Exploring Discourses on Prison Education

A comparative analysis of prison education policies of the UK, Norway and Ireland

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Abstract

Prisoners constitute one of the most marginalized groups of society and prison education as a field remains under-researched and under-theorized (Szifris et al., 2018). Regarding European policy documentation it “has been surprisingly invisible” (Czerniawski, 2016, p. 202). This thesis seeks to contribute to the field of prison education policy research. It critically examines prison education documents of the UK, Norway and Ireland. The theoretical framework draws from critical theory, critical discourse analysis (CDA), critical pedagogy and critical adult education as well as neoliberalism in education. CDA serves hereby both as theory and method that allows us to uncover the different ideologies and assumptions underlying the documents.

The research suggests that the policy document of the UK follows a neoliberal and narrow approach to education where the value of education is exhausted by the fact that it can fill workplace shortages. Further, prisoners are portrayed one-sided with being an offender as the main characteristic. On the other hand, Norway and Ireland represent prisoners as persons with different backgrounds, needs and feelings. Both reflect notions of critical pedagogy and critical adult education thus emphasizing the importance of fostering critical thinking through education and education for personal development. Further, it stresses the alleviating function of education in prison. However, in the Norwegian document the language remains unassertive when it comes to the applicability of the right to education to foreign prisoners in Norwegian prisons. The Irish document leaves unclear from which perspective their objectives and concepts in education are considered. Additionally, the thesis also critically discusses the need for a wide curriculum in prison, perceptions of self-responsibility and problematizes the over-reliance on measurement in education.

Key words: prison education, policy, critical pedagogy, critical adult education, neoliberalism, critical discourse analysis, United Kingdom, Norway, Ireland
# Table of Contents

Chapter 1 .......................................................................................................................... 1  
1.1 Introduction....................................................................................................................... 1  
1.2 Aims and Research questions .......................................................................................... 2  
1.3 Structure of the Thesis ..................................................................................................... 3  
1.4 Previous Research and Background Information .......................................................... 3  
1.4.1 Prison Education Rules (CoE) ..................................................................................... 5  
1.4.2 Education in prison (CoE) .......................................................................................... 6  
1.5 Key concepts ................................................................................................................... 9  
1.5.1 Prison ........................................................................................................................ 9  
1.5.2 Punishment ............................................................................................................... 10  
1.5.3 Rehabilitation ........................................................................................................ 11  
1.5.4 Education and Training ........................................................................................... 11  
1.5.5 Prison Education ..................................................................................................... 12  

Chapter 2 ............................................................................................................................ 14  
Theoretical framework.......................................................................................................... 14  
2.1 Critical Theory .............................................................................................................. 14  
2.2 Critical Pedagogy ......................................................................................................... 15  
2.3 Critical Adult Education .............................................................................................. 16  
2.3.1 Mezirow’s Theory of Transformative Learning ....................................................... 17  
2.4 Neoliberalism in Education .......................................................................................... 18  
2.5 Combining Theories – from Critical Theory to CDA .................................................. 20  

Chapter 3 ............................................................................................................................ 22  
Methodological framework................................................................................................. 22  
3.1 Ontological and Epistemological Assumptions .............................................................. 22  
3.2 Significance for the Field of International and Comparative Education .................... 23  
3.3 Research Design and Strategy ..................................................................................... 24  
3.3.1 Data Collection ...................................................................................................... 25  
3.4 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) ............................................................................... 25  
3.4.1 Concepts of critique, power and ideology .............................................................. 27  
3.5 Analytical procedure .................................................................................................... 28  
3.6 Limitations and Delimitations ..................................................................................... 30  
3.7 Criteria of trustworthiness ........................................................................................... 32
3.8 Ethical considerations ........................................................................................................ 33

Chapter 4 ................................................................................................................................. 34
Findings ........................................................................................................................................ 34
4.1 “Education and Employment Strategy” (UK) ........................................................................ 34
   4.1.1 Characterizing prisoners and people leaving prison one-sided .................................. 35
   4.1.2 Legitimizing educational efforts .................................................................................... 37
   4.1.3 Ensuring a successful rehabilitation ............................................................................... 42
   4.1.4 Brief summary ............................................................................................................. 44
4.2 Findings “Education and Training in the Correctional Services” (Norway) ...................... 45
   4.2.1 Painting a humane and multidimensional portrayal of the prisoner .......................... 45
   4.2.2 Legitimizing educational efforts .................................................................................... 48
   4.2.3 Education as right .......................................................................................................... 50
   4.2.4 Responding to individual needs of the prisoners ......................................................... 53
   4.2.5 Assisting persons leaving prison .................................................................................... 54
   4.2.6 Brief summary ............................................................................................................. 55
4.3 Findings “Joint Prison Education Strategy 2019-2022” (Ireland) .................................. 56
   4.3.1 Stressing prisoners as autonomous persons ............................................................... 56
   4.3.2 Legitimizing educational efforts .................................................................................... 57
   4.3.3 Aims of education ......................................................................................................... 58
   4.3.4 Making education measurable ....................................................................................... 61
   4.3.5 Usage of market-orientated language .......................................................................... 61
   4.3.6 Brief summary ............................................................................................................. 62

Chapter 5 ....................................................................................................................................... 63
5.1 Comparison and Discussion ................................................................................................. 63
   5.1.1 Characterization of prisoners ....................................................................................... 63
   5.1.1.1 Different penal policies and philosophies ................................................................. 64
   5.1.2 Need for a wide curriculum ......................................................................................... 66
   5.1.3 Individuality, Independence and Self-Responsibility .................................................. 68
   5.1.4 Legitimizing educational efforts .................................................................................... 70
   5.1.5 Making education measurable ....................................................................................... 71
5.2 Concluding discussion ........................................................................................................... 72
5.3 Further research .................................................................................................................... 74
Reference list .............................................................................................................................. 76
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CDA</td>
<td>Critical Discourse Analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>CoE</td>
<td>Council of Europe</td>
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<td>DHA</td>
<td>Discourse-Historical Approach</td>
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<td>ETBI</td>
<td>Education and Training Boards Ireland</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<td>IPS</td>
<td>Irish Prison Service</td>
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<td>MoJ</td>
<td>Ministry of Justice</td>
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<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
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<td>QQI</td>
<td>Quality and Qualifications Ireland</td>
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<tr>
<td>SFL</td>
<td>Systemic Functional Linguistics</td>
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<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</td>
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Chapter 1

1.1 Introduction

Prisoners have received little attention in terms of the right to education, and prison education appears to be an unpopular topic as it appears rarely in neither public discourses nor adequately in educational research. Educational journals seldomly feature articles about prison education (Szifris et al., 2018). Reasons for this may be that prisoners are on the margins of society (Bhatti, 2010, p. 31) and this not just in the figurative sense as they are physically invisible in society. Overall, prison education seems to be a field that remains under-researched and under-theorized (Szifris et al., 2018) and it “has been surprisingly invisible in some European policy documentation” (Czerniawski, 2016, p. 202).

In order to stress, among other things, the universal right to education, the UN has put forward a document called “The Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners” (also known as Nelson Mandela Rules) which were first published in 1955. It has served as a guide in developing correctional laws, policies and practices. It entails “universally acknowledged minimum standards for the detention of prisoners” (UN, 2015, p. 1). The provision of education shall be done in accordance with “the individual needs of each prisoner, taking account of his social and criminal history, his physical and mental capacities and aptitudes, his personal temperament, the length of his sentence and his prospects after release” (UN, 1955, p. 10). Furthermore, education should be compulsory for illiterate prisoners and young prisoners. Within the scope of the possible, education should be integrated with the national education system in order to facilitate the continuation of education after release (UN, 2015, p. 30). However, in the prison context, the right to education is “contested, far from absolute, and subject to limitation” (Czerniawski, 2016, p. 201). A conflict and disjuncture exist between the integration of the values of the UN and EU in national policies as well as a discrepancy between policy aspirations and actual implementation (Czerniawski, 2016, p. 198). Additionally, the majority of documents of the EU relating to adult learning usually does not refer to prison
education specifically and tends to homogenize the education needs for the marginalized (Czerniawski, 2016, p. 202). This forms the starting point for this thesis as it investigates critically the policy documents of the UK, Norway and the Republic of Ireland (hereafter Ireland) in terms of how prison education policies are formulated and what stance is given to education. As policy documents shape the foundation for implementations and shape the perception of society as well as the discourse around prison education, it is crucial to investigate the underlying assumptions. By examining the discourses surrounding prison education, it is possible to reclaim education for true equality, social justice and democracy (Bowl, 2017, p. 164).

1.2 Aims and Research questions

The aim of the thesis is to uncover and compare the underlying ideologies and motifs that are embedded in the policy documents on prison education of the UK, Norway and Ireland. The thesis examines what aim and value the respective governments ascribe to prison education and how prisoners are regarded and characterized. Further, I am interested in how the different points of view regarding education and educational efforts are legitimized in order to create consent with society. Thus, my research questions are as follows:

1. What values are ascribed to prison education?

2. How are prisoners characterized in the respective documents?

3. How are educational efforts legitimized?
1.3 Structure of the Thesis

The thesis consists of five overarching chapters:

Chapter 1 has dealt with an introduction and the presentation of aims and research questions of this thesis. Further, I will elaborate on previous research and background information on prison education as well as presenting documents of the Council of Europe (hereafter CoE) that shape prison education policies and practices. I will also present the key concepts in this chapter.

Chapter 2 deals with the theoretical framework which is based on the critical notion. It draws from critical discourse analysis (hereafter CDA), critical theory, critical pedagogy and critical adult education. Additionally, I will present neoliberalism in education and how the usage of CDA as my method aligns with the given framework and concepts.

Chapter 3 consists of the methodological framework where I go into detail regarding ontological and epistemological assumptions, the significance of the study for the field of international and comparative education, research design and strategy, my method CDA, analytical procedure as well as (de-)limitations of the study. Further, I will elaborate on how I ensure the quality of my research study and how I comply to research ethics.

Chapter 4 includes my analysis and findings of the documents from the UK, Norway and Ireland. Here, I answer my research questions as mentioned above.

Chapter 5 contains a comparison of the policy documents of the three countries as well as a critical discussion based on my findings, other research and literature study. The thesis concludes with suggestions for further research.

1.4 Previous Research and Background Information

Previous research on prison education often refers to different prison education programs and their implementation and effect. Further, they set out which arguments are employed in favor of prison education. What a vast majority of research studies have in common is
that one of the most prominent reasons to promote prison education, and in that sense also to legitimize efforts and expenses, is to reduce recidivism rates. Lower recidivism rates are connected to various types of education such as post-secondary education (Meyer et al., 2010), art education programs (Miner-Romanoff, 2016) as well as basic and vocational education (Watts, 2010). Lower recidivism rates also mean savings for the government and taxpayers as there will be ultimately fewer prisoners to accommodate and spend expenses on (Tewksbury & Stengel, 2006). Furthermore, education also serves as a mean for gaining new skills and qualifications which in turn help the person to participate in the labor market (Szifris et al., 2018, p. 56). Employment promotes a crime-free lifestyle which leads to further savings of public costs as released persons then are less likely to produce criminal justice costs or rely on welfare (Meyer et al., 2010; Vorhaus, 2014).

However, the value of prison education exceeds the economic arguments as the importance of education for the prisoner himself and his personal development is stressed. Several studies have shown that education programs can improve self-esteem, positive self-identity, confidence, empowerment and more. Education is seen as a way to achieve a sense of purpose and accomplishment (Bhatti, 2010; Cantrell, 2013; Meyer et al., 2010; Miner-Romanoff, 2016; Mortimer, 2017; Tewksbury & Stengel, 2006; Watts, 2010). In this way, education works as a “hook for change” (Szifris et al., 2018, p. 50) where different ways of thinking and acting can be explored and new concepts of a possible future self can be developed (Szifris et al., 2018). Prison education can act as a safe space for prisoners where one can express and communicate in a different emotional climate. The learning setting allows the persons to develop different identities and self-perceptions e.g. as a learner (Szifris et al., 2018, p. 57). These spaces are crucial as in the prison context the identity as prisoner is dominant and others become subordinate (Miner-Romanoff, 2016; Vorhaus, 2014).

Through prison education, the students are supposed to be prepared for life outside prison which is characterized by unpredictability and unexpected challenges (Bhatti, 2010; Cantrell, 2013; Carver & Harrison, 2016; Vorhaus, 2014). They are encouraged to turn into active, democratic and critical thinking citizens that make own decisions and take on responsibility. Research points out, however, that the prison itself signifies the opposite
of these objectives as daily life in prison is characterized by constraints and heteronomy (Bhatti, 2010; Cantrell, 2013).

Another positive effect of prison education is that it can foster positive relationships within the prisons as participating in education programs alleviates frustration or boredom which may result in negative behavior (Meyer et al., 2010; Tewksbury & Stengel, 2006). Further, prison education programs can also be a way to promote positive societal attitudes towards prisoners. In an art program, prisoners’ artworks were exhibited for the public and through that prisoners were perceived by society as more than just offenders (Mortimer, 2017).

Seeing these positive effects of prison education makes it crucial that governments take a supporting stance on prison education in their policy documents and set binding guidelines in order to strengthen prison education as an important part of imprisonment.

Depending on the countries different objectives are pursued in prison education. Those may be rather narrow and limited or adhering to international documents such as the UN, CoE and EU which adopt a more holistic perspective on education. As this thesis adopts a critical perspective on education, I will present the documents of the CoE on prison education as they also draw from the traditions of critical adult education.

1.4.1 Prison Education Rules (CoE)

The CoE is an international human rights organization consisting of 47 member states, among them the UK, Norway and Ireland which are the subjects of analysis of this thesis. It adheres to the protection of human rights, democracy and the rule of law through international conventions. The most prominent convention might be the European Convention on Human Rights which forms the cornerstone of all further activities of the CoE. Further, the CoE supports member states to undertake judicial reforms (CoE, n.d.).

In the course of their work, they also developed recommendations and documents relating to prison education. One of them is the “European Prison Rules” from 1987. It comprises rules and guidelines referring to accommodation, hygiene, medical services, work and education. Regarding education, the document states:
“A comprehensive education programme shall be arranged in every institution to provide opportunities for all prisoners to pursue at least some of their individual needs and aspirations. Such programmes should have as their objectives the improvement of the prospects for successful social resettlement, the morale and attitudes of prisoners and their self-respect.” (CoE, 1987, p. 10)

The document also refers to changes in morale and attitudes that education aims at hence acknowledging that education includes more than only vocational training. Education is supposed to respond to the interests and needs of the prisoners, however, not every interest can be realized due to the context of prison. The document calls on the prison administration to pay special attention to the education of young prisoners, prisoners with foreign origin or with particular ethnic or cultural needs (CoE, 1987, p. 10).

1.4.2 Education in prison (CoE)

Besides the European Prison Rules, the CoE has developed the extensive recommendation “Education in prison” in 1990 where it recommends the member states to recognize certain aspects relating to the implementation of prison education policies.

a. Role and value of prison education

For the CoE, education in prison “is of value in itself” (CoE, 1990, p. 13). Education in prison aims at developing “the whole person bearing in mind his or her social, economic and cultural context” (CoE, 1990, p. 4) hence adapting a holistic view on education.

It states that every prisoner shall have access to education which includes “classroom subjects, vocational education, creative and cultural activities, physical education and sports, social education and library facilities” (CoE, 1990, p. 4).

The document defines different aims and roles for these areas of education. Thus, vocational education aims to serve the wider development of the individual and being sensitive to trends within the labor market (CoE, 1990, p. 4).

