of higher education	0 (0.0%)	1 (2.7%)	1 (7.1%)	0 (0.0%)

These findings may indicate that the youngest prisoners have a tendency not to consider education as essential to their future potential for success, while the oldest prisoners may feel that educational activities are not worth the effort.

There appears to be a clear correlation between length of sentence and whether or not prisoners decide to participate in prison educational activities (table 5.5). Only 32% of the prisoners serving sentences shorter than 5 years stated that they were participating, while some 60% of the prisoners serving sentences of five years or more stated that they were participating in prison educational activities.

Table 5.5. Participation in prison educational activities by length of sentence

	Length of sentence (N=68)			
	<3 mo. (N=3)	3–12 mo. (N=20)	1–5 yrs. (N=30)	>5 yrs. (N=15)
Do not want to participate in prison educational activities	1 (33.3%)	14 (70.0%)	21 (70.0%)	6 (40.0%)
Compulsory level	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Upper secondary level, vocational program	0 (0.0%)	2 (10.0%)	2 (6.7%)	2 (13.3%)
Upper secondary level, general program	2 (66.7%)	4 (20.0%)	6 (20.0%)	6 (40.0%)
University or higher ed.	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (3.3%)	1 (6.7%)

Prisoners' educational preferences

According to the findings in table 5.6, older prisoners participate less frequently in prison educational activities, in spite of the fact that the teaching materials and facilities have been adapted to their needs. Table 5.4 (participation in educational activity by age group) shows that 87% of the prisoners over 44 were not participating in any prison educational activity. However, 37% of this same group stated that although they were not participating for various reasons, they would have liked to do so.

Table 5.6. Desire to participate in prison educational activities by age group

	Age group (N=68)			
	< 25 (N=15)	25–34 (N=35)	35–44 (N=11)	45+ (N=7)
Do not wish to participate in educational activities	3 (20.0%)	5 (14.3%)	3 (27.2%)	3 (42.9%)
Compulsory level	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Upper secondary level, vocational program	4 (26.7%)	20 (57.1%)	2 (18.1%)	1 (14.3%)
Upper secondary level, general program	3 (20.0%)	8 (22.9%)	3 (27.2%)	3 (42.9%)
University or higher ed.	5 (33.3%)	2 (5.7%)	3 (27.2%)	0 (0.0%)

Among the other age groups, there were even higher proportions of prisoners who were not participating in any prison educational activity but would have liked to. Approximately 45% of the prisoners under 25, 32%

of the prisoners between 25 and 34, and 40% of the prisoners between 35 and 44 stated that although they were not participating for various reasons, they would have liked to do so.

Table 5.7. Educational preferences by length of sentence

	Length of sentence (N=54)			
	<3 mo. (N=1)	3–12 mo. (N=17)	1–5 yrs. (N=25)	>5 yrs. (N=11)
Do not wish to participate in educational activities	1 (100%)	2 (11.3%)	8 (32.0%)	2 (18.1%)
Compulsory level	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Upper secondary level, vocational program	0 (0.0%)	8 (47.1%)	7 (28%)	2 (18.1%)
Upper secondary level, general program	0 (0.0%)	3 (17.6%)	9 (36.0%)	5 (45.5%)
University or higher ed.	0 (0.0%)	4 (23.5%)	1(4%)	2 (18.1%)

Comparing the results concerning desire to participate in educational activities by length of sentence (Table 5.7) with participation in educational activities by length of sentence (Table 5.5) enables us to make a somewhat surprising assumption. Only 12% of the prisoners serving sentences of 3–12 months did not wish to participate in any kind of educational activities while behind bars. We can therefore assume that nearly all, or 88% of the prisoners serving sentences of 3–12 months would have liked to participate in prison educational activities, while only 30% were actually doing so. Although this difference is not as striking in the other groups, the same relatively strong trend can be seen.

Study skills and learning disabilities

Looking at Table 5.8, it is worth noting that the results take the form of a pyramid, in which only 9% considered their ICT skills very poor, just under 22% poor, nearly 31% average, 31% good, and 13% very good.

These figures may be difficult to interpret, as no corresponding figures for the population as a whole are available, but it is clear that a substantial proportion of the prisoners (31%) rated their own ICT skills as poor or very poor, and it is therefore reasonable to assume that they would also be ill equipped for academic studies, many of which require ICT skills.

Table 5.8. Prisoners' self-rated ICT skills

How do you rate your ICT-skills?	(N=77)
Very poor	7 (9.1%)
Poor	17 (22.1%)
Average	24 (31.2%)
Good	19 (24.7%)
Very good	0 (13%)

A large number of the respondents (70%) stated, see table 5.9, that they had no literacy difficulties. It is also important to note that a group amounting to 30% stated that they had problems with these basic skills in relation to academic education. Resources must be made available so that these individuals are offered help and support and do not drop out of educational activities.

Table 5.9. Prisoners' self-rated literacy skills

Do you have reading and writing difficulties?	(N=76)
None	53 (69.7%)
Some	17 (22.4%)
Serious	6 (7.9%)

A far greater proportion (53%) of the prisoners rated themselves as having difficulties with arithmetic and mathematics (Table 5.10). It is therefore very important that resources be made available to help these individuals and enable them to complete their studies.

Table 5.10. Prisoners' self-rated abilities to solve math problems

Do you have difficulties with mathematics?	(N=77)
None	36 (46.8%)
Some	30 (39.0%)
Serious	11 (14.3%)

It would also be positive if prisoners who stated that they did not wish to participate in educational activities because they have learning disabilities could be offered help to alleviate these difficulties while in prison. Nearly 99% of the respondents answered this question.

Table 5.11. Prisoners who had ever been tested for learning disabilities

Have you ever been tested for learning disabilities?	(N=42)
Yes	12 (28.6%)
No	30 (71.4%)

Just under one third (29%) of the respondents who stated that they had learning disabilities had, by their own report, been tested for them (Table 5.11), a relatively low percentage. A suitable follow up of individuals who have not been diagnosed might facilitate for prisoners with learning disabilities to participate in prison educational activities.

Table 5.12. Prisoners who had ever received help for their learning disabilities

Have you ever received help for your learning disabilities?	(N=42)
Yes	10 (23.8%)
No	32 (76.2%)

As shown in Table 5.12, most prisoners with learning disabilities had never received help with them. The problem thus appears not only to be diagnosis, but also making help available after the diagnosis. According to our findings, in most cases (83%) the problem was not just being diagnosed but also getting help to solve the problems.

Table 5.13. Self-rated literacy skills

How do you rate your reading and writing skills?	(N=78)
Very poor	1 (1.3%)
Poor	7 (9.0%)
Average	19 (24.4%)
Good	27 (34.6%)
Very good	24 (30.7%)

It is of interest to compare the findings in Tables 5.9 and 5.13. The former asks "Do you have literacy difficulties, while the latter asks "How do you rate your literacy skills?" The two questions describe closely related factors, but the results are not in perfect accord. It can be seen in Table 5.9

lated factors. The findings in Table 5.14 can similarly be compared with those in Table 5.10, (Self-rated ability to solve math problems).

Table 5.14. Self-rated numeracy skills

How do you rate your mathematics skills?	(N=74)
Very poor	6 (8.1%)
Poor	21 (28.4%)
Average	28 (37.8%)
Good	11 (14.9%)
Very good	8 (10.8%)

The comparison reflects the same results: the prisoners overestimated their skills and underestimated their difficulties. Approximately 53% rated themselves as having difficulties with mathematics, while only 36% rated their mathematics skills as poor or very poor.

Motivation to participate in educational activities

When the prisoners were asked about the importance of various reasons for deciding to participate in prison educational activities, 45% stated that they considered education a very important aspect of making it easier to get a job after release.

Table 5.15a. How important were these reasons for you in starting on the program you are now involved in? (N=20)

Reasons for having decided to start a certain educational activity	Very important	Somewhat important	Not important
To make it easier to get a job after I am released	9 (45.0%)	5 (25.0%)	6 (30.0%)
To spend my time doing something sensible and useful	17 (85.0%)	3 (15%)	0 (0.0%)
To satisfy my desire to learn	8 (42.0%)	9 (47.0%)	2 (11.0%)
To make serving time easier	11 (55.0%)	7 (35.0%)	2 (10.0%)
To make this educational program a bridge to other education after I am released	11 (55.0%)	5 (25.0%)	4 (20.0%)
Because I had friends going to school	4 (20.0%)	2 (10.0%)	14 (70.0%)
To improve my self-esteem	8 (40.0%)	4 (20.0%)	8 (40.0%)
Because it is better than working in prison	1 (5.0%)	2 (10.0%)	17 (85.0%)

Approximately half the prisoners who were participating in educational activities thought that education would make it easier for them to get a job upon release. It should also be borne in mind that research indicates unemployment as a factor for becoming involved in criminality. Thus one of the objectives of prison education ought to be to prepare the prisoners for the labor market (item 1).

According to item 2, the majority (85%) of the prisoners who decided to participate in an educational activity considered it important to use their time constructively.

Approximately 40% of the prisoners considered the urge to satisfy their desire to learn as an important reason for having decided to participate, and 45% considered it somewhat important, while 10% did not consider it important (item 3).

Item 4 indicates that more than half the prisoners considered prison education an important way of making serving time easier. Only 10% did not consider making it easier an important aspect of their decision, so it appears clear that the prisoners chose to participate in educational activities in order to have something to do and alleviate boredom.

More than half the prisoners considered prison educational activities a bridge to further education (item 5). Only 20% stated that having friends who were already participating was an important reason for having decided to study in prison. Thus the social aspect does not seem to have been an important factor in prisoner's deciding to participate. Comparing this finding with item 2 in Table 5.15.b, there is not particularly good accord, indicating that social aspects were not one of the main reasons for deciding to participate in prison educational activities or to continue studying.

Opinions seem to differ about whether improving one's self-esteem was an important reason for participating in prison educational activities. A total of 40% saw improved self-esteem as very important, while 20% considered it somewhat important, and 40% not important. This even distribution of responses is noteworthy. Still, roughly half the prisoners did consider participation in educational activities as resulting in better self-esteem, which should in turn contribute to facilitating readjustment to society after release.

Only 5% of the prisoners considered getting better work in the prison an important reason for participating in prison educational activities (item

8). It should, however, be noted, that this item was erroneously translated in the Icelandic questionnaire, and was not supposed to be about the link between participating in prison educational activities and work opportunities in prison. It should have been translated as: “Because it is better than working in prison.”

Some 35% felt that having been encouraged to participate was a very important reason for having decided to do so, while 35% considered this a somewhat important reason. (Table 5.15b). A total of 30% stated that having been encouraged to participate had not been an important reason. Thus encouragement seems to have some impact on a prisoner’s decision to participate, since only 30% stated this reason as not important. It would be interesting, in a future study, to investigate whether the encouragement came from the authorities or people in the specific prison.

Table 5.15b. How important were these reasons for you in starting on the program you are now involved in? (N=20)

Reasons for having decided to start a certain educational activity	Very important	Somewhat important	Not important
Because I was encouraged to study	7 (35.0%)	7 (35.0%)	6 (30.0%)
Because I wanted to be part of the social environment at the school	2 (10.5%)	4 (21.0%)	13 (68.5%)
To get more free time during the day	4 (20.0%)	4 (20.0%)	12 (60.0%)
To make it easier for me to avoid committing crimes after I am released	6 (30.0%)	6 (30.0%)	8 (40.0%)
To pass an exam or improve a previous grade	8 (40.0%)	6 (30.0%)	6 (30.0%)
To learn about a subject	14 (70.0%)	4 (20.0%)	2 (10.0%)
To be better able to cope with life after my release	11 (55.0%)	5 (25.0%)	4 (20.0%)

Only 11% of the respondents considered the social environment at the school an important factor in the decision to participate in educational activities (see item 2). Thus a sense of social community does not seem to be an important aspect of what makes prisoners decide to study. This item shows great similarity with item 6 in Table 5.15a, thus confirming the indication that a sense of social community is only a limited factor determining what makes prisoners decide to study.

Only 20% of the prisoners who were studying stated the opportunity to have more free time during the day as an important aspect of their decision. Thus the prisoners do not seem to be buying themselves free time by participating in educational activities. It would be interesting to inves-

tigate whether prisoners had any grounds for comparison, such as having worked in the prison, so that they were able to compare educational activities with other prison activities (item 3).

Only 30% of the students considered education as important in helping them not to commit more crimes after release. This figure does not necessarily indicate, however, that prisoners did not consider education important in preventing them from returning to a life of criminality upon release.

Approximately 40% of the prisoners stated passing an examination or improving their grades as a very important reason for deciding to participate in educational activities, while 30% considered it somewhat important. A total of 30% did not consider passing an examination or improving their grades important (item 5).

Learning about a subject appears to be a very important factor in deciding to study. A total of 70% considered learning about a subject a very important reason for deciding to participate in educational activities, while only 20% found it somewhat important. It can be seen by comparing this item with item 5, that prisoners seemed to feel that it was more important to learn new subjects than to pass exams or improve their grades (item 6).

It is important to make sensible use of one's time in prison and to prepare as well as possible for the future. Education is a very important aspect of preparing prisoners for life after release. A total of 55% of the prisoners considered being better able to cope with life after release to have been an important reason for deciding to participate in educational activities, and 80% of the prisoners stated that this reason was at least somewhat important. Generally, the prisoners stated that education was a means of paving the way for a better future for themselves (item 7).

Table 5.15c. Reasons for deciding not to participate in prison educational activities. (N=42)

Reasons	N Per cent
I already have enough education	3 (7.1%)
This prison does not offer any educational programs suitable for me	4 (9.5%)
Education is not worth the effort	4 (9.5%)
I am not interested in getting an education in prison	6 (14.3%)
I believe that I have too many learning problems	7 (16.7%)
This prison does not offer any educational programs	8 (19%)
The conditions for school and studying in the prison are poor	12 (28.6%)
I do not receive any information about educational possibilities	17 (40.5%)
Other reasons	24 (57.1%)

Of the 42 prisoners who were not participating in any prison educational activities, 17 (40%) gave not receiving information as the main obstacle to participation (Table 5.15c). A total of 12 (29%) gave poor conditions for school and studying as the main obstacle. A number of other factors were also given. It should also be noted that many of the prisoners gave more than one reason for not participating in any prison educational activities.

Prisoners' evaluations of the prison educational activities

The prisoners' evaluations of the quality of the prison educational activities, see Table 5.15d, indicates that 60% of the respondents stated that they were satisfied with the teaching in the prison (item 1). In spite of the majority being satisfied, 25% of those who were participating in a prison educational activity were not satisfied. It would be interesting to investigate the reasons for this dissatisfaction in a follow-up study, and determine what can be done to improve the quality of the educational activities (see item 1).

Table 5.15d. What is your view of the educational program you participate in during sentence? (N=20)

Opinion	Completely agree	Agree somewhat	Unsure	Disagree somewhat	Completely disagree
I am satisfied with the teaching	1 (5%)	4 (20%)	3 (15%)	8 (40%)	4 (20%)
The requirements are too tough	2 (10%)	9 (45%)	7 (35%)	2 (10%)	0 (0%)
It is possible to study in prison	4 (20%)	4 (20%)	4 (20%)	4 (20%)	4 (20%)
The work load is just right	2 (10%)	0 (0%)	6 (30%)	10 (50%)	2 (10%)
The requirements are not tough enough	2 (10%)	2 (10%)	10 (50%)	5 (25%)	1 (5%)
Some subjects are too hard	1 (5%)	1 (5%)	12 (60%)	3 (15%)	3 (15%)
Too many lectures	11 (55%)	5 (25%)	4 (20%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
The teaching is suited to my needs	2 (10%)	7 (35%)	1 (5%)	3 (15%)	7 (35%)
Too much group work	4 (20%)	4 (20%)	9 (45%)	0 (0%)	3 (15%)
Inadequate access to ICT equipment	(20%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (10%)	14 (70%)
The teachers have good ICT skills	(20%)	2 (10%)	9 (45%)	3 (15%)	2 (10%)
I am pleased with the educational program	1 (5%)	2 (10%)	4 (20%)	4 (20%)	9 (45%)

Very few prisoners considered the demands too high. Only 10% of the prisoners agreed somewhat, and none agreed completely with this statement (item 2).

When we analysed our findings regarding the educational opportunities in prison, we found the results to be evenly distributed across the categories. There was no general consensus among the prisoners in their evaluations of the educational opportunities at the prisons where they were serving their sentences (item 3).

Item 4 indicates that the vast majority of the prisoners (90%) evaluated the work load in the subjects as normal. A total of 10% of the prisoners disagreed completely with this statement, none disagreed somewhat, and 30% were unsure as to whether the work load was just right (item 4).

Although the majority of the prisoners (80%) stated that they were not dissatisfied with the level of demands, 20% felt that they were not high enough. It should be noted that a large number of prisoners said they were unsure about this statement, indicating that the prisoners had not given much thought to the demands, and consequently found it difficult to evaluate them (item 5).

Only 30% of the respondents felt that some subjects were too hard. Generally, the prisoners did not feel that the teaching was too lecture-based. It is not, however, possible to draw any conclusion as to whether the prisoners would have liked even more lectures.

Opinions were highly divided in relation to the question of whether the teaching was well suited to the prisoners' needs. A total of 50% agreed completely or somewhat with this statement, while 45% stated that they disagreed completely or somewhat. In any case, more prisoners still seemed to be relatively more satisfied than dissatisfied with the teaching. Approximately 32% agreed completely with that statement, and only 10% disagreed completely (item 8).

The vast majority of the respondents participating in educational activities considered the teaching methods too much based on group work. It can be seen that while only 15% of the prisoners agreed completely with that statement, and none agreed somewhat, 45% were unsure, 20% disagreed somewhat and 20% disagreed completely (item 9).

The vast majority of the prisoners felt there was inadequate access to ICT equipment. Seventy per cent of the prisoners agreed completely with the statement, while 10% agreed somewhat and 20% disagreed completely. It should be noted that although there were clearly two categories of evaluation of access to ICT equipment among the prisoners, it was still clear that the majority felt that there was room for improvement concerning access to ICT equipment (item 10).

The prisoners did not generally have any strong opinions concerning the teachers' ICT skills. Nearly half the respondents were unsure, and among those who had opinions, they varied widely (item 11).

A fairly small number of the prisoners stated that they were dissatisfied with the educational activity in which they were participating. Only 15% stated that they disagreed completely or somewhat with the statement, 20% were unsure, 20% agreed somewhat, and 45% agreed com-

Table 5.16. Do any of the following factors create problems for you in the program of education that you are now involved in? (N=20)

Do any of the following factors create problems?	N Per cent
Transfers between prisons	4 (20%)
My problems with reading and writing	6 (30%)
Distractions in prison	6 (30%)
Security routines in prison	7 (35%)
I will have finished serving my sentence before completing my education	8 (40%)
My problems with mathematics	8 (40%)
Inadequate access to literature	11 (55%)
Inadequate access to ICT equipment	13 (65%)

When we examined in detail the factors that contributed to causing problems for the prisoners in relation to their educational activities, we found that 65% of the prisoners saw inadequate access to ICT equipment as an important cause of their educational problems in prison (Table 5.16), 55% considered inadequate access to literature a problem, 40% blamed their own mathematics difficulties, and a few stated that they considered it a serious problem that they would be finished serving their sentences before completing their education. A total of 35% considered prison security routines a problem, and 30% their own reading and writing difficulties.

Table 5.17a. Different ways of learning, motivation for learning, expectancies, and how you experience tests. To what extent do you agree or disagree that these statements describe you in your present educational situation? (N=20)

Description of my current educational activity	Completely agree	Agree somewhat	Unsure	Disagree somewhat	Completely disagree
When reading I try to connect the things I am reading about with what I already know	2 (10%)	0 (0%)	2 (10%)	11 (55%)	5 (25%)
I prefer class work that is challenging so I can learn new things	1 (5%)	2 (10%)	0 (0%)	6 (30%)	11 (55%)
I believe that I will achieve good results	0 (0%)	2 (10%)	3 (15%)	6 (30%)	9 (45%)
I am so nervous during a test that I cannot remember facts I have learned	4 (20%)	5 (25%)	1 (5%)	7 (35%)	3 (15%)
It is important for me to learn what is being taught	0 (0%)	2 (10%)	5 (25%)	4 (20%)	9 (45%)
I like what I am learning in this program of education	0 (0%)	2 (10%)	8 (40%)	5 (25%)	5 (25%)
I expect to do well	0 (0%)	2 (10%)	2 (10%)	6 (30%)	10 (50%)

Approximately 80% of the prisoners tried to relate what they read to things they already knew. (item 1). The majority of the prisoners preferred challenging classwork so they could learn new things. In reaction to that statement, 85% of the prisoners stated that they agreed completely or somewhat, and only 15% disagreed completely or somewhat. These findings confirm the indication already gleaned, that prisoners do not choose their educational activities strictly on the basis of improving their money-earning abilities, but also from the point of view of their interests, and for idealistic reasons (item 2).

