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## Turning prisons into a place for learning: Conditions for providing adult education in correctional settings

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### Abstract

*This study investigates the organisation of adult education in Swedish prisons and examines how education is integrated into a highly regimented environment. Using documents as empirical data, the study applies template analysis and the theory of practice architecture to explore the conditions shaping education in prison. The findings show that security concerns impede students' learning opportunities and development of digital literacy. In addition, due to a lack of resources, prisoners' right to education becomes conditioned, with some individuals excluded from participation. At the same time, efforts are made to turn the prison into an educational space through design choices, employment of non-prison staff, and language use. Furthermore, participation in education has recently been linked to the opportunity for parole. This has the potential to increase participation and completion rates through coercion, thus increasingly embedding education into the system of control and sanctions that is inherent in prisons.*

**Keywords:** adult education, prison education, correctional education, system of control, theory of practice architecture

### Introduction

Within many prison systems, education has been seen as an important part of prisoners' rehabilitation (Behan, 2014; Halimi et al., 2017; Novek, 2019; Roth et al., 2017), and the importance of prison education has been acknowledged by international organisations such as the United Nations and the Council of Europe, with calls to encourage prisoners to partake in educational programmes (Council of Europe, 2006; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2015). Education, among other rehabilitative measures, can facilitate reintegration into society; lead to better prerequisites for living a responsible,

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law-abiding life; and improve employment opportunities. Previous research has shown that the provision of education in prisons has had a positive impact on the individual, as it can improve self-esteem, self-efficacy, and well-being. Through participating in education, a sense of purpose and agency can be achieved, stimulating new ways of thinking and mitigating the negative effects of imprisonment (Behan, 2014; Bhatti, 2010; Bovill & Anderson, 2020; Brosens et al., 2020; Costelloe, 2003; Panitsides & Moussiou, 2019; Roth et al., 2017; Tewksbury & Stengel, 2006). Providing education (and other activities) can lead to safer and better functioning daily operations in prison, as prisoners are occupied with other activities and are therefore less likely to engage in misconduct (Brosens et al., 2015, 2020; Halimi et al., 2017). The value of providing education is also discussed from a financial perspective, as reduced recidivism leads to lower public costs associated with criminality or welfare allowances (Behan, 2014; Brosens et al., 2015; Roth et al., 2016, 2017; Tewksbury & Stengel, 2006).

How education in correctional settings is organised and what educational programmes are offered varies greatly across countries. Previous studies have explored the provision of, for example, basic, academic, vocational, and art education (Brosens et al., 2015; Costelloe & Warner, 2014; Jones et al., 2013; Lukacova et al., 2018; Miner-Romanoff, 2016; Tewksbury & Stengel, 2006; Watts, 2010) with the majority of studies conducted in the English-speaking world (Berglund et al., 2025). To the best of available knowledge, there is no study that has examined the conditions for providing adult education in Swedish prisons. This article aims at addressing this gap by exploring how education is integrated in correctional settings in Sweden. Adult education at large is deeply embedded in Swedish society, and is central to educational and labour-market policies (Andersson & Muhrman, 2024; Laginder et al., 2013; Rubenson, 1997, 2002). Nordic prisons have also been praised internationally for their humane treatment of prisoners (Scharff Smith & Ugelvik, 2017). The provision of education in prison thus takes its departure in a seemingly favourable societal context that nonetheless is framed by processes and security concerns that are inherent to the prison as an institution across the world. In addition, prisoners often have a brief educational background and struggle with low academic self-efficacy or concentration difficulties, which require more attention and support (Bhatti, 2010; Delaere et al., 2013; Halimi et al., 2017; Jones et al., 2013; Skolinspektionen, 2012). This study investigates how these challenges and tensions pertaining to prisons are met and translated into the provision of adult education in correctional settings.

The study's aim is therefore to examine the organisation of adult education within Swedish prisons and explore how education is integrated into such a strictly regimented environment. Prisons are not primarily designed for the provision of education, and are faced with unique conditions not found in the wider society. In order to turn prisons into an educational setting for adults, different arrangements have to be established and existing ones altered. This article addresses the following research questions:

1. How do regulations and conditions within prisons shape opportunities and challenges for the provision of education?
2. What kinds of arrangements are established to turn prisons into a place for adult education?