Creative and cultural activities in the context of education are seen as having the potential to “enable prisoners to develop and express themselves” (CoE, 1990, p. 5). Education is
supposed to draw out and help developing creativity which can be found in every human being. In the case of prison education, this aspect is especially important as for many prisoners, creativity has been “misdirected in destructive or anti-social ways” (CoE, 1990, p. 40).

Social education aims at supporting prisoners in managing their daily life within prison as well as facilitating the return to society (CoE, 1990, p. 5). This aim resonates in all kinds of education but explicit social education is used to “describe any education geared towards helping people live in the community” (CoE, 1990, p. 43). It seeks “to empower students with attitudes, skills and information which will enable them to live more fully and constructively within the community” (CoE, 1990, p. 43) and develop a sense of belonging. This is especially crucial in the prison context as eventually imprisoned persons are often marginalized and powerless which is only exacerbated by imprisonment (CoE, 1990, p.43). The CoE uses the term “social education” instead of “social training” or “social and life skills” in order to emphasize the development of the whole person rather than referring to mere behavior modifications (CoE, 1990, p. 43).

The focus on integrity and free choice as well as creativity instead of imposing behavior is seen as crucial for education to be genuine and true. Education aims at “[awakening] positive potential in students and make them aware of new possibilities and, to that extent, can facilitate their choosing for themselves to turn away from crime” (CoE, 1990, p. 4; p. 13). The context of freedom of choice where one explores and decides on his own to change his life is considered to be “genuine rehabilitation” (CoE, 1990, p. 42) thus education is being regarded as rehabilitative (CoE, 1990, p. 10).

Moreover, education is also attributed an attenuating and normalizing role. The prison itself is “of its very nature abnormal, and destructive of the personality in a number of ways” (CoE, 1990, pp. 9–10) and the deprivation of liberty provokes suffering and “a deterioration of personality” (CoE, 1990, p. 13). Life within prison walls tends to diminish the sense of personal responsibility and self-respect (CoE, 1990, p. 14). Through education, those detrimental effects such as depersonalization, institutionalization and desocialization can be limited (CoE, 1990, p. 13). Further, prison education contributes to justice and equality of opportunity as the majority of prisoners have gained negative
educational experiences in the past. Prison education is the opportunity to provide special support and redress the educational disadvantage (CoE, 1990, p. 10).

Arguing from an economic point of view, education fulfills the role of reducing costs as education costs are relatively low in comparison to the overall costs of running a prison and the general costs of crime within society (CoE, 1990, p. 10).

b. Principles of adult education

According to the CoE, the aims of prison education “should be essentially the same as those in adult education” (CoE, 1990, p. 11) and “have purposes no less important than those of education in the community outside” (CoE, 1990, p. 11). Thus, the provided education should resemble the education that similar age-groups in the outside world receive and should follow adequate adult education methods (CoE, 1990, p. 4). As far as the circumstances allow, education should take part outside the prison (CoE, 1990, p. 5). Furthermore, adult education aims at the “development of the active role and critical attitudes of women and men, as parents, producers, consumers, users of the mass media, citizens and members of their community” (CoE, 1990, p. 12).

Effective adult education “attunes itself to the wishes of its clients and this principle should also be applied to prisoners” (CoE, 1990, p. 27). For this reason, the learning opportunities should be based on the participants’ needs and interests (CoE, 1990, p. 18) and be “as wide as possible” (CoE, 1990, p. 4) to ensure freedom of choice. For the CoE, adult education “can only have a meaningful role if participation is voluntary” (CoE, 1990, p. 16). However, the CoE also acknowledges the contradiction between education and prison regimes as the latter one is concerned with security and controlling behavior while education focuses on potential and encouragement of participation and choice (CoE, 1990, p. 15).

In order to ensure normal education settings and processes as far as possible, the CoE recommends minimizing the prison context and to relegate the past criminal behavior to the background (CoE, 1990, p. 18). Moving these issues to the background is also recommended as an over-emphasis on negative aspects may reinforce the prisoner’s sense of inadequacy (CoE, 1990, p. 44).
The right to learn applies to every human and needs to be supported by prison education services. Based on UNESCO’s declaration, the rights include: the right to question, analyze, imagine and create, the right to read and write about one’s own world and history, the right to access educational resources and lastly the right to develop individual as well as collective skills (CoE, 1990, p. 11). Education following the above outlined principles “is the only meaningful and effective form of education to be pursued” (CoE, 1990, p. 14).

1.5 Key concepts

In order to broaden the background information and foundation for understanding the further elaborations, I am going to define the institution prison and with it the concepts of rehabilitation and punishment. After that, I will define education and training and show how it fits into the framework of prison and rehabilitation.

1.5.1 Prison

The institution prison reflects what the sociologist Erving Goffman (1968) describes as “total institution”:

“A total institution may be defined as a place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time together lead an enclosed formally administered round of life.” (p. 11)

The prison system and imprisonment have three key objectives which are 1. the protection of the public, 2. to punish and 3. to rehabilitate (Karthaus et al., 2019, p. 195). Punishment of people who broke the law through prison sentences is one of the most accepted social practices throughout the world (Hampton, 1984, p. 208). Justification emerges because it is seen as a strategy and necessary tool to prevent crimes in the future and to promote the well-being and safety of the public (Hampton, 1984, p. 211; Lippke, 2007, p. 251).
Similarly, the UN (2015) states that the purpose of imprisonment or other measures that deprive somebody of one’s liberty is “primarily to protect society against crime and to reduce recidivism” (p. 8). Further, the eventual aim of imprisonment is the social rehabilitation and reintegration with persons capable of leading a law-abiding and self-supporting life (UN, 2015, p. 4). In order to do so, the time imprisoned needs to be dedicated to activities such as education, vocational training and other forms of assistance (UN, 2015, p. 8). Further, activities should foster prisoners’ self-respect and support the development of a sense of responsibility (UN, 2015, p. 28).

1.5.2 Punishment

Punishment can take many forms. Intuitively one may connect punishment with the infliction of pain (Hampton, 1984, p. 224). However, punishment is more than that as it also contains an educative character (Hampton, 1984, p. 209).

Arguing against the background of the moral education theory, punishment aims at teaching the person concerned that certain actions are morally wrong and thus forbidden. The reason why someone refrains from doing something is then because of one’s own insight and choice rather than solely out of self-interest in order to avoid pain. In that sense, punishment does not serve as simple deterrence and rejects the idea that punishment conditions people to behave how society expects and wants it (Hampton, 1984, pp. 212–213). Moreover, punishment is not seen as a passive treatment to a “sick” person. It is something that is done for the person rather than to the person. A person is supposed to be supported in acquiring moral knowledge (Hampton, 1984, p. 214). To summarize this train of thoughts, in other words, the ultimate aim of punishment is “not to destroy the criminal’s freedom of choice, but to persuade him to use his freedom in a way consistent with the freedom of others” (Hampton, 1984, p. 222). A prison fulfills its task of retribution through the deprivation of freedom and not through activities carried out during the sentence (Svensson, 1996).
1.5.3 Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation in the context of prisons aims usually at the reintegration of people into the society after release. Rehabilitation, besides the role of retribution, is a central task of imprisonment. It provides “opportunities for individuals to reflect on their values and to prepare the ‘less adequate’ for the world outside” (Bayliss, 2003, p. 159). Contemporary rehabilitation practices have moved the focus of their objective to “managing risk and social control in the interests of the general public” (Behan, 2014, p. 20). Policies are developed around the idea of lowering delinquency, reducing costs connected to crime and increasing the public’s confidence in the penal systems (Behan, 2014, p. 21).

Following Rotman’s typology (1986) of rehabilitation, this kind of rehabilitation corresponds to the authoritarian model as prisoner’s personalities are molded to comply to predetermined patterns of thought and behavior (p. 1026) Authoritarian rehabilitation is stated as a “mere instrument of institutional discipline” (p. 1026). In contrast to this, the anthropocentric model of rehabilitation shows similarities to the critical adult education approach focusing on critical thinking (see chapter 2). Both of them stress the importance of the individual’s own will to change and regard the individual as an independent and active person. The model acknowledges social and cultural factors influencing deviance, the influence of being incarcerated and does not aim at conforming people into prescribed patterns (Behan, 2014, p. 21). According to this approach, transformation cannot take place through imposed paradigms from outside but stresses the importance of own insights (Rotman, 1986, p. 1026). Individual activities are tried to be understood in the wider political, social and economic context rather than to pathologize (Behan, 2014, p. 21). This humanistic rehabilitation approach seeks to “awaken in inmates a deep awareness of their relationships with the rest of society, resulting in a genuine sense of social responsibility” (Rotman, 1986, p. 1026).

1.5.4 Education and Training

The terms “education” and “training” might be used interchangeably, however, understanding the difference is crucial. Generally, training refers to learning how to do something and acquiring a skill. It is focused on employability. Training outcomes can be
measured by measuring what one can do when one has completed the training. On the other hand, education includes understanding and the values that derive from the understanding. The aim is to develop the capacity for critical reflection. It cannot be measured in the same way as training but it is rather measured by what one knows and the ability to apply and analyze the knowledge (Costelloe & Warner, 2014, p. 177).

In regard to adult education, the crucial quality of it is that it is an end in itself. Adult education is not seen as a means to an, often employment-focused, aim. It seeks to promote creative and critical thinking which eventually leads to a “profound and lasting change in a person’s conscientization, worldview and direction” (Costelloe & Warner, 2014, p. 177).

1.5.5 Prison Education

To connect the concept of prison education with rehabilitation, prison education can be seen as a part and form rehabilitation (Behan, 2014, p. 20). According to Wright (2008), many prison systems view education as a key element in the process of change and transformation of an individual. The objectives of prison education are amongst desistance also to understand the social construction of criminality, reflect on issues related to punishment as well as class and economic injustices (Behan, 2014, p. 25). However, as adult education can employ different philosophical positions to education, prison education practices and policies may implement different approaches as well. Behaviorism characterizes learning as “an observable response to behavioural conditioning, managed through expert instruction” (Bowl, 2017, p. 101). This approach has long been commonly used in penal and rehabilitative settings as the goal was the control and remediation of behavior (Bowl, 2017, p. 101).

Depending on the prisons, the dimensions of the educational offers take on different forms. Offers may include basic education in numeracy and literacy, secondary, post-secondary or vocational programs. Furthermore, some prisons may also offer creative programs such as dance or art courses (e.g. Meyer et al., 2010; Miner-Romanoff, 2016; Mortimer, 2017; Tewksbury & Stengel, 2006; Watts, 2010). However, there seems to be
a need to make prison education “more politically acceptable” (Behan, 2014, p. 27) as education programs are being redefined and replaced by programs focused on offense-avoidance. Courses aim more and more at teaching anger management, life and communication skills rather than subjects such as philosophy (Behan, 2014, p. 27). By reframing education as a treatment, the individual becomes a patient to whom something is done to instead of done with (Behan, 2014, p. 27). This, in turn, denies the individual any autonomy.

From Rotman’s point of view, the offense-focused education programs reflect an authoritarian rehabilitation approach. The focus lies on conformity rather than authentic personal change (Behan, 2014, p. 27). Costelloe and Warner (2008) argue that these programs reflect a limited and negative approach following the medical model of imprisonment. Implicated in this approach is the view on the prisoner as primarily “something broken in need of fixing or as an object in need of treatment” (p. 137).

An anthropocentric model of education would rather consider personal responsibility, choices and reflection of moral implications of the choices made (Behan, 2014, p. 27). In line with the values of critical adult education (see chapter 2), it seeks to develop critical thinking and to build self-worth and self-confidence. In that sense, prison education challenges everything that characterizes prison institutionalization such as control, restricting personal freedom and choice to a minimum, eliminating decision-making and reducing self-esteem (Bayliss, 2003, p. 160).
Chapter 2

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework of the thesis is strongly built on the critical notion. It draws on CDA in which texts are understood as simultaneously constructing and reflecting the social world (Rogers, 2004, p. 3). Language is not neutral and within the text, certain ideologies are embedded. Researchers using CDA are interested in “uncovering and transforming conditions of inequality; analyses that transcend the interpretation of language and, instead, aim to explain the work that language performs in society” (Mullet, 2018, p. 118). Thus, the policy documents are seen as part of the discourses on prison education that can be analyzed in terms of ideological and political views underlying the perception of education. The political and ideological views in this study are explained through a tension between a) critical pedagogy and critical adult education, deriving from critical theory with the notions of liberalism and humanism, and b) neoliberalism which in contrast bases the perceptions of education on economic parameters. These two approaches to education will be presented in the following chapter and then used as a framework to study the policy documents on prison education through CDA.

2.1 Critical Theory

Critical theory is concerned with revealing how the individual’s understanding of the world is shaped by ideologies that serve particular interests yet we perceive it as commonsensical (Collins, 2003, p. 365). In critical theory, ideologies are seen as “broadly accepted sets of values, beliefs, myths, explanations, and justifications that appear self-evidently true, empirically accurate, personally relevant, and morally desirable to a majority of the populace, but that work to maintain an unjust social and political order” (Brookfield, 2001, p. 14).
All existing knowledge is not independent of the system in which it is located and is shaped by the interests of different people and systems (Wang et al., 2019, p. 235). By identifying and challenging particular interests as well as the strategies that sustain them, critical theory seeks to further human emancipation (Collins, 2003, p. 365). It aims to promote social justice by problematizing what is taken for granted and experienced to be “a normal state of affairs” (Brookfield, 2018, p. 56).

2.2 Critical Pedagogy

Stemming from critical theory, critical pedagogy is understood, in this study, as an approach highlighting power relations that are manifested in the education of children and adults. It reveals how the existing power structures and social relations reproduce inequality in society (Apple et al., 2009, pp. 3–5). From various approaches within critical pedagogy, this study relies particularly on an approach called critical, liberatory pedagogy which was developed by the Brazilian literacy educator Paulo Freire (Wang et al., 2019, p. 235).

Critical, liberatory pedagogy defines education as a system in which both students and teachers are enabled to “develop a critically conscious understanding of their relationship with the world” (Au, 2009, p. 222). Secondly, it is intended to help student and teacher to develop the consciousness of their context and condition as Subject and to “become an instrument of choice” (Au, 2009, p. 222). According to Freire, by becoming Subjects one becomes a “critical agent[…] in the act of knowing” (Shor & Freire, 1987, p. 33). Through education, subjects should be encouraged to critically reflect the reality that they encounter and take actions to transform it based on previous critical reflections. The conscious and transformative action (also called “praxis”) is a central part of Freire’s liberatory pedagogy. For this reason, in order for education to be authentic, it has to be liberating. From Freire’s point of view, by taking away the consciousness and right to transform the world, one oppresses the Subject (Au, 2009, p. 222).
Relating critical pedagogy to prison education, it implies that, at least in theory, prison education should be liberatory. In order to implement a critical, liberatory pedagogy in praxis, Freire introduces two approaches. The first one problem posing includes the process where students and teachers ask critical questions of the world and material realities as well as critically reflect on their actions to change the material conditions (Au, 2009, p. 222). The second approach is dialogue. Through dialogue, humans can reflect on what they know respectively do not thus being able to improve their knowledge and ability to transform the given reality (Shor & Freire, 1987, p. 222). Dialogue is fundamentally social as it comprises active reflection in relation to other humans. This means that dialogue does not follow a “banking concept”: one cannot just “deposit” ideas on other people or exchange ideas that then are “consumed” by the counterparts. It is rather a process of acting with others together which helps one to create and act upon one’s ideas. Hence, dialogue also requires critical thinking (Au, 2009, pp. 222–223). By providing those spaces where questions can be asked and assumptions can be challenged, individuals transform themselves and their social perspectives which in turn can initiate actions for social justice (Wang et al., 2019, p. 236).