A total of 75% of the prisoners believed that they would achieve good results in their educational activity, indicating that they were completely or partly in agreement with that statement. Substantially fewer (10%) did not believe they would achieve good results. On this basis, it appears that most of the prisoners had good self-confidence, an important factor in education (item 3).

Around half the respondents considered themselves so nervous in test situations that they couldn't remember facts. Although there are no corresponding data from the general population for comparison, this does appear to be a relatively high proportion (item 4).

The majority of the prisoners (65%) stated complete or partial agreement with the statement that it was important to them to learn what was being taught (item 5). Since this is both a positive and highly leading statement, it is natural to assume that no one would disagree with it, but 10% of the respondents did state that they disagreed somewhat with it.

Half the respondents stated that they agreed completely or somewhat with the statement that they liked what they were learning in their educational activity. Approximately 40% were unsure, and 10% stated that they disagreed to some extent (item 6). Item 7 is quite like item 3, "I believe I will achieve good results," and the results are also very similar. However, the items do not measure exactly the same things, for example a person with learning disabilities may do well in a course without achieving good results. The vast majority of the students stated that they expected to do well, with only 10% stating that they disagreed to some extent (item 7).

Table 5.17b. Different ways of learning, motivation for learning, expectancies, and how you experience tests. To what extent do you agree or disagree that these statements describe you in your present educational situation? (N=20)

Description of my current educational activity	Completely agree	Agree somewhat	Unsure	Disagree somewhat	Completely disagree
I am a good learner	0 (0%)	2 (10%)	4 (20%)	6 (30%)	8 (40%)
I have an uneasy, upset feeling when I take a test	3 (15%)	5 (25%)	1 (5%)	9 (45%)	2 (10%)
I think that what I am learning in this program of education is useful for me to know	1 (5%)	0 (0%)	5 (25%)	5 (25%)	9 (45%)
I have good study and work habits	1 (0%)	2 (10%)	3 (15%)	10 (30%)	4 (45%)
I think that what we are learning in this program of education is interesting	2 (10%)	0 (0%)	5 (25%)	10 (50%)	3 (15%)
I believe that I will complete the program	1 (5%)	1 (5%)	5 (25%)	3 (15%)	10 (50%)
It is important for me to learn what is being taught	1 (5%)	2 (25%)	0 (0%)	2 (10%)	15 (75%)
When I take a test I think about how poorly I am doing	6 (30%)	2 (10%)	5 (25%)	2 (10%)	5 (25%)

According to table 5.17b, 40% of the prisoners agreed completely with the statement (I am a good learner), and 30% agreed to some extent. Approximately 20% were unsure, while 10% disagreed to some extent and no prisoner disagreed completely.

Item 2 is very similar to item 4 in Table 5.17a, (I am so nervous during a test that I cannot remember facts I have learned), and the results were also quite similar, indicating that 10% of the prisoners agreed completely that they felt uneasy and upset during tests, 45% agreed in part, and 5% were unsure. In contrast, 25% stated that they disagreed to some extent, and 15% disagreed entirely. It should be noted that more than half (55%) the prisoners thus stated that they tended to be very nervous during tests, and 40% that they tended to be uneasy and upset.

Item 3 indicates that 45% agreed completely with the statement that what they were learning was useful to them, 25% agreed somewhat, 25%

were unsure, and 5% disagreed completely. Item 4 indicates that 75% of the prisoners agreed completely or somewhat with the positive statement about their reading and writing skills, and only 15% did not regard their own literacy skills as good.

According to item 5, 65% of the prisoners considered what they were learning in prison interesting. It should be noted that only 10% of the prisoners considered their studies uninteresting (item 5). A majority of the prisoners (65%) believed they would complete their educational activity, and only 10% of the prisoners who were participating in educational activities disagreed with this statement to some extent.

Table 5.17c. Different ways of learning, motivation for learning, expectancies, and how you experience tests. To what extent do you agree or disagree that these statements describe you in your present educational situation? (N=20)

Description of my current educational activity	Completely agree	Agree somewhat	Unsure	Disagree somewhat	Completely disagree
Even when study materials are dull and uninteresting, I keep working until I finish	1 (5%)	2 (10%)	3 (15%)	12 (60%)	2 (10%)
When I study I put important ideas into my own words	4 (20%)	1 (5%)	4 (20%)	10 (50%)	1 (5%)
I often find that I have been reading for class but do not know what it is all about	3 (15%)	2 (10%)	2 (10%)	4 (20%)	9 (45%)
I find that when the teacher is talking I think of other things and do not really listen to what is being said	3 (15%)	4 (20%)	3 (15%)	3 (15%)	7 (35%)
When I am studying a topic, I try to make everything fit together	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (15%)	11 (55%)	6 (30%)
When I am reading I stop once in a while and go over what I have read	2 (10%)	3 (15%)	1 (5%)	9 (45%)	5 (25%)
When I study for a test I practice saying the important facts over and over to myself	4 (20%)	2 (10%)	4 (20%)	7 (35%)	3 (15%)

The majority of the prisoners (85%) felt it was important to understand what they had learned. This finding is in accord with the findings above,

and indicates that prisoners studied not only to pass tests, but also because they valued learning the subject matter, and being able to apply the knowledge outside the classroom (item 7). Prisoners' evaluations of how their own minds worked during tests varied (item 8).

This question investigated a similar aspect as (When work is hard I either give up or study only the easy parts), and the findings are also similar to those in item 4 table 5.17.d, where it is clear that the majority of the prisoners (60%) agreed completely or to some extent with the statement that they either gave up or studied only the easy parts when work was difficult. More than 70% of the prisoners agreed completely or in part with the statement that they went on working until they were finished even when study materials were dull and uninteresting (item 1).

According to item 2, approximately 55% of the prisoners agreed completely or somewhat that they tried to put important ideas into their own words when studying for a test. It should be noted that 30% of the prisoners did not prepare for tests in this way, which is a fairly large percentage.

It should also be noted that 65% of the prisoners did not know what the material about in spite of having read and prepared for class. About 15% disagreed completely with this statement, 15% to some extent, and 15% were unsure (item 3).

Approximately 50% of the prisoners stated that they agreed completely or somewhat with the statement that they often thought about other things and didn't listen to what was being said, about 15% were unsure, and 20% disagreed with this statement to some extent. Seen in the context of the findings concerning item 3 (I often find that I have been reading for class but do not know what it is all about), these results are not necessarily surprising, since there 50% of the prisoners stated that they had often read and prepared for class without understanding what the material was about.

According to item 5, 85% of the prisoners agreed completely or somewhat with that statement, which indicates that most of the prisoners tried to make the material fit together when they were studying a subject. It is noteworthy that no prisoner stated that it was not important to make the material fit together.

About 70% of the prisoners agreed completely or somewhat that when reading they would stop and go back through what they had read once in

a while, approximately 10% disagreed completely, 15% somewhat and only 5% stated that they were unsure (item 6).

Item 7 shows that roughly 50% of the prisoners agreed completely or somewhat with the statement that they practiced saying important words over and over to themselves to better remember what they had read. About 20% of the prisoners were unsure, 10% disagreed somewhat and 20% disagreed completely with this statement.

Table 5.17d. Different ways of learning, motivation for learning, expectancies, and how you experience tests. To what extent do you agree or disagree that these statements describe you in your present educational situation? (N=20)

Description of my current educational activity	Completely agree	Agree somewhat	Unsure	Disagree somewhat	Completely disagree
When reading I try to connect the things I am reading about with what I already know	1 (5%)	2 (10%)	2 (10%)	9 (45%)	6 (30%)
I ask myself questions to make sure I know the material I have been studying	4 (20%)	3 (15%)	1 (5%)	8 (40%)	4 (20%)
It is hard for me to decide what the main ideas are in what I read	1 (5%)	3 (15%)	4 (20%)	9 (45%)	3 (15%)
When work is hard I either give up or study only the easy parts	4 (20%)	8 (40%)	3 (15%)	2 (10%)	3 (15%)
When I study I put important ideas into my own words	1 (5%)	1 (5%)	2 (10%)	13 (65%)	3 (15%)
When I study for a test I try to remember as many facts as I can	2 (10%)	1 (5%)	1 (5%)	8 (40%)	8 (40%)
When studying, I copy my notes over to help me remember material	2 (10%)	4 (20%)	1 (5%)	6 (30%)	7 (35%)

Approximately 75% of the prisoners tried to connect the things they were reading with what they already knew (Table 5.17d, item 1). Like many of the questions in this table, this statement refers to a basic learning strategy. Being able to relate information to knowledge is important, and in the social sciences, to experience of daily life. The vast majority of the prisoners who were involved in a prison educational activity stated that

when studying for tests, they related what they were studying to what they already knew.

Some 60% of the prisoners asked themselves questions to check that they remembered what they had read (item 2). Most of the prisoners often found it difficult to understand the main ideas in what they had been reading. Approximately 60% of the prisoners agreed completely or somewhat with that statement, and only 20% disagreed completely or somewhat (item 3).

Item 4 indicates that most of the prisoners (60%) agreed completely or somewhat with the statement that when the schoolwork got difficult, they would either give up or just concentrate on the easy parts. Thus a relatively large percentage of the prisoners gave up when the going got rough: 25% agreed completely or somewhat with this statement (item 4).

Table 5.17d shows that the majority of the prisoners (80%) tried to put things into their own words when studying (item 5). Remembering facts is an important way of studying for tests. Generally, the prisoners appeared to be aware of how important this is: 80% agreed completely or somewhat with that statement. It should be noted that the prisoners also stated that they connected up information when preparing for tests (see item 1). Thus it appears that most of the prisoners did use some kind of learning strategy (item 6).

Item 7 indicates that 65% of the prisoners agreed completely or somewhat with the statement that they copied notes over to help them remember when studying. Some 10% of the prisoners disagreed completely, 20% somewhat, and only 5% were unsure.

Most of the questions to which this table relates are about learning strategies, and the findings indicate that the prisoners realized in many ways how important it is to use learning strategies. Still, having regular courses in learning strategies for the prisoners involved in educational activities may be a good means of helping with their studies.

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6. Norway

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Individuals in Norwegian prisons have the same rights to education as the population as a whole. These rights are regulated in the Education Act from 1998, as well as international conventions and recommendations. Pursuant to the Education Act, all residents have both the right and the obligation to attend compulsory school. Young people who have completed compulsory school or the equivalent have a right, upon application, to three years of full-time upper secondary school (the Education Act, Article 3.1). For programs requiring longer than three years to complete, young people have the right to complete the courses as specified in the curriculum. This entire right is normally to be exercised within a period of five years, or six when the course includes in-service training. Prior to 2005 the right had to be exercised before the individual turned 20. Pursuant to the most recent amendment to the Education Act (June 2005), this “young people’s right” applies until the end of the year in which the individual turns 24.

At the time of the study Norwegian law stipulated that an adult born before 1 January 1978, who had completed compulsory school or the equivalent but not upper secondary school, had a right, upon application, to upper secondary education (Education Act, Article 4A.3). (This article was amended on 1 August 2008, and now applies from the year the individual turns 25). Anyone over the age when they must attend compulsory school but who has not completed that level, has the right to do so (Education Act, Article 4A.1). This right normally applies to the subjects required to obtain a compulsory school leaving certificate for adults. According to the Education Act, such education is to be adapted to the needs of adults. The Norwegian Enforcement of Sanctions Act regulates the

civil rights of prisoners (Article 2). The regulations for this act stipulates that convicted prisoners and individuals in remand have the same rights to options and services and the same obligations and responsibilities as all others in society. The Prison and Probation service is therefore required, whenever possible, to ensure that government agencies cooperate in order to be able to offer prisoners and individuals in remand the services required by law, and give them access to said services (Article 4).

The Norwegian study

Our study was carried out between 2 and 9 February 2006. We collected the data using the questionnaire that later served as a point of departure for the ones used in the other four countries (see chapter 2). All prisoners over the age of 18 who were serving sentences, in remand or in safe custody *during this time period* were the target population of the study. Thus, in practice, it was a population study (there were nine prisoners under the age of 18, and they were not included in the population). According to the reports from the individual prisons, there were a total of 3,289 prisoners during the time period in question. Some were on leave or otherwise occupied, for instance if their cases were being heard in court, and could not be reached. A total of 117 prisoners were thus unable to participate in the study and did not receive the questionnaire. Of the 3,172 prisoners who received the questionnaire, 71.1% returned it.

One staff member at each prison was responsible for administration of the questionnaire. Each liaison officer was phoned shortly before the questionnaire was sent out by the education office of the County Governor of Hordaland, the national coordinator for prison education, on behalf of the Ministry of Education and Research. This was done to ensure that the same procedures would be followed in all prisons. Although no written reminders were sent to individuals who failed to return the questionnaire, prisons that were late in returning the responses were reminded and given an extension on the deadline. It was clarified that prisoners who had arrived at the prison after 9 February 2006 were *not* to be included in the study.

Prisoners who did not speak Norwegian were also given the English language version of the questionnaire. To avoid duplication in reporting,

it was clarified that only one of the versions was to be returned. Moreover, anyone who needed help in understanding and filling out the questionnaire was aided. The questionnaires were returned anonymously, but were marked with a prison number.

The respondents

Only a very small number of the respondents were in safe custody, (41 individuals, 1.8%). One out of eight was in remand. These figures are somewhat lower than the actual situation in Norwegian prisons on the last day of the study, according to figures from the Ministry of Justice (according to which 17.5% of the prisoners were in remand). From this point of view, prisoners serving sentences are slightly overrepresented in our study. Women accounted for 4.7% of the prison population on 9 February, but 6% of the study population. More than 80% (85.7%) stated that they were Norwegian citizens; while 84.1 stated that they had grown up in Norway. (According to the Ministry of Justice 83.2% of the prisoners were Norwegian citizens on the last day of the study). Citizens of 67 different countries participated in the study, and prisoners from outside Europe comprised a larger than average portion of those in remand. The prisoners' average age was 35 years (standard deviation 10.1).

Educational backgrounds

Table 6.1 shows the proportions of the prisoners stating that they had finished various levels of education as presented in the question: "Have you completed any of the schools or programs of education listed below?" The levels described are compulsory school (or equivalent), upper secondary school (or equivalent), and higher education (at a university or other institute of higher education). We also present the percentage who stated that they had completed some kind of vocational training. Vocational training includes courses, craft certificates, vocational school (prior to 1975), or any other kind of accepted vocational training.

Table 6.1. Per cent* of prisoners who had completed compulsory school, upper secondary school, higher education, and vocational training. N=2,255=100%

Level of education:	Per cent
Compulsory school**	92.8
Completed only the first year of upper secondary school, not more	15.1
Completed the second year of upper secondary school (VK1), not more	17.4
Completed upper secondary school or the equivalent	30.6
Higher education ***	12.9
Completed vocational training #	29.5

* Each cell in the table is independent; i.e. 100 per cent minus the figure in each cell gives the number who had not completed the relevant level.

** Including all forms of compulsory school. *** Including both non-matriculating courses and undergraduate and graduate level degrees at universities and other institutes of higher education.. # For a few of the prisoners, there is overlap between this category and completed upper secondary school.

There may be some overlap between completed upper secondary school and vocational training. In Norway the term “*videregående opplæring*”, translated here as upper secondary school, covers all three-year programs for 16–19-year-olds. A student may have completed just the first year (“*grunnkurs*”), or the first and second (“*VK1*”) years, while “completed upper secondary school or the equivalent” normally means having completed all three years (the third year being “*VK2*”). Another thing that should be noted in relation to Table 6.1 is that individuals who completed a higher level of upper secondary school are not included in the percentage for the level under, although those listed as having completed some form of higher education will naturally have completed upper secondary school or the equivalent as well, and those who have completed vocational training may also have completed upper secondary school as well.

The educational backgrounds of women and men prisoners were very similar, the main difference being that nearly twice as many men as women had completed vocational training. Women had completed higher education slightly more often than men.

Table 6.2. Per cent* of prisoners who had completed compulsory, upper secondary and higher education, and vocational training by age group

Completed educational level	18–24 N=338	25–34 N=783	35–44 N=655	44+ N=364
Compulsory school**	91.7	92.7	93.1	94.8
Completed only the first year of upper secondary school, not more	22.5	15.2	14.7	9.3
Completed the second year of upper secondary school (VK1), not more	27.2	20.7	13.4	8.2
Completed upper secondary school or the equivalent	16.3	31.8	33.6	38.2
Higher education ***	2.7	9.8	16.9	22.8
Completed vocational training #	19.8	26.2	31.9	43.7

* Each cell in the table is independent; i.e. 100 per cent minus the figure in each cell gives the number who had not completed the relevant level.

** Including all forms of compulsory school. *** Including both non-matriculating courses and undergraduate and graduate level degrees at universities and other institutes of higher education.. # For a few of the prisoners, there is overlap between this category and completed upper secondary school.

As shown in table 6.2, there is some correlation between age and completed level of education. The youngest prisoners (under 25) had completed one or two years of upper secondary school to the largest extent (22.5% and 27.2%, respectively), but they had far from the largest percentage of individuals who had completed upper secondary school (16.3% per cent as opposed to over 30% in the other age groups). This can probably be explained by their life situations, not least whatever caused them to wind up in prison. Many of them were school dropouts, and both this fact and the fact that they were now in prison imply that it would take them longer than most young people to finish their education.

There is also a correlation between the educational background of the prisoners and their geographical places of origin. Nearly every sixth prisoner grew up elsewhere than in Norway. Only four out of five of the prisoners from countries outside Europe had completed compulsory school or the equivalent. However, the percentage of people in this group who had completed higher education was also relatively high (11%). At the time of the study, educational activities were offered at 34 of the 47 Norwegian prisons. The educational levels of the prisoners at prisons with no schools were higher than at prisons with schools. Still, it should be noted that 40% of the prisoners at prisons with no schools had not completed upper secondary school.

How many prisoners participate in educational activities?

Table 6.3 shows both numbers and percentages of prisoners who were participating in educational activities at the time of the study. The percentages given are based on 746 respondents who stated that they were participating in some educational activity. The category “other educational activity” includes, for example ICT courses or language courses (usually Norwegian for immigrants).

Table 6.3. Number and per cent* of prisoners participating in prison educational activities. N=746

School form/educational activity:	Number	Per cent
Compulsory school	39	5,2
Upper secondary school, first year	187	25,1
Second year of upper secondary school	123	16,5
Third year of upper secondary school	46	6,2
Preparatory course for higher education	117	15,7
Apprenticeship contract	38	5,0
Single courses, university or higher ed.	48	6,4
Degree from university or higher ed.	51	6,8
Other educational activities	181	24,3
Not specified	70	9,4

* Respondents could state participation in more than one activity.

At the time of the study, 517 prisoners stated that they were involved in some *formal education*; 70 of the 746 who were participating in some prison educational activity did not specify what type of activity it was. Of the 517 who were in formal education, some may have been taking some “other educational activity” as well.

In the Norwegian study, 569 prisoners were only participating in one single educational activity, 78 in two, 25 in three, and eight in four to five activities. A total of 1,509 prisoners, or 66.9% of the respondents, were not participating in any prison educational activity.

A total of 414 prisoners (or 55.5% of those involved in a prison educational activity) were taking some form of upper secondary education (meaning the first, second or third year of upper secondary school or the preparatory year for higher education, or an apprenticeship contract). Approximately 30 per cent of the respondents who stated that they were doing upper secondary courses were taking general, economic or administrative subjects, while some. 60 per cent were taking vocational subjects.

Educational preferences

The prisoners were asked to describe their educational preferences from among nine options plus one open category for other types of studies. Table 6.4 shows the percentages who ticked the boxes alongside the various preferences listed in the questionnaire, as well as the number who stated at least one of the options offered. The percentages in the table are based on all respondents and only the prisoners who stated that they had educational preferences. A total of 485 did not specify any preferences.