In order to answer these questions, documents outlining regulations and conditions for providing education in prison are analysed by drawing on the theory of practice architecture (Edwards-Groves & Grootenboer, 2015; Grootenboer & Edwards-Groves, 2023; Kemmis et al., 2014; Mahon et al., 2017). The article is structured as follows: first,

a short description of municipal adult education and its implementation in Swedish prisons is provided. The next section presents the theory of practice architecture and how it is used to examine the enabling and constraining arrangements framing the provision of education in prison. This is followed by a section on methods. After that, the findings are presented and then discussed in relation to both the research questions and the tension that can arise when integrating education into a setting that primarily serves correctional rather than pedagogical purposes. The article ends with a conclusion offering suggestions for further research.

## Municipal adult education in Swedish prisons

Municipal adult education (*komvux*) is available, free of charge, to all residents of Sweden who are over the age of (in most cases) 20. They can take compulsory, upper-secondary, and vocational courses as well as Swedish for non-native speakers at one of the schools in their municipality. In 2023, around 363000 students were enrolled in municipal adult education, which was approximately the same number of students enrolled in upper secondary school (Skolverket, 2024a, 2024b). Prisoners have the opportunity to study municipal adult education while incarcerated through learning centres that each prison, regardless of its security class, runs on its premises. The courses and the diploma that is earned are equivalent to those earned in the wider society.

Teaching in prisons is conducted in one-on-one format, with every student following their own individual study plan. The teachers are employed at one prison facility but can teach both in person and in distance mode, meaning that a student can be serving their sentence at another facility than where the teacher is located. In order for a prisoner to be able to study at the learning centre, an assessment needs to be made, resulting in a decision of whether or not they are eligible for studies (Kriminalvården, 2005, 2007b; KVFS 2011:1). In 2024, 3566 prisoners had started some kind of education, which corresponds to 20% of all prisoners (Kriminalvården, 2025).

## Theoretical framework

The study draws on the theory of practice architecture (Edwards-Groves & Grootenboer, 2015; Grootenboer & Edwards-Groves, 2023; Kemmis et al., 2014; Mahon et al., 2017), which will be used as a lens to examine regulations and conditions that shape the provision of education. The theory has previously been applied in examining educational practices in various contexts, such as early childhood education (Salamon et al., 2016), English education (Edwards-Groves & Grootenboer, 2015), professional learning (Kemmis et al., 2014) and study circles for migrants (Pastuhov et al., 2021). According to the available knowledge, however, the theory of practice architecture has not yet been applied in examining education in correctional settings. Using this theory as a lens allows for an exploration of the tensions, challenges, and possibilities that arise from prisons being the setting for educational practices. The provision of education in prison has to comply with and adapt to arrangements pertaining to the prison at large, while new arrangements simultaneously need to be created in order to make it possible for prisoners to study while incarcerated. Together, the different types of arrangements are termed *practice architecture* and hold a particular practice in place. The practice is therefore enmeshed in these arrangements and cannot exist without them (Kemmis et al., 2014). Within the theory, three different types of arrangements can be identified that together shape the sayings, doings, and relating:

1. **Cultural-discursive arrangements** prefigure the sayings and are located in the semantic space through the medium of language. They affect what can be said and thought in relation to describing, interpreting, performing, or justifying the provision of education in prison.
2. **Material-economic arrangements** shape the doings and take place in the physical and material world. These arrangements precondition where, when, and how prisoners and teachers can meet and engage in education. They are dependent on the resources distributed to pedagogical staff, equipment, and material, as well as the prison layout and schedules.
3. **Social-political arrangements** shape how people can relate to one another and non-human objects in the social space linked to power and solidarity (Kemmis et al., 2014). The meeting between teacher and student, usually taking place outside prisons, is inserted into the dynamic of the prison context with its traditionally strict distinction between us and them (Drake, 2011).

These arrangements enable and constrain how a practice can unfold, and are specific to the site where it takes place (Grootenboer & Edwards-Groves, 2023; Kemmis et al., 2014). Applying the theory of practice architecture in this study makes it possible to identify those specific cultural-discursive, material-economic, and social-political arrangements that precondition the provision of education in prisons. It provides a deeper understanding of how educational and correctional arrangements are entangled and affect the provision of education in the semantic, physical and material, and social space.

