Abstract: Adult Education has a long tradition in Sweden. Historically its primary task has been to provide elementary or secondary education to those who lack such qualifications. The Adult Learning is now aimed to meet the needs of people who as a result of changes in working life or for their own personal development seek further knowledge and skills. At European Union level and in the individual European countries, efforts are being made to ensure that young people and adults obtain the knowledge and skills they need to face new employment situations in a society in a state of constant change. It is clear that without these skills and this knowledge, individuals will be excluded from the ordinary educational system and the labor market. The prison population is a vulnerable group in this respect. In the Swedish prison system, it is the actual deprivation of liberty and not the prison operations that make up the punishment. Instead, the time in prison should be used to reduce the risk of reoffending by creating opportunities for the prisoner to abstain from a criminal life once out of prison. The role of prison is to prepare the prisoners for their return into the society and to counteract any adverse effects of the imprisonment. The imprisonment should from the outset prepare the prisoners for their release. The purpose of this paper has been to provide a brief description of education and training in Swedish prisons. The statistics are primarily from 2007 and 2008.

Key words: prison education, lifelong learning, adult education, client’s education, correctional education.

Introduction

Adult Education in Sweden has a long tradition. It is provided in many different forms and under many different auspices, ranging from municipal adult...
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education to labour market training programmes. One fundamental principle of the Swedish education system is that everybody must have access to equivalent education, regardless of sex, ethnic and social background and of place of residence. (Regeringskansliet, 2006/2007)

Prisoners have rights concerning education and training, and these rights are regulated in international conventions and recommendations. In prison by participating in work, education, criminality and abuse related programs, etc. on working hours, as well as in structured recreational activities, prisoners can satisfy their individual needs and prepare for their release. (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2009: 508). 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.

Educational activities are among the instruments at the disposal of society to increase the chances that prisoners, who have served time under the auspices of the Prison and Probation Service, will be able to create a life for themselves in society free from crime and drugs.

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. (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2009: 536)

If prisoners are to receive education and training on the same terms as the rest of society, then it is a basic prerequisite that their rights are clearly stipulated in the legislation. While the authorities in all of the Nordic countries actively advocate lifelong learning and skills enhancement for adults, there are studies who reveals that prisoners’ rights to education and training are less clearly defined. Legislation governing prison and probation services must also stipulate, therefore, that the only thing of which a prisoner is to be deprived is his or her liberty. In principle, all other rights must be upheld. (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2009: 536)

Considering the importance attached to lifelong learning and the attention paid to the need for continuous skills enhancement and to the increasingly multicultural nature of Nordic society, all these elements need to be acknowledged in prison education and training.

Prison education and training must reflect the ordinary educational system. Research shows that many prisoners have had inadequate schooling compared with the rest of the population. In terms, for example, of the right to edu-
cation and training, the humanitarian perspective, and rehabilitation, education and training is considered an investment in crime prevention in the sense that it will increase the number of prisoners who continue their education and find jobs after release. (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2009: 536)

A prison sentence is one of the ways in which society can react to undesirable actions. This reaction builds on the instruments available to the Prison and Probation Service to promote the reintegration of the prisoner into society. The educational authority is one of the national agencies meant to ensure that convicted prisoners receive the education to which they have a legal right. The prison and probation services have responsibility for coordinating the measures implemented by the various state authorities so that prisoners have well-organized, positive options. (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2009: 536)

There are 61 prisons from south to north in Sweden. Inmates are transferred between different prisons, so it is important to have a national education organization. The prisoners have to be able to continue their studies wherever they are. This has been achieved by establishing a Learning Centre at each prison in the country.

History

Prison education has taken different forms in the Swedish prison system over time. In the nineteenth century the clergy were very important, particularly in teaching reading skills. Ambitions in terms of thinking that prisoners should also learn a trade or vocational skills have also been documented.