It should be noted that 54.9% of all the prisoners had at least one educational preference. The table also indicates that upper secondary education and apprenticeship contracts were the type of educational opportunity most often preferred. However, the demand for different types of education was fairly evenly distributed, with the exception compulsory level schooling. Respondents were also asked to state the level of upper secondary education at which they would like to start. Twenty-four per cent of all those who expressed a preference for that upper secondary education stated that they would like to study general subjects, 63.4% vocational subjects, 4.4 % a music, dance and drama program, and 6.4% a sports program. (It was possible to tick the boxes for several options.)

There were only small differences in educational preferences between women and men, but clear correlations with age groups. The oldest age group of prisoners preferred “other educational activities” more often than the younger ones, especially ICT courses (it was also possible to state “other educational activities” without specifying any activity). The younger the age group, the more respondents who wanted to participate in upper secondary education. Among the prisoners below the age of 25, 65.4% stated at least one educational preference, while the corresponding figure for the prisoners ages 44+ was 35.7%.

Nearly every tenth prisoner from countries outside Europe stated that they would like to participate in compulsory level education. Prisoners from elsewhere than Norway stated a particularly high preference for “other educational activities.” They mainly mentioned language courses in either Norwegian or English. The next most often-stated preference under “other educational activities“ was ICT courses.

Table 6.4. Numbers and percentages* of prisoners with educational preferences

Educational preference:	Number	Percentage* of all respondents	Percentage* of respondents with educational preferences
		N=2,255	N=1,701
Do not wish to participate in any educational activity	554	24.2	-
Stated no preference	485	21.5	28.5
Compulsory school	75	3.3	4.4
First year of upper secondary school	302	13.4	17.7
Second year of upper secondary school	244	10.8	14.3
Third year of upper secondary school	194	8.6	11.4
Preparatory course for higher education	213	9.4	12.5
Apprenticeship contract	247	11.0	14.3
Single subject, university or other higher education	192	8.5	11.2
Degree from university or other higher education	181	8.0	10.5
Other educational activity	189	8.4	11.0
At least one educational preference	1,216	54.9	-

*Each cell in the table is independent: 100 per cent minus the figure in the cell gives the percentage with no preferences.

Forty-three per cent of the prisoners at prisons with no schools (there were a total of 13 such prisons) stated at least one educational preference. One third of the prisoners in these prisons had a legislated right to upper secondary education, but at the time of the survey had no opportunity to study.

Subject skills and learning disabilities

The prisoners were asked to rate their own ICT, literacy, and numeracy skills. As can be seen in Table 6.5, one out of every seven rated their literacy skills as poor or very poor, while one out of four rated their numeracy skills correspondingly. A particularly large proportion of the prisoners (nearly 40%) rated their ICT skills as poor or very poor.

Just under two out of every three prisoners (62.8%) stated that they had *no* reading or writing difficulties, while 27.2% stated that they had “some” difficulties, and 10% that their reading or writing difficulties were “serious.” One out of every ten male prisoners (10.2%) stated that they

had “serious” reading or writing difficulties; the corresponding figure for women was 6.3%. The oldest age group had the lowest percentage of “serious” reading or writing difficulties (6.2% per cent), while the age group 25 to 34 had the largest percentage of self-rated “serious” reading or writing difficulties (12.2%).

Table 6.5. Prisoners’ self-rated subject skills. Figures in per cent

Self-rating	Reading or writing skills	Mathematics skills	ICT skills
Very good	21.6	11.1	8.0
Good	34.7	26.9	18.7
Average	29.4	37.1	34.0
Poor	10.5	17.3	22.6
Very poor	3.8	7.5	16.7

One likely explanation is that the younger prisoners would have had reason in the recent past and in the present to be reminded of these problems. Some of the prisoners’ language backgrounds was radically different from that of an average Norwegian. These individuals may have reported general difficulty with Norwegian and foreign languages as literacy difficulties. It is therefore likely that there was over-reporting of literacy disabilities. Forty per cent of the prisoners from “the rest of the world” reported “some” literacy difficulties.

Just over half the inmates stated that they had no difficulty with mathematics, one out of three had “some,” and one out of eight had “serious” difficulties. There were no differences in this respect between women and men prisoners, but the youngest age groups reported difficulties more often than the older ones. Prisoners from Europe outside the Nordic region were those who least often reported having numeracy difficulties, and prisoners from the other Nordic countries most often (approximately one out of every eight).

Our study indicated no significant differences between those who participated in educational activities and those who did not with regard to self-reported difficulties or skills in reading, writing and mathematics. Prisoners who participated in educational activities were somewhat more positive about their own ICT skills and had more often been tested for and felt help with their literacy or numeracy difficulties.

Generally speaking, individuals involved in longer programs and/or higher levels of education (particularly those studying at university or

higher education level) stated that they had better skills and fewer learning difficulties. Prisoners taking the preparatory course for higher education had less self-rated trouble with mathematics, while prisoners studying at compulsory or upper secondary level had poorer self-rated skills and somewhat greater learning difficulties. Thus there are reasons to be particularly attentive to prisoners studying at compulsory school or the first year of upper secondary level in terms of the need to improve their skills and to be helped with their learning difficulties.

Motivation to participate in prison educational activities

Prisoners participating in educational activities were asked to answer the following question: "Below are several possible reasons for starting an educational program in prison. How important were these reasons for you in starting on the program *you are now involved in*?" They were then asked to rate fifteen possible reasons for having decided to start studying as "very important," "somewhat important," and "not important." The findings are presented in table 6.6.

Three "very important," reasons for starting to study were given by more than half of the prisoners. The reason most often given: "To spend my time doing something sensible and useful," is clearly impacted on by the situation in which a prisoner finds himself, being incarcerated. The second most frequently-given reason, also stated by more than half the prisoners, was "To learn about a subject," and the third was "To make it easier to get a job after I am released."

Between 40% and 50% of the respondents marked as "Very important" other reasons that could be useful in the future ("To pass an exam or improve a previous grade"), the value of knowledge ("To satisfy my desire to learn"), everyday life after release ("To be better able to cope with life after my release"), plus "To make it easier for me to avoid committing crimes after I am released" and "To make serving time easier."

In order to obtain a better picture of reasons for deciding to participate in prison educational activities, we classified the answers into a smaller number of categories using factor analysis. This is a way of reducing a large number of variables to a smaller number of dimensions (here: main reasons for deciding to study). Factor analysis identifies clusters or

groups of interrelated variables. Our analysis indicated that the motivation of prisoners who participated in educational activities can be seen in line with three different dimensions, which we refer to as: 1) “changing and mastering the future,” 2) “socially and situationally related reasons,” and 3) “acquiring knowledge and skills.” While categories 1 and 3 measured the extent to which prisoners were goal-oriented (relating to the future or to the inherent value of knowledge and skills), category 2 measures the extent to which prisoners participated in educational activities because others did, or to alleviate the boredom of being in prison or of prison routines. The first category is the most important with regard to understanding the structure of prisoners’ motivation. It is twice as important as the second category, and also more important than the second and third together. (Statistically, the first category explains 25.6%, the second 13.7% and the third 9.3% of the variation in prisoners’ responses.)

Table 6.6. Distribution of responses to the reasons prisoners decided to participate in prison educational activities by per cent. N=537

Prisoners reasons for deciding to participate in educational activities	Very important	Somewhat important	Not important
To spend my time doing something sensible and useful	80.5	18.2	1.3
To learn about a subject	73.6	23.1	3.4
To make it easier to get a job after I am released	56.7	27.2	16.1
To pass an exam/improve a previous grade	48.8	26.7	24.6
To satisfy my desire to learn	47.7	42.0	10.2
To be better able to cope with life after my released	47.1	25.1	27.8
To make serving time easier	44.2	40.1	15.7
To make it easier for me to avoid committing crimes after I am released	41.6	20.2	38.2
To make this educational program a bridge to other education after I am released	33.1	29.9	37.0
Because it's better than working in prison	30.7	25.5	43.9
To improve my self-esteem	29.6	38.4	32.1
Because I want to be part of the social environment at the school	17.1	31.2	51.7
To get more free time during the day	16.8	24.9	58.3
Because I was encouraged to study	6.7	17.5	75.8
Because I had friends going to school	4.0	12.1	84.0

We wanted to determine whether the scores relating to the three motivational categories differed in relation to the educational level of the prisoners, and used the highest and lowest completed educational level as our point of departure, dividing the prisoners into five groups: completed compulsory school, completed upper secondary school, completed subjects at a university or institute of higher education, and completed a degree at a university or institute of higher education. High motivation was considered a score in the highest 25% and low motivation correspondingly the lowest 25%.

There was no significant difference between prisoners with different educational backgrounds in relation to motivational category 1. Prisoners with less completed education were not less motivated to change or to master the future than prisoners with high educational backgrounds (or vice versa). However, we did find significant differences with regard to motivational category 2 (Chi square = 20.28, $p < .01$). The more education a prisoner had, the less motivated he or she was by social and situational factors. Those factors were motivating for prisoners with little or no previous education. We also found a significant difference between prisoners with different educational backgrounds in relation to the third motivational category, acquisition of knowledge and skills (Chi square = 19.28, $p < .01$). Prisoners with high educational backgrounds were particularly motivated to acquire knowledge and skills.

We also examined the correlation between the three motivational categories and length of sentence: < 3 months, 3–12 months, 1–5 years, and > 5 years. There were significant differences between the groups in relation to the motivational category “changing and mastering the future” ($F = 5.86$, $p < .001$). Prisoners serving long sentences were more motivated by these reasons than prisoners serving shorter sentences. There was also a significant difference in relation to “social and situational factors.” ($F = 2.99$, $p < .03$). Prisoners serving shorter sentences, particularly in the category 3–12 months, were more motivated by these factors than prisoners serving longer sentences. There was no significant difference with regard to length of sentence in relation to the motivational category “acquisition of knowledge and skills.”

Although there was no difference between the sexes with regard to the motivational categories, there was an age-group difference with regard to “social and situational factors.” The prisoners in the youngest age groups

scored highest, and the oldest lowest with regard to this motivational category ($F=6.69$, $p<.001$).

Motivation and learning strategies

We measured various types of motivation in relation to learning strategies. We defined motivation as *expectations* concerning learning and achievement (expectations regarding mastery), the extent to which the educational activity was of *value*, and elements of negative emotions (test anxiety) in the educational situation. We measured learning strategies as cognitive strategies (such as putting what you are trying to learn into your own words and trying to memorize facts) and self-regulation (such as repeating subject matter and asking yourself questions to check your comprehension). According to our findings, the respondents stated that they were quite motivated in their studies, and that they basically used appropriate learning strategies. Those with high motivation (i.e. high scores on mastery expectations and values and low scores on test anxiety), also used the most appropriate cognitive strategies and self-regulation.

Prisoners studying subjects or degree programs at university or higher education level had higher scores on “value” and “self-regulation”, but lower levels of “test anxiety,” and prisoners studying degree programs at university or higher education level also had higher levels of mastery expectation and cognitive strategies. Prisoners in the first year of upper secondary education had higher levels of “test anxiety,” and lower levels of “self-regulation”. Prisoners in the second year of upper secondary education had higher levels of “test anxiety,” and prisoners studying at compulsory school level had lower levels of “self-regulation”.

Thus our findings indicate that prisoners participating in higher education have somewhat better resources with regard to motivation and learning strategies than other participants in prison educational activities, as one could have predicted on the basis of the fact that higher education is more demanding than secondary or compulsory education.

Reasons for not participating in prison educational activities

Prisoners who were not participating in educational activities at the time of the study were asked about their reasons for not participating. They were offered a list of eight options, of which they could mark one or more, and there was an "other reasons" option and space to explain those reasons. The distribution of responses is shown in table 6.7.

Only one reason was marked by 64.4%, while 19.7% marked two or more reasons (very few, 6.2%, marked more than two reasons). As can be seen in table 6.7, one fifth marked the option that the prison where they were serving time did not offer any educational activities. It should be noted that at the time of the study there were no prison educational activities in 13 of the 47 Norwegian prisons (during the course of 2007, educational activities were established at all Norwegian prisons). The two next most frequently-given reasons for not participating were not being given information about the educational options and that the prison did not have educational activities suitable for the individual. Only a small percentage of the prisoners marked their own learning disabilities as a reason for not participating, in spite of the fact that learning disabilities are known to be common among prisoners. The most frequently-stated "other reason" was too short a sentence.

The only difference between women and men was that women more often marked "other reasons". We found significant differences between the age groups concerning the reason "I do not receive any information about educational possibilities" and "I believe that I have too many learning problems".

Table 6.7. Reasons for not participating in prison educational activities. N=1,509

Reasons for not participating in Prison educational activities	Per cent*
This prison does not offer any educational programs	20.7
I do not receive any information about educational possibilities	17.7
This prison does not offer any educational programs suitable for me	17.1
I am not interested in getting an education in prison	11.4
The conditions for school and studying in the prison are poor	9.4
I already have enough education	8.5
I believe that I have too many learning problem	6.9
Education is not worth the effort	1.5
Other reasons	19.5

* Each cell in the table is independent: 100 per cent minus the figure in the cell gives the percentage who did not state that reason.

In both these cases, the youngest prisoners had most often given these reasons for not participating. The responses to the statement “I do not receive any information about educational possibilities” showed wide variation between prisons. In seven prison wards no prisoners stated this as a reason for deciding not to participate, while in four others over 30% stated this reason (there were a total of 47 prisons with a total of 54 prison wards in the study).

The longer sentence a prisoner was serving, the more likely it was that he or she would choose the statements “This prison does not offer any educational programs suitable for me” and “The conditions for school and studying in the prison are poor.” We also divided the respondents into groups by country of origin: Norway, another Nordic country, elsewhere in Europe, and outside Europe. We found no significant differences between prisoners from these regions in relation to their reasons given for not participating in prison educational activities.

Prisoners’ evaluations of prison educational activities

The participants in the study were asked to state the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with various statements concerning the quality of the teaching and the learning environment. Table 6.8 shows the distribution of responses. One of the most important findings was that nearly three out of four prisoners participating in prison educational activities (73.6%) agreed either somewhat or completely with the statement “I am satisfied with the teaching” (14.3% disagreed somewhat or completely). Half (50.4%) agreed somewhat or completely with the statement that “The prison makes it possible to take an education” (29.4% disagreed somewhat or completely).

Table 6.8. Prisoners' evaluations of the teaching, in per cent. N=502 to 523

Quality of teaching	Disagree completely	Disagree somewhat	Unsure	Agree somewhat	Agree completely
I am satisfied with the teaching	6.5	8.4	12.8	28.7	43.6
The requirements are too tough	50.3	16.0	21.3	8.0	4.3
The prison makes it possible to take an education	14.3	16.4	16.2	25.2	27.9
The amount of work is just right	5.1	9.4	21.5	31.6	32.4
The requirements are not tough enough	25.4	14.4	32.1	17.4	10.7
Some subjects are too difficult	33.1	19.5	23.0	17.7	6.7
Too many lectures	43.4	15.5	24.9	9.8	6.4
The teaching is suited to my needs	12.7	12.3	14.0	25.7	35.3
Too much group work	55.0	19.2	18.8	4.6	2.4
Inadequate access to ICT equipment	23.6	12.5	12.4	14.7	36.9
The teachers have good ICT skills	11.6	10.8	39.7	19.1	18.9
I am pleased with my educational program	6.0	5.0	12.9	25.7	50.4

A little more than half (57.3%) agreed completely or in part with the statement “The teaching is suited to my needs” (23.8% disagreed entirely or in part). Approximately one out of five (22.3%) agreed completely or in part with the statement “Some subjects are too difficult” (56.8% disagreed entirely or in part). Half (49.5%) agreed completely or in part that there was “Inadequate access to ICT equipment” (33.9% disagreed entirely or in part).

According to the results, prisoners with apprenticeship contracts and prisoners studying degree programs at university or higher education level were significantly less satisfied with access to ICT equipment than other prisoners. Prisoners studying subjects or degree programs at university level were also significantly less satisfied with the quality of the education than other prisoners.

Circumstances that make studying in prison difficult

The prisoners were asked to state their problems with prison education on the basis of eight choices (of which they could state more than one). Table 6.9 shows the percentages of the prisoners who stated various types of difficulties associated with prison education.

As seen in the table, no less than 42.5% of the prisoners stated that the shortage of ICT equipment presented problems for their studies. The next most frequently-stated problem was prison security routines, followed by transfers between prisons, disturbances in the prison, inadequate access to literature, and that the sentence would be over before the course could be completed. These factors can all be classified as problems associated with the learning environment.

Table 6.9. Per cent of prisoners stating various causes of problems associated with prison education. N=534

Circumstance causing problems	Per cent
Inadequate access to ICT equipment	42.5
Prison security routines	33.5
Transfers between prisons	26.0
Disturbances in prison	22.3
Inadequate access to literature	21.1
Sentence will be served before I can complete course	19.8
My own reading and writing difficulties	18.3
My own mathematics difficulties	15.6

Moreover, 18.3% stated that their own reading or writing difficulties created problems, and 15.6% that their own mathematics difficulties created problems for them in relation to their educational activities. These are classified as problems associated with the individual's skills. There were no significant differences between women and men in this respect.

Nearly half (43.2%) of the prisoners who were participating in educational activities stated one or two circumstances that created problems for them associated with their educational activities, while 21.8% did not describe any problematic circumstances. A total of 26.0% of the prisoners stated three or four problematic circumstances, and 8.9% between five and seven. Thus 34.9% mentioned a relatively large number of problems.

Summary, discussion, and practical implications

The legislation governing educational activities in the Norwegian prison and probation system is crystal clear with regard to compulsory and upper secondary education. Both the Education Act and the Enforcement of Sentences Act state that prisoner have the same right to education as the general population. Neither of these laws, however, covers university or higher education for prisoners.

Educational background

More than seven per cent of the prisoners had not completed any educational level at all. This figure is quite similar to our findings from a study made in 2004 (Eikeland and Manger, 2004). Nearly one out of three prisoners had completed upper secondary education or the equivalent. Every eighth prisoner had some form of higher education, either single university subjects or a degree. Of the prisoners who had completed at least one year of upper secondary education, two out of three had been in some form of vocational training. The youngest prisoners (under 25) were those who had most often completed part of their upper secondary education, but only just over 16% had graduated from upper secondary school. Many had dropped out of school, and both this fact and the fact that they were incarcerated probably meant that it would take them longer to finish.

The educational backgrounds of female and male prisoners were very similar, with the main difference being that nearly twice as many men as women had completed a vocational training program. Women had higher education somewhat more often than men. There was also a relationship between prisoners' educational backgrounds and their countries of origin. Only four out of five prisoners from countries outside Europe had completed compulsory school or the equivalent.

Prison educational activities

According to our study, approximately 30% of the respondents were participating in some prison educational activity. More than half of them were in upper secondary education, and 40% of that group were in vocational training. It is interesting to compare this finding with the fact that

two thirds of the prisoners stated that they would have liked to study something with a vocational orientation. This means that in relation to demand, there are too few vocational courses available. Also, nearly half the prisoners who were participating in some prison educational activity (45.3%) were studying general, economic or administrative subjects. At the same time, we know that 54% of the openings for upper secondary studies in Norwegian prisons are in general, economic or administrative subjects, or 60% of the openings offered under the auspices of the Prison and Probation Service, including follow-up classes (Fylkesmannen i Hordaland, 2005). There therefore appears to be an imbalance between the number of prisoners studying these subjects (45.3%) and the number of openings for these subjects (54–60%).

Prisoners' educational preferences

Overall, our study indicates that more than half the prisoners wished to participate in more educational activities. More than two thirds of those under the age of 25 expressed at least one educational preference, while the older prisoners more often stated a preference for “other education,” particularly ICT courses. There were only minor differences between women and men and between prisoners from different parts of the world. To outsiders, unfamiliar with prisoners' situations, it may seem surprising that the prisoners wished to participate in more educational activities. However, Costelloe (2003) also wrote that prisoners who had dropped out of ordinary school and educational activities early often had an initial resistance to anything that resembled school but, paradoxically, it was also her finding in Ireland that serving time gave these individuals an opportunity to revise this standpoint. Having a first experience of the utility of education, the prisoners in her study often developed new interests, and this became motivated to go on studying.