## Method

In this study, relevant documents regarding the organisation of education in prison were collected and analysed using template analysis (Brooks et al., 2015; King, 2012). The document selection was informed by the website of the Swedish Prison and Probation Service (*Kriminalvården*), where laws, ordinances, and regulations as well as external and internal steering documents are listed. For this study, the Act on Imprisonment (SFS 2010:610), Ordinance on Prison (SFS 2010:2010), Ordinance on Adult Education (SFS 2011:1108), Curriculum for Municipal Adult Education (SKOLFS, 2022), and appropriation directions (*regleringsbrev*) were identified as relevant for answering the research questions. Additional documents, collected by contacting the Prison and Probation Service, included handbooks on education, memos, official decisions, and newspaper articles. These, as well as publicly available annual reports, were included in the analysis. The chosen documents describe education in prison in a detailed way, thus providing insight into the conditions shaping education from different angles.

The chosen timeframe was 2007 to 2023 as the first uniform guidelines on adult education for the Prison and Probation Service in the form of a handbook were issued in 2007. This was also the year that was dedicated to implementing learning centres in all prisons, which resemble how adult education is organised today in terms of, for example, the sole organiser in charge of municipal adult education in prison, approval to assess, and supervision by the National Agency for Education.

The documents were analysed following a template analysis within a qualitative paradigm (Braun & Clarke, 2019; King, 2012). The analysis was conducted in an iterative manner. In the beginning, the material was read through, and relevant parts to the research questions were highlighted, such as descriptions of how education in prison is organised, challenges that prisons have faced when providing education, and any shifts pertaining to

education that have occurred. In the case of the annual reports, the focus was on the Introduction of the Director General in order to get a more general overview of each year; then, more specifically, the chapter on occupational activities in prison was analysed. The material was coded and preliminary themes were generated and, in turn, were organised in a template structure. The following is an example of an initial template:

## **1. Prisons as a place for adult education**

### **1.1 Being different from prison**

1.1.1 Teachers' wearing civilian clothing

### **1.2 Being different from school**

1.2.1 Language use

1.2.2 Interior design

The initial templates and themes were successively refined by analysing more documents, going through the codes and themes repeatedly, and testing out theoretical ideas in order to further analyse the material. New ways of organising the data emerged during the writing process, which led to further modifications such as moving codes to different themes and renaming the themes to capture their meaning in a more poignant way. For example, the theme '1.2.1 Language use' as shown in the example of the initial template above was refined to the final theme '1.2.1 Becoming Part of the Mainstream Adult Education Landscape', which is presented in the *Findings* section of this article. The renaming of the theme deepens it by not only capturing the language and discourse surrounding education in prison but also emphasising the purpose and consequences of the language used. Here, the purpose is to become part of the mainstream adult education landscape and discourse, which, in turn, is intended to impact the actors and the practice. The final themes that were generated through iteratively refining the templates and themes are presented in the following *Findings* section, where the theory of practice architecture serves as a theoretical perspective to illuminate how arrangements exist in different realms that together both enable and constrain practice.

## **Findings**

In the following, five themes are presented: *Becoming part of the mainstream adult education landscape*, *Overarching security concerns*, *Lost rights and opportunities*, *Increased steering*, and *Turning prisons into a place for adult learning*. Within these themes, the cultural-discursive, material-economic, and social-political arrangements that shape the provision of education are explored. The arrangements are analysed in terms of how they affect the ways one can speak about education in prison, what form education can take in practice, and how teachers and students can relate to each other.

The quotes presented below were originally in Swedish and have been translated by the author.

### ***Becoming part of the mainstream adult education landscape***

The adult education provided in prisons is described as follows in the 2007 handbook on education: 'The activities should, as far as possible, mimic the adult education available in the wider society. Adult education in prison should therefore not be made "prison-specific"' (Kriminalvården, 2007c, p. 6; author's translation). Despite taking place in prison, the education provided should be similar to that found outside prison. Adult

education reaches out to those who are physically separated from other citizens; a fact, however, which should not affect the educational form and content. The similarity of municipal adult education provided within and outside prisons is also marked by repealing the Ordinance on Education in Prison (SFS 2007:152) and replacing it with the Ordinance on Municipal Adult Education (SFS 2011:1108), thus including education that takes place in prison in the discourse on adult education in general. This arrangement enables education in prison and the involved actors to strengthen their position and present themselves as an integral part of the adult education landscape in Sweden.