In the early twentieth century prisoners were only allowed to write one letter per month, although there were also various privileged exceptions. The right of the prisoner to read was also generally extremely restricted. All a prisoner was actually permitted to study were the “cell books”, i.e. the New Testament, the hymnal and a devotional volume with the English equivalent title: In Solitary Hours. (Arnelund, 1994)

The general prison system was based on incarceration in individual cells. Prisoners were not meant to be in contact with each other, because they might influence one another negatively. Once the Comprehensive School Statue was put into effect in 1842, all prisoners under the age of 35 had to participate in educational activities. This made the correctional system quite pioneering in the area of adult education in Sweden. In accordance with the principle of single cell prisons, the classrooms were constructed so that prisoners sat and studied in little cubicles and were able to see the teacher but not their fellow prisoners. With the introduction of the 1916 Enforcement of Sentences Act and the reform of
sentence enforcement regulations in the 1940s, prisoners began to be allowed to spend time in each other’s company and to have more contact with the outside world. (Kriminalvårdens Historiska Utställning, 2010).

Folk high schools were the main arrangers of prison education from the 1950s through the mid-1970s. These institutes of adult education were considered the natural organization to take on the task of providing prisoners with further adult education. In practice, a folk high school in geographical proximity to the prison would set up a branch in the prison, using the school’s teaching staff to run courses corresponding to those offered by the folk high school in Swedish, mathematics, civics, English, and Swedish for immigrants. (Henning Loeb, 2006)

In the mid-1970s the Prison and Probation Service shifted responsibility for prison education to the community adult authorities at municipal level. This was also in accord with the new legislation that came into force after the 1974 reform of the correctional system, based on the principles of normalization and proximity. Therefore, the Prison and Probation Service began to cooperate with the National Agency for Education and the National Labor Market Board. General education in prison was to be organized under the auspices of the municipal adult education authorities and the national adult education establishments, and vocational education in prison was to be provided on equal terms as in the community, i.e. in the form of labor market training courses. (Henning Loeb, 2006)

Swedish legislation on the right to basic education for adults (corresponding to the first seven years of comprehensive school) did not distinguish between prisoners and other citizens.

Extensive decentralization in Sweden during the 1980s resulted in the abolition of funding at central level from the National Labor Market Board for special vocational courses in prisons. This responsibility now rested directly with the county labor market boards which, in turn, delegated it to the local employment services, so that the employment services nearest each prison took responsibility for that prison. (Henning Loeb, 2006)

Prison education until the early 1990s was an integral part of Swedish adult education policy, with its emphasis on special efforts for people who have had least access to society’s resources and adults with inadequate educational backgrounds. Until then, prisoners had the same rights to basic education as all other citizens. After funding was transferred from the Ministry of Education to the Ministry of Justice, this legal right no longer applied. The Adult Education Act stipulates that every inhabitant of a municipality who does not have the skills to be achieved in comprehensive school has the right to participate in basic adult education from the age of 20. However, it also states that “The stipulations in this
article do not apply to prisoners”. Thus, since 1992, prison education has been regulated by the Act on Correctional Treatment in Institutions. (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2009: 536)

A significant change in prison education took place in 2007, when the Ministry of Education issued a regulation “on education in correctional care in prisons” (SFS, 2007: 152). Pursuant to this regulation, it became possible for the Prison and Probation Service to offer educational activities corresponding to municipal adult education (SKOLFS, 1994: 2) as well as Swedish language courses for immigrants (SFS, 1994: 895). According to this legal clarification, such educational activities are to be directed by the headmaster, and must follow the relevant curricula for municipal adult education. The Prison and Probation Service is now authorized to issue grades, and is under the supervision of the National Agency for Education. The grades are not to reveal that the studies were pursued at a prison facility. (Henning Loeb, 2006)

Under the new system, prisoners, wherever in Sweden they are placed, are offered educational activities that are equivalent both from prison to prison and with municipal adult education as offered in the community. It should not be formally difficult for prisoners to continue studies begun at one facility after transfer to another facility or release. Studies are graded in the same way as at schools in the community. This means that prison education is now an integrated aspect of regular adult education. (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2009:508)

On the basis of the regulation issued by the Ministry of Education, the Prison and Probation Service has issued special guidelines for prison education. The guidelines describe the objectives and limitation of these educational activities and how they are to be run. (Prison and Probation Service, 2010)

There are more than twenty different education organizations working within the prison service system. Among these, we have adult education administered by local authorities, a couple of large educational companies, some adult education associations, some high-schools, some private educational companies and some “prison service teachers”. (Lindström & Leijonram, 2008)

Description of prison education

The Ministry of Justice is responsible for establishing prison policy, but has no authority to interfere in the daily work of the prisons and probation service centrally or regionally. This is, instead, the responsibility of the Swedish Prison and Probation Service under the supervision of the Swedish National Agency for Education. (Lindström & Leijonram, 2008). The main tasks of the Prison and
Probation Service are to implement prison and probation sentences, to supervise conditionally released persons, to implement instructions for community service, and to carry out pre-sentence investigations in criminal cases. The Prison and Probation Service is also responsible for activities at remand prisons and the transport service. (Prison and Probation Service, 2010)

Education is one piece of a larger puzzle where the various pieces are to be described in a sentence plan for each prisoner, adapted to his or her needs and providing a platform on the basis of which the individual will be better equipped to return to life in the community – “better out”.