Subject knowledge and learning disabilities

Far more of the prisoners self-rated their ICT skills as poor than those who rated their own literacy or numeracy skills as poor. Just over one out of every three rated themselves as having “some” or “serious” reading or writing difficulties, and nearly half reported having mathematics difficul-

ties. The oldest prisoners reported the fewest such difficulties. One logical explanation might be that younger prisoners had more recent or current personal experience of such difficulties.

There were no major differences regarding self-rated subject knowledge or learning disabilities between prisoners who were participating in educational activities and those who were not, but prisoners taking an educational activity had more often been tested for and given help with their reading, writing, or mathematics difficulties. There may be various explanations for this. This group may have had more resources for seeking help or been more motivated to get help earlier. It is also possible that, for some reason, there was a better mechanism for helping prisoners in this group. It goes without saying that all groups of prisoners with learning disabilities must be offered help, although it seems that prisoners who do not participate in educational activities may hitherto have been neglected in this respect, and require special attention.

Motivation to study

The individual reasons mentioned as very important by most prisoners in relation to having decided to participate in educational activities were: 1) To spend my time doing something sensible and useful, 2) To learn about a subject, and 3) to make it easier to get a job after I am released. A factor analysis of the fifteen reasons in the questionnaire gave three clear motivational categories: "changing and mastery of the future," "social and situational factors," and "acquisition of knowledge and skills."

Our study also identified a number of *structural impediments* to participating in prison educational activities, including that the prison did not offer education, that the educational activities offered were not suited to the individuals' needs, or that insufficient information was given about the educational options. *Individual impediments* were also found, including that the prisoner did not want any more education, had a negative attitude toward education, or had learning disabilities. However, our study does not support the findings of Jonsson and Gähler (1996) that the most vulnerable groups in society do not participate in educational activities because they do not experience them as worth the effort. Only 1.5% of the prisoners who were not participating in educational activities in Norwegian prisons stated this as one of their reasons for choosing not to

participate. Although many prisoners have learning disabilities, only seven per cent of the prisoners who were not participating in educational activities stated their own learning difficulties as a reason for not participating. This finding may appear surprising, but it is supported in our previous research (Manger, Eikeland, Asbjørnsen and Langelid, 2006), where we found that prisoners with literacy difficulties significantly more often than others reported a desire to study at upper secondary school level. We interpreted this finding as meaning that such difficulties can both explain previous dropping out of school and a later desire to catch up, once the context had changed.

There may also be *situational impediments* that explain an indifference toward participating in educational activities. Having to serve a prison sentence may necessitate dropping out of school or being unable to construct a life situation that includes learning and education. Serving a short sentence may make it impossible to redo a subject or start a new educational option, and many respondents mentioned these phenomena under “other circumstances.”

According to our findings, the respondents in this study were well-motivated to participate in educational activities, and that they generally use appropriate learning strategies. Highly-motivated prisoners (i.e. individuals with high scores in the factors mastery expectations and values and low scores in test anxiety) also usually use appropriate cognitive strategies and self-regulation. These findings support the assumption that learning strategies do not appear in a vacuum, but arise out of some kind of motivation (Pintrich and De Groot, 1990).

Prisoners' evaluations of educational activities

The respondents' answers indicate that they were largely satisfied with various aspects of the educational opportunities and the teaching situation. The statistics indicate that most of the respondents agreed with the statements that described positive aspects of the educational activities and disagreed with the negative ones.

Those who experienced problems associated with the educational activities experienced the inadequate access to ICT equipment and the prison security arrangements as the most problematic, although other problems were also common. Although on the whole far more problems were

experienced with the learning environment than with the prisoners' own learning disabilities, nearly one out of five prisoners participating in educational activities stated that their own literacy difficulties created problems for them. These answers should be seen in light of the fact that over 14% stated that their literacy skills were poor or very poor, and more than one third that they had some or serious literacy difficulties. It should also be noted in this context that fewer (18.3%) stated literacy difficulties as a problem associated with their educational activities than stated that they had some or serious literacy difficulties (37.2%). It is conceivable that some prisoners with slight literacy difficulties did not experience them as particularly problematic in relation to their ongoing prison educational activities.

Practical implications of the Norwegian findings

In recent years there has been a steady cutback in the number of openings to study at compulsory school level in Norway. This is a consequence of the fact that more people today have completed compulsory school than in the past. Still, it is important to bear in mind that the seven or eight per cent of prisoners who have not completed any educational level have an explicit legal and democratic right to this schooling. For this reason, Norwegian prisons must have plenty of openings to study at compulsory school level.

The educational activities on offer must be more varied, and all prisons must offer upper secondary education, in relation to which more openings must be made available for vocational training. Collaboration with the labor market authorities in Norway (The Norwegian Labour and Welfare Organisation, NAV) is of the essence if it is to be possible to offer educational activities adapted to labor market needs. Our findings indicate that there is a surplus of unutilized openings to study general, administrative and economic subjects, and that a reduction of them should be made, in order to offer more vocational subjects. This is also in line with the guidelines in a report to the Norwegian Parliament (Stortingsmelding nr. 27, 2004–2005).

The fact that more and more prisoners are qualified to study at university or higher education level implies that opportunities must also be offered to study at this level in prison. In the joint recommendations in the

Nordic survey of prison education (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2005), special emphasis was placed on improving access to higher education, via both more opportunities for day release privileges to study and independent studies in prison with tutoring. The report also states that good, security-adapted Internet solutions may give more prisoners access to a broad range of higher education options. According to the report, the new technologies are a tool that would allow prisoners access to various educational options outside the prison walls.

The results of the Quality Reform in Norwegian Higher Education included a new degree structure (bachelor and master), better student follow up, new types of examination and evaluation, and increased internationalization (including greater transnational student mobility). An opinion from the standing committee on education of the Norwegian Parliament (Innst. S nr. 196 (2004–2005)) states that feedback has come to the committee from many prison schools indicating that the introduction of the quality reform has made it more difficult for prisoners to participate in higher education. It is important that requirements concerning mandatory attendance and follow-up of students do not become an obstacle for students who want to study and take exams, and thus that efforts be made to organize special arrangements for prisoners who wish to study in higher education. Surveys of prisoners' educational backgrounds and preferences from 2004 and 2006 make it clear that both prisons and institutes of higher education need to adapt to the reality that many prisoners today are eligible to study at university level.

Help to solve problems must be focused on both problems in the classroom environment and on individual learning disabilities. In spite of the fact that the prisoners confirmed various problems in the environment, it is also important to stress efforts to help individual prisoners with their disabilities, particularly as there appear to be as many prisoners with learning disabilities among those who were participating in prison educational activities as among those who were not. It goes without saying that help must be offered to all groups of prisoners with learning disabilities, and that prisoners not participating in educational activities may be a group with special needs requiring particular attention. Our study also indicates that there is a great need to strengthen prisoners' ICT skills.

Our findings also highlight the significance of creating a learning environment that promotes motivation because this can, in turn, affect learn-

ing strategies. For example, mastery expectations may rise when an individual experiences success. This may even apply to mastering negative feelings, such as test anxiety, in the learning situation. Mastery expectations can also improve thanks to concrete, credible feedback about one's own skills, and by being given assignments that are challenging but not impossible (Pintrich and Schunck, 2002). Imparting the value of education per se is also important, as well as the value of education as a meaningful activity in the here and now and as a means of achieving more long-term objectives. Since students with poor skills often also struggle with motivation and learning strategies, it is clear that these students require special attention. For instance, it is important to know that a student with literacy difficulties may also have problems with motivation and/or learning strategies, or that an unmotivated student with poor learning strategies may be in that situation owing to learning disabilities.

As mentioned above, at the time of the study in 2006, there were thirteen prisons in Norway that did not offer prisoners any educational options. Since that time, the government has seen to the establishment of prison schools in all prisons where they are relevant. Between 2005 and 2007, the budget for prison education was increased NOR 108,874,000 to NOK 161,860,000. For the future, it is also important to vary the education options more, to raise their quality, and to ensure that all prisoners receive detailed information concerning possible prison educational activities.

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7. Sweden

by Anna-Lena Eriksson Gustavsson and Stefan Samuelsson

Summary

This survey of the educational backgrounds and needs of prisoners was carried out at Swedish prison facilities in autumn 2006, on behalf of the research committee of the Swedish Prison and Probation Service, and in collaboration with Linköping University, Department of Behavioral Sciences and Learning, and the Prison and Probation Service. The questionnaire was distributed to a representative sample totaling 900 prisoners. The results indicate that just under 40% had completed no more than compulsory school, 34% had completed upper secondary school, and 9% had studied at a university or institute of higher education. A larger percentage of prisoners age 32 or more had completed some educational level than younger prisoners. The majority of the prisoners (57%) were not participating in any prison educational activity, while 36% stated that they were participating in some prison educational activity. Seven per cent of the respondents chose not to answer the question about participation. A larger proportion of the prisoners who were not studying had also not completed any educational level previously, or only compulsory school level. Prisoners who were not studying also had more self-rated literacy difficulties, and this group also contained a large proportion of young prisoners and prisoners serving short sentences. Among prisoners who were participating in some educational activity, upper secondary studies were the most common course of study. The most common motivating factors for participating were to make sensible use of one's time, to improve one's grades, and to get jobs and cope better with life after re-

lease. The prisoners' evaluations of their educational activities indicate that most of the prison educational activities were well run.

Education under the auspices of the Swedish Prison and Probation Service

Education for clients of the Swedish Prison and Probation Service includes formal adult education, vocational training, and higher education. In recent years these activities have been dramatically reformed. In the past they were subject to a public procurement procedure (pursuant to the Public Procurement Act), and were therefore provided by a large number of organizations, but at present the Prison and Probation Service runs its own educational activities, monitored by the Swedish National Agency for Education. The activities offered follow the national guidance documents for adult education, and are also regulated in accordance with the ordinance on prison education (2007:152), the guidelines for prison educational activities (2007:4), and the guidelines for prisoners' use of computers and the Internet (2007:1).

At the time of the study, an education reform was under way, and the results therefore reflect both systems.

Irrespective of where in Sweden prisoners are incarcerated, they are to be offered educational activities that are equivalent from one prison to the next, and equivalent with municipal adult education offered in Swedish communities. Prisoners are also to be able to continue studies they have begun if they are transferred between prisons, as well as after release. Whenever possible, studies are to conclude with grades being given. Vocational training is mainly carried out as labor market courses run in collaboration with the Public Employment Services, which both finance these courses and decide what courses are to be offered.

In order to offer an environment conducive to study, prisons have "learning centers", *Lärcentrum*, parallel to the municipal learning centers in the community. A learning center is to offer enough flexibility to enable as many prisoners as possible to study on the basis of their needs, their individual study plans, and at their own pace. This greatly facilitates return to the community for prisoners wishing to continue studying after release, because the environment and the study forms will feel familiar. The prisons use qualified teachers with experience of adult education. The key instrument of the educational activities is a computerized plat-

form known as the “net center,” *Nätcentrum*, which enables secure communication between teachers and students through the use of firewalls. Students whose teachers are at a different prison can thus mainly communicate electronically. At times they may also communicate by letter or telephone. The network of teachers offers the competence to teach some 110 courses, and a total of 3,746 prisoners, or approximately 30% of the prison populations at Swedish prison facilities, were participating in some prison educational activity in 2007.

Staffing is organized on a regional basis. Each region has a headmaster, whose teachers are stationed at the various prison facilities in the region. The teachers (a total of 110 in January 2008) and the headmasters make up a national network coordinated by a director of studies working at the Swedish Prison and Probation Service, head office. The director of studies, guidance and professional counselors, and some administrators at central level ensure the maintenance of the national perspective in prison education.

Vocational training for prisoners in Sweden is arranged with the help of central financing provided by the Swedish Public Employment Service, and takes the form of labor market courses. The vocational courses offered at each prison are decided on in collaboration between the local employment service and the Prison and Probation Service. In 2008 the Swedish Public Employment Service allocated a total of SEK 40 million at national level for vocational training at 25 prisons. These courses vary in length from a couple of weeks to a few months, and are offered in some twenty subject areas.

Most studies at higher education level are conducted as web-based courses with extra high security requirements for being online with the institute of higher education in question. Pilot projects are being run to see if higher education studies can be integrated into the *Nätcentrum* firewall-secured communications network.

Methods and implementation

At all prisons for men in Sweden, both open and closed, we selected a random sample of 20% of the prisoners to participate and, correspondingly, 50% of the women in women’s prisoners. We based the sampling on lists of all prisoners on the day of the study, choosing prisoners born on the first

through the seventh of each month for men, and the first through the fifteenth of each month for women. Out of this random sample (N=960), 67 participants did not participate in the full study but did answer a number of introductory questions in the questionnaire. The external non-response rate was therefore 8%. Thus it is reasonable to assume that the prisoners who completed the study are representative of the entire population of prisoners in Sweden. The internal non-response rate for each question in the questionnaire varied between 1% and 18.3%. The internal non-response rate for the majority of the questions was 14%. Thus the total non-response rate (the sum of the external and internal non-responses) for any individual question was approximately 22% for most of the questions, and the maximum total non-response was 26.3%. The total response rate for all questions in the questionnaire was well over 70%.

The study group thus comprised 893 prisoners, 817 men and 76 women. The sample of male prisoners corresponds to 20% of the total number of prisoners at the time of the study, and the 76 female participants to approximately 28% of the population in women's prisons. In other words, the sample of women prisoners did not correspond to what we had initially planned (50%).

A liaison officer was appointed at each prison to administer the questionnaire, and every prisoner was contacted personally to obtain consent for participation. Any prisoner who declined to participate was still asked to answer a number of introductory questions (questions 1–9) to provide statistics for a non-response analysis. The prisoners had the opportunity to fill out the questionnaire either alone or in groups, and any prisoner who had difficulty filling it out was offered assistance with reading the information texts and the questions.

Prisoners' educational backgrounds

Prisoners in Swedish prisons generally have poor educational backgrounds. A total of 877 prisoners answered the questions about their educational background, giving an internal non-response rate of 16 (1.8%) for the variable highest completed educational level. A total of 97 (11%) of the prisoners stated that they had completed no educational level at all and, as can be seen in table 7.1, the most frequently completed educa-

tional level by far was compulsory school, 42%. Approximately one-fifth stated that they had completed a 3–4 year upper secondary school program, while 10% had pursued studies in higher education.

Table 7.1. Educational background

	Highest educational level completed					
	6/7-yrs. Comp.	9-yrs. comp.	2-yrs. upper sec.	3-yrs. upper sec.	Higher ed.	No level
Number	23	369	133	171	84	97
Per cent	3	42	15	19	10	11

Differences between women and men

There were no significant differences in the Swedish study group between male and female prisoners in terms of the number of years in their educational backgrounds or the highest level of education completed. For both male and female prisoners, the highest completed level of education by far was compulsory school. (see table 7.2).

Table 7.2. Educational background by sex

Educational level	Sex of prisoner	
	Male (N=803)	Female (N=74)
6/7-yrs. comp.	23 (3%)	0 (0%)
9-yrs. Comp.	325 (41%)	44 (59%)
Upper sec. 2-yrs.	123 (15%)	10 (14%)
Upper sec.3–4-yrs.	170 (21%)	1 (1%)
Higher ed.	73 (9%)	11 (15%)
No completed ed.	89 (11%)	8 (11%)

Age differences

When examining educational level in relation to age, it was found that compulsory school was the most common highest level of education completed in each of the age categories (Table 7.3). In light of the ages of the prisoners, in the vast majority of cases nine-year compulsory school was the obligatory school form they would have been able to complete. In the two lowest age groups, 18–24 and 25–34, the proportion of prisoners who had completed a three-year upper secondary program was higher than in the other age groups.

Table 7.3. Educational background by age group

Educational back- ground	Age group			
	18–24 (N=140)	25–34 (N=247)	35–44 (N=222)	45+ (N=197)
6/7-yrs. comp.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	18 (9%)
9-yrs. comp.	71 (50%)	97 (40%)	102 (46%)	71 (36%)
Upper sec. 2-yrs.	12 (9%)	33 (13%)	53 (24%)	26 (13%)
Upper sec. 3–4yrs.	29 (21%)	59 (24%)	30 (14%)	38 (19%)
Higher ed.	5 (4%)	20 (8%)	23 (10%)	31 (16%)
No completed ed.	23 (16%)	38 (15%)	14 (6%)	13 (7%)

One explanation for the number of younger prisoners who had completed an upper secondary program could be that in recent years more and more young people have continued to upper secondary school. In the two youngest age groups, although many prisoners stated that they had completed upper secondary studies, there were also a large number of prisoners who had not completed any educational level at all. Prisoners in the age group 45+ had completed higher education studies more often than the younger prisoners.

Differences related to prisoners' mother tongue

Prisoners in Sweden represent a total of approximately 60 different mother tongues. Irrespective of mother tongue, the largest group of prisoners was those who had completed compulsory school only, which is well in line with the findings reported above concerning educational background (see table 7.4). Prisoners in the “other European” language group had substantially more often than the others completed a higher education program. No prisoners in the “other Nordic language” group stated that they had completed a higher education program. The largest proportions of prisoners who had not completed any level of education at all were in the “other Nordic language” and “rest of the world” groups.

Table 7.4. Educational background by mother tongue

Educational level	Mother tongue			
	Swedish (N=537)	Other Nordic lang. (N=38)	Other European lang. (N=113)	Rest of the world (N=163)
6/7-yrs. comp.	18 (3%)	0 (0%)	3 (3%)	2 (1%)
9-yrs. Comp.	231 (43%)	19 (50%)	42 (37%)	68 (42%)
Upper sec. 2-yrs.	101 (19%)	6 (16%)	9 (8%)	15 (9%)
Upper sec. 3–4yrs.	90 (17%)	7 (19%)	30 (27%)	38 (23%)
Higher ed.	48 (9%)	0 (0%)	18 (16%)	15 (9%)
No completed ed.	49 (9%)	6 (16%)	11 (10%)	25 (15%)

The dominant mother tongue in Swedish prisons is Swedish, and it was found that the proportion of prisoners with Swedish mother tongue increased with age (Eriksson-Gustavsson and Samuelsson, 2007).

Prison educational activities

This section describes the group of prisoners in Swedish prisons who participate in prison educational activities while serving their sentences. A total of 344 prisoners (35.8%) stated that they were participating in prison educational activities, 548 (57.1%) that they were not, and 68 (7.1%) declined to answer the question concerning participation in prison educational activities.

Type of educational activity

The most common type of education pursued in prison was upper secondary level studies, 40%, and the type of courses with fewest participants were “Swedish for immigrants” and “teaching basic skills in reading and writing,” 6% and 4%, respectively.. Seventy-two prisoners stated that they were participating in educational activities of the type “other activity,” which corresponds to 17% of the types of educational activities reported. As can be seen in Table 7.5, 430 different types of education activities were reported, indicating that some prisoners reported participating in more than one type.

Table 7.5. Prison educational activities by type

Type of educational activity	Number	Per cent
Courses (no grades)	41	9.5
Basic ed	36	8
Upper sec	170	40
Higher ed.	36	8
Swedish for imm	26	6
Read and write	17	4
Vocational	32	7.5
Other	72	17

There was a correlation between highest educational level completed and whether or not a prisoner participated in educational activities while serving his or her sentence (Eriksson, Gustavsson, and Samuelsson, 2007). There was a clear trend indicating that the higher level of completed education reported, the larger the proportion of people from that group were studying in prison. Only one third of the prisoners reported compulsory school as their highest level of education were attending any educational activity at the prison, whereas two third of the prisoners reported university studies as their highest level of education were taking part in education at the prison.

Differences between women and men

It was found when comparing male and female prisoners that slightly more than half the female prisoners were participating in prison educational activities, while the corresponding figure for the male prisoners was approximately 30%. For both male and female prisoners who decided to participate in prison educational activities, upper secondary studies were the most common type of study, followed by "other educational activities."

Table 7.6. Type of educational activity¹ by sex.