Education in prison has also been linked to lifelong learning. In the preface of the 2007 handbook on education it is stated: 'Education must be provided in ways that make it possible to study no matter where one is located. Therefore, education must be made available to people throughout their lives, regardless of their life situation' (Kriminalvården, 2007c, p. 2; author's translation). The need to continuously learn – regardless of where one is located physically, how old one is or what kind of situation one is in – is emphasised. Consequently, education in prison has to be made available to prisoners. Placing education in prison in the context of lifelong learning carries with it the opportunity for prisoners to participate, but simultaneously implies a responsibility to do so. It is now possible, and even required, to participate in education even in a difficult life situation, which imprisonment often is. The emphasis on the responsible *adult* learner can also be found in the 2011 handbook on education, which stresses the importance of distinguishing education in prison from school for children and teenagers. Different language should be used when talking about education in prison, as certain terms are deemed inappropriate for describing, performing, interpreting, or justifying the educational practice taking place (Kemmis et al., 2014). Instead of using the word 'skola [school]', the term 'lärcentrum [learning centre]' should be used (Kriminalvården, 2011b, 2018b) and the term *elev* is exchanged for the term *studerande*:

Student: Prisoners enrolled in adult education within the Prison and Probation Service. The term is used in everyday work (instead of the legal term *elev* found in laws and regulations etc.) to emphasise that studying as an adult differs from studying in compulsory school. (Kriminalvården, 2018b, p. 13; author's translation)

Both terms *elev* and *studerande* describe someone who is studying. In Swedish, the term *elev* is more commonly associated with children in compulsory school rather than adults. However, in official documents such as the Curriculum for Municipal Adult Education, adult students are also referred to as *elev* as it is the official legal term. While the provision of education in the Prison and Probation Service is steered by regulations related to municipal adult education, they have made the decision to avoid the term *elev* in their everyday practices. Instead, they use the term *studerande* when talking about education and their students in order to emphasise that the students are adult learners. Embedding these terms in the official handbook on education establishes a shared language and creates an image of who the students are, what demands can be made, and how to interact with them. This cultural-discursive arrangement shapes the sayings (and thinkings) in relation to education of those involved in the practice, which, in turn, can affect the doings. For example, prisoners may be more motivated to start studying: as many have previously had negative school experiences, the use of different terminology may mitigate their aversion to education (Kriminalvården, 2011b). Simultaneously, teachers might also potentially adopt different ways of thinking and acting because of the established shared language for describing the practice and its participants.

## ***Overarching security concerns***

The material arrangements in prison for providing education fall under the overarching objective of maintaining security. Security issues have to be considered, and are typically not a part of other educational practices in the same way. In other educational practices, security issues may concern keeping others out of the school rather than making sure that the students themselves are restricted in reaching out to the outside world. Security concerns in prisons affect both the educational practices within the learning centres and logistical operations surrounding the education that pose significant challenges, especially in high-security prisons (Kriminalvården, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2024). Moving prisoners to and from the learning centre can be difficult, as prison officers have to accompany students in the higher-security classes (Kriminalvården, 2012, 2013). Additionally, some prisoners have to be separated from each other as they cannot attend the learning centre simultaneously. As a result, some students have fewer hours to study at the learning centre and the number of students per study session has been reduced, thus not utilising the entire capacity of the learning centre (Kriminalvården, 2024). The material arrangements based on security concerns limit how students can access places for learning, i.e. the learning centre, where they can study, progress in their studies, and meet with their teacher. Here, the prison context clashes with the stated requirements in the Curriculum for Municipal Adult Education regarding flexibility: ‘Flexibility should always be aimed for in the provision of education. This includes the location of the education, time, pace of study, mode of study and forms of learning’ (SKOLFS, 2022, p. 2; author's translation). The aim of flexibility, as stated in the Curriculum, and the way the prison can translate its elements into the prison context are restricted. The provision of education has to be adapted to the necessary internal routines, which are not directly linked to the education itself but rather to security and logistics. This, in turn, is also closely connected to the staff that are available to oversee the prisoners. The security issue has been exacerbated by the growing number of prisoners in recent years:

Occupancy rates in prisons and jails have been very high throughout the year [...] Providing meaningful activities to prisoners is crucial to maintaining security, especially in a high occupancy situation. At the same time, providing occupational activities to all prisoners is a growing challenge. (Kriminalvården, 2020, p. 1; author's translation)

The importance of occupational activities is emphasised in relation to both rehabilitation and its importance for maintaining security in the prison day-to-day. In order to meet the educational needs of prisoners, student intake needs to increase alongside the growing population. This can prove challenging, as it would entail the recruitment of more teachers on top of the already existing difficulty in recruiting staff (Kriminalvården, 2013, 2018a, 2019a, 2024) as well as creating more physical spaces for teaching and learning (Kriminalvården, 2011a). To enable all prisoners to study, material-economic arrangements need to be established by allocating resources for staff and infrastructure in line with the growing number of prisoners.

## ***Lost rights and opportunities***

How incarcerated individuals can relate to education is enabled and constrained by social-political arrangements that exist within prisons. While education can be made obligatory (see also the theme *Increased Steering*), the *right* to education does not exist in the prison context: ‘There is no right to education for prisoners or individuals in jails. This differs



from the wider society, where the right to education through municipal adult education is more far-reaching' (Kriminalvården, 2018b, p. 14; author's translation). This suggests an imbalance between prisoners' obligations, responsibilities, and rights. While the individual is given the responsibility to engage in lifelong learning, whereby participation can be made obligatory for prisoners, prisoners themselves are not in a position to unconditionally exercise their right to education. For instance, those who want to study in order to avoid prison work should not take up study spots (Kriminalvården, 2008). The right to education becomes conditional, with individual reasonings mattering less, and choosing education as a 'lesser evil' compared to prison work is not a valid reason. The decision as to whether or not someone can participate in education is made by someone other than the affected individual. This reflects the power imbalance present in correctional settings, and is not found in the same way when it comes to municipal adult education outside prisons, where admission is much more permissive.

Due to limited resources, prisons prioritise individuals under age 21 and those without a high school diploma, which excludes those who do not fit the criteria or who want to study something other than municipal adult education. Previously, it was possible for prisoners to study at universities in distance mode. However, these studies were officially discontinued in 2019 as internet access has to be continuously monitored by staff, which is resource-intensive, in order to prevent illegitimate communication (Kriminalvården, 2010a, 2010b, 2011b, 2013, 2014a, 2019b). The lack of material-economic arrangements that enable students to study on university level also affects the relations as doings and relations 'hang together' (Kemmis et al., 2014). Students cannot relate to education taking place outside prisons and the people and objects associated with it. It can also result in social consequences (Mahon et al., 2017), where students are excluded from future possibilities such as employment in fields where higher education is required.

The prohibition of internet access affects not only the possibility for university studies but also how the provision of existing municipal adult education can unfold. The Curriculum for Municipal Adult Education states that all students 'should be given the opportunity to develop their ability to use digital technologies' (SKOLFS, 2022, p. 3; author's translation). Within Swedish prisons, however, prisoners are not allowed to use the internet or other digital tools in the same way as those outside prisons can. In their annual report for 2017, the Prison and Probation Service mentions the difficulty of living up to the requirements of the National Agency for Education:

This poses challenges for the Prison and Probation Service, since security issues have to be taken into account as prisoners are not allowed to communicate with others or the outside world through the internet. At the same time, learning requires training in how to search for information, evaluate sources, programming and more, as well as support in teaching through audio, visual and interactive exercises. (Kriminalvården, 2018a, p. 44; author's translation)

The material-economic arrangements that enable the development of digital literacy do not exist, as there is no access to the internet. This prevents students from learning to navigate and critically evaluate the broad range of information and sources available in the digital space. Prisoners thus become excluded from both the physical and digital spaces for learning. They become passive recipients of the learning opportunities and programmes which have been made available to them and which were deemed worthy of receiving resources. The possibility of offering a wider variety of educational opportunities has also been further restricted for the future. It can be seen that funding for education in prison has already decreased, as noted in the yearly allocations received by

the Prison and Probation Service in the appropriation directions. In the most recent appropriation directions, for 2024, a stronger focus on medical treatments can be found, while no specific provision is made in relation to education (Justitiedepartementet, 2022, 2023). The Prison and Probation Service is restricted in how it develops and makes available different forms of education, as the economic arrangements are simply not available.