Formal adult education under the auspices of the Prison an Probation Service is subject to the statute on prison education (Utbildningsdepartementet, 2007), and the Swedish National Agency for Education is the supervisory body. When applicable, prison educational activities follow the national instruments regulating the corresponding educational activities in the community. (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2009: 536)

Practically, all institutions have study facilities. The inmate can study subjects from compulsory basic school level and upper secondary school level. The inmate can also study at university through distance learning. Many inmates work and study at the same time. (Lindström & Leijonram, 2008)

Prison education is available, usually on a part-time basis, either theoretical or practical. The levels of prison education in Sweden are:
• Basic adult education (grades 1-9, primary and lower secondary levels, including Swedish for immigrants)
• Upper secondary education,
• Vocational education,
• University and other higher education,
• Other education (study circles, parenting courses, etc)

All these levels are offered as part of the structured activity programs in Swedish prisons. Thus “program” is an umbrella term covering various goal-oriented activities including: education (general and practical), work, criminality and abuse-related programs, library activities, creative activities, physical activities, and sports and social skills training. (Prison and Probation Service, 2010)

There is an agreement between the Prison and Probation Service and the Public Employment Service governing both the focus and scope of vocational training, including labor market skills training. University and higher education is offered as remote learning by all Swedish institutions of higher education, with individual tutoring given to the prisoners by the regular prison teachers, and
other forms of education such as study circles and informal education, such as courses on parenting. (Prison and Probation Service, 2010)

Because prison education is one aspect of the national educational policy ambitions concerning adult education, priority is given first and foremost to individuals who have not completed compulsory school or the equivalent form of adult education. Next, priority is determined on the basis of the same principles as for municipal adult education, meaning that individuals who:

- Wish to complete studies begun in accordance with an individual study plan,
- Need further education for a job they already have,
- Need education for planned or future professional choices

All participation in both general and practical education takes place on the basis of a sentence enforcement (treatment) plan, individual for each prisoner. Activities that are part of the agreed plan are to be arranged for thirty to forty hours per week. They are obligatory, and remuneration is paid for them. As this implies, prisoners must participate in organized activities. However, participation in educational activities is voluntary. To participate, prisoners must apply, and must be motivated. Work and educational activities are remunerated in accordance with a fixed hourly salary, although a piece-work/performance rate may be paid in addition for some types of work. (Prison and Probation Service, 2010)

_Education for prisoners_

Education is one aspect of what the Swedish Prison and Probation Service define as “program activities”. All prisoners are required to participate in activities, defined as work, schooling, “criminality and abuse related treatment programs” and other structured activities. The regional office and local prisons meet twice a year to discuss the organization and scope of required activities/activities offered by each prison. The decision of who participates in education is made in accordance with a structure through which each prisoner’s study objectives are clarified and the remote learning options determined when necessary. When this has been done, a meeting is held, at which the individual’s studies are examined in a larger context. (Prison and Probation Service, 2010)

In prison by participating in work, education, criminality and abuse related programs, etc. on working hours, as well as in structured recreational activities, prisoners can satisfy their individual needs and prepare for their release.
Since 2007, general education in prisons is taught by teachers employed by the Prison and Probation Service. The teachers are directly responsible to the regional prison education headmasters. Every region headmaster has the overall responsibility for all prison educational activities. These activities take place at “Learning Centers” modeled on those used in municipal adult education. This facilitates the transition to society for prisoners wishing to continue to study after release, who will feel familiar with both the environment and the organization of studies. The teachers at the prisons have experience of education and are qualified to teach at upper secondary level as well as at more basic levels. (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2009: 536)