2.3 Critical Adult Education

Critical adult education draws from critical theory and critical pedagogy. Therefore, the notion of critique is at the heart of critical adult education (Brookfield, 2018, p. 53).

Critical adult education defines the goal of adult education as raising awareness and fostering the ability of participants to be critical about political as well as societal issues (Wildemeersch, 2018, p. 133). Critical adult education sees its mission in furthering democracy (Brookfield, 2018, p. 54). It looks at the deficiencies of a system, institution or set of practices and imagines “a more humane, compassionate and equitable way of organising the world” (Brookfield, 2018, p. 53). Education is seen from the philosophical traditions of liberalism and humanism as the importance and benefits of learning for the sake of personal fulfillment are central (Bowl, 2017, p. 8). Additionally, personal growth and development are meant to be furthered in education and individuals are supported in
their wish to take control of their lives. Critical adult education seeks to foster “a cultured and knowledgeable individual” (Bowl, 2017, p. 101). At the same time, this notion of education acknowledges the adult learner’s own competency and knowledge as educators are also not seen as “omniscient founts of knowledge” (Brookfield, 2018, p. 60).

Regarding prison education, this implies that, although being a prisoner, the person’s own knowledge and abilities have to be acknowledged and included in the learning process. As outside of prisons, learning is a collective attempt to name and change the reality (Brookfield, 2018, p. 60). This notion challenges current perceptions of adult education where education is barely seen as workplace learning and preparation for jobs in the information society and service industries (Brookfield, 2018, p. 60). Further, critical adult education does not regard the learner as only “human capital” and representing a commodity (Brookfield, 2018, p. 58).

2.3.1 Mezirow’s Theory of Transformative Learning

The notion of critique has played an ever-increasing role in adult education theorizing in the late twentieth/early twenty-first centuries. Jack Mezirow’s work is considered to be one of the most prominent and fundamental ones in the field of adult education (Brookfield, 2018, p. 62; Wang et al., 2019, p. 235). For him, at the heart of adult learning stands “transformative learning”. Being confronted by so-called “disorienting dilemmas”, that is to say situations where our previous expectations and assumptions are challenged and overturned, we have to re-evaluate our ways of understanding the world. Frames of reference are transformed through critical reflection on either the assumptions of others or our own (Brookfield, 2018, p. 63). Critical reflection is a process “by which a person challenges the validity of his or her own presuppositions which may lead to [perspective transformation]” (Warner, 1998, p. 128). Although the theory is not specified for prison education, this general theory on adult education should be applicable to prison education as it falls under the category of adult education. There is no reason to deny those notions of adult education as prisoners have the same rights as adults outside prisons except for the deprivation of freedom.
Arguing from this point of view, the goal of adult development, inside and outside prison, is to “realise one’s agency through increasingly expanding awareness and critical reflection” (Brookfield, 2018, p. 63). One of the main elements of the theory is the “systemic critical reflection” that aims to probe sociocultural distortions. It comprises how dominant ideologies are ingrained in our everyday life and how they are uncritically accepted thus creating injustice. Similarly to Freire’s conception, adult education aims to promote awareness of how belief systems and assumptions are shaped by people in power and how this, in turn, justifies and sustains economic and political inequity (Brookfield, 2018, pp. 63–64). By raising awareness of the unquestioned assumptions, education works towards the ideals of empowerment and liberation (Wang et al., 2019, p. 238).

For prison education, this means that it should also be empowering and liberating. At first sight, it might seem paradoxical as a prison is restrictive and the opposite of empowerment and liberation. However, looking more closely, liberative and empowering education aligns with prison and its objective of rehabilitation as it supports transformative change and at the same time equips the persons with the abilities to live an independent and self-sufficient life.

### 2.4 Neoliberalism in Education

Derived from the shift away from humanist and liberal notions of adult education towards neoliberal ones, different assumptions have evolved in adult education policy and practice. Individuals are expected to pay for their own education as far as possible. This applies especially to post-compulsory education by raising fees paid by the individual and reducing subsidies. Another consequence of the shift to consumerism and instrumentalism is that adults that lack “functional” or “employability” skills become now the primary targets of education and training efforts (Bowl, 2017, p. 4). Further, government support for adult education should serve economic ends thus they focus on vocational training and employability to the detriment of a broader view on adult education including social and individual development. Adult education seems to turn
into an important economic policy tool in order to maintain and enhance national competitiveness within a knowledge economy (Desjardins, 2018, p. 219).

Bagnall & Hodge (2018) also state that an “instrumental epistemology” has become dominant in adult education and lifelong learning in recent decades (p. 25). Instrumental epistemology embedded in education is “directed entirely to the end of informing contextually valued action that will be demonstrated performatively by the learners under appropriate conditions” (Bagnall & Hodge, 2018, p. 21). Learners are supposed to develop and practice those skills that are deemed as useful for the predefined tasks that they are ultimately expected to perform. In the case of neoliberal policy discourses, this refers to skills that increase employability and competitiveness. In order to assure this, although contradicting the neoliberal free-market rhetoric, a “new managerialism” and a “culture of performativity” has developed to influence education work (Bowl, 2017, p. 5). This has been common for a long time in the field of schooling but qualification frameworks, audits, inspections and outcome-based assessments have been imposed increasingly in the field of adult education as well (Bowl, 2017, p. 5). Education is becoming more and more characterized by competence-based, behaviorist and outcome-based approaches (Bagnall & Hodge, 2018, p. 21).

Furthermore, Wildemeersch (2018) notes an emergent prominence of an “economic reframing” of adult and continuing education policies in which a “responzibilisation” of the individual takes place. The individual is expected to take responsibility for his own life. In discourses, the term “emancipation” is increasingly substituted by the term “empowerment” with the latter one shifting the focus to the individual’s responsibility, autonomy and employability (Wildemeersch, 2018, p. 139). Empowerment in a neoliberal discourse “signifies self-efficacy, self-sufficiency and personal responsibility for ensuring one’s own economic and personal well-being” (Bowl, 2017, p. 26). In turn, this means that failure or inequality is seen as individual responsibility and not as the consequence of unequal structure and power relations within a society (Desjardins, 2018, p. 219). In the context of neoliberalism, individuals are encouraged to give their life an entrepreneurial form (Lemke, 2001, p. 202).

The term “empowerment” has been also criticized because it is used to ensure compliance with neoliberalism. Neoliberal governments use the term “to shift the discourse of public
provision from one of rights to one of responsibilities” (Bowl, 2017, p. 163). Here, the concept of empowerment is utilized as a tool for promoting education as a commodity. From this perspective, education offered to the prisoners is also a commodity and it is regarded as the prisoners’ responsibility to take part in them. Education is no longer a universal right but a necessity. Further, it resonates that by offering education in prisons, one aims at making prisoners compliant in the neoliberal order. Individuals are only insofar empowered if they have the resources to choose from the educational offers available in the marketplace. However, if one is not able to capitalize the offers available, one is “cast as responsible for their own disempowerment” (Bowl, 2017, p. 163). Empowerment has been “construed as a personal responsibility and disempowerment an individual deficit” (Bowl, 2017, p. 163) and thus neglecting the wider context. The idea of empowerment has to be regarded against the background of the specific prison context as empowerment by participating in education can only take place in the realm of what is offered. Thus, failing to do so cannot be termed as individual failure as the opportunities, in the first place, are restricted and dependent on what prison administrations implement and allow.

2.5 Combining Theories – from Critical Theory to CDA

In CDA, language and discourse are not seen as neutral but always carrying certain intentions and ideologies. In large part, it stems from the critical theory of the Frankfurt School (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 688). Following Fairclough’s definition (as cited in Rogers, 1992, p. 5) a discourse is “more than just language use: it is language use, whether speech or writing, seen as a type of social practice” (p. 28). Hence language itself is not neutral but social and reflects particular interests (Rogers, 2004, p. 3). It represents “meanings, conventions, codes in specific socio-cultural, temporal and historical contexts [and] how linguistic practices are both located in, and create their own contexts” (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 686). Discourses reflect, construct and at the same time are constructed by the social world and in that sense are constitutive, dialectical and dialogic (Rogers, 2004, pp. 5–6). It sustains and reproduces the status quo (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). CDA is an analysis of
“dialectical relations between discourse and other objects, elements, or moments, as well as analysis of the ‘internal relations’ of discourse” (Fairclough, 2010, p. 4). Moreover, in CDA one pays attention not only to what a text includes but also what it excludes thus attending to “structured silences and how these embody differentials of power and influence in society” (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 688). CDA is an approach “for critically describing, interpreting, and explaining the ways in which discourses construct, maintain, and legitimate social inequalities” (Mullet, 2018, p. 116).

Furthermore, CDA is not merely a descriptive approach but normative. CDA addresses wrongs in the society and aims at “possible ways of righting or mitigating them” (Fairclough, 2010, p. 11). It aims at transforming and emancipating the society and its members and interrogating ideological, political, social and economic power and its construction, perpetuation and reproduction through discourse (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 688).

Based on these remarks, this thesis considers policy documents as a form of discourse that are led by certain ideologies, assumptions and values. By using CDA, I can reveal the existence of critical and neoliberal notions within the documents as well as the underlying ideologies. Moreover, by analyzing the text I can show how the use of certain language shapes the discourse on prison education and creates specific ideas and how the policy documents themselves are influenced by society.
Chapter 3

Methodological framework

In the following chapter, I am going to elaborate on my methodological framework. Before delving deeper into CDA, I am going to elaborate on my ontological and epistemological assumptions as well as the significance of the study for the field of international and comparative education. Following, I will present my research design and strategy including the data collection. After that, I present CDA as my analytical tool and the underpinning understanding of the concepts of critique, power and ideology. Further, I will go into detail about the (de-)limitations of this study. Aligned with good research practice, I will consider the criteria of trustworthiness and how it applies to my work as well as raising ethical considerations.

3.1 Ontological and Epistemological Assumptions

Ontology is concerned with the nature of social entities (Bryman, 2012, p. 32). The thesis adopts a constructionist stance as social properties are not regarded as merely “out there” but as “outcomes of the interactions between individuals” (Bryman, 2012, p. 380). In order to understand the natural and social world, people employ categories. Here, constructionism suggests that those categories are social products. Categories “do not have built-in essences; instead, their meaning is constructed in and through interaction” (Bryman, 2012, p. 34). Additionally, they are in a continuous state of revision and meaning will change by time and place thus are culture- and context-bound (Bryman, 2012, p. 34; Cohen et al., 2018, p. 288). Meaning is created through social interaction and the “world […] is constituted in one way or another as people talk it, write it and argue it.” (Potter, 1996, p. 98 as cited in Bryman, 2012, p. 34).
My thesis aligns with the constructionist position as I aim to investigate the discourses around prison education. I seek to show how prisoners and the value of prison education are represented in the documents and how this, in turn, shapes the discourse, building of categories and meaning-making. Realities are “multiple, constructed and holistic, capable of sustaining multiple interpretations” (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 288). For me as a researcher, this also means that my own accounts of the social world are constructed hence my analysis and findings are only a specific version of social reality among many others (Bryman, 2012, p. 33).

Epistemology refers to the question what is or should be viewed as acceptable knowledge. In contrast to the natural science epistemology of positivism, this thesis follows an interpretivist epistemology. It is critical of the applicability of the scientific model to the social world as the subject matters in social sciences are fundamentally different from the subject matters in natural sciences thus studying the social world requires another logic of research procedure (Bryman, 2012, p. 28). Interpretivism implies that the understanding of the social world is accomplished by examining the interpretation of the world by its participants (Bryman, 2012, p. 380).

3.2 Significance for the Field of International and Comparative Education

This thesis contributes to the field of international and comparative education as it is in its nature comparative by comparing documents of three different countries. Through the international comparison, it is possible to investigate how different countries formulate prison education policies and how the discourses around prison education are created by the respective governments. It promotes the understanding of similarities and differences between the three countries in terms of prison education policies.

Further, the study draws on international documents such as from the CoE and the UN. Those documents influence to a varying extent the local policymaking thus exercising an international influence. Prisons and prison education are a pervasive and international
topic although it may have received little attention (Szifris et al., 2018). According to Costelloe and Warner (2014), who researched prison policies in Europe, virtually all European countries offer some kind of education to their prisoners but the extent and diversity vary across the facilities. The different implementations and offers of prison education are supposedly rooted in divergent views on the objectives and possibilities of prison education (p. 175). By analyzing the documents of the UK, Norway and Ireland, this thesis is able to reveal the perspectives and underlying ideologies of the respective three governments. The thesis seeks to further the relatively small knowledge base about prison education from an international and comparative perspective.

3.3 Research Design and Strategy

Aligned with the research questions as well as the ontological and epistemological assumptions, the research strategy of the thesis is qualitative. It emphasizes “words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data” (Bryman, 2012, p. 380). CDA falls into the qualitative paradigm as the focus is on language and how language creates the social world and how the documents are influenced by it. I am interested in how language is used to create certain discourses.

Furthermore, the research design is comparative as it compares the UK, Norway and Ireland with each other. I compare policies of different countries as, aligned with the logic of comparison, I believe that comparing the policies in relation to the other ones allows me to understand the documents on a deeper level (Bryman, 2012, p. 72). Against the background of Bryman (2016), my study is a “multiple-case study” as it combines a qualitative research strategy with a comparative design (p. 74) where the policies of three different countries are under analysis.
3.3.1 Data Collection

My data collection was guided by my language proficiency which is why I primarily searched the government websites of English and German-speaking countries. I also searched for documents translated into English from other countries. Eventually, I am using the following documents for my study:

**UK:** “Education and Employment Strategy” (2018) – 33 pages

I found the strategy paper of the UK by searching the governmental website with the words “prison education” and the filter to show me only policy papers and consultations. The UK as object of research is also interesting as Scotland, England and Wales have the highest incarceration rates among West European countries in 2019 (Statista, n.d.).


The Irish document was found on the Irish Prison Service website which is an executive office within the Department of Justice and Equality (About Us, n.d.).

**Norway:** “Education and Training in the Correctional Services” (2005) – 39 pages

The inclusion of the Norwegian document was done by other means. During my literature review, I found an article by Costelloe & Warner (2014) that referred to Norway’s White Paper on prison education called “Another Spring”. I looked the paper up and decided to include it into my study as it gives a Nordic point of view on prison education and seemed to embody references to critical education.

3.4 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

In order to study the tension between the critical and neoliberal approaches in prison education policies and to reveal how they are embedded in the studied documents, I use CDA. CDA is particularly useful for this study because it transcends the merely linguistic
level and examines how discourse shapes and is shaped by the social word. It allows discovering “latent or hidden beliefs that appear in language disguised as analogies, metaphors, or other conceptual expressions” (Mullet, 2018, p. 120). Further, the application of CDA on prison education is fruitful because the method works with the “voices of marginalized, disempowered and oppressed groups, and it critiques the illegitimate power of dominant groups and the role of language in this” (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 688).

CDA, however, does not have a unitary theory or series of methods. That is to say that there is no “formula” for conducting CDA as it is dependent on the research questions and theoretical framework (Mullet, 2018, p. 117; Rogers, 2004, p. 3). As the focus of CDA is on social problems rather than scholarly paradigms, CDA “can be used to understand and solve problems with any theory or method that may be relevant” (Mullet, 2018, p. 117).