Type of educational activity	Sex of prisoner	
	Male (N=378)	Female (N=47)
Courses (no grades)	39 (10%)	1 (2%)
Basic ed	34 (9%)	2 (4%)
Upper sec	143 (38%)	26 (55%)
Higher ed.	35 (9%)	1 (2%)
Swedish for imm	22 (6%)	3 (7%)
Reading and writing	17 (4%)	0 (0%)
Vocational	25 (7%)	6 (13%)
Other	63 (17%)	8 (17%)

¹N=number of answers for each type of activity, which may not correspond to the number of prisoners of each sex.

Age differences

In all age groups, the proportion of prisoners who did not participate in any educational activity was greater than the proportion of prisoners attending educational activities in the prison. The largest proportions of prisoners attending educational activities in the prisons were in the age groups 25–34 and 35–44 to compare with the lower proportions obtained for the age groups 18–24 and 45+ (Table 7.7).

Table 7.7. Proportion of prisoners participating in educational activities by age group¹

Educational background	Age group			
	18–24 (N=140)	25–34 (N=247)	35–44 (N=222)	45+ (N=197)
Number	56	110	82	58
Per cent	18	36	27	19

¹Of the 344 prisoners who were studying, 38 (11%) did not state their age.

The low rate of participation in the age group 18–24 should be particularly noted, especially in light of the low educational background in this group reported above, and the fact that so many in this group had not completed any level of education (see table 7.7). Table 7.8 describes the types of educational activities being pursued by age group. For all age groups except 45+, upper secondary studies dominated. For the oldest age group, the most common activity was “other educational activities,” followed by upper secondary studies.

Table 7.8. Type of educational activities¹ by age group

Type of educational activity	Age group			
	18–24 (N=66)	25–34 (N=137)	35–44 (N=98)	45+ (N=76)
Courses (no grades)	5 (8%)	8 (6%)	12 (12%)	8 (11%)
Basic ed	5 (8%)	9 (7%)	9 (9%)	8 (11%)
Upper sec	36 (54%)	60 (44%)	33 (34%)	21 (28%)
Higher ed.	2 (3%)	13 (9%)	11 (11%)	5 (6%)
Swedish for imm	3 (4%)	6 (4%)	8 (8%)	5 (6%)
Reading and writing	0 (0%)	9 (7%)	3 (3%)	3 (4%)
Vocational	8 (12%)	12 (9%)	6 (6%)	2 (3%)
Other	7 (11%)	20 (14%)	16 (17%)	24 (31%)

¹N=the number of answers for each activity, and therefore does not always agree with the number of prisoners studying in each age group (see Table 7.7).

Differences in relation to prisoners' mother tongue

Upper secondary studies were most common for all prisoners, irrespective of mother tongue (Table 7.9).

Table 7.9. Type of educational activity¹ by mother tongue

Type of educational activity	Mother tongue			
	Swedish (N=235)	Other Nordic lang. (N=12)	Other European lang. (N=58)	Rest of the world (N=102)
Courses (no grade)	27 (11%)	0 (0%)	2 (3%)	9 (9%)
Basic ed.	17 (7%)	1 (8%)	6 (10%)	9 (9%)
Upper sec.	100 (43%)	6 (50%)	24 (41%)	36 (35%)
Higher ed.	25 (11%)	1 (8%)	4 (7%)	5 (5%)
Swedish for imm.	0 (0%)	1 (8%)	6 (10%)	14 (14%)
Read and write	5 (2%)	1 (8%)	5 (9%)	5 (5%)
Vocational training	18 (8%)	0 (0%)	1 (2%)	11 (11%)
Other educational activities	43 (18%)	2 (17%)	10 (18%)	13 (12%)

¹N=the number of answers for each type of educational activity, and is therefore not always the same as the number of prisoners in each mother tongue group who were studying.

These findings are in line with those reported above with regard to studies and the sexes and ages of the prisoners, respectively. The proportion of prisoners studying Swedish for immigrants whose mother tongue fell under the heading of “rest of the world” was somewhat greater than the proportion with “other European language.”

Differences by length of sentence

Our general finding is that the active participation of prisoners in educational activities increases with increasing sentence length. Prisoners who were participating in educational activities were serving sentences of at least three months. Again, when considered in light of sentence length, upper secondary level studies dominated (Table 7.10). Thirteen per cent of the prisoners serving sentences longer than 61 months were studying at higher education level. This is a substantially higher proportion in comparison with prisoners serving shorter sentences who were participating in educational activities.

Table 7.10. Type of educational activity¹ by length of sentence.

Educational activity	Sentence length			
	1–2 mo (N=0).	3–12 mo. (N=67)	13–60 mo. (N=209)	> 61 mo. (N=119)
Courses (no grade)	0 (0%)	13 (19%)	18 (9%)	9 (7%)
Basic ed.	0 (0%)	7 (10%)	20 (10%)	8 (7%)
Upper sec.	0 (0%)	15 (23%)	91 (44%)	50 (43%)
Higher ed.	0 (0%)	2 (3%)	8 (4%)	16 (13%)
Swedish for imm.	0 (0%)	4 (6%)	10 (5%)	9 (7%)
Read and write	0 (0%)	6 (9%)	8 (4%)	3 (3%)
Vocational training	0 (0%)	6 (9%)	16 (8%)	8 (7%)
Other educational activities	0 (0%)	14 (21%)	38 (18%)	16 (13%)

¹N=the number of answers given for each type of activity, which may not correspond to the total number of prisoners studying in each sentence length group.

Educational preferences

Below, we present the prisoners' educational preferences by sex, age group, mother tongue, and sentence length. These statistics include both the prisoners who were participating in educational activities and those who were not.

In light of the finding presented above in relation to educational background, that the most frequent highest completed level of education was compulsory school, the findings relating to educational preferences are as expected. The majority of prisoners expressed an interest in starting a course of vocational training and in studying to acquire upper secondary equivalency. In Sweden, much vocational training is offered at upper

secondary level, so prisoners' preference for upper secondary level education may be even higher than can be seen in Table 7.11.

Table 7.11. Prisoners' expressed preferences¹ regarding educational activities.

Type of educational activity	Number	Per cent
Courses (no grades)	66	7
Basic ed	75	8
Upper sec	149	16
Higher ed.	128	13
Swedish for imm	44	5
Read and write	73	8
Vocational	228	24
Other	141	15

¹N=number of educational preferences expressed, which may not correspond to the number of prisoners. A total of 141 prisoners (15%) stated that they would like to study (see also Tables 7.12, 7.13, 7.14, and 7.15).

Preferences given under the heading "Other educational activities" spanned the spectrum from academic studies (medicine, law) to training for vocations (welder, blacksmith, artist, goldsmith), and service sector jobs (taxi driver, restaurant worker, masseur) (Eriksson, Gustavsson, and Samuelsson, 2007). Interest was also expressed in computer studies, and specialized training such as studying for a truck driving license or a diving certificate. Another interest expressed was to supplement one's education from abroad so that it would correspond to the equivalent degree in Sweden, and another was to study for personal development. "Other educational activities" may also have been listed under headings such as "Higher education" and "Vocational/labor market courses."

Differences between women and men

To a large extent (26%), male prisoners in Sweden expressed a preference for vocational training, followed by upper secondary level education and other educational activities. The educational activity for which the greatest preference was expressed by female prisoners was upper secondary level studies (19%). Many female prisoners also expressed an interest in vocational training and other educational activities (17% each). It is also of interest to note that a relatively large proportion of the male and female prisoners expressed an interest in higher education. No women prisoners expressed an interest in studying basic literacy skills, while as many as

9% of the male prisoners stated that they would like to take part in such courses (Table 7.12). Consequently, male prisoners rated themselves as having some or serious literacy difficulties substantially more often than women prisoners (Eriksson, Gustavsson, and Samuelsson, 2007).

Table 7.12. Educational preferences¹ by sex

Educational preferences	Sex	
	Male (N=843)	Female (N=61)
Courses (no grades)	63 (8%)	3 (4%)
Basic ed.	68 (8%)	7 (9%)
Upper sec.	135 (17%)	14 (19%)
Higher ed.	117 (14%)	11 (15%)
Swedish for imm.	44 (5%)	0 (0%)
Read and write	73 (9%)	0 (0%)
Vocational ed.	215 (26%)	13 (17%)
Other ed. Activities	128 (16%)	13 (17%)

¹N=number of educational preferences, which may not correspond to the number of prisoners.

Age differences

When examining educational preferences by age, a preference for vocational training dominated in most age groups.

Table 7.13. Educational preferences¹ by age

Educational preferences	Age groups			
	18-24 (N=140)	25-34 (N=288)	35-44 (N=262)	45+ (N=151)
Courses (no grades)	7 (5%)	15 (6%)	23 (10%)	18 (9%)
Basic ed.	11 (8%)	25 (10%)	19 (8%)	14 (7%)
Upper sec.	39 (28%)	46 (19%)	37 (16%)	16 (8%)
Higher ed.	22 (16%)	39 (16%)	34 (15%)	22 (11%)
Swedish for imm.	2 (1%)	22 (9%)	11 (5%)	5 (3%)
Read and write	7 (5%)	28 (11%)	18 (8%)	11 (6%)
Vocational ed.	35 (25%)	79 (32%)	69 (31%)	34 (17%)
Other ed. activities	17 (12%)	34 (14%)	51 (23%)	31 (16%)

¹N=number of educational preferences, which may not correspond to the number of prisoners.

In the youngest age group, 18–24, there was a slightly greater preference for upper secondary than for vocational education. In the other age groups, the preference for upper secondary education decreased with increasing age.

Differences in relation to prisoner's mother tongues

When prisoners in Sweden were grouped by mother tongue, the preference for vocational training still dominated in all four mother tongue categories (Table 7.14). In the two mother tongue groups Swedish and Rest of the world, there was a greater interest in higher education, and to some extent even for upper secondary education, than in the other mother tongue groups. In the group of prisoners in the category European language, a relatively large number expressed an interest in basic education. Basic literacy courses were of greater interest to prisoners with a mother tongue other than Swedish. The group with mother tongues from the rest of the world stood out in their interest in both Swedish for immigrants and basic literacy courses.

Table 7.14. Educational preferences¹ by mother tongue

Type of educational activity	Mother tongue			
	Swedish (N=504)	Other Nordic lang. (N=37)	Other European lang. (N=107)	Rest of the world (N=223)
Courses (no grade)	38 (7%)	2 (5%)	7 (6%)	13 (8%)
Basic ed.	42 (8%)	1 (3%)	14 (12%)	16 (9%)
Upper sec.	88 (16%)	5 (13%)	18 (15%)	35 (21%)
Higher ed.	85 (16%)	3 (8%)	11 (9%)	23 (14%)
Swedish for imm.	0 (0%)	2 (5%)	11 (9%)	27 (16%)
Read and write	25 (5%)	5 (13%)	10 (9%)	30 (18%)
Vocational training	139 (26%)	11 (29%)	19 (16%)	55 (32%)
Other educational activities	87 (16%)	8 (21%)	17 (15%)	24 (14%)

¹N=number of educational preferences, which may not correspond to the number of prisoners.

Differences in relation to length of sentence

Prisoners' educational preferences, also when related to length of sentence, corresponded to the pattern described above. Thus vocational training was the dominant preference even in relation to most categories of sentence length (Table 7.15). Prisoners' serving the shortest sentences, 1–2 months, expressed an equal preference for higher education as for vocational training. Many prisoners in the other three categories of sentence length stated that they would like to study both at upper secondary and higher education levels, as well as to take courses that would fall into the category "other educational activities."

Table 7.15. Educational preferences¹ by sentence length

Educational activity	Sentence length			
	1–2 mo (N=16).	3–12 mo. (N=201)	13–60 mo. (N=479)	> 61 mo. (N=166)
Courses (no grade)	3 (13%)	19 (9%)	33 (8%)	8 (4%)
Basic ed.	1 (4%)	12 (6%)	48 (11%)	10 (6%)
Upper sec.	2 (8%)	36 (18%)	76 (17%)	27 (15%)
Higher ed.	3 (13%)	25 (12%)	59 (14%)	32 (18%)
Swedish for imm.	1 (4%)	10 (5%)	26 (6%)	4 (2%)
Read and write	1 (4%)	16 (8%)	45 (10%)	10 (6%)
Vocational training	3 (13%)	50 (24%)	122 (28%)	45 (25%)
Other educational activities	2 (8%)	33 (16%)	70 (16%)	30 (17%)

¹N=number of educational activities in which the prisoner was interested, and may not correspond to the number of prisoners. Prisoners serving longer sentences expressed an interest in more educational activities, which explains why the percentages do not add up to 100 for the two categories with the shortest sentence lengths.

Self-rating of skills

In the questionnaire, prisoners were asked to rate their own ICT, literacy, and numeracy skills. Table 7.16 indicates that they rated their writing skills highest. Two thirds of the prisoners rated their reading and writing skills as “very good” or “good.” Half the prisoners assessed their numeracy skills as “very good” or “good.” In contrast, when it came to ICT, only one third evaluated their skills as “very good” or “good.” Eriksson Gustavsson and Samuelsson (2007) found that prisoners with strong educational backgrounds rated their reading and writing abilities higher than those who had very little education, who rated their reading and writing abilities as “poor” or “very poor.” In previous studies, Samuelsson, Herkner and Lundberg (2003) showed that Swedish prisoners do not have specific reading difficulties to a larger extent than is found in the general population.

Table 7.16. Self-rated ICT, literacy, and numeracy skills.

Skill	Self-rated skill				
	Very good	Good	Average	Poor	Very poor
ICT skills	132 (15%)	161 (18%)	231 (26%)	225 (26%)	134 (15%)
Reading and writing skills	310 (35%)	270 (31%)	202 (23%)	71 (8%)	23 (3%)
Mathematics skills	167 (19%)	280 (32%)	244 (28%)	153 (17%)	34 (4%)

Prisoners may have literacy difficulties for various reasons, such as lack of reading experience and incomplete or disrupted basic education. However, according to previous studies, educational level and adults' literacy skills are correlated (OECD, 1992, 1995, 1997, 2000; Skolverket, 1996, 2000; Eriksson-Gustavsson, 1997, 2002).

Self-rated skills in literacy, and numeracy,

Prisoners rated their own writing abilities more positively than their mathematics abilities, as is reflected in the findings in the table below, where it can be seen that fewer prisoners consider themselves to have problems with writing than with mathematics.

Table 7.17. Self-rated literacy, and numeracy skills, respectively

Difficulties	Self-rated difficulties		
	None	Some	Serious
Literacy difficulties	572 (65%)	264 (30%)	47 (5%)
Numeracy difficulties	459 (52%)	328 (37%)	95 (11%)

As can be seen in Table 7.17, prisoners rated their own literacy skills more positively than their skills in mathematics.

Help with difficulties

A total of 440 prisoners stated that they had “some” or “serious” literacy or numeracy difficulties. One hundred and twenty-nine (29%) stated that they had received some special education support for these difficulties. It is not possible to determine from the questionnaire responses whether this help was given while they were serving their sentences or if they had been involved in other educational activities outside the prison.

Study motivation

The motivation for prisoners to participate in educational activities mainly concerned the future after release: questions in the study posed to de-

termine what motivated prisoners to participate in educational activities focused on the future after release, personal satisfaction in terms of learning and new knowledge, studies as a way of alleviating boredom, and studies that satisfy the social and emotional needs of the prisoners.

Motivation to participate in prison educational activities

Table 7.18. Motivation to study among prisoners who were participating in educational activities

Motivational factor	Very important	Some importance	Not important
To make it easier to get a job after I'm released	141 (47%)	82 (27%)	77 (26%)
To spend my time doing something sensible and useful	241 (81%)	49 (17%)	6 (2%)
To satisfy my desire to learn	154 (52%)	119 (40%)	25 (8%)
To make serving time easier	121 (41%)	125 (42%)	52 (17%)
To make this educational program a bridge to more education after I am released	135 (45%)	98 (32%)	68 (23%)
Because I had friends going to school	7 (2%)	27 (10%)	252 (88%)
To improve my self-esteem	72 (24%)	96 (33%)	128 (43%)
Because it is better than working in prison	67 (23%)	99 (35%)	121 (42%)
Because I was encouraged to study	9 (3%)	42 (15%)	235 (82%)
Because I wanted to be part of the social environment at the school	45 (16%)	88 (30%)	157 (54%)
To get more free time during the day	27 (10%)	63 (22%)	194 (68%)
To make it easier for me to avoid committing crimes after I am released	93 (32%)	62 (22%)	134 (46%)
To improve a previous grade	146 (50%)	71 (24%)	74 (26%)
To learn about a subject	193 (65%)	77 (26%)	26 (9%)
To be better able to cope with life after my release	135 (46%)	70 (24%)	87 (30%)

According to the prisoners, it was important to use their time in prison well in order to learn more, improve previous grades, get jobs, and cope better after release (Table 7.18). They also felt that studies in prison might help them feel able to go on to more education after release, and satisfied their need and desire to learn. Incarceration is a time of constant waiting for release, and the prisoners also stated that educational activities were a way of “passing the time.” Neither having friends who were study-

ing nor encouragement from prison staff seem to have been important factors in deciding to study.

Reasons for not participating in prison educational activities

Table 7.19 gives an account of the total of 795 reasons given for deciding not to participate in prison educational activities, indicating that some prisoners stated several reasons. One third of the responses fall into the category of “*having few if any of the necessary prerequisites to pursue educational activities.*” Thirty-six per cent of the reasons stated have to do with the prison not offering satisfactory educational options, divided as: 13% no education offered, 13% no information given, and 10% inadequate study conditions. Another 9% of the reasons given fall into the category “*personal limitations,*” while some 25% of the reasons given for deciding not to study were other unspecified reasons.

Table 7.19. Prisoners' reasons for deciding not to participate in prison educational activities

Reason for not studying	Number	Per cent
This prison does not offer any educational programs	107	13
No information	106	13
Poor studying conditions	78	10
Not interested	130	17
Have enough education	65	8
Education is not worth the effort	17	2
Have too many learning problems	33	4
Have dyslexia	39	5
Other reasons	220	28

More than one quarter of the reasons indicated by prisoners who not participate in any educational activity belongs to the categories “not interested”, “not worth the efforts” and that he or she already has enough education.

Prisoners' evaluations of educational activities

The prisoners who were participating in educational activities were generally satisfied with the educational options and felt that the prison offered and created opportunities for studying (Table 7.20). The educational

activities satisfied the students' needs, and the demands were appropriately adapted to the individual. In terms of structure, the prisoners stated that there was just the right amount of both lectures and group work. They reacted, however, to the inadequate access to ICT equipment, and were also uncertain as to whether the teachers had sufficient ICT skills.

Table 7.20. Experience of prison educational activities

Experience of prison educational activities	Agree completely	Agree somewhat	Unsure	Disagree completely	Disagree somewhat
I am satisfied with the teaching	98 (33.2%)	100 (33.9%)	48 (16.3%)	23 (7.8%)	26 (8.8%)
The requirements are too tough	13 (4.5%)	26 (9.0%)	44 (15.2%)	63 (21.7%)	144 (49.7%)
The prison makes it possible to take an education	110 (37.7%)	92 (31.5%)	31 (10.6%)	40 (13.7%)	19 (6.5%)
The amount of work is just right	98 (33.9%)	84 (29.1%)	58 (20.1%)	26 (9.0%)	23 (8.0%)
The requirements are not tough enough	14 (5.0%)	47 (16.8%)	72 (25.7%)	48 (17.1%)	99 (35.4%)
Some of the subjects are too hard	12 (4.3%)	38 (13.6%)	66 (23.7%)	56 (20.1%)	107 (38.4%)
Too many lectures	9 (3.3%)	12 (4.4%)	36 (13.3%)	48 (17.7%)	166 (61.3%)
The teaching is suited to my needs	98 (34.6%)	84 (29.7%)	40 (14.1%)	35 (12.4%)	26 (9.2%)
Too much group work	2 (0.7%)	13 (4.6%)	33 (11.7%)	43 (15.2%)	192 (67.8%)
Inadequate access to ICT equipment	95 (33.9%)	44 (15.7%)	33 (11.8%)	38 (13.6%)	70 (25.0%)
Teachers' ICT skills are very good	55 (19.9%)	43 (15.5%)	120 (43.3%)	28 (10.1%)	31 (11.2%)

Overall, the findings displayed in Table 7.21 indicates that the educational activities basically run smoothly. However, they also reported circumstances that caused them problems with their studies, with the shortage of ICT equipment and the prison security arrangements as particularly negative (Table 7.21). A shortage of teachers was also clearly experienced as problematic, as well as the fact that prisoners were sometimes transferred to another prison. Inadequate access to literature and the sentence being served before an educational program was completed were other possible impediments. Disturbances at the prison also had a nega-

tive impact on studies, as did prisoners' own problems with reading, writing and mathematics.