### ***Increased steering***

Participation in occupational activities aimed at equipping prisoners with knowledge and skills to live a crime-free life is obligatory and embedded in legislation (SFS 2010:610; SFS 2010:2010), and in recent years recidivism prevention measures such as education have been linked to the opportunity for parole. This means that ‘prisoners can be directed to seek education’ (Kriminalvården, 2022, p. 48; author's translation), which stands in contrast to earlier handbooks on education that stress its voluntariness (Kriminalvården, 2007c, 2011b). If a prisoner is instructed to participate in education and decides not to, this will be noted. Drop-out, misbehaviour, as well as not making progress over time, will also be noted and taken into account when a holistic evaluation is made regarding parole (Kriminalvården, 2018b). While the parole decision is not made by the pedagogical staff, education nonetheless becomes increasingly embedded in the prison's punishment and reward system, whereby undesirable behaviour leads to sanctions. This, in turn, can affect how the pedagogical staff can relate to their students and their work. Their work and professional role have been connected to the prison, having become more than solely serving pedagogical aims but also acting as a tool for managing prisoners (Burns, 1992; Goffman, 1991). Teachers' decisions and evaluations can lead to far-reaching consequences beyond the educational context. However, the link between parole and participation is also ascribed pedagogical value:

The purpose of the routines [...] is to support the prisoner in completing what they have started. It can support the prisoner in understanding the purpose of the education and of the study plan, as well as the goal to be achieved with the studies. It clarifies that there are rules for being at the learning centre. (Kriminalvården, 2018b, p. 27; author's translation)

Supporting learning, helping students to understand the purpose of the studies, and increasing completion rates can now be reached not only through pedagogical expertise among staff but also through the link between participation and parole. This link, as social-political arrangement, shapes individuals' doings and relatings and affects prisoners' decision-making since not participating can have negative effects on their parole. Prisoners may participate in education without true interest but rather solely for the purpose of avoiding having their parole deferred, which can make teaching more difficult. On the other hand, teachers are provided with more time to support the students' learning, as students are unwilling to drop out due to fear of deferred parole. The social-political arrangement, therefore, has both constraining and enabling effects that alter relationships between pedagogical staff and prisoners as well as how individuals relate to themselves and the educational activities.

### ***Turning prisons into a place for adult learning***

While education has become increasingly embedded in the prison's system of sanctions, and security concerns overshadow the provision of education, the learning centre itself

aims to create conditions supporting learning through the design of the physical space: ‘Study spaces should be designed as a pleasant, inspiring and functional environment. A study space should not be furnished like a traditional, old-fashioned classroom. On the contrary, the less classroom-like it is in furnishing and appearance, the better’ (Kriminalvården, 2007c, p. 14; author's translation). And: ‘The learning centre is a physical environment for study, designed as an adult workplace where students have access to support from teachers, learning materials, computers, contact with subject teachers located at different prisons and with study and career counsellors’ (Kriminalvården, 2011b, p. 16; author's translation). It is important for the learning centre to look like an adult workplace and not a traditional school classroom, as many prisoners have had negative experiences in the traditional school environment (Kriminalvården, 2011b). Through the physical design of the learning centre, the Prison and Probation Service creates adult learners who are dedicated to formal education. The learning centre seeks to impose on participants an identity and conception of self that is built right into the social arrangements of said organisation (Burns, 1992; Goffman, 1991). In this case, the material arrangements of the prison, together with the cultural-discursive arrangements discussed previously, prefigure practice and work towards the same goal – which is to create a responsible adult learner.

In addition to the material arrangements of the learning centre aimed at shaping students’ doings, the teachers’ clothing also constitutes a central aspect of turning the prison into a place for adult learning by influencing social relations. The Prison and Probation Service has made the decision that teachers working in prison will not wear uniforms. This decision is justified as follows: ‘Professional roles are clearly outlined in relation to other colleagues and provide the opportunity to give the learning centre the character of a municipal learning centre rather than an “institutional school”’ (Kriminalvården, 2007a, p. 1; author's translation). In contrast to prison officers who wear uniforms, teachers wear their own clothes. This civilian clothing symbolises their distinct role in prison and reinforces their role as educators rather than enforcers. Teachers can more clearly be perceived as representatives of the municipal adult education rather than the prison, thus mitigating inherent power imbalances in correctional settings. Combined with the design of the learning centre, the civilian clothing shapes both doings and relating as it contributes to a more relaxed atmosphere where the learning centre feels like an educational space rather than a correctional one. This, in turn, can encourage student engagement and stimulate relationships based on more equal terms.