In order to identify and expose ideology and power at work in society, CDA uses linguistic analysis whereby it combines micro- and macrolevel (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 688). Hereby, it moves beyond the purely linguistic level and investigates the exercise of power through discourse (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 687). Fairclough (1989) developed a three-step model that refers to the movement between linguistic and social context. The model consists of 1. description of functional characteristics of the text, 2. interpretation of the links between text and interaction and 3. explanation of the connection between interaction and social conditions (p. 26). Fairclough refers to those steps also as 1. local, 2. institutional and 3. societal domain. The analysis moves between the micro- and macrolevel of the texts in an ongoing process. Due to the recursive movement between a linguistic and social analysis, CDA constitutes a systematic method and not a “haphazard analysis of discourse and power” (Rogers, 2004, p. 7).

CDA draws on tools from different fields that allow discovering the connection between language and meaning. The field that this analysis draws from is systemic functional linguistics (hereafter SFL). SFL is considered as “linguistic backbone of CDA” (Rogers, 2004, p. 8). According to SFL, language has soft and hard structures. Hard structures refer to aspects of the linguistic system such as nouns, verbs or adjectives while soft structures
refer to the function of language. SFL places its focus on the function of language, that is to say what language does and how it does it. Further, it focuses on meaning and the “choices people make when making meaning” (Rogers, 2004, p. 8). It also considers the (un-)conscious choice of meaning. Why someone chooses to use for example a certain word, tense or passive sentence structure shows at the same time the choices that are not made (Rogers, 2004, p. 9). CDA aims at describing, interpreting and explaining the relationship existing between soft and hard structures of the language (Rogers, 2004, p. 8). How words are used in the text can be analyzed to see what meaning lies behind them and what kind of effect is created. Generally, CDA pays attention to common linguistic concepts such as word choices, word order, time, coherence and more (Mullet, 2018, p. 120).

3.4.1 Concepts of critique, power and ideology

Fundamental in all CDA approaches are the concepts of critique, power and ideology. In my thesis, I am going to adhere to the socio-philosophical orientation of the Discourse-Historical Approach (hereafter DHA) when analyzing the policy documents. The concept of critique refers to those three aspects:

1. **Text or discourse-immanent critique** seeks to reveal inconsistencies, paradoxes, dilemmas and self-contradictions within the text or discourse.
2. **Socio-diagnostic critique** tries to demystify the persuasive or even manipulative character of different discursive practices whether it is latent or manifest. In order to do so, one draws from acquired contextual knowledge, social theories and theoretical models from different disciplines.
3. **Future-related prospective critique aims** to make a contribution to improve communication by for example developing guidelines.
   (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009, p. 88)

For guiding my analysis, especially the first two aspects are of relevance. When analyzing the documents, I will investigate how the text itself contains contradictions or inconsistencies. Furthermore, I will draw on the theoretical, conceptual and
methodological knowledge in order to expose how dominant ideologies and assumptions are exercised.

In DHA, *ideologies* are regarded as “one-sided perspective or world view composed of related mental representations, convictions, opinions, attitudes and evaluations” (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009, p. 88). Ideologies serve to establish and maintain unequal power relations through discourses. This is achieved by for example creating and disseminating hegemonic identity narratives or by controlling who gets access to specific discourses and public spheres. DHA focuses on language to uncover how ideologies are (re-)produced. Language itself is not seen as powerful on its own but rather as a “means to gain and maintain power by the use ‘powerful’ people make of it” (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009, p. 88).

*Power* refers to an “asymmetric relationship among social actors who assume different social positions or belong to different social groups” (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009, p. 88). Power is regarded as the possibility to enforce one’s own will against the will or interests of others within a social relationship (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009, p. 88). Through discourses, power is legitimized and delegitimized. Ideological fights for dominance and hegemony are often reflected in texts hence DHA focuses on the ways in “which linguistic forms are used in various expressions and manipulations of power” (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009, p. 89).

### 3.5 Analytical procedure

In my study, I base my analysis process on Mullet’s framework (2018) which includes characteristics and principles common to the main CDA approaches. It is “suitable for application to a wide range of disciplines and research problems” (Mullet, 2018, p. 117) and condenses “many CDA approaches into a set of easily conceptualized levels of analysis without sacrificing the core principles of CDA” (Mullet, 2018, pp. 122–123). The framework consist of seven stages: selecting the discourse, locating and preparing data sources, exploring the background of the text, coding the text and identifying
overarching themes, analyzing the external and internal relations of the texts and finally interpreting (Mullet, 2018, p. 122).

Following this framework, I have identified my discourse and data sources which are the policy documents on prison education. After that, I went through the respective documents several times and marked aspects that I could relate to my conceptual, theoretical and methodological framework as well as research questions. Further, I highlighted aspects that attracted my attention but might not be directly related to the previous points. By marking the text, I identified major themes of the respective document and categorized my findings and found headlines. The coding was performed in an inductive way as I found my themes by working through the text. However, the categories were also informed by the frameworks and my research questions such as how persons are characterized and which arguments are put forward regarding prison education thus it is to some extent also deductive. Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2007) state that regarding inductive and deductive coding procedures it is “not an either/or decision because deductive and inductive approaches exist on a long continuum” (p. 243). Subsequently, I analyzed the internal and external relations of the text. Internal relations refer to “patterns, words, and linguistic devices that represent power relations, social context (e.g., events, actors, or locations), or speakers’ positionalities” (Mullet, 2018, p. 124). I analyzed the language for references regarding aims of the texts and how contexts, events or actors are represented. Further, I analyzed the external relations of the text which is also called “interdiscursivity”. Interdiscursivity allows identifying “interactions among different discourses within specific texts or talks” (Mullet, 2018, p. 124). It includes the analysis of how the text affects social structures and practices and in turn how social practices are informed by arguments in the text. In the comparison and discussion part, I relate the documents to the documents of the other countries as well as making clearer connections to my theoretical framework. Further, I interpreted the meanings of the internal and external relations as well as the themes. Although presented as successive steps, the analysis moves back and forth between the stages (Mullet, 2018, p. 128). In qualitative research, interpretation and analysis are fused, concurrent or simultaneous and it “is naive to suppose that the qualitative data analyst can separate analysis from interpretation”
For this reason, my analysis, interpretation and findings are not presented as strictly separated but overlapping and merging into each other.

### 3.6 Limitations and Delimitations

One of the limitations of this study is language. As I only have extensive knowledge in German or English the documents had to be in one of these languages. Thus, I had to restrict myself to German- or English-speaking countries respectively rely on documents from other countries that were translated into English. Due to this fact, the scope of possible policies has been narrowed down. Generally, it was rather difficult to find suitable documents as I have searched databases of different governments and ministries with relevant keywords but did not find explicit policy documents, strategy papers or similar relating to prison education. I believe that either there are no explicit ones as previously mentioned prison education is a fairly unpopular topic or prison education is subsumed in general documents on education. Relevant documents may also only exist in the native language hence I could not access them due to the language barrier.

The Norwegian document that I use is an English summary while the ones from the UK and Ireland are in their original language and not summarized. This may influence the comparability of the respective documents. Furthermore, the Norwegian document is a report and not a strategy paper or similar like the ones from the UK and Ireland. My aim, however, was more to illustrate the different attitudes of the respective governments which are reflected in both types of documents. Furthermore, I wanted to include Norway as I believe that it provides another interesting insight into prison education that is not shaped by an Anglo-Saxon perspective. Additionally, during my literature review, there were several references to the progressive development of Nordic prisons which I wanted to investigate myself. I was interested to find out how this is manifested in a document published by the government. Another limitation may be also that the Norwegian document is fairly old (from 2005). It may be possible that the attitudes towards education have changed and Warner (2011) notes that how prisoners are perceived is dynamic. However, I have contacted the Norwegian government as well as other governments in
order to inquire about more recent documents respectively documents in English, but I did not receive a response.

Another limitation regarding language is that I am not a native speaker of English and as CDA investigates the language used it may be the case that some words or sentences have another connotation for me than it might have for a native speaker.

While I criticize in my thesis the word choices of the ministries regarding prisoners and persons leaving prison and that those word choices partly paint a one-dimensional picture, I am also aware that I use the term “prisoner” and it is not without controversy either. By subsuming the imprisoned persons as prisoners can mask individual identity and ignore gender, ages, abilities, ethnicities and culture of those imprisoned (Bayliss, 2003, p. 158). However, for the sake of better readability, I have used “prisoner” instead of e.g. imprisoned persons but I refrained from using the term “prisoner” when speaking about the persons leaving prison to avoid emphasizing being a prisoner as the main characteristic. Another limitation of this thesis may be also that the voices of the persons concerned in this thesis, that is prisoners and persons leaving prison, is missing. However, the research design and objectives of this study are aimed to analyze the documents on prison education and their implications and not the personal experiences of the persons concerned.

Before writing this thesis, I did not have any knowledge about prison education as it was not something I encountered before during my studies. Furthermore, I do not have any personal insight into the topic of prison education and all my information derives from the literature. Additionally, most of the research originates from the U.S. and in comparison to other areas the previous research is relatively scarce which limited, to some extent, a deeper or more personal immersion into the topic.

As delimitation, this thesis furthers the rather little knowledge base of prison education policies. It gives insight into the discourses surrounding prison education and how different governments create those through their documents. At the same time, CDA also reveals societal attitudes towards prison education. Further, the countries under investigation have very differing incarceration rates which makes the comparison interesting. Scotland has 150 persons in prison per 100,000 persons and England and Wales have 139 persons in prison per 100,000 persons. Those are the highest
incarceration rates among the West European countries in 2019 (Statista, n.d.). On the other hand, Ireland has 81 persons in prison per 100,000 persons and Norway 63 which are one of the lowest numbers for Europe (Statista, n.d.).

### 3.7 Criteria of trustworthiness

Since my research follows a qualitative design, the criteria for quality reliability, validity and objectivity which are central for quantitative research have to be adapted. Lincoln and Guba (1985, as cited in Bryman, 2012, p. 390) have developed an alternative to reliability and validity that is applicable to qualitative research: trustworthiness.

Trustworthiness comprises:

**a. Credibility (parallels internal validity)**

Credibility stresses the existence of multiple perspectives on social reality. As stressed in the chapter on ontology and epistemology, I am aware that my perspective is one among many and that my analysis and findings are influenced by my background. I am aware that I am, as a researcher, a “part and a parcel of the construction of knowledge” (Bryman, 2012, p. 394).

**b. Transferability (parallels external validity)**

In contrast to quantitative research, I do not aim for generalization. However, my research study can provide a database that can be used by others for discussions on the transferability of the results into other contexts (Bryman, 2012, p. 392). Furthermore, I describe and elaborate on my steps so that it is traceable for outsiders.

**c. Dependability (parallels reliability)**

I will ensure dependability in my thesis as all records of my research are kept in an accessible manner and will be provided if someone wishes so. Usually peers work as auditors verifying compliance to the correct procedures (Bryman, 2012, p. 392). Regarding this thesis, the supervisor assumes the role of an auditor and supports me in following the proper procedures and being transparent with my steps.
d. Confirmability (parallels objectivity)

Complete objectivity is not possible in social research, however, it should be apparent that one has “acted in good faith” (Bryman, 2012, p. 392). Personal values or theoretical inclinations should not overtly influence the research and findings (Bryman, 2012, p. 392). I am reflective of my own cultural, political and social context and that this influences how I read and interpret the data even though I try to minimize it.

3.8 Ethical considerations

The study does not gather information directly from human subjects but conducts an analysis of official documents that are public and available to access for everybody who wishes to do so. No individual is directly under scrutiny and the study does not include any personal or private data thus I do not face any privacy or consent issues as postulated in the GDPR (European Parliament and of the Council, 2016). The thesis complies with the Swedish Research Council’s document on Good Research Practice (2017). That includes e.g. that I am honest about my research and transparent about my research procedure. Further, I do not plagiarize, nor do I pass off the results of others as my own (Swedish Research Council, 2017, p. 10).
Chapter 4

Findings

The following chapter presents the findings of the analyzed documents sorted by country. Each chapter on the analyzed policy documents contains subchapters that stand for the categories and themes that have been developed in accordance with my research questions and objectives.

4.1 “Education and Employment Strategy” (UK)

The “Education and Employment Strategy” was published by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) of the UK in May 2018. The strategy elaborates on how approaches on education and employment should be tailored to support prisoners in their learning and acquisition of skills as well as securing and sustaining employment after release. The vision of this strategy is that “when an offender enters prison they should be put, immediately, on the path to employment on release” (MoJ, 2018).

The document contains 33 pages and starts off with a foreword by the Secretary of State for Justice and is followed by an introduction stating the vision of the UK for prison education, its current state of art, the challenges and their approach to it. The three main chapters, consisting of Chapter 1: Education and training in prison, Chapter 2: Prison work and Chapter 3: Employment on release, follow a similar structure as the introduction. First, there is a chapter summary and then information is given on the respective topic. After that, the document goes into detail about the progress to date, challenges ahead, the intended approach and a conclusion. Case studies are included in the first two chapters. The whole strategy paper ends with a conclusion.
4.1.1 Characterizing prisoners and people leaving prison one-sided

When speaking about persons who have left the prison, the document characterizes them predominately as ex-offender or ex-prisoner which enforces a one-sided perspective on prisoners and neglecting other aspects of the person. Furthermore, females in prisons are characterized primarily as child-caretaker which enforces social stereotypes.

a. Enforcing being an “offender” as the main characteristic

Persons released from prison are characterized one-sided as they are consistently referred throughout the document as “ex-offender” and “ex-prisoner”. The term “ex-prisoner” is used 47 times and the term “ex-offender” is used 41 times while they are described only three times as people leaving prison. Once the term “ex-felon” is used (MoJ, 2018, p. 28).

One part of the foreword reads as follows:

“We know that when an offender is released from prison, they are much less likely to continue committing crime if they have a job. Yet only 17% of ex-offenders are in PAYE work a year after coming out of prison and only half of employers say they would even consider employing an ex-offender.” (MoJ, 2018, p. 3)

The terms “ex-offender” and “offender […] released from prison” are used for persons who have left the prison. The second term even left out the prefix “ex-“ implying that the person is still an offender. This is notable as a person leaving prison has served his punishment for the crime he has committed thus should not be considered as an offender anymore. By referring to the persons as (ex-)offender, the MoJ reinforces social stereotypes and places the characteristic “criminal” in the foreground. The person is still merely seen as an offender and reduced to only this aspect of his personality. He is not regarded as an equal citizen in society.

The word choice and formulation can also be regarded as part of “penal populism” or “populist punitiveness” (Snacken, 2010, p. 280). These concepts refer to the development that discourses and policies have become more punitive as politicians believe that this is what the public expects and wants (Snacken, 2010, p. 280). Hence, arguing from this point of view, the way how the document characterizes people released from prison
reflects the British society’s attitude towards prisoners and people released from prison. This increased influence of the public opinions on political decision-making rather than relying on experts can particularly be observed in the US, the UK and other Anglo-Saxon countries (Snacken, 2010, p. 280). From a critical discourse analytic perspective, this is an example of how discourses shape and are shaped by society. The society’s attitudes influence how the discourse is framed and at the same time, the discourse in the policy document itself enforces the specific worldview of persons leaving prison as primarily an ex-offender.

Moreover, the document stresses that employees should see the person “not just as a former prisoner” (MoJ, 2018, p. 4) or an ex-offender but as “future potential” (MoJ, 2018, p. 4). This appears contradictory as the strategy paper itself, open to the public on the ministry website, enforces the discourse and characterization of offending as main attribute of the person. Thus, it seems not surprising that “many employers are still skeptical […] about recruiting ex-prisoners to work” (MoJ, 2018, p. 24) when the government continues referring to them in that way.

b. Basing education offers on stereotypes regarding female prisoners

Regarding female prisoners, it is interesting to note that the document criticizes how training offered to females are characterized by stereotypes about suitable employment (MoJ, 2018, p. 6). However, later, when describing the steps to support women leaving prison the document reads as follows:

“We will also set out our approach to managing and rehabilitating female offenders, including how best to support women into employment when they leave custody. For example, this will include how women can manage childcare responsibilities alongside rehabilitation programmes and working commitments.”