The key tool to prison educational activities today is a computerized platform, “Nätcentrum”, (Netcenter), enabling every student, on the basis of his or her own individual study plan, to study the subjects he or she needs, in order to achieve the established goals. Remote studies give students access to subjects and teaching competence beyond what is available in the prison where they are serving time. The relevant teachers have responsibility for their own subjects and for giving grades, via the Net Center, telephone and postal contact. At their prison schools, students also have access to general educational support thanks to the teacher(s) working there. Students carry out their remote studies from the same facilities/at the same Learning Center where other studies are pursued. Remote study is a valuable option in that it increases access to education and contributes substantially to increased possibilities for individualization. Because it is not tied to any specific time or place, it is also a type of education that is less vulnerable in relation to transfers. (Kriminalvården, 2007)

Vocational training is usually carried out in conjunction with the local employment service, which also organizes and funds it. It takes the form of labor market courses, with the same quality demands as for courses in the community. The cooperation between the Prison and Probation Service and the employment services follows a central agreement with the Swedish National Public Employment Service stating that prisoners have the right to services on the same conditions as other users of the employment services. (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2009: 508)

Many prisoners have the problem of having had very little experience of the labor market. This absence of work experience contributes to their difficulties in getting and keeping a job, as does their often incomplete schooling. Even in times of economic boom, prisoners and former prisoners often need extra support in finding work. Advisory services, job application courses, preparatory and vocational education are examples of what the employment service can offer. (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2009: 536)
Educational activities are among the instruments at the disposal of society to increase the chances that prisoners, who have served time under the auspices of the Prison and Probation Service, will be able to create a life for themselves in society free from crime and drugs. The various objectives for prison education range from development of prisoner's competence, to helping them be better able to go on studying after release or getting a job, as well as developing informal competence, helping them take responsibility, take part in teamwork, and function in groups. To put it simply, formal competence can (in the long run) lead to a job, and informal competence can contribute to being able to keep that job and otherwise improve one's quality of life. (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2009: 536)

**Studies in the community with day release privileges**

One way of improving prisoners' chances of studying on equal terms is the use of day release privileges so that prisoners can leave the institution and participate in studies at a municipal Learning Center outside the Prison and Probation Service. Opportunities for studying with day release privileges are regulated in the instructions and general guidelines from the Prison and Probation Service concerning special measures for transition to the community, including day release, halfway houses, and “close supervision release”. (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2009: 536)

Prisoners on close supervision release live at home but with electronic shackle supervision, and participate in studies or work. The aim of close supervision release is to make it easier for the prisoner to have a job, and thus to develop a stable lifestyle after release. Prisoners with highest priority for close supervision release are those who do not have a place on the labor market and therefore require an introduction to working life. (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2009: 536)

**Internet based education – new opportunities**

Another way of integrating prisoners into the ordinary educational system is through access to modern technology, such as Internet-based education. More and more adult education in Sweden is offered as remote learning via the Internet. This makes it possible to tailor both the educational activities and study schedules to the needs of the individual. It is also well suited to the needs of prisoners, making them less dependent on being physically present in the right place at the right time. The use of Learning Centers in Sweden utilizes technology that makes it possible to provide prison education as remote learning. One of the
results is that the number of grades issued in a large number of subjects has risen. (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2009: 536)

All the teachers and local Learning Centers are under the umbrella of the National Learning Center, thus enabling all prisoners to study, wherever they are. Both the use of flexible learning and teachers in different prisons teaching different subjects provide support to the students in their learning processes. There are no classes, no lessons and no terms. The education is all individualized. If there is one single student somewhere in the country, wanting to study French or something, it is okay. He or she does not have to wait until there is a group of five students, for example. The students study at their own place; they can start at any time of the year and they all have their own individual study plan. When a student has started a course and then is transferred to another prison, he continues with the same teacher until the course is finished and the grade is taken. The teaching is totally individualized concerning, for example, courses, study place, and starting date, thanks to the Net Center. It is mainly used for communication between teachers and students when they are not in the same place. A separate virtual room is created for each student where he or she is connected to a remote teacher. Only one student and one teacher have access to each room, a forum for their communication. It is possible to attach a file, such as a Word document, to a message, as well as a video clip or a sound file. (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2009: 536)

The Net Center is an Intranet for prisoners and teachers. Although prison teachers have full access to the Internet, students can only use the Internet with permission and under supervision. They are, however, free to use all the Intranet services.

Statistics

In 2006, work programs comprised about 31% of all program activities, education formed 16%, service and maintenance programs comprised 25%, specialized rehabilitation and treatment programs, 5%, and other activities 21%.