Table 7.21. Conditions creating problems associated with prison educational activities

Conditions creating problems	Number	Per cent
Transfer while serving my sentence	85	14
I will have finished my sentence before I finish my education	51	8
My own reading or writing problems	35	6
Disturbances in prison	52	9
The security routines in the prison	95	15
My own math difficulties	38	6
Shortage of ICT equipment	106	18
Shortage of literature	56	9
Shortage of teachers	93	15

Learning strategies

Prisoners who chose to pursue prison educational activities reported satisfaction with investing time and energy in their studies. They were goal-oriented in terms of wanting to learn and understand, and stated that what they were learning was both interesting and important. Thus the decision to become involved in prison educational activities is an active choice, and the effort invested in studies was of great importance to the prisoners.

The prisoners' study techniques and skills were characterized by an active approach, and focused on processing of the material they were learning. The majority of the prisoners who were studying stated that they used learning strategies that facilitated the learning process. They thought about whether they had understood the material by stopping and thinking about what they had just read, they asked questions, tried to find the key facts, reformulated the material in their own words, tried to relate new knowledge to what they already knew, and strove to obtain an overall picture by seeing what they were learning as a whole. They described a meta-cognitive approach to learning, meaning that they would "think about" what they were learning. Even at times when the material felt boring or uninteresting, they went on working until they felt they had learned it. Repetition was another method they used to develop and consolidate new knowledge.

As described above, the active choice to participate in prison educational activities made the prisoners highly goal-oriented and confident

that the effort they were investing would be sufficient. Prisoners had high expectations, and also felt that the knowledge they were gaining was of value.

Studies require work, and achievement is assessed and evaluated. Most of the prisoners who were studying found that they could cope with the requirements, although test situations and studying also triggered anxiety and doubts about whether their efforts would suffice.

Concluding discussion

Our findings concerning the educational backgrounds of prisoners in Swedish prisons may be of great use in relation to ongoing and future educational activities conducted under the auspices of the Swedish Prison and Probation Service. Below, we highlight and comment on the results we consider particularly valuable in these respects.

Young prisoners

Prisoners in Sweden generally have low levels of completed education. The most commonly completed education was compulsory school, and there was also a large group of prisoners who had not completed any education at all. In this context it should be emphasized that in the youngest group of prisoners (ages 18–24) only half had completed compulsory school and as many as 20% had not completed any education at all (Table 7.3). Moreover, only a small number of the youngest prisoners chose to participate in prison educational activities (Table 7.7) Hopefully, young prisoners have long lives ahead, and in society today good education is a key factor. Therefore, the group *young prisoners* ought to be considered a high priority group, and a major challenge in terms of future educational activities under the auspices of the Swedish Prison and Probation Service.

Participating versus not participating in prison educational activities

Prisoners participating in educational activities stated clearly that the main motivational factors for their decision were getting a job, being able to go on studying after release, and coping better with life after release.

They regarded education as an investment in the future and in their life in the community. Most of them were studying at upper secondary level, and thus paving the way for continued studies. A large proportion of the prisoners who were not participating in educational activities stated that they would have liked to begin vocational training while serving their sentences (Table 7.11) This strong preference for vocational training applied to all age groups, irrespective of mother tongue, and to prisoners serving both short and long sentences. Probably these prisoners who expressed an interest in vocational training were also motivated by a desire to plan for the future, and to improve their prospects on the labor market after release. Thus the need to interest prisoners to participate in educational activities cannot be overemphasized. If they received the appropriate assistance in planning their education activities and support in carrying them out, it ought to be possible to target the large group of prisoners who had not chosen to participate in educational activities, but who did express educational preferences. When information about educational options is given, it is very important that each potential student is given a clear "road map" for reaching his or her respective educational goals. A survey should be made of the various educational options offered by the Swedish Prison and Probation Service, planning coordination, and options for continued studies after release.

Clearing away the obstacles

Our findings indicate that the prisoners who were participating in educational activities were largely satisfied with their studies and with the activities they were pursuing. Problems they encountered in spite of this positive experience of studies included security routines, and shortages of ICT equipment and teachers. Although some of the impediments the students described may be caused by inevitable restrictions and limitations in prisons that cannot be abolished, it is still very important to identify the problems and perceive them as challenges in our efforts to facilitate the educational process for prisoners.

The prisoners who had decided not to participate in educational activities included those with the weakest educational backgrounds, who were uncertain as to what their educational preferences might be, and who also felt hesitant as to whether they actually possessed the prerequisites for

studying. They stated that they had not received information about educational options and that there were no options available to them. When prisoners stated that what they wanted to study was not available, this does not mean that it was not available at all, but simply not at the prison where the individual was serving time. This group may be the most important group to reach, but it is also the most difficult one, in terms of stimulating their interest in and commitment to studying. These prisoners have to dare to want to study, and are the most challenging in terms of both the educational organization and the educators in terms of:

- providing information that will trigger their interests in educational activities and participating in them,
- offering individually-adapted educational activities,
- making support available to compensate for individual disabilities,
- long-term study planning,
- ongoing follow up and evaluation,
- access to study counseling,
- cooperation on educational activities within and between prisons,
- cooperation between the Prison and Probation Service and community educational institutions.

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8. Differences and similarities in the Nordic region

by Ole-Johan Eikeland

The researchers responsible for the chapters on each individual country made choices of their own in terms of analyses, what to present in the tables, and what to discuss. Thus not all the results are immediately comparable. Not all the percentages are based on the same point of departure, and the statistics related to the multiple choice questions to which the prisoners could give more than one answer have not always been calculated identically (in ways that also affects the percentages). Thus some of the results and presentations in this chapter may differ from those presented in the country-by-country chapters, but this does not mean that either presentation is erroneous. This chapter focuses on comparisons among the five Nordic countries, and where the basis for comparisons is problematic, we point it out.

Readers who have examined the country chapters will have noted that there are similarities and differences among the Nordic countries in terms both of how education for prisoners is organized, the extent to which prisoners take advantage of the educational opportunities offered, and their educational backgrounds. Moreover, there are some differences in how education for the general population is organized, as well as the content. This is, of course, reflected in the range of prison educational activities offered. In other words, a number of factors determine the context in which differences and similarities between the Nordic countries with respect to prison education should be seen.

One such factor is related to the geographic and demographic differences between the countries. For example, it is probably far easier to obtain an overview of all the prisoners in a country as small as Iceland,

where only just over one hundred individuals were in prison at the time of the study, than in Sweden, where there were more than five thousand prisoners. Also, the smaller the number of prisoners, the easier it is to organize a system for prison education, to survey prisoners' educational needs and preferences, and to organize the actual teaching. The sizes of the prisons are also relevant in this respect.

On the other hand, the basic structures of the Nordic education systems are quite similar: they all have a tripartite division with compulsory school, upper secondary school (including vocational and general programs as well as preparatory studies for higher education), and university and other higher education. However, within this structure, there are fairly major national differences in terms of levels, specializations and programs, extensive enough to exacerbate comparisons difficult. One example of a difference in terms of levels and programs is that in Denmark, in addition to vocational training at upper secondary level, there is a whole separate vocational training program for adults who never completed compulsory school, which has no equivalent in the other Nordic countries. Thus it is also difficult to compare Danish prison educational activities with those of the other Nordic countries in this respect.

A third relevant factor has to do with the history of educational policy. Over the last thirty years, there have been major educational reforms in many European countries and at all educational levels. This applies to all the Nordic countries with the exception of Finland. In Finland, in comparison with the other Nordic countries, in some respects the older organization of education and teaching has been maintained. Reforms, of course, are also reflected in the educational options offered to prisoners.

A fourth factor that plays into the differences between the Nordic countries has to do with the organization of their prison and probation services, and the extent to which education is integrated into these services. There are even variations from one prison to another in this respect, partly attributable, for example, to their different security levels which, in turn, reflects the type of prisoner incarcerated in the respective prison, including what kind of crimes the prisoners are serving time for and how long their sentences are. In some cases, too, although not in all the countries, the prison managements have a degree of autonomy when it comes to organizing their educational activities.

A final factor that must be taken into account is the diversity of the composition of prison populations. Although there was no particular variation in average age of prisoners between the Nordic countries, the age range is great, implying that prisoners have experience of and backgrounds in a number of different types of education. Some prisoners have no education at all, others completed school forms that no longer exist, and have never supplemented them. Others, who have updated their early education, have experience of various school forms, and thus probably of educational reforms as well. This diversity poses challenges in terms of investigating the educational backgrounds of prisoners and their motivation even within one country. Since our ambition was to make cross-border comparisons as well, the challenges increased exponentially. The prison populations are, in addition, multinational, and composed of individuals from different national, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds which, of course, means that they have different educational backgrounds and needs. All this complicates comparisons and classifications, and must be borne in mind when drawing conclusions concerning possible similarities and differences.

Prisoners' individual characteristics

The average age of a Nordic prisoner is in the thirties. Iceland has the youngest prison population, with an average age of 31. Finland and Sweden have the oldest, with an average age over 36. (The standard deviation from the average age was very similar in the five countries, between 9.4 and 11.6. This was also true when taking account of the population of the country as a whole.

There was some variation in sentence length among the five countries. Specific sentence length was asked for in the questionnaire; prisoners were simply asked to tick the box corresponding to the range of their sentence length range (“<3 months”; “3–12 months”; “1–5 years”; “> 5 years”). The Danish survey also offered a fifth category, “indefinite sentence.” In Iceland and Sweden only 4% of the prisoners were serving the shortest sentence length, while the corresponding figure for Finland was 9.5%, for Denmark 12.6%, and for Norway 24.3%. The proportion with the longest sentence length (> 5 years) was generally over 20%: Sweden

(21.4%), Iceland (23%), Finland (22%) and Denmark (23.1%, including prisoners serving indefinite sentences). In Norway, by contrast, 15.6% of the prisoners were serving sentences of more than five years.

The proportions of women and men prisoners were also similar. Between 94% and 95% of all prisoners were men. Country of origin (citizenship) varied to some extent. According to our findings, Finland was the Nordic country with the largest proportion of prisoners whose citizenship corresponded to the country where they were serving time (92.6%). In Iceland the corresponding figure was 88%; in Norway 85.6%; in Denmark 84.3%, and in Sweden 74.6%. (In the Swedish questionnaire there was also a question about mother tongue, and the finding was that 62.5% had Swedish mother tongue.) This finding indicates that the prison population in Sweden contains a larger element of individuals from elsewhere than in the prison populations of the other Nordic countries.

Educational backgrounds and levels

Although the educational systems in the five Nordic countries have a great deal in common, there are also variations. Basically, a three-tiered structure can be described: level one, compulsory basic education, level two, vocational and upper secondary education as well as preparatory courses for higher education, and level three university and other higher education. Within these levels there are a variety of specializations and programs, and in some respects there is great diversity in the Nordic region. Variations may reflect the type of profession, degree of specialization and in-depth studies offered, at what level the profession or craft may be exercised, and to what extent the program includes both theory and practical work experience.

Table 8.1. Highest level of education completed by prisoners in the Nordic countries. Figures in per cent

Educational level	Denmark	Finland*	Iceland	Norway	Sweden
No level completed	11.6	7.2	16	7.2	11.0
1. Compulsory school	33.9	27.7	48	35.3	45.0
2. Vocational school, upper secondary school, preparatory courses for higher education	50.4	57.7	27	44.6	34.0
3. University or institute of higher education	4.2	7.4	9	12.9	10.0
(N)=100%	(2,285)	(1,928)*	(77)	(2,255)	(877)

* In the Finnish study, 260 prisoners stated that they had completed studies at other (unspecified) levels (cf. Table 4.5 in chapter 4. This group was not included in the percentages in this table.

As mentioned above, most countries have implemented educational reforms at all three levels. The differences in the systems in the Nordic countries are to some extent attributable to the timing of these reforms and to their content.

What, then, are the variations in highest educational level completed among prisoners in the Nordic countries (Table 8.1)? Let us begin by examining those who had completed no level of education at all, where the variation in proportions is quite large. Iceland has the highest percentage in this respect (16%), and Finland and Norway (7.2% each) have the lowest. In Denmark and Sweden roughly every ninth prisoner (11.5% and 11%, respectively) had completed no level of education at all.

The proportion of prisoners who had completed compulsory school as their highest level varied from approximately one fourth in Finland to nearly half in Iceland and Sweden. Denmark and Finland had slightly more prisoners who had completed upper secondary school than the other Nordic countries, and the lowest percentage was in Iceland. In Norway and Sweden approximately one out of every ten prisoners had completed level three; Denmark had the lowest proportion of prisoners with higher education (4.2%).

Prison educational activities

The proportion of prisoners who did not participate in prison educational activities was striking similar in the five Nordic countries, as can be seen

in table 8.2. Iceland had the lowest figure in this respect (55%), and Denmark the highest, three out of four. In the other three countries roughly two out of every three prisoners were not participating in any prison educational activities at the time of the study.

Table 8.2 also shows that Iceland had the highest proportion of prisoners who were studying at upper secondary level in prison, when vocational and general upper secondary programs were combined (12% plus 30%). This is consistent with the finding that Iceland had the smallest percentage of prisoners who had completed upper secondary level. One out of every twelve prisoners in Finland (7.9%) was studying at compulsory school level. In Denmark one out of every nine prisoners (11%) was participating in either preparatory or general adult education. Norway, Sweden and Iceland topped the statistics concerning prisoners who were studying at higher education level, approximately 3%. The category "other educational activities" varied in content from country to country, including everything from ICT courses to various language and hobby courses.

Table 8.2. Participation in prison educational activities. Only the highest educational level for each prisoner is included. Figures in per cent

Prison educational activities	Denmark	Finland	Iceland	Norway	Sweden
Not participating	75.8	66.7	55	66.8	61.6
1. Adult ed., compulsory level	11.0	7.9	0	1.7	3.7
2a. Vocational/professional	3.6	17.7**	12	17.8**	3.6
2b Upper sec., preparatory higher education	2.8		30		17.1
3. University, higher ed.	1.0	1.7	3	3.6	3.2
Other	5.9	6.0	0	10.2	10.8
(N)=100%	(1,999)*	(2,036)	(77)	(2,255)	(877)

*406 prisoners did not answer the question concerning whether or not they were participating in prison educational activities, and are thus not included here.** For Finland and Norway, answers 2a and 2b were combined.

Motivational factors for participation in prison educational activities

Each country chapter describes the motivational factors stated by the prisoners for deciding to participate in educational activities. The ques-

tionnaire contained fifteen statements, and prisoners were asked to rate each as “not important,” “somewhat important,” “very important” factors. Percentages given for each reason are presented in the country chapters. In Table 8.3 we present the four most important motivational factors for each country, the four reasons most often given by the prisoners in each country as being “very important.”

Of the fifteen possible reasons, only eight ranked among the four most important when all the countries are taken together. “To spend my time doing something sensible and useful” was the most important motivating factor for prisoners in all five countries. In Sweden, Norway, and Iceland more than four out of every five prisoners gave that reason as very important. Only in Norway and Sweden was and “To pass an exam or improve a previous grade” among the four most strongly motivating factors. In Iceland only, “To make serving time easier” and “To make this educational program a bridge to more education after I am released” were among the four most important factors. The only country where, “To make it easier to get a job after I am released” was *not* among the four most important factors was Finland. “To satisfy my desire to learn” ranked among the four most important reasons in Finland and Sweden.

Table 8.3. The four most strongly motivating factors for participating in prison educational activities, by country. Figures indicate per cent – ranking

Motivational factor	Denmark	Finland	Iceland	Norway	Sweden
To spend my time doing something sensible and useful	71–1	68–1	85–1	81–1	81–1
To be better able to cope with life after my release	62–2	67–2			
To learn about a subject	61–3	62–3		74–2	65–2
To satisfy my desire to learn		62–3			52–3
To make serving time easier			55–2		
To make this educational program a bridge to more education after I am released			55–2		
To make it easier to get a job after I am released	61–3		45–4	57–3	
To pass an exam or improve a previous grade				49–4	50–4
(N)	(580)	(812)	(20)	(546)	(301)

Only prisoners who were participating in educational activities were included.

Prisoners' evaluations of prison educational activities

Prisoners who were participating in prison educational activities were asked to evaluate these activities by stating “agree completely,” “agree somewhat,” “unsure,” “disagree somewhat,” and “disagree completely” in relation to twelve statements, with “unsure” as the midpoint. The percentages from these evaluations are presented in the country chapters. Below, “agree completely” has been converted to 5 and “disagree completely,” to 1. Table 8.4 presents the arithmetic averages based on these conversions. To simplify the table, only the lowest and highest averages for each country are given. The evaluations of prisoners in the other countries were between the extremes shown.

It may be seen in table 8.4 that prisoners who participated in educational activities were satisfied with the teaching. To the extent that there were country differences in this respect, Danish prisoners were the least satisfied, average score 3.4, and Norwegian prisoners were most satisfied, average score 3.9. The midpoint on this scale was 3. When evaluations of a certain statement are on both sides of the midpoint, this indicates less consensus among Nordic prisoners than about statements for which the averages for the countries are all on the same side of the midpoint. This lack of consensus applies to the statements: “The requirements are not tough enough,” “Some subjects are too difficult,” “The teaching is suited to my needs,” and “The teachers have good ICT skills.”

Table 8.4. Prisoners' evaluations of educational activities

Evaluation of educational activities	1	2	3	4	5
I am satisfied with the teaching				D	N
The requirements are too tough		S	I		
The prison makes it possible to take an education			I	S	
The work load is just right				D	N
The requirements are not tough enough		S	D		
Some subjects are too difficult		S	I		
Too many lectures		I	F		
The teaching is suited to my needs			I	S	
Too much group work		S	I		
Inadequate access to ICT equipment				S	F
The teachers have good ICT skills			I	F	
I am pleased with the educational program				F	N

The range is 1 = disagree completely to 5 = agree completely, with 3 = unsure. The letters stand for the prisoners of the countries with the lowest and highest average scores on this scale, other countries were between these extremes.

For five of the twelve statements, the prisoners in Iceland and Sweden accounted for the extremes at both ends of the same scale. Moreover, Iceland or Sweden was at one extreme of two other scales.

Reasons for not participating in prison educational activities

As stated in the section above, there are certain variations in the Nordic prison populations in terms of the prisoners who were not participating in educational activities. Generally, in all the Nordic countries in 2006 and 2007 (at the time of the survey) approximately two out of every three prisoners were *not* participating in any educational activity. In other words, at country level, there is no immediate correlation between the proportion of prisoners with no education at all, and the proportion who participate in educational activities while serving time. In that case, what reasons did the prisoners have for not participating? Table 8.5 gives an overview of this matter (When responding to this question, prisoners could state more than one reason, and thus the percentages in the table to not add up to 100%, but 100 minus the percent given for each reason

corresponds, in this table, to the percentage of prisoners who did *not* state that reason.).

Table 8.5. Reasons for *not* participating in prison educational activities. Only answered by prisoners who were not participating in any such activities. Several reasons could be given

Reasons for not participating in prison educational activities	Denmark	Finland	Iceland	Norway	Sweden
This prison does not offer any educational programs	Question not asked	11.9	18	20.7	19.2
This prison does not offer any educational programs suitable for me	33.1	26.7	9	17.1	Question not asked
I do not receive any information about educational possibilities	33.9	18.3	39	17.7	19.3
The conditions for school and studying in the prison are poor	16.7	10.0	27	9.4	14.1
I am not interested in getting an education in prison	21.4	15.4	14	11.4	23.7
I already have enough education	12.1	9.9	7	8.5	11.9
Education is not worth the effort	3.0	2.4	9	1.5	3.1
I believe that I have too many learning problems*	8.4	4.5	16	6.9	6,0/7.1*
Other reasons	21.7	26.1	56	19.5	40.0
(N)	(1,516)	(1,447)	(44)	(1,509)	(548)

* In Sweden a more specific reason was also offered: "I have reading and writing disabilities."