(MoJ, 2018, p. 7)

The first example of approach mentioned is to support women in managing childcare responsibilities and only then come the other points such as rehabilitation programs and working commitments (MoJ, 2018, p. 7). The way how the sentence above is phrased enforces stereotypical views on women as primarily child-caretaker and after that as
someone earning her own living. By characterizing women in this way, the document contributes, legitimizes and exacerbates the current inequality between women and men as it shapes the discourse and perceptions of the society in this specific way.

4.1.2 Legitimizing educational efforts

Throughout the document different arguments are employed to legitimize efforts and expenses on prison education: savings for taxpayers, the need to fill labor shortages and for the individual itself.

a. Cost savings for society

Efforts in education are primarily legitimized by referring to economic reasons. On the one hand, workforce shortages can be filled and on the other hand, providing education that leads to employment also achieves “value for money for the taxpayer” (MoJ, 2018, p. 13). Another “prize” (MoJ, 2018, p. 33) for investing in prison education are “lower reoffending rates, savings to the tax payer and enhanced public safety” (MoJ, 2018, p. 33). This aligns with many contemporary practices focusing on “managing risk and social control in the interests of the general public” (Behan, 2014, p. 20).

Furthermore, it seems as if prison education is obliged to justify itself to what extent it addresses offending behavior (Costelloe & Warner, 2003, p. 2). This can also be observed in the document:

“This work in prison services limits the cost of prison to the taxpayer. It also allows funding to be spent on other priorities in individual prisons, such as security measures or offender behaviour programmes, which tackle the root causes of offending.”
(MoJ, 2018, p. 19).

Offender behavior programs might be considered as an educational measure, however, viewing this from Rotman’s perspective (see chapter 1), offense-focused programs focus on conformity rather than authentic personal change (Behan, 2014, p. 27). Depending on how those offender behavior programs are implemented it might not be tackling the root
causes or aiming at a deep change of behavior based on one’s own insight but rather molds the persons into desired behavior patterns. Another question that arises is to what extent are programs able to tackle the root causes of offending as there are various factors leading to deviance.

b. Making use of the workforce in prisons to fill labor shortages

The increased focus on prison education has come about because the potential for greater economic development for the wider society has been discovered. Education and employment are less for the sake of the individuals that served a sentence such as promoted in critical education approaches but rather for employers and the economy that can benefit from the group that has not received much attention till now. The increased attention may also result from the fact that leaving the EU will create further workforce shortages (MoJ, 2018, p. 4). Another example of the discovery of the prisoners as useful workforce can be seen as the ministry seeks “to increase the commercial work done by prisoners in prison industries” (MoJ, 2018, p. 20).

Prisoners and people leaving prison are seen as strong workforce and “untapped talent” (MoJ, 2018, p. 26). Prisons have “the potential to provide many loyal and hard-working recruits” (MoJ, 2018, p. 4) and governors have to be supported to “make the best use of these powers” (MoJ, 2018, p. 7). At the same time, however, the jobs that the persons after release can take are predefined as the focus lies on education and training programs that eventually fill in the existing workforce shortages in the labor market. Those labor gaps are typically physically demanding jobs that only few people are willing to take such as construction, agriculture/horticulture, cleaning, catering and hospitality (MoJ, 2018, p. 4; p. 11; p. 23). Czerniawski (2016) also states that the reconstruction of prison education to low-cost job training contributes “to the domination of policies that speak more to public moral panic and the need to cut the economic costs of welfare than to the rehabilitation of prisoners” (p. 208). Here, the kind of employment serves primarily not as a starting point for the individual to lead a self-sufficient life and in the words of Freire to be liberating but to fill in labor shortages.
Priority sectors to engage with are identified annually which are based among others on labor market information that provide details of which qualifications are required (MoJ, 2018, p. 29). This reflects an “instrumental epistemology” (Bagnall & Hodge, 2018) as the content that the prisoners are learning is exactly tailored to fill in the labor shortages. The education sector in prison is going to be strongly steered from the outside development rather than from within the prison in order to meet prisoners’ needs and interests.

Further evidence for the instrumental approach can be found on p. 16:

“We are working on a system to intervene if education in individual prisons is not meeting expected standards.” (MoJ, 2018, p. 16)

The ministry aims to intervene if certain standards are not met. Those interventions will be based on various performance data, indicators and external scrutiny by inspectorates (MoJ, 2018, p. 16) hence employing an outcome and performance-based approach. Further, this point of view has also a clear link to the human capital theory as it evidences an “economistic, fragmentized and exclusively instrumentalistic” (Robeyns, 2006, p. 69) perspective. Education is conceptualized as human capital. It is only in so far relevant and valued as it “creates skills and helps to acquire knowledge that serves as an investment in the productivity of the human being as an economic production factor, that is, as a worker” (Robeyns, 2006, p. 72). In case that it does not bring the desired result, i.e. filling in the labor shortages, interventions will be taken.

Moreover, the document stresses that prison work (i.e. work done inside the prison by prisoners) and employment opportunities have to be clearly linked. However, if one considers the work that falls under prison work it is preliminary cleaning or cooking in prison kitchens (MoJ, 2018, p. 18). By emphasizing the link between this, the scope of possible jobs after prison is narrow as job opportunities within prisons are limited. Connecting prison work with employment after release again aims at combatting labor shortages.
c. Neglect of the prisoner’s needs and background

Even though the document mentions that education and training programs have to meet the prisoner’s needs, the employer’s needs and requirements are paramount as they are stressed various times. It appears as if prisoners have no say in the matter of what is they can and want to learn during their prison sentence. That employers’ needs and wishes are imperative is reflected in the fact that they are most of the times mentioned first:

“Empower governors in England to commission the education provision most likely to meet employers’ requirements and prisoners’ needs” (MoJ, 2018, p. 7)

“[…] education has also not been closely tailored to the requirements of employers or the needs of different cohorts of prisoners” (MoJ, 2018, p. 9)

“[…] to find the training most responsive to employers’ requirements and most appropriate for prisoners’ learning needs” (MoJ, 2018, p. 13)

For Houle (1963) adult education as “a substantially voluntary engagement, relies on individual learner self-perceptions or constructions of how they see and justify their involvement” (Bagnall & Hodge, 2018, p. 23). Arguing from this point of view, the approach adopted in this policy contradicts the adult education approaches where the adult himself is seen as knowledgeable and is included in the learning process. It is not in the foreground what the prisoner’s goals or interests in learning are but they are rather imposed on him and/or promoted through incentives and punishment. The instrumentalist approach fails to support adults as self-directed learners and fails to acknowledge the background and prior learning experiences. Learning is only perceived as the transmission of predefined skills (Bagnall & Hodge, 2018, p. 26).

d. Economic reframing of education

As seen, in the first place education serves economic purposes. This “economic reframing” (Wildemeersch, 2018) of education also implies an increased responsibilization of the individual:

“Ex-offenders must also be able to take the opportunities available to them.” (MoJ, 2018, p. 32)
By using the word “must”, the connotation resonates that it is the individual’s responsibility and duty to take the opportunities that are unfolded before him. However, by focusing on the individual’s responsibility, it deflects attention from the social, mental and personal background, social structures as well as the detrimental effects of imprisonment that makes learning within the prison and seizing the opportunities difficult. It does not take into account “the wider context from which they came and to which they will return” (Costelloe & Warner, 2003, p. 3). As research has shown, prisoners often come from a disadvantaged background and being released from prison after a sentence does not mean that the background is supportive in a sense that it facilitates taking up those opportunities. Furthermore, as pointed out earlier, the possible opportunities based on the education that the prisoners have received in prison are fairly narrow and predetermined.

Another example of individualization can be found on p. 5 and p. 33:

“Effective rehabilitation needs prisoners to engage with the opportunities in front of them, to build a different kind of life. They must be willing to commit to change, take advice, learn new skills and take opportunities to work – both during their sentence and after.” (MoJ, 2018, p. 5)

“This starts with prisoners themselves, who must be willing to engage positively with learning and work during their sentences.” (MoJ, 2018, p. 33)

Again, this request does not take into account the background and other social factors that lead to deviance and imprisonment. In a way, it places the blame on the individual if he does not seize the opportunities offered to him. Prisoners are expected “to conform to the normative standards taught through the language of empowerment” (Bayliss, 2003, p. 161).

The lack of responsiveness and sensitivity to the personal circumstances is further reflected in the fact that it is stated several times that one has to “set each prisoner on a path to employment from the moment they enter prison” (MoJ, 2018, p. 32) or when “an offender enters prison they should be put, immediately, on the path to employment” (MoJ, 2018, p. 33). By emphasizing to make the prisoner employable immediately, the ministry does not acknowledge either the transition time or the background but rather aims to tap
the new potential as soon as possible. Furthermore, the document stresses that prisoners “must be willing to commit change” (MoJ, 2018, p. 5). However, the change refers primarily to employment and not on a holistic level. The idea of change does not correspond with Mezirow’s transformative learning where ways of understanding the world are transformed through critical reflection. Changes are elicited through incentives and not based on one’s own insight.

4.1.3 Ensuring a successful rehabilitation

The document mentions several ways to ensure successful rehabilitation of persons in prison and eventually leaving prison. Hereby, employment is regarded as the main tool for rehabilitation. Further, in order to have prisoners participate in education and eventually be employed, the document stresses the use of incentives for participation. In order to make rehabilitation sustainable, the ministry aims at “managing” the future paths of prisoners.

a. Employment as “key tool” for prisoner rehabilitation

Employment is seen as a “key tool for prisoner rehabilitation” (MoJ, 2018, p. 23). However, in contrast to genuine education, employment itself does not have the power to create a self-reliant, critical thinking person – especially given the narrow scope of possible employments that are predominantly little cognitively demanding. The CoE also mentions that very low skill requirement jobs may have “demoralizing” effects (CoE, 1990, p. 32). Further, by phrasing employment as “key tool” for rehabilitation, it creates an image of employment as the main content of rehabilitation although against the background of Rotman (1986) it comprises more such as personal development and the development of social responsibility.

Work “provides not just an income but also structure, direction and self-worth” (MoJ, 2018, p. 33). Self-worth can be understood in different ways. By connecting work as self-worth giving, it implies that it is not something that everyone possesses regardless of
whether he is employed or not. The worth of a person is based on his ability to have an employment and the person is not valuable in himself.

b. Promoting participation in education programs through incentives

In order to promote education and training the ministry intends to “sharpen the incentives and punishments for all prisoners in custody” (MoJ, 2018, p. 7) so that prisoners participate in rehabilitation instead of engaging in violence and disruption. This line of argumentation depicts education as a “tool of prison management” (Bayliss, 2003, p. 168) or a form of social control (Bayliss, 2003, p. 169) rather than a human right as promoted by the UN or the CoE.

The ministry adopts a behaviorist and conditioning approach to change and rehabilitation by giving incentives. Rather than trying to support prisoners in understanding why they should engage in education and the value of it for their further life, one is “punishing bad behavior and rewarding the good” (MoJ, 2018, p. 7), “[reinforcing] positive behaviour” (MoJ, 2018, p. 33) and uses incentives “to promote good behaviour in prison” (MoJ, 2018, p. 4). The neglect of the personal insight into participating is further reflected on p. 5:

“Prisons cannot help people who are not willing to help themselves – but they can sharpen the incentives to help set prisoners on the right path.” (MoJ, 2018, p. 6)

Through incentives persons are steered in the desired direction. By using the formulation “to set someone on the right path” the independence and self-determination of the person is excluded and he is rendered as a cue ball.

Against the background of Rotman (1986) this approach shows parallels to the authoritarian approach to rehabilitation where prisoners are supposed to comply with predetermined patterns – in this case to participate in the education programs in order to eventually fill in the labor shortages.
c. Managing future paths of prisoners

The document speaks of “managing” offenders (MoJ, 2018, p. 7). It states:

“[…] we have also reformed the way we manage prisoners when they are released from custody.” (MoJ, 2018, p. 26)

This choice of word stresses that prisoners are in a sense objects that can be managed and controlled rather than worked with. It is also to be seen particularly critical regarding the fact that the person has left prison and is a free citizen. By using the word “managing”, it implies less of a supporting role of the ministry, but it shows rather the aim to maintain control and taking on a patronizing attitude. The prisoner or person leaving the prison is not seen as competent or knowledgeable as promoted in the philosophy of critical adult education. Furthermore, critical education aims at being empowering and liberating. However, by using the word “managing” it reveals that the person going through the education process is not empowered and liberated as he is still regarded as being in need of control. Additionally, the term “managing” also reflects the idea of “new managerialism” that is typical for neoliberal notions in education as one aims to track and assess all the steps to ensure the fulfillment of the goals.

4.1.4 Brief summary

To conclude, the document stresses the importance and benefit of education primarily for the labor market as this allows to fill workforce shortages. The education offered within the prisons are not based on the needs of the prisoners but are steered from the outside labor market development. The personal interests of the prisoners seem secondary. Throughout the document, it appears as if the value of the prisoner respectively why one focuses on education for prisoners is only exhausted by the fact that they represent unused potential that needs to be utilized to the full.

By emphasizing the responsibility of the individual to take the opportunities, the personal and emotional state of the individual as well as the contextual factors that complicate taking the opportunities are excluded. Regarding critical adult education, it becomes obvious that education here aims neither at developing critical thinking, furthering
democracy nor being transformative. Changes within the individual are not based on own insights but rather the individual is molded into suitable employment and desired behavior patterns by imposing incentives. Education is merely seen as workplace learning and this in a restrictive way where professions are predetermined.

4.2 Findings “Education and Training in the Correctional Services” (Norway)

The document to be analyzed is called “Education and Training in the Correctional Services” with the subtitle “Another Spring” and is a short version of report no. 27 to the Storting (Norwegian Parliament). It was published by the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research in 2005.

The report comprises 39 pages and starts with a preface on the objectives of (prison) education. It is followed by an introduction elaborating on the background and history of prison education. The following chapter deals with the current situation of prison education and goes into detail on, among other things, the right to education, the relationship between education and punishment or models and principles of prison education. Then, the next chapter elaborates on how to improve education in correctional services and touches upon areas such as higher education, ICT, Norwegian language instruction, competence development for teachers and instructors and follow-up after release. Further, it includes recommendations by the ministry. Aligned with the research questions and aims of this study, the analysis and findings focus on attitudes expressed by the ministry and arguments brought forward regarding education.

4.2.1 Painting a humane and multidimensional portrayal of the prisoner

In the report prisoners are presented in a multidimensional way and referred to as pupils and participants. Further, attention is paid to the diverse background of prisoners and a poem is used to illustrate a prisoner’s perspective.
a. Prisoners as persons having emotions

The subtitle “Another Spring” of this report refers to a poem written by Bashir, a student at the Grønland Adult Education Center. The poem is part of the collection “Dikt fra fengselet” (Poems from prison) which includes poems that prisoners have written during their sentence in Oslo Prison as part of the Norwegian language class.