This section describes the group of prisoners in Swedish prisons who participate in prison educational activities while serving their sentences. The majority of the prisoners’ (57%) were not participating in some prison educational activities, while 36% stated that they were participating in some prison educational activity. Seven per cent chose not to answer the question about participation. All data represented in this section is official statistics from the Swedish Prison and Probation Service.
**Educational level of prisoners**

The general educational level of prisoners is low, eleven per cent had no completed level of education at all in 2007 (Eriksson – Gustavsson and Samuelsson, 2007). Just fewer than 40% had completed no more education than compulsory level, while 34 % had completed a two to four year upper secondary school program. A total of 36 % stated that they were participating in some educational activity while serving their sentences.

**Prison educational activities**

The majority of educational activities, 40%, are at upper secondary level, followed by basic general education corresponding to nine-year compulsory school, 34%, and vocational training, 22%. Approximately 4% of the studies pursued are at university or higher education level. The nature of prison educational activities has changed markedly since the model using Learning Centers and remote studies was introduced in 2006–2007. Previously, prisoners could only choose courses the local teachers were qualified to teach, while now they can, in principle, be in contact with the teachers who have the qualifications that best suit their own needs, irrespective of where both student and teacher are located. For an individual student, this means an increase in the course options from, perhaps, five or six local courses to more than one hundred subjects.

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.

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 +. 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.
Study motivation

The motivation for prisoners to participate in educational activities mainly concerned the future after release: questions in the study posed to determine 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 (Eriksson-Gustavsson and Samuelson, 2007). 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. 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 studying nor encouragement from prison staff seem to have been important factors in deciding to study.

Reasons for not participating in prison educational activities

The main reasons given for not participating in prison educational activities were that the prison did not offer any such activities, or that there were no activities on offer suited to the needs of the prisoner, for instance vocational training. 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.

Conclusions

In the European Union as a whole and in individual European countries, authorities focus on providing young people and adults with the qualifications and skills enhancement they require to be able to perform the new tasks in a society in constant change. Individuals unable to utilize these opportunities for skills enhancement will find them marginalized from general educational and the labor market. In this context, prison populations are vulnerable groups.

It is important to organize the education for each prisoner on the basis of what he or she knows and has mastered. This is the starting point from which it is possible to give each prisoner a long-term chance of having his or her educational needs satisfied. Education is offered for the benefit of the prisoner, for his or her own personal development, as well being one aspect of the general effort of creat-
ing a better platform to stand on after release from prison – hopefully to a life free from criminality and drugs.

Today, the prison population is approx. 500 inmates less than in 1992. This change is mainly a result of the use of intensive supervision with electronic monitoring and community service. Those alternatives are possible for persons who are sentenced to just a few months, when we had this category in prison some years ago they were almost never eligible for any education because of the short time.

Today, every prison has a highly diverse population, which must be taken into account when educational activities are being organized. Every year more and more young people with a former upper secondary education come into the prison system. They may have forgotten a lot, some things they may have never learnt, but with longer and longer sentences they have plenty of time to do something about it. They may need to refresh their memory and do some parts again, but they definitely do not belong in the basic education classrooms. If you are working with classroom teaching in the traditional way, you often start a course at the beginning of the term and finish it at the end. However, the high turnover of prisoners in most Swedish prisons affects the prison education. You may well have ten pupils in a group with the intention to learn, for example Spanish, but at the end of the term you will probably hot have more than three of four pupils left – the rest having been transferred to other units or prisons, released of found something else to do.

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 and can easily become 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. 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.

The prison education offered today does not satisfactorily correspond to prisoners’ educational needs. Good cooperation between the prison and probation services and other authorities is one of the key starting points for satisfying prisoners’ educational needs.

Increased investments in prison education would probably be of added value for society as a whole. From a socioeconomic point of view it would undoubtedly be beneficial to invest more in prison education. However, education
in prison in order to be effective must first of all meet the needs of prisoners and, secondly, ensure continuity of the learning process and the possibility of participation of all prisoners. The big challenge of course is to overcome all difficulties which entails in the place of detention.

References


Obrazovanje iza rešetaka: švedski primer


Ključne reči: obrazovanje u zatvoru, doživotno učenje, obrazovanje odraslih, obuka klijenata, obrazovanje u popravnom domu

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