Between one out of every twelve (Finland) and one out of every five prisoners who was not participating in any educational activity stated a structural reason – that the prison they were in did not offer any educational programs. Denmark and Iceland had the largest proportion of prisoners who stated that they did not receive information about educational possibilities (33.9% and 39%). In Sweden and Denmark, more than every fifth prisoner who was not participating in any educational activities stated that he or she was not interested in getting an education in prison. It should be noted that Sweden had the largest proportion of prisoners who gave the unspecified answer "other reasons." Many prisoners have relatively short sentences, and most of them do not consider it worth the effort to start a program of education since they are in prison for such a short time. Many of those who stated "other reasons" specified this as their reason.

Problems related to prison educational activities

What problems do prisoners participating in educational activities experience, and is there variation in this respect from one Nordic country to the next? Prisoners were asked to take a stand on eight circumstances (nine for Sweden) that could create problems for them. Table 8.6 only accounts for the four that were ranked highest per country. Only prisoners who stated that they were participating in educational activities are included in these figures.

Table 8.6. The four largest causes of problems relating to prison educational activities. Prisoners could state more than one cause. In the table, only the four most important ones in each country are given. Only prisoners participating in educational activities. Per cent – ranking

Problem	Denmark	Finland	Iceland	Norway	Sweden
Inadequate access to ICT equipment	61–1	32–1	65–1	43–1	35–1
Prison security routines	28–4	9–4	35–4	34–2	28–2
Transfer while serving sentence	33–3	14–2		26–3	28–4
Inadequate access to literature	28–4	13–3	55–2		
Sentence served before course ends	28–4	9–4	40–3		
Disturbances in prison	36–2	9–4		22–4	
Own reading and writing or math difficulties			40–3		
Teacher shortage*					31–3*
(N)	(580)	(812)	(20)	(546)	(301)

* This question was only asked in the Swedish questionnaire.

A shortage of (or inadequate access to) ICT equipment was stated as the major cause of problems related to the educational activities by the prisoners in all five Nordic countries, with the highest figures for Iceland (65%) and Denmark (61%). After the consensus around this factor, there was great variation concerning the second through fourth factors and the number of problems stated. In Sweden, a relatively large proportion of the prisoners (nearly 30%) stated up to four causes of problems, while in Finland there was a great discrepancy between the proportion who stated inadequate access to ICT equipment, and all the other problems.

Thus inadequate access to ICT equipment was considered by far the greatest problem by prisoners in all five countries, although even here there was some variation in the proportion of prisoners who stated that this was a problem for them, the lowest percentage being given in Finland and the highest in Denmark and Iceland. In Denmark and Norway, and to

some extent in Finland as well, disturbances in prison were also experienced as a problem. It should also be noted that it was only in Iceland that the prisoner's own difficulties was one of the four main problems stated.

Learning disabilities and prison education

To what extent do the prisoners have literacy or numeracy difficulties, and what is the relationship between such difficulties and participation in prison educational activities?

Table 8.7. Percentages of prisoners who reported learning disabilities

Disability	Denmark	Finland	Iceland	Norway	Sweden
Reading and writing difficulties:					
No problems	70	77	70	63	65
Some problems	25	20	22	27	30
Serious problems	5	3	8	10	5
(N)	(1,516)	(1,447)	(44)	(1,509)	(548)
Mathematics difficulties:					
No problems	58	62	48	52	52
Some problems	36	29	38	36	37
Serious problems	7	9	14	12	11
(N)	(1,516)	(1,447)	(44)	(1,509)	(548)

Are there differences among prisoners in the five Nordic countries in this respect and, if so, what are they? The questions in this survey investigating learning disabilities were given self-report answers using quite a wide-meshed multiple choice: "no problems," "some problems," and "serious problems." There was one question about literacy difficulties, and another about numeracy difficulties. Table 8.7 shows the distributions in all five countries regarding both types of learning disabilities.

Between 63% (Iceland) and 77% (Finland) of the prisoners stated that they had no reading or writing difficulties. Similarly, the range for prisoners who stated that they had no mathematics difficulties spanned between 48% (Iceland) and 62% (Finland). With a slight national variations, just over every third prisoner stated "some" mathematics difficulties, and roughly every fourth prisoner that had "some" reading or writing difficulties. Did these self-rated opinions about learning difficulties, then, have

any correlation with prisoners' participation in educational activities, and what hypotheses can we establish on the basis of our findings?

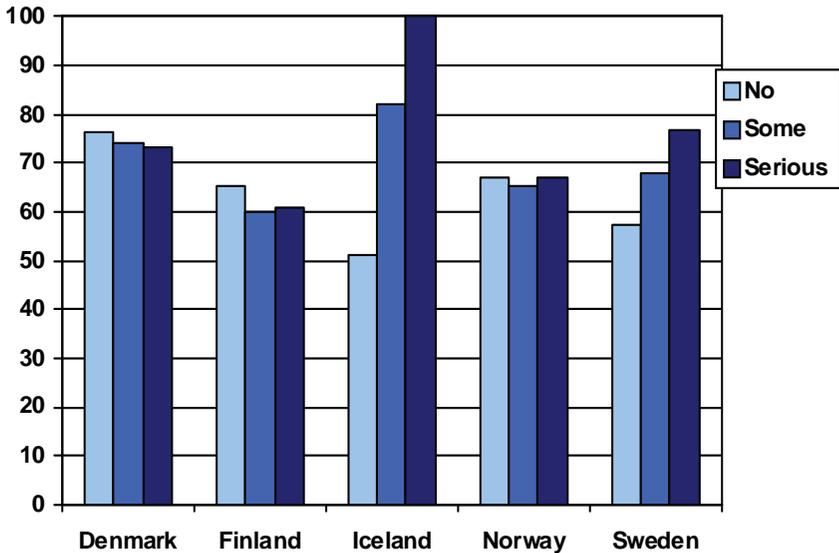


Figure 8.1. Percentages of prisoners who were not participating in educational activities in relation to self-reported reading or writing disabilities

Figures 8.1 and 8.2 address the question of whether prisoners who experience themselves as having learning disabilities try to do something about them while serving time by taking up an educational program they had either interrupted or dropped out of, or whether their disabilities continue to be an obstacle to them when deciding to participate in educational activities.

There were two main trends in the five Nordic countries when these questions were investigated in relation to prisoners. The first was that, for prisoners in Denmark, Finland, and Norway, literacy difficulties were not found to have a negative impact on the decision about participating in educational activities. In fact, a slightly larger proportion of prisoners who rated themselves as having *no* literacy disabilities chose *not* to participate in educational activities in Denmark and Finland than prisoners who rated themselves as having such problems. The other trend was found in Iceland and i Sweden, where literacy difficulties were found to have a slightly negative impact on the decision about participating in

educational activities. In Iceland, none of the prisoners who rated themselves as having literacy disabilities were participating in any prison educational activity; and more than four out of five fire who rated themselves as having some literacy disabilities had also decided not to participate, while half of the prisoners who stated that they had no literacy disabilities were participating in educational activities. This trend was the same, although slightly less clear, in Sweden. Prisoners with reading or writing disabilities participated less frequently in prison educational activities than others. Below, we examine the same issues with regard to self-reported mathematics difficulties, see figure 8.2.

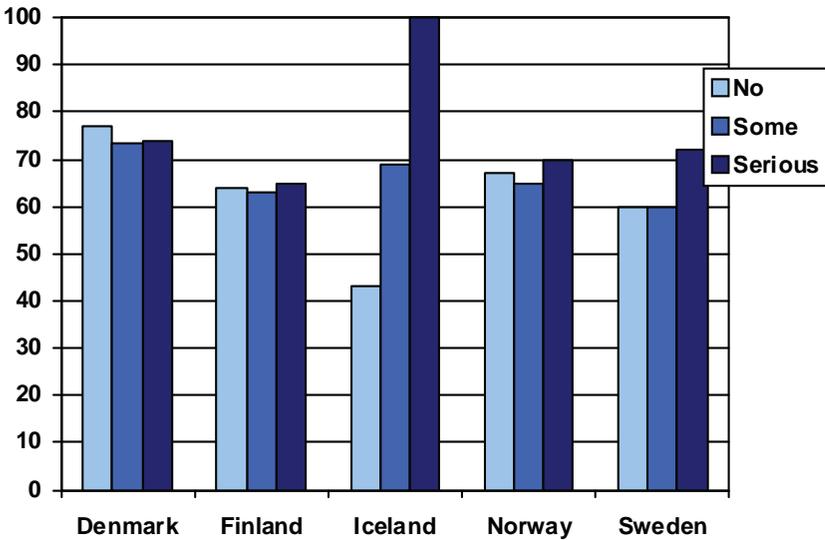


Figure 8.2. Percentages of prisoners who were not participating in educational activities in relation to self-reported mathematics disabilities.

In Sweden, the trend is very similar to that found for literacy disabilities, although somewhat weaker again, while in Iceland it is the same as for literacy difficulties. Prisoners who rated themselves as having mathematics disabilities in Denmark, Finland, and Norway did not seem to participate less, or not much less, in educational activities than prisoners who rated themselves as *not* having any mathematics difficulties.

ICT skills and prison educational activities

We saw above that prisoners stated that greater access to ICT equipment would make it easier for them to participate in prison educational activities. There may be various types of access problems, two of which are most relevant (and not mutually exclusive) in the prison education context: shortage of ICT equipment for a prisoner to use in the learning context and inadequate access to ICT equipment because the prisoner has not learned to use it. Prisoners may either need to learn to use ICT equipment as a tool for study purposes or they may be experienced ICT users but need to learn new ways of using it in the learning situation.

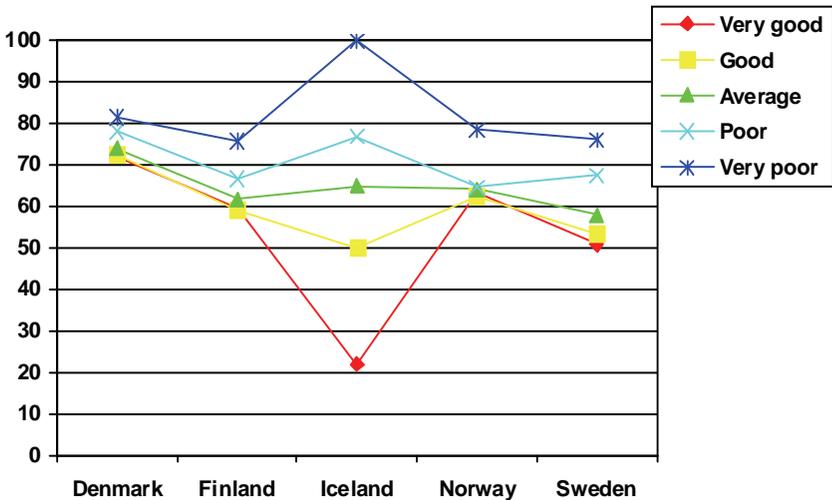


Figure 8.3. Percentages of prisoners not participating in educational activities in relation to self-rated ICT skills.

In light of the prisoners' perceptions of inadequate access to ICT equipment as a problem in the education situation, we investigated whether their self-rated ICT skills were correlated to their participation in educational activities. Did prisoners with poor ICT skills participate less often in educational activities than prisoners with good ICT skills? This question is addressed in figure 8.3.

Once again, prisoners in Iceland deviated somewhat from those in the other countries. In Iceland there was a relatively clear statistical correlation between self-reported ICT skills and participation in prison educa-

tional activities. None of the prisoners who rated their ICT skills as very poor were participating, and 20% of those who rated their ICT skills as very good were not participating. (Because there are so few prisoners in Iceland, a small number of individuals makes a big statistical difference.) The trend in the other Nordic countries was similar but much weaker. It should also be added that the proportion of prisoners in Norway with good or very good ICT skills who were not participating in educational activities was somewhat higher than the corresponding figure for prisoners who rated their ICT skills as average.

Sentence length, age, and prison educational activities

To what extent is participation in prison educational activities affected by prisoners' sentence lengths and ages? Although the questionnaire did not contain a specific question concerning the impact of sentence length on their decision about whether or not to participate in prison educational activities, under the heading "other circumstances" a number of prisoners volunteered the information that their sentence length was too short for them to feel it was worth beginning a course of education.

Prisoners' ages can impact in various respects. If we assume that the youngest prisoners also have the least completed education, it might be relevant to hypothesize that the youngest prisoners would also be the most active participants in educational activities. In contrast, however, it might be the case that criminality was precisely what causes prisoners to interrupt their education, which case they might want to resume it later in life. If so, then not only the youngest prisoners ought to be found to be participating in prison educational activities. Another factor is that older prisoners might feel it is too late for them to resume an educational program they had interrupted earlier in life. Previous studies indicate only small variations among the Nordic countries in terms of the prisoners' ages and educational activities. As hypothesized above, the oldest prisoners (over the age of 44) demonstrated the lowest participation in prison educational activities in all five countries, but in the younger age groups, age did not seem to be a decisive factor. And participation was *not* greatest among the youngest prisoners.

In contrast, with regard to sentence length, as can be seen quite clearly in figure 8.4, the shorter the sentence the lower the rate of participation in prison educational activities (NB: In Iceland the number of prisoners in the group with the shortest sentence length was extremely small, so this figure should be interpreted with caution.) If, therefore, we disregard Iceland in this context, we find a clearly significant statistical correlation between prisoners' sentence lengths and whether or not they were participating in prison educational activities. The differences between prisoners serving the shortest and longest sentences were smallest in Denmark and largest in Norway and Sweden.

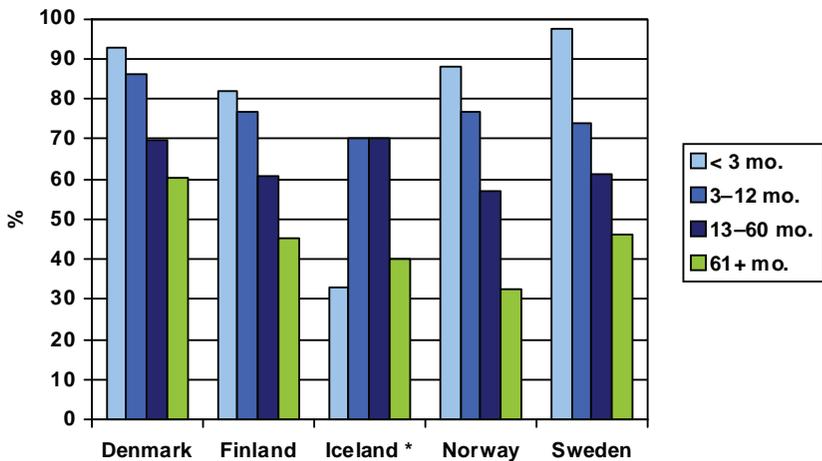


Figure 8.4. Percentages* not participating in prison educational activities by sentence length.

* In Iceland the number of prisoners in the group with the shortest sentence length was extremely small.

Prisoners' educational preferences

When considering how to study prisoners' educational preferences, we determined that of the plethora of possible ways of determining them, two were probably most relevant: Firstly to determine the proportion of *all* prisoners who, at the time of the study, stated that they would have liked to participate in some prison educational activity, irrespective of whether or not they were doing so. Secondly, to determine the proportion of pris-

oners who were *not* participating in any prison educational activity (irrespective of their reason for not doing so) who stated that they would have liked to participate. One possible complication in interpreting the findings is that prisoners who were already participating in educational activities may have meant that they were hoping to complete their activities, in light of the uncertainty of prisoners' life situations.

Another complication is the diversity of preferences expressed in the prisoners' answers, owing to the fact that respondents were able to choose several preferences without having to rank them. It is also unclear whether they were expressing preferences regarding educational options in prison or even after release. Many prisoners stated more than one preference, some of which were undoubtedly more realistic than others. For instance, there were prisoners who had never completed compulsory level education and who stated that their choice would be to do this, but the same prisoners could also state that they would like to go on to (and complete) upper secondary education. However, in order to do this they would have to complete their compulsory level education first, and therefore the extent to which it would be realistic for them to complete upper secondary education is contingent on their ability to complete the compulsory level.

In the chapter on Sweden, the percentage of prisoners who were *not* participating in prison educational activities but who would have liked to be was presented. In the chapter on Finland, the actual percentages of prisoners who would have liked to choose the various educational options offered are given, as well as a table showing the highest educational level the respondents stated that they wished to achieve. The Norwegian chapter presents figures both in relation to all the respondents and only to those who stated that they would have liked to participate in prison educational activities.

Table 8.8. Prisoners' educational preferences. The percentages* are based on all the respondents. Figures in per cent

Educational preference	Denmark	Finland	Iceland	Norway	Sweden
Do not want prison education	27.0	33.8	18	24.6	15.8
1. Adult education or compulsory school level	16.7	2.6	0	3.3	8.4
2a. Vocational, professional training	25.4	39.5#	35	35.3#	25.6
2b Upper secondary, preparatory courses for higher ed.	9.2		22		16.7
3. University or higher ed.	-	8.6	9	14.1	14.3
No response given	20.5	10.1	9	21.4	22.2
(N)	(2,405)	(2,269)	(77)	(2,255)	(892)

* These figures do not add up to 100% because some courses (language courses and ICT courses, for example) have been excluded. Some prisoners may also have expressed several preferences. # For Finland and Norway, 2a and 2b were combined.

To enable comparison, in table 8.8 we have based our percentages on all the respondents to the questionnaire. Prisoners who were already participating in educational activities may very well have expressed a preference for both more and later educational options.

As can be seen in table 8.8, Sweden had the lowest proportion of all respondents who stated that they did not want (more) education. One out of every three prisoners in Finland stated that they did not want (more) education. One out of every six prisoners in Denmark stated that they wanted some kind of adult or compulsory level education; Denmark thus had the largest proportion of prisoners who stated that they preferred educational activities at the lowest level. The table also shows that there was variation in the proportions stating that they would like educational activities at level two, i.e. general or vocational upper secondary level education and preparatory courses for higher education, between one out of every three (Denmark) and more than half (Iceland). The largest proportions of prisoners who expressed a preference for higher education were in Norway and in Sweden, every seventh prisoner, while in the other three countries the levels were much lower and quite similar, approximately one out of every ten prisoners.

Our main finding in this respect was a systematic correlation between *participation* in prison educational activities and sentence length. Below, we investigated whether there was also a correlation between educational preferences and sentence length, and whether prisoners serving short

sentences less frequently expressed an interest in participating in (more) educational activities than prisoner serving longer sentences.

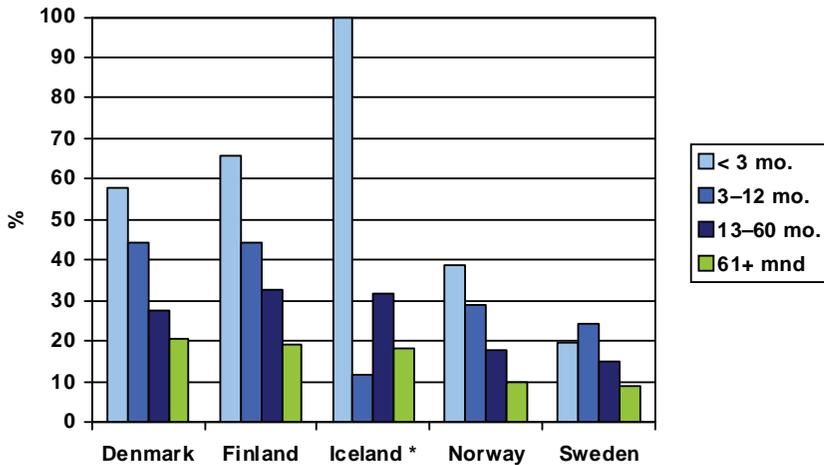


Figure 8.5. Percentages* of prisoners who stated that they did not want (more) education by length of sentence

* There were very few prisoners in Iceland in the group with the shortest sentence length.

Figure 8.5 describes this relationship. (There were very few prisoners in Iceland in the group with the shortest sentence length at the time of the study.) It can be seen that in Denmark, Finland, and Norway, the shorter the sentence, the more prisoners stated that they did not want any education. This correlation was less clear in Sweden, where the least interest in participating in educational activities was in the group with the next shortest sentence length. The main finding was also less strong in Sweden than in Denmark and Finland.