The poem reads as follows:

“Another Spring
Another spring
I’m locked up.
I’m bored,
so bored that I think I’m going
to die.
The outside world, me and my thoughts;
it’s all hopeless here in the dark.
Don’t think I’ll ever see
a beautiful spring again.
Spring has just meant
misery; this summer I should probably
make a run for it.
Maybe summer can make me
happy, so I can forget
everything that has happened to me down here.” – Bashir

By including a poem written by a prisoner, the ministry gives the people concerned in this report – prisoners and people leaving prison – a voice. It shows the emotions, hopelessness and the difficulties that the person in prison faces. This allows regarding the prisoner not only as a criminal but as a human being with feelings and struggling with the detrimental effects of imprisonment. Furthermore, it gives a hint to what is learned in prison and that the classes also focus at least to some extent to the creative expression of feelings as e.g. promoted in the documents of the CoE.

b. Prisoners as diverse pupils and participants

Most of the times prisoners participating in education programs are referred to as “participants” or “pupils” thus emphasizing a person who is learning. The emphasis is
deflected from being a prisoner or criminal but as someone having the potential to learn and develop. To be able to classify, e.g. the term “pupil” is used 48 times (although also referring to pupils outside prisons) and the term prisoner is only used 17 times. The belief in the capability to develop is stressed as the ministry wants schools to provide counseling “to assist in developing plans for individuals” (Ministry of Education and Research, 2005, p. 35).

Furthermore, by using the term “pupil” the aspect of the person being a part of the society or as someone “normal” is stressed as pupils are a common group in the world outside of prison. There is no distinction made between prisoners and non-prisoners in the context of education as the term “pupil” is used both for referring to persons in prisons and outside prisons participating in education programs. This reflects also the “normalization principle” that the treatment of prisoners is based upon in Norwegian prisons. The normalization principle aims at making life in prison as normal as possible within the necessary security framework.

The normalizing can also be seen through the fact that the document uses the word “school” for the education setting in prisons and not e.g. prison schools. By using the word school, a bridge to everyday language is built. Moreover, it aligns with the notion that prisoners and people outside prisons have the same education rights hence they are also offered the same institutional place which is a school. Additionally, as the Norwegian prison system follows the “import model” all “non-penal functions are placed with bodies outside the prison” (Ministry of Education and Research, 2005, p. 15) which includes teachers and normalizes the teaching situation in prison.

Moreover, the document also acknowledges the diversity of the prisoners and that they “do not constitute a homogenous group” (Ministry of Education and Research, 2005, p. 18). Hence, different education and training offers are needed in order to attend to those needs. Learning difficulties are neither attributed to the prisoner himself nor cognitive deficits but that this in general “reflects a background characterised by a lack of social and pedagogical stimulation” (Ministry of Education and Research, 2005, p. 18). The specific backgrounds of prisoners have to be considered in the educational plans and that
issues such as worries about work, accommodation, social networks or substance abuse adversely affect learning. Hence education and training in Norwegian prisons “must also take the time to create positive expectations, strengthen inmates’ faith in themselves and improve their self-control” (Ministry of Education and Research, 2005, p. 29). Furthermore, education and training have to be adapted to the needs of the individual regarding his or her “background […] length of sentence […] gender, language background etc.” (Ministry of Education and Research, 2005, p. 24). This takes up the notions of critical adult education where the adult learner is central and the background of each is considered.

4.2.2 Legitimating educational efforts

In order to legitimize efforts in education, the ministry firstly presents Norway as a competent and respected actor in the field of prison education which is looking back on a long and successful history in this field. Further, the ministry refers to the benefits of prison education for the economy and security of the society as well as for the individual.

a. Presenting Norway as a competent country

The ministry writes about itself and Norway in the preface as following:

“As a nation, Norway has traditionally been at the forefront with regard to the humane treatment of prison inmates and the protection of their civil rights. This has been crucial for successfully returning inmates to society, something it will continue to be in the future.” (Ministry of Education and Research, 2005, p. 5)

By using the terms “traditionally” and “at the forefront” it transmits the picture of a successful country that has been a pioneer in this field for a long time. The impression is stressed by the formulation “it will continue to be in the future” which leaves no room for possible doubts. This self-perception and trust can be attributed to the fact that Norway has a long history of prison education that aims at socializing prisoners and equipping them with the knowledge to be able to lead a self-reliant life and adhering to a crime-free lifestyle (Ministry of Education and Research, 2005, p. 9). On the other side, from a critical discourse perspective, through this language use the Norwegian government
creates trust and establishes its credentials within the society. It maintains its powerful position and as a government whose decisions and attitudes can be relied on.

b. Benefits for the economy and society
In order to legitimate expenses and efforts on prison education, the ministry refers to social and economic reasons as it contributes to the wealth creation in the Norwegian society (Ministry of Education and Research, 2005, p. 5). However, the emphasis is more on the benefit for the society. For example, the ministry mentions the high costs of crime to society but then refers to the harming effects that crimes have on the victims but also on the prisoner himself. Implementing appropriate education and training can prevent those crimes thus are seen “an investment in the future and a contribution towards greater security in society” (Ministry of Education and Research, 2005, p. 5). The ultimate argument in favor of prison education is then security. This emphasis on the social aspect is stressed again by the end of the document where efforts in education and training are legitimized by the fact that it is “a key factor in preventing recidivism” (Ministry of Education and Research, 2005, p. 36) thus it is “a good social [emphasis by me] investment” (Ministry of Education and Research, 2005, p. 36).

Further, it is stated:

“If education can help to successfully rehabilitate only a small fraction, this will still be a good investment economically speaking, improve the quality of life of perpetrators and yield fewer victims.” (Ministry of Education and Research, 2005, p. 37)

This shows that investing in education is even then valuable if it only rehabilitates a small group of persons as it improves the quality of life of the perpetrator and yields fewer victims in any case. Speaking “economically” in this case does not refer to the savings of public costs but that both the quality of life of the person leaving prison and potential victims are central in rehabilitation.

c. Development through education for the individual
Education enables the individual to live in the society and culture as well as to impart knowledge and become self-reliant. Further, it enables the individual to develop the
talents to the fullest possible (Ministry of Education and Research, 2005, p. 5). Education is seen as able to provide persons in prison “with a foundation for managing in society and the workforce” (Ministry of Education and Research, 2005, p. 19). Here, the word order implies that the value of education is primarily for society and secondarily for the economy and workforce. However, in other parts of the document, the argument that education and training serve to qualify for the workforce is predominant as it is mentioned first and only then are the other reasons given:

“[…] education and training in the correctional services will be an important contribution towards qualifying for the workforce and coping in general as well as towards rehabilitation” (Ministry of Education and Research, 2005, p. 22)

Based on the ideas of the Education Act, the students can become “useful and independent human beings” (Ministry of Education and Research, 2005, p. 12) and develop “skills, understanding and responsibility that prepare pupils for life at work and in society” (Ministry of Education and Research, 2005, p. 12). However, the question arises what the notion of “useful” implies and for whom he should be useful and in which context. Furthermore, the terms “useful” and “independent” are partly contradictory as “useful” implies to aim at a certain goal which may be defined by someone else while “independent” signifies in a sense the opposite.

4.2.3 Education as right

Based on the human rights perspective, the document stresses that prisoners have the same rights as persons outside prisons except for the deprivation of liberty. This applies also to the right to education that prisoners have. However, this right is restricted when it comes to foreign prisoners.

a. Right to education for convicted persons

The document adapts a “policy rhetoric of rights” (Czerniawski, 2016, p. 202). It states:

“[…] convicted persons and persons in custody have, in principle, the same rights and obligations than the rest of the population”

(Ministry of Education and Research, 2005, p. 13)
However, citing from a rights perspective does not guarantee that education of a certain kind or quality is going to be provided by a particular institution (Czerniawski, 2016, p. 202). Further, by adding the insertion “in principle” it becomes evident that there are certain restrictions. This refers on the one hand to the security issue as this is and should be paramount. However, one could also read this in a way that a loophole is left open as the rights of the prison inmates can be restricted while still complying with the guidelines.

Included in the same rights as for persons outside prisons is the right to education. In the preface, the ministry refers to the report on “Culture for Learning” that states:

“Education passes on values and imparts knowledge and tools that allow everyone to make full use of their abilities and realise their talents. It is meant to cultivate and educate so that individuals can accept personal responsibility for themselves and their fellows. [...] that in the future we must increasingly appreciate diversity and deal with differences.”

(Ministry of Education and Research, 2005, p. 5).

This concept of education aligns partly with critical education. It acknowledges education as a means in itself and as promoting personal development. It aims at developing responsible citizens. Those objectives of education are not specifically targeted at prisoners but the ministry stresses in the next sentence that those objectives are “also crucial for education in the correctional services” (Ministry of Education and Research, 2005, p. 5). The adjective “crucial” serves to underline the importance to implement these aims in prison education and that they should not be neglected in the prison context. After that, the document states:

“All pupils are entitled to adapted and customised education based on their own abilities and needs. This also applies to education and training in the correctional services as well.” (Ministry of Education and Research, 2005, p. 5)

By referring to general aims of education and then making explicit that all those objectives and principles also apply to prisoners, it becomes obvious that it is not a matter of course that it applies to prisoners. By arguing in that structure, the ministry raises awareness of the different views on education and that not everyone is regarded as equal but that there is a distinction in who deserves what kind of education. Later on, it is
stressed explicitly by stating that the “objective for education in the correctional services is the same for all other education” (Ministry of Education and Research, 2005, p. 5).

b. Restricted right to education for foreign prisoners

Regarding foreign prisoners, it becomes evident that the previous argumentation that everyone has the same right to education is restricted and does not apply to every prisoner in Norwegian prisons. Foreign prisoners do not have the same rights as national prisoners. In comparison to the previous determination to provide good education to all prisoners the word choices regarding foreign prisoners remain rather vague:

“[Foreign prisoners] should [emphasis by me] be given educational opportunities on par with other prisoners” (Ministry of Education and Research, 2005, p. 35)

“[L]aws and recommendations are aimed [emphasis by me] at ensuring that prisons accommodate foreign prisoners” (Ministry of Education and Research, 2005, p. 35)

“[T]he Ministry advocates [emphasis by me] ensuring the right to education and training for foreign prisoners” (Ministry of Education and Research, 2005, p. 36)

The ministry does not insist that foreign prisoners receive education but only that they should. The measures that are necessary to provide education to foreign prisoners is merely “advocated” or “aimed” for but no action is implied in those formulations. Furthermore, the allocation of funding for the county administrations for prison education are based on the number of “entitled pupils” and school places which does not include funds needed for prison education for foreign prisoners. Without taking the foreign prisoners into consideration, it is difficult to have the financial resources to implement programs for them retrospectively after funds have been allocated. Restricting the right to education can also be seen in the following:

“In light of this, the Ministry will continue the current practice of providing instruction to pupils thereto entitled.” (Ministry of Education and Research, 2005, p. 36)

In this formulation, it becomes obvious that only entitled persons receive instruction. However, others who are not entitled do not receive instruction and therefore also no education or training. Foreign prisoners are given the right to education but they cannot exercise it. It makes a difference whether someone is merely granted a right or whether
someone ensures that this right can be exercised. This is especially crucial in the light of prison education as prisoners do not have the opportunity to exercise their right to education if there is no one offering as they cannot participate in the “open” educational landscape if prison staff does not grant it.

Additionally, the document extends respectively specifies that prisoners also have the right to have a flexible and broad education offer (Ministry of Education and Research, 2005, p. 22). However, later on, due to capacity and resources reasons, priority to education is given to the youngest prisoners with the least schooling or who have been in an education program before imprisonment or in another prison before transferring (Ministry of Education and Research, 2005, p. 16).

4.2.4 Responding to individual needs of the prisoners

The document stresses the importance of tailored education programs that respond to the needs of the prisoners. The responsibility for a broad offer is, however, shifted to the local school. Furthermore, vocational training and other activities implemented are fairly narrow and focus on deficits.

a. Emphasizing the need for tailored education programs

The ministry states:

“The content of the education and training must accord with the abilities, aspirations and needs of inmates and not determined on the basis of what the permanent teaching staff can conceivably offer.” (Ministry of Education and Research, 2005, p. 23)

By using the word “must” the emphasis is strengthened on the imperative to tailor the programs to the prisoners and reflects focus on target groups which constitutes a central aspect of adult education. However, the ministry shifts and shirks the responsibility of this task to the local schools as the schools “must ensure the proper use of teaching resources by bringing in other teachers” (Ministry of Education and Research, 2005, p. 23) in order to provide an extensive offer that can respond to prisoners’ needs.
b. Limiting vocational training options

Offered vocational training is to a large extent limited to mechanical, woodworking, hotel and food-processing trades (Ministry of Education and Research, 2005, p. 22). The scope of possible vocational education is narrow and refers to the typical employments that lack workforce. By limiting the vocational offers in that way, it does not acknowledge the potential within the prisoners to become something else as advocated in the critical education approach.

c. Employing a deficit perspective

The prison implements further program activities of which the main carried out programs are cognitive programs, drunk-driving courses and anger-management courses. The target groups for those programs are substance abusers, violent criminals, sex offenders and recidivists (Ministry of Education and Research, 2005, p. 27). Those programs focus rather on what a person lacks than starting from what the adult already knows as promoted in critical adult education. However, it is not that these programs are unimportant but those behavior-orientated programs need to complement education programs aimed at critical thinking, transformative learning and personal development rather than substituting adult education as only education approach. Against the background of the different rehabilitation models, cognitive programs reflect a medical model of rehabilitation where the prisoner is seen as being in deficit or having an “illness” and is in need to be cured (Bayliss, 2003, p. 160).

4.2.5 Assisting persons leaving prison

After release, correctional services are obliged “to assist inmates in obtaining a place to live and work” (Ministry of Education and Research, 2005, p. 16). The word “assist” contains a supportive connotation where the other individual maintains its independence. Furthermore, the term “follow-up” (Ministry of Education and Research, 2005, p. 16) is used which implies a less controlling role. The supporting role that the ministry seeks to assume is stressed as they want to “provide those released with the best possible services” (Ministry of Education and Research, 2005, p. 34). This creates a picture of a released
person that can take advantage of the offers based on one’s own judgment of its importance and relevance.

### 4.2.6 Brief summary

Prisoners are presented in the document primarily as pupils, participants and human beings with feelings and individual backgrounds are emphasized. The ministry respectively Norway represents itself as a competent country providing good education to its prisoners and through that increasing the society’s trust in its decisions.

Educational efforts are legitimized from an economic and social perspective whereas social reasons such as security outweigh the economic rationale. Further, the document also refers to the benefits for the individual for life after prison in society and the workplace. Due to the heterogeneity of the prison population, the document stresses the need for education to be tailored to those different backgrounds. However, the responsibility is shirked from the ministry to local schools to provide a diverse offer. Offers beyond education programs are vocational training options as well as other program activities that are fairly narrow and employ a deficit perspective. Furthermore, the document stresses that all prisoners have the same rights as persons outside prisons except for the deprivation of liberty. However, regarding foreign prisoners, the ministry employs a much vaguer language in how far the right to education applies to this group of prisoners.
4.3 Findings “Joint Prison Education Strategy 2019-2022” (Ireland)

The “Joint Prison Education Strategy 2019-2022” was launched by the Minister for Justice and Equality in 2019. It is a joint strategy with the Irish Prison Service (IPS) and Educational Training Boards Ireland (ETBI) which details the objectives of prison education and how to meet these objectives.

The strategy paper consists of nine pages and starts with an introduction which is then followed by a graph on the mission, vision and values of the ministry. The document goes into detail on the operating environment, that is to say the current situation, how education is delivered and the policy, prison and international context. After that, the IPS and ETBI represent the strategic actions to achieve their aims. This includes e.g. increasing staff training, upgrading facilities, using more ICT, providing broad-based education and quality assurance.