## Discussion

This article aims to answer two research questions: (1) how regulations and conditions within prisons shape opportunities and challenges for the provision of education, and (2) what kinds of arrangements are established to turn prisons into a place for adult education. In relation to the first question, the analysis shows that the provision of education is subordinate to the more overarching regulations of prisons, namely security concerns, that have to be considered. The arrangements that hold security in place extensively affect the doings related to education in the physical space (Grootenboer & Edwards-Groves, 2023; Kemmis et al., 2014). Within prisons, the doings connected to education are concentrated on the physical learning centre as it is here that students can use a computer with access to learning materials and the intranet. However, students cannot decide themselves when or how long they will study at the learning centre, as access is regulated. It is also scheduled based upon security considerations, as it has to be taken into account which prisoners cannot be at the learning centre simultaneously due to the potential for

conflict. The social space where people can relate to each other (Grootenboer & Edwards-Groves, 2023; Kemmis et al., 2014) also becomes connected to the physical space within prisons, as it is only at the learning centre that students have the possibility to meet with their teachers and build relationships with them.

No prisoners are allowed to access the internet in order to avoid illegitimate communication. This material-economic arrangement affects how the educational practice can unfold as students are prohibited from accessing the internet even for educational purposes. It excludes incarcerated students from the digital learning space and therefore also restricting their possibilities to relate to other people and non-human objects in the social space existing outside prisons. The provision of education is enmeshed in (Grootenboer & Edwards-Groves, 2023; Kemmis et al., 2014) and subordinate to the arrangements that hold security in place within prisons. This, however, impedes students' right to education and learning opportunities, such as developing digital literacy and studying at university level in distance mode. These learning opportunities can theoretically be made possible by changing the material-economic arrangements (Grootenboer & Edwards-Groves, 2023; Kemmis et al., 2014), for instance allocating more resources to staff who can supervise students' internet access or by providing necessary equipment.

The opportunity to work with other students, as stated in the Curriculum for Municipal Adult Education, is also made more difficult as the teaching is conducted one-on-one without opportunities for group work or similar methods. It can also be challenging to conduct laboratory work or practical exercises linked to vocational education (Kriminalvården, 2009). From another perspective, the arguably most favourable condition for students' learning in prison might be precisely that the provision takes place in one-on-one format. Prisoners, both in Sweden and internationally, often have a background that requires additional support in their studies (Bhatti, 2010; Delaere et al., 2013; Halimi et al., 2017; Jones et al., 2013; Kriminalvården, 2011a, 2012, 2013, 2014b; Skolinspektionen, 2012). The one-on-one format provides students with the opportunity to receive this type of individualised teaching and support from the teacher, which is not available to the same extent and form in municipal adult education outside prisons.

In prison, therefore, both exist: favourable cultural-discursive, material-economic, and social-political arrangements that promote learning, and arrangements upholding security that impede learning. However, while arrangements holding security in place limit prisoners' learning opportunities and how the education can unfold, the education cannot exist without it. Ignoring security considerations, for instance when placing students at the learning centre, could lead to potentially dangerous situations for both teachers and students. Ensuring prison security and upholding the safety of all involved actors when providing education is crucial. In that sense, relevant doings and relatings of education and security are 'harnessed together' (Mahon et al., 2017) in order to make the provision of education in prison possible, and to hold it in place (Kemmis et al., 2014).