Summary

There are some variations between the Nordic countries with regard to prisoners' educational backgrounds, participation in prison educational activities, and motivation to continue their education. According to the five national studies, between 7% and 16% of all prisoners have no completed educational level at all. Between one fourth and just under half of the prisoners, depending on country, had only completed compulsory

level education. As regards higher education, the variation between the countries was great, ranging between one out of every eight and one out of every twenty prisoners having completed higher education.

There was very little difference between the Nordic countries in terms of the percentage of prisoners who were *not* participating in prison educational activities: the figure at the time of the study was two out of three in all five countries. Denmark and Finland had the largest proportions who were participating in educational activities at the lowest level (compulsory level education), Denmark had the lowest proportion studying at level two (general or vocational upper secondary level), while in the other countries on average every fifth prisoner was studying at this level. Between one and three per cent of the prisoners were doing higher education in prison.

In all the countries, the reason given as most important for studying in prison was to make sensible use of one's time. Prisoners who were participating in educational activities were basically satisfied with the teaching, although prisoners in all five countries stressed that inadequate access to ICT equipment created problems for them in relation to their educational activities.

On average, every third to fourth prisoner stated that he or she had reading or writing difficulties, and slightly more that they had difficulties with mathematics. However, these facts played little if any role in relation to whether or not the individual decided to participate in prison educational activities. In contrast, there appeared to be something of a consensus to the effect that short sentences hardly made it worth the trouble of becoming involved in prison educational activities.

In chapter nine we go on to discuss in greater detail the implications of these findings and what can best be done to facilitate effective learning for prisoners.

9. Discussion

by Terje Manger and Ole-Johan Eikeland

In chapter one of this report we demonstrated research-based support for the convictions that prison education reduces recidivism (see, for example, Steurer and Smith, 2003) and that education benefits society more generally in reducing the socioeconomic costs associated with criminality (see, for example, Lochner and Moretti, 2004). This makes it essential to provide the necessary education for people at risk of becoming involved in criminality, and to ensure that individuals already in prison have educational options that can contribute to a new start for them after their release.

It is clear from the previous chapters that in the Nordic countries today there is great similarity among the prison populations in terms of both educational background and participation in prison educational activities, but that there are also some differences. Denmark, Iceland and Sweden have larger proportions of prisoners with no completed level of education than Finland and Norway. In Sweden, this may partly be explained by the fact that of the five Nordic countries Sweden had the one with the largest percentage of prisoners who were citizens of other countries. Sweden and Norway were also the countries with relatively large proportions of prisoners who had studied courses or been awarded degrees from universities or institutes of higher education. It may be difficult to compare the findings from these studies with those of other countries, to the extent that such studies exist, not least because of cultural differences. However, the overall picture from our studies is that prisoners in Nordic prisons have stronger educational backgrounds than has been shown demonstrated for prisoners in the United States (Gathright, 1999; Tewksbury and Stengel, 2006). The general educational level is also relatively high in the Nordic

countries. One Norwegian study found that the educational background of prisoners was on a par with that of the population as a whole between 1980 and 1985 (Eikeland and Manger, 2004). Had we compared with an age equivalent group (the average age of the prison populations in the five Nordic countries being between 31 and 36), we would have found that the educational background of prisoners was even lower compared with the general population.

Seen in terms of educational backgrounds, our studies from the Nordic countries demonstrate that the prisoners are a more heterogeneous group than the media and public opinion tend to indicate. In several of the countries there are roughly the same proportions of prisoners who have completed no educational level at all and who have university degrees. This is probably a reflection of the trend presented in chapter one – the distinction between prisoners who displayed major, complex problems from early childhood, and prisoners whose antisocial behavior did not become evident until after an ostensibly normal childhood (see, for example. Moffitt, Caspi, Harrington and Milne, 2002; Granic and Patterson, 2006). One characteristic of the former group is dropping out of school, while the latter group has often completed upper secondary education or has good potential for doing so. According to Natsuaki, Ge, and Wenk (2008), graduating from upper secondary school may initiate a positive spiral of life opportunities, maximizing the probability of good prospects on the labor market and a stable adult life.

Between 94% and 95% of all Nordic prisoners are men; this is probably a reflection of the fact that far more boys than girls have major, complex problems as early as in childhood. As discussed in chapter one, these "early starters" often have neurobiological problems in combination with vulnerability from growing up in difficult environments. In a study of more than 15,000 individuals in Stockholm from childhood through the age of thirty, Kratzer and Hodgins (1999) demonstrated how early starters committed far more crimes of a much more varied nature than other groups of convicted prisoners. Today, there is sufficient research-based evidence concerning children who show early, serious behavioral problems to be certain that these children and their families require early interventions to prevent development of antisocial behavior and criminality.

Very similar proportions (around one third) of the prisoners in all the Nordic countries participate in prison educational activities. This partici-

pation decreases with shorter sentence lengths. These conclusions apply, in practice, to all five Nordic countries. Prisoners with short sentences, for instance three to four months, seem to believe that it is impossible to begin (and complete) a course of education within the short period incarceration. There may be various reasons for this. One is that prisoners consider education something that takes, and has to take a (very) long time. A second reason is that they probably feel that if they are going to become involved in education, they will need quite a long time to make progress, a third that the educational system itself contributes to giving prisoners the impression that education is time-consuming, or at least takes longer than a short prison sentence allows. A fourth probable explanation is that prisoners are not (have not been) informed concerning the fact that some educational activities are actually short-term, and might give them a foot in the door to the educational system that would enable them to get started. A fifth explanation could be that prisoners experience a barrier between education as offered behind bars and the education offered in the community, that might be a continuation of education they begin in prison. It is extremely unfortunate, particularly for young prisoners, who often get short sentences, that this becomes an obstacle to schooling.

Skaalvik, Finbak, and Pettersen (2005) describe one possible goal as being to offer a range of meaningful activities for prisoners serving short sentences, which would give them a sense of mastery, improves their self-esteem, and makes them feel that able to complete an educational program. Such short courses might include vocational certificate courses or labor market preparatory courses, driver's education, training in construction equipment operation, preparatory courses for a trade, such as welding, preparatory courses for certain longer educational programs, or courses that might help former dropouts resume and complete an education. Refresher courses are another possibility. In Denmark, for example, preparatory and general adult education are both offered, as well as short courses that give prisoners the necessary basic skills in reading or mathematics that they may lack.

It is paradoxical that prisoners considered a short sentence as an impediment to getting started with studies, particularly for prisoners whose lack of education or interrupted education have paved the way into a life of crime. It is absurd that a short sentence, in itself a sign that the crime

committed is not of the most serious nature prevents these prisoners from the potential positive experience of a successful educational activity and its possible positive effects in impeding the return to a life of criminality. Reversing the question, we could ask why it seems to be necessary for someone to bring a long prison sentence down upon oneself in order to have the opportunity to begin the education he or she so badly needs. The following anecdote has relevance in this respect:

When the researchers in the project group responsible for the Norwegian survey were in the Bergen prison to run a pilot questionnaire test with a group of prisoners, we were told something that cements the paradox mentioned above. One of the non-Norwegian prisoners had taken advantage of his incarceration to study. His release was pending, but he had not finished his educational program. He therefore applied to have his time behind bars extended so that he could complete his program, but his application was rejected. At the time, which was close to his release date, he could not see that there was any way he would be able to complete the program in the community. There was, of course, something funny about this story, as perceived both by the test group and the researchers, and yet for the prisoner in question, the situation was deadly serious. This became eminently clear when he asked the research group for help in resolving his very uncertain situation. And being in prison was not the cause of his uncertainty.

As described above, approximately one out of every ten prisoners stated that they were not participating in educational activities because they felt that they already had enough education. This figure was quite similar in all five Nordic countries. The variation was greater with regard to the percentages who stated that they were not interested in getting an education. This answer was given, for example, by nearly one out of four prisoners in Sweden and one out of five in Denmark. The background to this lack of interest may lie in the prisoners' negative previous experience of the education system, or in their not having received enough information from the prison authorities concerning prison educational options. Although the proportion of prisoners who stated their own learning disabilities as an impediment to studies was not terribly high, some underreporting in this respect must be anticipated, as well as awareness that the prisoners may have channeled their concern about their own disabilities into an expressed disinterest in getting an education. Other Nordic studies referred to in chapter one (Samuelsson, Gustavsson, Herkner, and Lund-

berg, 2000; Samuelsson, Herkner, and Lundberg, 2003), confirm underreporting in this respect. Whether or not there was underreporting in our study, however, there is still something telling about the lack of interest in getting an education expressed by the prisoners in relation to their motivation to decide whether to become involved in prison educational activities. If they are not aware of the potential positive ramifications, then this cannot contribute to making a prisoner decide to participate in educational activities.

In chapter eight we established that there was no immediate statistically significant correlation between prisoners' self-reported (and personally experienced) learning disabilities and their participation in prison educational activities in Denmark, Finland, or Norway. Prisoners who rated themselves as having difficulties with reading, writing or mathematics participated in educational activities to roughly the same extent as prisoners who stated that they had no such disabilities. Although this finding may be seen as support for the hypothesis that learning disabilities do not pose an obstacle to education, these very disabilities may have been a contributing factor to prisoners having dropped out of school earlier in life. The acknowledged importance of providing these prisoners with the educational follow up they need in prison may thus explain the fact that prisoners *with* learning disabilities participate more in prison educational activities than prisoners *without* learning disabilities. Statistics from one Norwegian study thus show that having literacy difficulties more often predicts the desire of prisoners to participate in upper secondary education than not having such difficulties, when other factors have been controlled for (Manger, Eikeland, Asbjørnsen, and Langelid, 2006). This may, in turn, imply that the very fact of being in prison may motivate prisoners with learning disabilities to take the opportunity to return to the classroom, when it is offered. Prior to ending up behind bars, and possibly precisely because of their learning disabilities, they may have refused other educational opportunities. (It should be emphasized that this finding was not present with regard to education at higher levels than upper secondary.)

It is also clear from chapter eight that prisoners participating in educational activities in Nordic prisons were basically satisfied with the teaching, although with slight variations among the countries. This is in accord with previous findings from Nordic studies (Claesson and Dahlgren,

2002; Lindberg, 2005) and from studies in the United States (Gee, 2006; Moeller, Day and Rivera, 2004). It was stressed by Diseth, Eikeland, Manger, and Hetland (2008), on the basis of their own findings, that the prison learning environment can become a source of motivation. According to this study, the prisoners' experience of learning environments impacts on their motivation, rather than vice versa. As also discussed in chapter eight, there are various circumstances that create problems for prisoners in relation to the educational activities in which they are participating. One such circumstance applied clearly in all five countries: to a large extent prisoners stated that inadequate access to ICT equipment was a serious problem in relation to their educational activities. This problem is partly related to prison security routines. ICT equipment is a tool for communication and information in most arenas of society today, including the criminal sphere. For this reason, many of the opinions of prisoners concerning ICT equipment ought to be seen as associated with problems created by prison security routines. However, it is clear from the responses that prisoners participating in prison educational activities also felt that they had to compete with each other for access to the existing ICT equipment, because there was too little of it. Many educational programs today have come to require more or less full-time use of a computer both as a tool for information retrieval and as a means of teacher-student communication, as well as a way of turning in assignments, etc. Without access to a computer, students are more or less denied access to the arena where education takes place. These developments in society as a whole and in the sphere of education mean that if computer access remains inadequate or is regarded as a security risk in relation to prison education, prisoners will be unable to participate in many courses and programs. Also, there are courses with mandatory attendance. This means that for some courses, independent study in prison is no longer realistic option.

With some variation from country, a clear majority of the prisoners in the Nordic countries stated that they would have liked to participate in prison educational activities. This is in line with findings from previous Nordic studies (such as Kunnari and Peltonen, 1993, as cited in Nordic Council of Ministers, 2005; KVS, 1996). In all five countries, prisoners who were already participating in educational activities stated that their main motivation for doing so was to make constructive use of their time

while serving a sentence. The second most frequently-cited reason in several of the countries was to improve one's prospects on the labor market after release. Using the terminology of Gambetta (1987) and according to the findings from Ireland of Costelloe (2003), both these factors can be classified "pull factors": a desire to acquire knowledge or prepare for life after release once one had wound up in prison. Both our Danish and Norwegian studies indicated that types of motivation that can be categorized as ways of preparing for life after release were the main motivational factors for the prisoners. Another type of factor that can motivate prisoners to become involved in educational activities can be a desire to avoid or alleviate something otherwise experienced as very negative, such as prison routines and other unpleasant aspects of life behind bars (Parson and Langenback, 1993). Prisoners motivated by such factors may choose educational activities so as to pass the time in prison more easily, or to avoid being assigned to manual labor. These "push factors" were found to be less motivating than pull factors such as concerns about the future for prisoners already involved in educational activities in Nordic prisons.

Practical implications

International conventions to which the Nordic countries are parties ensure the rights to education of all groups in society. Today, every prison has a highly diverse population, which must be taken into account when educational activities are being organized. It is a matter of concern that so many young prisoners have a need for compulsory and upper secondary level education. The prison and probation services and the educational authorities must make regular surveys of prison populations, identify needs, and see to it that the educational activities offered are kept in line with these needs. Many young prisoners serve short sentences, with the consequent paradox pointed out above, that the very fact of a short sentence becomes an impediment to participation in educational activities. A short sentence easily becomes a stepping stone to further criminality, which makes it particularly important to see to it that this kind of short sentence does not imply a disruption of young prisoners' education. We recommend that all the Nordic countries become forcefully engaged in ensuring that there are

prison educational activities available and suitable to all, irrespective of sentence length. This will require good collaboration with the school systems from which prisoners, particularly young prisoners, have come and to which they will be returning. One possible approach would be to evaluate the skills of every prisoner serving a short sentence and then draw up a plan that would also motivate him or her to continue in education after release.

Our findings from the part of the study applying to prisoners who were *not* participating in educational activities indicate that there were a number of factors preventing them from becoming involved. The main obstacles were of an institutional nature: too little variety in the educational options involved and too little information about educational activities were the two main factors stated by these prisoners. A need for more vocational and professionally oriented courses was clearly identified. This also indicates that at the time of the study was in good accord between the educational preferences of Nordic prisoners and the demands of the Nordic labor markets.

The proportion of Nordic prisoners qualified to study at higher education level is on the rise. It must therefore be made easier for prisoners to study at university level. In the Nordic registration (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2005), a number of joint Nordic recommendations were made with a view to improving access to higher education for prisoners, including facilitating day release privileges and opportunities for independent study at higher education level. The country reports presented here make it clear that there is an acute need for follow up of these recommendations. Higher education reforms in some of the Nordic countries have actually made it more difficult to study at university level if one is unable to attend in person.

Nordic prisoners' self-ratings of their own skills indicated that between one third and one quarter have reading and writing difficulties, and nearly half have difficulties with mathematics. There are also clear indications that the kind of questionnaire we used gives underreports of such disabilities (Asbjørnsen, Jones, and Manger, 2008; Samuelsson et al., 2000). It is very important that prisoners' disabilities be diagnosed, registered, and dealt with, so that time spent in prison can be used to improve reading, writing and mathematics skills. Research indicates that reading disabilities are often primarily environmentally and experienced based.

This highlights the importance of prisons offering help with these problems and good library services and access to literature.

Our findings in the parts of the survey that applied only to prisoners who were participating in educational activities indicate that these prisoners were basically satisfied with their courses. However, in comparison with individuals studying in the community, they felt that their inadequate access to ICT equipment put them at a competitive disadvantage. The Nordic countries must quickly solve the conflict between the essential prison security routines and the needs of prisoners involved in educational activities to use ICT equipment in their studies. This is of special importance for those prisoners whose studies are dependent on regular contact with educational institutions in the community.

Responses from prisoners participating in educational activities also indicated that their main motivational factors were related to gaining better control over the lives they would be living after release. It is essential to maintain this motivation once prisoners have finished serving their sentences and are back in society. Ravneberg (2005) highlighted the demotivating effects of concerns about an uncertain future, full of problems, and the idea of getting an education only to find oneself unemployed. Prison schools should therefore participate in mandatory cooperation with various authorities in the community (including the educational, labor market, and social welfare authorities) with a view to facilitating the transition between prison and the community, helping individual prisoners to draw up and implement their plans for the future.

Continuing research needs

The five Nordic country reports provide a quantitative survey of some aspects of the educational backgrounds of prisoners and their current situations in relation to prison educational activities, as well as the factors motivating those prisoners who were involved in educational activities, and all the respondents' educational preferences. It is important that there be follow up studies, both quantitative and qualitative, that investigate the specific problem areas identified in greater detail. On the basis of the present report, it becomes clear that there is a need, for example, for more detailed studies of education and motivating factors concerning education

for prisoners serving short sentences, particularly young ones. More knowledge is also needed concerning the many foreign citizens serving time in Nordic prisons, whose numbers are on the rise. The learning disabilities of the respondents to this study were registered by self-rating. We were aware that this would only provide a superficial picture, but it was the option available to us. It is now clear that Nordic studies need to be made in which the skills and disabilities of prisoners in relation to the basic school skills, reading, writing and mathematics, are examined through testing. ICT access in prison also stood out as an area where more research efforts would be useful. Similarly, more thorough studies of the learning environment of specific prisons is needed, as well as studies of the transition from prison educational activities to continued education after release.

For future research on prison education, a long-term objective would be to establish research environments where teams composed of senior researchers and research recruits worked together. PhD students who could work with some continuity over a three-to-four year period would be ideal. They would be able to do in-depth work on some of the most significant problem areas, and both raise the status and deepen the knowledge of prison studies as a research field. For this to happen, there would have to be external funding to the universities for this type of commissioned research, but the benefits to both the prison and probation services and prison education would also be great.

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Brief survey of the Estonian prison system and prison education

by Krister Tüülinen, adviser Ministry of Justice

Brief description of the prison system

In Estonia, the Ministry of Justice is responsible for the prison service. Estonia has five closed prisons and one open. The total prison population at the time of writing is 2,567 and 114 prisoners are women. Thirteen percent of the prison population is foreigners.

Number of short-term and long-term sentenced prisoners

	< 3 months	3 to 12 months	1 to 5 years	> 5 years
1 Feb. 2008	26	326	1,316	1,018

Brief description of prison education

The Ministry of Education and Research is responsible for educational activities in Estonian prisons, and the Ministry of Justice is responsible for the educational environments in prisons. Prison education in the republic of Estonia is regulated in legislation including the Education Act, the Imprisonment Act, and others. All prisoners have a right to education by law.

Approximately 30% of the prison population participates in prison educational activities (number of pupils per day in relation to number of inmates per day) Education is available to prisoners who have not completed compulsory level education or who do not have work experience

(these prisoners get vocational activities). Prisoners who have completed compulsory education but who they do not have work at the moment also participate in educational activities at upper secondary level or vocational level.

The Estonian school system consists of basic education (compulsory and upper secondary), supplementary education, vocational training, and higher education, but only outside of prison.

Prisoners do not have access to the Internet for their educational activities, because the Internet is prohibited in Estonian prisons, to prevent prisoners from committing crimes via the Internet, and because it is against security rules.

Prisoners who study Estonian language are eligible for an allowance: 30% when they begin the course and rest (70%) when their test results are positive (51% of the answers must be correct) The total sum is 1080 Estonian kroons. The minimum monthly (?) salary in Estonia today is 4350 kroons. In future the allowance system may also be applicable to vocational and basic education students

Prisoners are only paid when they are working or studying Estonian. It is difficult to compare remuneration for working with the allowance for learning Estonian, because we offer different jobs for prisoners at different rates of pay.

Students who have learning disabilities can study a simplified curriculum.

Primary and upper secondary education is same for all prisoners who participate in educational activities, while prisoners in vocational activities choose a specialization. Every student has a study plan

In terms of literacy difficulties it should be clarified that in Estonian prisons there are inmates who speak Russian only, and they have problems with Estonian. There are also a few inmates who cannot read and write at all.

Some inmates have numeracy difficulties, especially prisoners whose educational backgrounds are very weak. We offer ICT training courses to all prisoners who participate in educational activities.

With regard to cooperation between school and working activities in prison, prisoners who have completed vocational school they have more opportunity to get work in prison, because they have a specialization, and prisoners participating in vocational activities can get practical work ex-

perience on the shop floor in the industrial workshops of the Estonian prisons.

The ambition of prison educational activities in terms methods and content is to be as close as possible to the best adult education available in the community and to constantly be seeking ways to link prisoners with the community and to interaction between prison and community as fully and constructively as possible.