4.3.1 Stressing prisoners as autonomous persons

In the document, prisoners are not regarded primarily as offender or a homogenous group but the different needs are stressed as well as the free will of the individual and potential to develop.

a. Prisoners as “people in custody”

Persons in prisons are referred to repeatedly as “people in custody” (IPS & ETBI, 2019, p. 1) which places the focus on the imprisoned person as a person and not as a prisoner primarily (IPS & ETBI, 2019, p. 4).
b. Supporting function of prison education

By using the word “help” (IPS & ETBI, 2019, p. 1) when speaking about the role of education for the person in prison, the independence and self-determination of the individual is stressed as promoted in critical adult education where the adult is seen as self-directed learner. The word choice also signifies a supporting rather than controlling role as it is not aimed at imposing certain ways of thinking or behavior.

c. Prisoners having diverse needs

Education is aimed at responding to the needs of the prisoners (IPS & ETBI, 2019, p. 1) which aligns with the CoE philosophy and the critical adult education approach. Prisoners are seen as adaptive persons as personal development as one of the main goals of education is stressed. The document states that personal development is understood in the context of adult education. However, it remains unclear what exactly personal development entails as adult education itself can imply different rationals. Szifris, Fox and Bradbury (2018) also note that the term personal development “can take a variety of meanings” (p. 42). Some notions of personal development may relate only to making someone employable and developing skills while others go beyond this and emphasize the development of a person in a broader sense (Szifris et al., 2018, p. 42).

4.3.2 Legitimizing educational efforts

The document legitimizes efforts in education by stating the positive effect it has on the individual. Furthermore, it points out indirectly the benefits for the labor market.

a. Counteracting negative previous and current experiences

The IPS and ETBI does not only aim at providing education but a broad and flexible education program. This is legitimized through the fact that it has to be “attractive enough to counteract the previous negative experiences of those in custody” (IPS & ETBI, 2019,
Further, education is legitimized as it helps the prisoners to cope with the sentence (IPS & ETBI, 2019, p. 3).

b. Reducing challenges in the labor market

The IPS and ETBI point out that educational disadvantages are connected to difficulties in finding employment. Then the document states:

“Those with a history of imprisonment and educational disadvantage face even greater challenges.” (IPS & ETBI, 2019, p. 4)

Here, in an indirect way, education efforts are legitimized by the labor market. Through prison education, the educational disadvantages that many prisoners face can be compensated and hence it will be easier for people leaving prison to find employment. This in turn, will benefit the economy (IPS & ETBI, 2019, p. 3).

Interestingly, in general, the economic value of education plays a rather small role as it is referred to only twice. Education and employment are not very explicitly linked which becomes evident as employability, work or training are not mentioned under the category of “Broad-based Education Provision” in the document but are mentioned under the category “Integration and Sentence Planning” (IPS & ETBI, 2019, pp. 6–7). Further, programs such as “Alternatives to Violence” are summarized under complementary programs and not as part of education itself (IPS & ETBI, 2019, p. 7).

4.3.3 Aims of education

The IPS and ETBI aim at providing, amongst other characteristics, a broad and flexible education program. In order to illustrate this, a range of adjectives and descriptions is used. Moreover, the importance of prison education as a means for developing an “appetite” for lifelong learning is stressed.
a. Providing broad and flexible education

The IPS and ETBI state their aim of prison education as follows:

“The aim of the Prison Education Service is to deliver a high quality, broad, flexible programme of education that helps people in custody cope with their sentence, achieve personal development, prepare for life after release and establish an appetite and capacity for life-long learning.” (IPS & ETBI, 2019, p. 1)

The IPS and ETBI use several descriptions and adjectives such as broad, flexible and high quality in order to signify its aim and determination to provide good education adapted to the needs of the prisoners. Furthermore, the document enumerates four goals of education that focus on the detrimental effects of imprisonment, personal development, integration into society and development of the ability of life-long learning (IPS & ETBI, 2019, p. 1). However, it remains open what the preparation for life after release as mentioned above entails, i.e. whether it follows a critical approach promoting participation, social responsibility and critical reflection or a more economic perspective focusing on participation in the labor market.

In order to emphasize its ambition to provide good education, a wide range of descriptions and adjectives are used in the following sentence and partly in a repetitive manner:

“The Service seeks to deliver relevant programmes that cater for holistic needs, ensures broad access and high participation and prioritises those with basic education needs. It supports a multi-disciplinary approach within the prison system. The provision of a broad-based, flexible, relevant education service is designed to cater for the complex educational needs of persons in custody, covering a wide spectrum from Basic Education to Third Level programmes. It balances the need for practical, up-to-date accredited learning and learning for personal development within a philosophy of Second Chance, Continuing or Adult Education. [emphases by me]”

(IPS & ETBI, 2019, p. 1)

b. Developing an “appetite” for lifelong learning

An “appetite” (IPS & ETBI, 2019, p. 1) and “desire” (IPS & ETBI, 2019, p. 3) for lifelong learning should be developed. The “full potential as learners” (IPS & ETBI, 2019, p. 3) should be achieved. Lifelong learning refers to the concept of learning throughout life (Lee & Jan, 2018, p. 378) and can be understood in different ways with differing rationals
and policy motivations laying behind it. In recent years it has become a “buzzword” used by politicians and Matheson and Matheson (1996) state that lifelong education is “bedecked with hurrah words and emotive terms” (p. 230).

Lifelong learning can be framed in a neoliberal paradigm where due to globalization and rapid changes continuous learning is necessary in order to remain competitive in a knowledge economy. Learning is necessary in order to make individuals employable (Jarvis, 2007, pp. 122–123) and the resulting competitive individuals “in the form of human capital are the basic infrastructure of a global knowledge economy” (Regmi, 2015, p. 138). Organizations such as the OECD or the EU promoted lifelong learning as a “strategy to speed up economic growth and become competitive” (Regmi, 2015, p. 133). This point of view aligns with the human capital theory as it considers education as an investment with beneficial economic returns and the maximization of growth and prosperity. Investment in education and learning is seen as more economically profitable than the investment in other non-human capitals such as industry or agriculture (Regmi, 2015, p. 135).

On the other side of the spectrum, lifelong learning can be regarded from a humanistic perspective and resonating with the critical, liberatory education approach. Here, lifelong learning is “deeply linked to social and economic justice, equality, respect for human rights, recognition of cultural diversity, peace building and self-determination” (Regmi, 2015, p. 142). This perspective adopts a wider view that includes lifelong learning as beneficial not only for economic growth but also for the individual and the community and as promoting democratic citizenship (Regmi, 2015, p. 142). In that sense, lifelong learning is perceived as a “new social movement” (Jarvis, 2007, p. 123; Regmi, 2015, p. 142).

In the Irish policy document, it is not clear which perspective lifelong learning is viewed from. It remains open whether lifelong learning is regarded as important for one’s own sake and a democratic society or whether it is aimed to create employable individuals that can compete in a rapidly changing world or whether it is aimed at both.
4.3.4 Making education measurable

Education programs are also aimed at responding to “accredited learning” (IPS & ETBI, 2019, p. 1) which includes the notion of measurement. The quality of education is measured by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) and all “Prison Education Centres meet the quality assurance standards demanded by QQI” (IPS & ETBI, 2019, p. 1). Whether standards are met can be measured when it comes to skills where one might take a test at the end of the education period. However, another question arising is to what extent other objectives such as personal development can be measured. Additionally, also non-accredited education is provided such as theater or drama (IPS & ETBI, 2019, p. 6) which is not measurable. The question is which stance non-accredited programs have in comparison to accredited ones if measurement is central.

Non-accredited education is recognized:

“The Department of Education and Skills stresses the role of non-accredited learning in enabling adults to return to the learning process at their own pace and in facilitating them to explore their full potential. The IPS also acknowledges the value of non-accredited programmes and their inclusion in the prison education curriculum. [emphases by me]” (IPS & ETBI, 2019, p. 4)

However, non-accredited learning is only “stressed” by the Department of Education and Skills and the IPS “acknowledges” the value of those programs and their inclusion in the education curriculum of the prison. The use of the word “acknowledge” does not imply the determination to really put those programs into practice. Generally, although the strategy draws from the UN standards, the COE’s recommendations and the European Prison Rules, the commitment to those through the word choices remain rather vague. Another example is e.g. that the joint strategy only “reflects and acknowledges” (IPS & ETBI, 2019, p. 3) the issues raised in the CoE and UN documents.

4.3.5 Usage of market-orientated language

Even though the economic value of education is not stressed in this document, a market-orientated language is adopted to some extent:
“The Service seeks to **deliver** [...] [emphasis by me]” (IPS & ETBI, 2019, p. 1)

“The IPS plays a critical role in facilitating the effective **delivery** of education in Irish prisons by the ETBs. [emphasis by me]” (IPS & ETBI, 2019, p. 3)

“[...] on how education is **delivered** in prisons. [emphasis by me]” (IPS & ETBI, 2019, p. 4)

Education is phrased in terms of service and delivery which signifies education as a tradeable commodity. Bowl (2017) also notes that the “language of market” pervades the discourse on curriculum and teaching “in which ‘learning packages’ are ‘delivered’, ‘programmes’ are ‘marketed’ and potential students have been re-cast as ‘customers’” (p. 164). The question arises is to what extent the marketized language can be truly reconciled with the notions of critical education and how education and learning will be conceptualized in this kind of marketized discourse (Bowl, 2017, p. 164). From a critical discourse analysis perspective, the IPS and ETBI spread a discourse of education that is characterized by market-language and thus enforcing the connection of education and neoliberalism.

### 4.3.6 Brief summary

The document follows a broad concept of education, including personal development, lifelong learning and preparation for life after release. However, the concepts of “personal development” and “lifelong learning” can be interpreted in different ways, such as from an economic or critical perspective, and it remains open what the Irish ministry’s position on this is. Additionally, there are accredited and non-accredited education programs and it is left open which stance non-accredited and non-measurable education aimed at personal development has if prison education has to meet the standards of the QQI.

Education is regarded as crucial as it fights the detrimental effects of imprisonment. The notion of this also emphasizes the prisoner as a person with feelings. In the document, the prisoner is represented as someone who can develop and education assumes a supporting role in this.
Chapter 5

5.1 Comparison and Discussion

Generally, the Irish and Norwegian documents adopt a similar view on prisoners and prison education as they are both based on the CoE’s documents “Education in prison” and the European Prison Rules. Furthermore, the notions of critical pedagogy and critical adult education can be found in those two documents. On the other hand, the UK employs a more economic focused perspective. However, it has to be noted that the policy paper of the UK is specifically targeted at education and employment while the other ones are more general.

In the following, I am going to compare the three documents regarding the characterization of prisoners and how individuality and self-responsibility are viewed by the respective governments, the need for a wide curriculum, the legitimization of educational efforts and how education is measured. Furthermore, while comparing I will also critically discuss the underlying assumptions of the attitudes and their implications in regard to critical adult education.

5.1.1 Characterization of prisoners

Comparing how the UK, Norway and Ireland use certain terms to describe and characterize the prisoners in the policy documents reveals much about the attitude held towards them. The document of the UK stresses the prisoner and the person leaving prison as an offender respectively ex-offender while Norway regards the prisoner primarily as a citizen and person. In a similar vein does the Irish document refer to prisoners as “people in custody”. The latter two documents also acknowledge the heterogeneity of the prison population with different backgrounds, needs and feelings. Even though the document of the UK stresses the needs of different cohorts of prisoners, the needs of the labor market are paramount and individual backgrounds are neglected. Despite the focus on the labor
market it is nonetheless important to acknowledge the different needs and backgrounds of the prisoners in order to be able to implement genuine adult education.

In any education approach, the student has to be given “a significant say in what is studied, how it will be studied and how it is evaluated” (Warner, 2002, p. 33). Additionally, the students’ life experiences are included in the learning (Warner, 2002, p. 33). By characterizing the prisoner as one-dimensional and only attributing negative aspects, one denies the possibility for them to bring in their own perspectives and experiences. It seems redundant to let someone participate in the educational planning process if he is merely seen as an offender. If one is blind to the positive qualities and the ability to develop then it makes “little sense in supporting developmental educational activity for people who [one] could not envisage developing” (Costelloe & Warner, 2014, p. 178).

5.1.1.1 Different penal policies and philosophies

The way how Norway and Ireland regard their prisoners in the documents and how the UK does it, reflect two different penal philosophies and models (Warner, 2007, p. 171). The document of the UK follows rather the idea of “culture of control” or “new punitiveness” (Costelloe & Warner, 2014, p. 176) by referring to the prisoners primarily as (ex-)offender. Warner (2007) has termed this point of view also as “Anglo-American” (p. 171) as the most vehement advocations and illustrations of a punitive model can be found in the US and England (Warner, 1998, p. 121).

The “punitive model” is characterized by three key features:

1. negative stereotyping of prisoners
2. vengeful attitudes
3. a massive increase in the use of incarceration

(Warner, 2007, p. 179)
Especially the first attitude can be observed in the document of the UK as the prisoner is represented as one-dimensional. In a punitive model “[o]ther aspects of their lives and personalities, their complexities, their problems and their qualities (aspects of the whole person, in other words) are screened out” (Warner, 2007, p. 180). By focusing on offending as the main attribute of the prisoner and person leaving prison one also deflects attention from the prison itself being criminogenic (Warner, 2007, p. 180). This one-sided perspective also prevents us from regarding prisoners or persons leaving prison as members of the society and recognizing their value as individuals independently from their actions. Warner (1998) states that we “also need to be able to locate the negative labeling as part of wider social patterns” (p. 123) and acknowledging prisoners as “socially deprived citizens in need of support” (Warner, 2011, p. 93). The majority of prisoners are “victims of severe social and psychological neglect in the past” (Warner, 1998, p. 123).

The other two key features vengeful attitudes and mass incarceration cannot be found in the policy documents which is gratifying. However, looking at the incarceration rates of the respective countries, it becomes obvious that the UK with Scotland, England and Wales has the highest incarceration rate among the West European countries in 2019 (Statista, n.d.). The high numbers contradict the idea to use imprisonment as “last resort”. Using imprisonment as “last resort” acknowledges the detrimental effects of imprisonment as “time spent in prison serves to reduce the chances of living a conventional life – with a legitimate income – and thereby contributes to marginalisation and social exclusion” (Nilsson, 2003, p. 80). The high incarceration rate of the UK rather reflects imprisonment as a frequently used method of social control. Generally, it is still a rather slighter form of penal populism as e.g. irrational impulses or emotional reactions such as revenge are not included in the policy documents (Warner, 2011, p. 102).

In contrast to the punitive model, “penal welfarism” considers prisoners in a holistic way and as members of the society. It aims to normalize the life within prisons and sees imprisonment as “last resort” (Warner, 2011, p. 92). This point of view also resonates with the CoE’s philosophy. According to Garland (2001) the basic axiom of penal welfarism is “that penal measures ought, where possible, to be rehabilitative interventions, rather than negative retributive punishments” (p. 34). The aim is “to bring all individuals into full social citizenship with equal rights and equal opportunities”
(Garland, 2001, p. 46). Rentzmann (1996), based on the European Prison Rules, summarized three interrelated and fundamental principles of a contemporary penal philosophy: normalization, openness and responsibility. The latter one might also be referred to as self-administration. Especially openness and normalization alleviate the prison as total institution and the detrimental effects of imprisonment. Self-administration, on the other hand, replaces the paternalistic attitudes of many prisons. Within the bounds of necessary security measures and circumstances, the individual should be enabled to make choices and shape his life and activities in prison (Warner, 1998, p. 120).

These kinds of orientations and paradigms can be observed in the documents of Norway and Ireland. For the Nordic countries, the penal welfare paradigm has been the dominant one (Warner, 2011, p. 94) but surprisingly the Irish one also reflects this paradigm although it is one of the Anglo-Saxon countries. The different penal policies might also be a result of the different incarceration rates between the countries as the UK has significantly higher rates and thus might feel a stronger need to implement more radical attitudes.