Another regulation affecting the provision of education is the newly established link between participation in education and parole, which has created the unique possibility to increase participation and completion rates through coercion. While the right to education for all cannot be fulfilled within prisons due to limited resources, it is possible to utilise prisoners' fear of deferred parole to coerce them into participating. Education has become increasingly embedded in the system of control and sanctions that is inherent in prisons, and the supposedly free decision to participate in education has come to be steered by the ever-present question in prisons of when can I be released and what do I need to do to be released earlier (Burns, 1992; Goffman, 1991). While the link between participation in

education and parole is ascribed pedagogical value, such as persistence and understanding the purpose of education, it can be argued that it corrodes the integrity of education by making it more vulnerable to policy shifts, non-pedagogical objectives, and performance indicators (Behan, 2014). This link also draws attention to the question of participation in education from a broader perspective. The recruitment, and creating a demand for education, among those who are disinclined to participate in studies, still form one of the main issues in educational policy (Paldanius, 2002; Rubenson, 2002; Rubenson & Desjardins, 2009). This issue, in a sense, is solved by linking parole and participation and therefore creating an extrinsic motivation that is not found or needed in the wider society. It can be questioned, from a pedagogical perspective, to what extent meaningful learning can take place if the motivation to participate builds upon a fear of deferred parole. However, this link can also be viewed in a more positive light. While some students might start participating in education due to the wish to minimise the time spent in prison, it can turn into meaningful learning experiences where the value of education is discovered. The link, therefore, enables incarcerated students to see studies as a possible doing, which they might not have seen and experienced without the link. The positive experiences made when studying in prison can also become a platform for further learning (Costelloe, 2003), and enable individuals to participate in a wider range of practices and contexts when returning to society.

Aside from security concerns and limited resources that shape the provision of education and that, in many cases, impede learning opportunities, the Prison and Probation Service actively creates conditions for promoting learning. This leads to the second research question: What kinds of arrangements are established to turn prisons into a place for adult education? The analysis shows that turning correctional settings into places for adult education is made possible through the cultural-discursive, material-economic, and social-political arrangements that have been altered or established. The learning centre is not supposed to look like either a school for children and teenagers or a prison-specific school, but rather an adult workplace. While the learning centre is part of the prison and its conditions of confinement and institutional dynamics (Behan, 2014), it possesses a level of freedom to be designed in a way that serves its educational vision and purposes. In addition, the teachers do not wear a uniform but rather their own clothes, in contrast to prison officers, whose tasks are associated with security and control rather than pedagogy. According to Behan (2014), the employment of non-prison staff constitutes a distinguishing feature between the educational space and the rest of the prison. The teachers bring in pedagogical principles and lack the disciplinary rationale of prison officers, thus contributing to a different culture that can facilitate the establishment of a trusting teacher-student relationship.

Education in prison is also embedded in the lifelong learning discourse, ruled by the same steering documents and leading to the same diploma, thus positioned as equivalent to the education provided outside prisons. In addition, different terms such as *studerande* (a term to signify adult learners) and learning centre are used to distinguish adult education from traditional school. This is done with the hopes of promoting positive attitudes towards studying while incarcerated, as many prisoners have had negative experiences in the past. The chosen terms and the integration of adult education in prison into wider societal discourses and steering documents are cultural-discursive arrangements that promote specific views on education in prison. It shapes sayings and naturalises certain ways of thinking regarding what education should look like, as well as who the participants should be and how they should act. By establishing these sayings, it constrains alternative interpretations and ways of thinking. This, in turn, then also comes to constrain and enable subsequent doings and relatings. Sayings 'hang together' with

doings and relatings, giving the educational practice in prison its distinctiveness (Kemmis et al., 2014; Mahon et al., 2017; Salamon et al., 2016).

## Conclusion

The provision of education in correctional settings faces different logics and arrangements shaping sayings, doings, and relatings that create a dynamic, multi-layered space for teaching and learning. This article has outlined how the educational space within prisons is created and regulated, and how education is integrated in prisons in the context of Sweden. The elements signifying prison and the traditional school in the semantic, physical, and social space are reduced, for instance by using different language, design choices, and civilian clothing with the aim of establishing a space for adult education. However, arrangements upholding security take precedence and pose challenges to the provision of education as they constrain prisoners' right to education and their learning opportunities. This also raises the question of how equal educational opportunities can be provided to all prisoners without compromising security, and to what extent altering these arrangements is both feasible and desirable. How can educational purposes and aims be aligned with correctional necessities? How this tension plays out in prisons of different security classes is worth investigating further, in order to gain a more nuanced picture of the provision of education in correctional settings. Further research could also explore the experiences of pedagogical staff and incarcerated individuals in order to understand how the prison as an educational space is navigated. Including the voices of those who are involved in practice can provide valuable insights into how the arrangements, as identified in this study, are understood by the participants and how they affect actual practice.

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The author declares no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship or publication of this article.

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