5.1.2 Need for a wide curriculum

As the Norwegian and Irish documents follow the CoE’s philosophy and adopt a multidimensional view on the prisoners, they also reflect a broader curriculum that embodies creative and cultural activities. Here, the two documents reflect the traditions of liberalism and humanism in education by referring to personal development and learning as an end in itself. As the document of the UK is targeted at education and employment, the breadth of the curriculum is from the outset narrower. However, even in the field of vocational education it does not offer a broad curriculum as possible vocational paths are predefined.

To regard the prisoner as more than merely a criminal goes hand in hand with a wide curriculum. If one recognizes the need and right for the development of the “whole person” then automatically a wide curriculum has to be imperative as only this allows the
broad development of the person (Warner, 2002, p. 33). Depending on how differentiated prisoners are considered, the more extensive the education offers can be in the first place. Neglecting a wide curriculum and the development of the whole person and focusing solely on employment shifts the right to education as social right to an economic necessity (Bowl, 2017, p. 103). It fails to see education as a human right applying to every individual (Warner, 1998, p. 125).

Apart from a broad curriculum as such it is crucial to have spaces where the prisoners can ask questions, challenge assumptions and critically reflect on the reality and through this being enabled to transform themselves and their perspectives as advocated in the critical education approach.

Furthermore, a wide curriculum is also valuable as this will meet more genuine interests of the prisoners and give them opportunities to get interested in different things. The participation then would be based on voluntariness which will increase the positive outcomes and enforce the added value of education. The CoE (1990) also states that educationalists need to be aware of the underdeveloped creativity and talents of the prisoners that they did not have the chance yet to develop (p. 41). Furthermore, by engaging in different activities, prisoners themselves may become aware of what they want to learn and what they feel like they need to improve or learn (CoE, 1990, p. 45). As advocated in adult education, this should be a starting point as the individual is involved in the education process and educational objectives are not defined by someone on the outside and then imposed.

As mentioned in the analyses, the documents also refer to classes such as offender-behavior programs, substance-abuse or anger-management classes that employ a deficit perspective. Without a doubt, those classes are important as they allow the prisoner to address the problems directly. However, it is important to avoid over-reliance on those classes (Warner, 2007, p. 172) as one runs the risk to substitute or neglect other education programs. By focusing too strongly on offender-behavior education, education is then only offered to those regarded as potential prospects for re-offending (Costelloe & Warner, 2014, p. 178). It is more useful to identify both the weaknesses and strengths and start programs from that point (Warner, 2007, p. 175). Furthermore, it is unclear how effective offender-behavior programs will eventually be as “many inmates are obliged or
pressurized into following them” (Warner, 1998, p. 126). In regard to adult education, offender-behavior training appears to be “far too frontal and morally directive in their approach, which must be seen as a poor technique in any adult teaching setting” (Warner, 1998, p. 126). Regarding Mezirow’s theory of transformative learning, offender-behavior training would probably only elicit change on behavioral level and not on a deep, transformative level.

An interesting aspect is that also non-deficit orientated classes can change behavior in a less directive way. For example, by offering art classes one could learn to express his feelings such as anger or frustration in a constructive way that does not harm anyone (Warner, 1998, p. 125). Warner (1998) suggests that both, indirect and direct methods such as e.g. art and anger-management classes, should be available and prisoners should be able to choose according to their own needs.

5.1.3 Individuality, Independence and Self-Responsibility

All three documents acknowledge the individuality, independence and self-responsibility of the individual albeit to a different extent with varying underlying assumptions. Acknowledging those three aspects is important as this also reflects that prisoners are equal to the citizens outside prison. The prisoner should not “be seen as an object of treatment but as a responsible subject” (Warner, 1998, p. 119). The document of the UK states that prisoners must engage themselves in the opportunities which are available to them. However, at the same time, the document adopts a patronizing attitude that contradicts the independence and self-determination thought. The document of the UK uses words such as “setting” the prisoner on the path of employment which signifies someone controlling. In the context of release, the document of the UK speaks of “managing” offenders while the Norwegian document uses the word “assist”. In a similar vein, the Irish document states a “helping” role of education. Other terms that can be used for describing the assistance of persons leaving prison are e.g. also “after-care” which the UN uses in their Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (UN, 1955, p. 10). The use of the words “assist” and “help” also signify the critical adult education
approach where the learner is regarded as an already capable and knowledgeable individual who develops further with the support of education.

Against the background of critical pedagogy and critical adult education, it is crucial to foster the individual’s consciousness as Subject. The aim is to become “critical agents in the act of knowing” (Shor & Freire, 1987, p. 33) and “realise one’s agency through increasingly expanding awareness and critical reflection” (Brookfield, 2018, p. 63). The teacher does not take on a patronizing position as in the education process both teacher and student are in a dialogue where both critically reflect on the reality. If one neglects the individuality and value of the person’s ideas in the prison, a learning process in the philosophy of critical education cannot take place.

At the same time, as self-responsibility is stressed it is important to not neglect the social contexts that lead to criminal actions. The social context may also restrict how self-responsibility can be enacted thus the social and personal responsibility complement and influence each other. In fact, it is not possible to achieve personal responsibility without considering the social barriers and difficulties that stand in the way of a person’s progress (Warner, 2011, p. 102). By acknowledging the social context and deflecting the sole focus on the individual, one also emphasizes that society itself might need to change (Warner, 2011, p. 103). It stresses that rehabilitation and return to society is a joint task.

A too strong focus on individual responsibility may also lead to the danger that one blames solely the individual for failure. The case is, however, that a multitude of difficulties play a role and failures are "rooted in structures, in the "power relations" of society” (Warner, 1998, p. 129). By not going beyond the personal level, one risks reinforcing negative self-images and being disempowering (Warner, 1998, p. 129).

The Norwegian and Irish documents acknowledge the social context as responsibility is not only placed on the individual. It is “not seen as simply a matter of personal choice whether a person in prison will commit crime again or not” (Warner, 2011, p. 94). When the document of the UK speaks about the connection between the individual and society, it refers mostly to the fact how the individual can contribute and benefit the society rather than how the society influences the individual.
5.1.4 Legitimizing educational efforts

When legitimizing educational efforts, both the UK and Norway refer to the benefits for society whereupon the UK stresses, besides the positive effect of filling labor gaps, the public savings for the taxpayer, the reduced recidivism rates and public safety. On the other hand, Norway also stresses the contribution to wealth creation but focuses more on the social aspect of recidivism prevention such as increased security. Additionally, the Norwegian document stresses the benefits of lesser crimes not only for the victim but also as improving the life quality of the potential perpetrator thus regarding everyone’s well-being as important. Further, it also argues from a human rights perspective where everyone has the right to education although restricting this right in regard to foreign prisoners. The Irish document, in contrast, does not refer to savings for the public or similar at all but rather puts its focus on the person in prison. The Irish government goes one step further as the value of prison education itself and hence the legitimization is already exhausted by the fact that it helps to cope with the difficult situation of imprisonment and also as a means to balance out previous negative experiences. In that sense, education in prison contributes to equality and justice.

The detrimental effects of imprisonment are acknowledged and included in the Norwegian and Irish documents which is crucial. Imprisonment and the deprivation of liberty itself damages people to a great extent and leads to suffering through e.g. loss of self-respect or personal responsibility (Warner, 2007, p. 177). The prison itself is criminogenic, i.e. “by the very act of imprisoning someone you add to the chances that he or she will commit further crime” (Warner, 2007, p. 173). Education can help to alleviate these difficult circumstances. However, education constitutes only a small part of the whole impact of imprisonment which may negatively influence the effect that education can have. For this reason, it is important to realize that education should be continuously provided even though the outcome might not be measurable directly. If persons released from prison recidivate is dependent on many other factors that are at work inside and outside the prison. The negative influences inside the prison could be e.g. abuse by other prisoners, further alienation from society or humiliation by prison staff. Factors outside prisons that lead to recidivism could be e.g. the housing situation or the social environment the persons return to (Warner, 2007, p. 173). Czerniawski (2016) also
states that the relationship of recidivism rates and educational provisions remains problematic as it is difficult to follow persons leaving prison for a long enough time to establish a link between those factors (p. 199).

Detrimental effects of imprisonment or the alleviation function of education are not considered in the document of the UK as they state that when “an offender enters prison they should be put, immediately, on the path to employment” (p. 33) which neglects e.g. the transition time or the difficulties that a person carries into the prison. Warner (1998) states that the aim to alleviate the negative effects of prison is fundamental as a “person overwhelmed by prison will be unable to progress in any other way” (p. 121).

5.1.5 Making education measurable

In all three documents there is to some extent reliance on accredited courses and measurements of education. In the document of the UK, education is completely based on whether standards are met and if not, interventions will be taken. Whether a program is regarded as useful depends on the labor market which reflects a neoliberal notion. The Irish document, on the other hand, stresses accredited and non-accredited programs. However, it remains open which stance non-accredited programs have in comparison to accredited programs.

Both inside and outside the prison, the need to meet standards and the focus on accreditation has been a large restriction on the scope of education. Undoubtedly, to have those kinds of qualifications is important as e.g. employers require them. However, adhering largely to those can mean that other kinds of education fall short or real needs are bypassed (Warner, 1998, p. 126). Skills can be measured in tests or similar, but education aimed at critical thinking and personal development are not that easily measured. These kinds of changes might be only visible in the long run and outside prison. It is crucial to realize this as one runs the risk to render non-measurable education as useless or ineffective. In order to counteract this and to support critical adult education, it is important to promote education as a fundamental right to everyone independent of measurability and include it in the prison policy.
The effectiveness of education is also often measured by recidivism rates. However, one should not over-emphasize the connection of recidivism and education as many other factors are at work. Moreover, education in prisons cannot balance everything out that other institutions in the society have failed so far which eventually has lead in some cases to criminality in the first place (Warner, 2011, p. 91).

### 5.2 Concluding discussion

I am aware that my advocacy for critical adult education in prisons and my criticism on the policy documents might be too utopic as one has to consider the realm of the possible. Resources are not infinite and hence restrictions have to be made in what can be offered and what should be given priority. Although official policy documents tend to be ambitious and lofty while the reality falls short of those high aspirations, the documents offer a sense of direction and validate good practice on the ground (Warner, 2002, p. 34). An utopia is “a dream, something to be worked for, helping people learn so that they can grow and develop and help change the world” (Jarvis, 2007, p. 207). In similar vein, this thesis seeks to show the direction that prison education could aim for and how a critical adult education approach can help to build an equal and democratic society that recognizes the right to education as truly universal. Prison education, implemented in the philosophy of critical education, can contribute to more equality and social justice. Further, it is important to rethink how we portray prisoners in policy documents as this shapes how society thinks about them. The way how they are depicted influences what kind of education will ultimately be offered, which education will be regarded as worth to employ and seen as deserved by prisoners. A negative portrayal and disparaging language usage also may promote attitudes of revenge and engender fear (Warner, 2002, p. 35).

The kind of education that is offered in prisons reflects what kind of society one is aiming for (Bowl, 2017, p. 165). The question arising is what kind of society one aims for if the purpose of prison education is to only develop skills that are useful for the labor market and neglects critical, creative and personal development. Of course, it is indispensable to
provide vocational training and focus on employment if one aims at a truly holistic education (Szifris et al., 2018, p. 58). According to Desjardins (2018) adult education does not only serve humanistic purposes but is also closely related to economic, social and human functioning. Those functions are fundamentally linked with each other and cannot be distinguished (p. 223) thus all components should find a way into prison education policies. The purpose and philosophy for adult prison education are “to consider the prisoner as primarily an adult in need of education and only secondarily as a criminal in need of reform” (MacCormick, 1931 as cited in Warner, 1998, p. 131).

Generally, a overfocus on short-term or only economic, instrumental outcomes is problematic (Czerniawski, 2016, p. 205) as unemployment is nonetheless possible. Wider educational experiences and education aimed at critical thinking are necessary and have more long-term effects (CoE, 1990, p. 33). It enables the individual to actually build a sustainable, self-sufficient life. Offering broad possibilities is crucial as it allows the prisoners to explore what they are genuinely interested in learning themselves. This, in turn, increases the chances that it would be pursued after release (CoE, 1990, p. 45) and thus creating the base for lifelong learning. Implementing critical adult education can lead to transformative learning on a deep and sustainable level as promoted by Mezirow. This stands in contrast to education for employment or offender-focused programs where change may be rather superficial based on merely behavioral changes. Regarding offense-focused work, Costelloe and Warner (2003) also criticize that it is fairly confident as it asserts being capable to intervene and improve prisoners while ignoring the negative influences of imprisonment itself (p. 10).

Providing genuine education to prisoners is also crucial as the state aims to convey the message that human life must be respected and everyone deserves the same rights which also includes the right to education. By designing a prison that reflects those values and providing education to all prisoners, the state leads by example and shows that they believe that persons in prisons can change and develop (Hampton, 1984, p. 223; Svensson, 1996, p. 70).

Having access to education also makes life normal for prisoners and being a learner like any other person (Warner, 1998, p. 131). The education setting creates an environment where prisoners themselves become conscious that they are valued members of the
society with equal rights (Svensson, 1996, p. 72). By being appreciated as a valued member of the society, taking social responsibility and adapting non-criminal behavior is promoted. At the same time, the society has to show and support the individual in becoming an active, responsible citizen and refrain from blaming failure solely on the individual. The inability to participate in education or become an active citizen as solely the weakness of the person is a notion that is believed to be true from a neoliberal point of view (Regmi, 2015, p. 143).

To conclude, to focus and improve prison education is a recognition of the human rights and its applicability to truly all. Education, as stated in the Declaration of Human Rights, should be provided to everyone as their fundamental right. This applies also to prisoners and one needs to provide a broad curriculum aiming at a holistic development of the person. It should not be forced in the direction of being used only for economic purposes. One should refrain from relying solely on economists framing questions surrounding the purpose and worthiness of adult education (Desjardins, 2018, p. 223). The notion of “right” and “access” are not coterminous (Czerniawski, 2016, p. 202). The government has a particular responsibility in providing prisoners genuine education as they are dependent on what is offered within the prison. They have no opportunity to turn to different education institutions and hence constituting one of the most vulnerable groups regarding access to education.

5.3 Further research

In order to gain a deeper understanding of prison education, it is essential to conduct more research and to investigate how the policies are implemented as plans are “more easily written down than expected” (Svensson, 1996, p. 72). The critical adult education approach corresponds with the education ideas of the CoE hence the critical approach and good penal policies complement each other as they recognize the whole person and their individuality, autonomy and potential (Warner, 2007, p. 181). At the same time, however, the methodologies of adult education contradict the prison as institution itself and its restrictions. Certain characteristics such as an open learning space or an open teacher-
student relationship are not as unproblematically feasible as outside prisons (Warner, 1998, p. 125).

In order to better place policy documents in their context, it would be also fruitful to investigate the specific adult education context and orientations in the respective countries more explicitly as the way how adult education is viewed in general influences also the formulation of prison education policies. Further research could also engage in comparing more countries with each other and using multilingual researchers in order to increase access in possible analyzable documents. As a complement to a pure document analysis, it would be valuable to include the voices of prisoners or persons leaving prison and their attitudes and experiences with prison education.

A general investigation of other policies and their interplay with prison education policies would also be interesting. Despite a rhetoric that is characterized by inclusion, entitlements and rights towards education, those policies might be undercut and marginalized by other more dominant policies that a government puts forward (Czerniawski, 2016, p. 208).
Reference list


