



Promoting Lifelong Learning in Prisons: UNESCO's Role in Shaping Global Norms and Advancing Inclusive Education for Incarcerated Individuals

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Abstract

The thesis examines UNESCO's role in promoting lifelong learning within prison education through the lens of global governance, soft power, and problematization. By analyzing four UNESCO publications from 1995 to 2023, the study explores how UNESCO frames prison education as a tool for rehabilitation, personal empowerment, and social reintegration. The findings reveal a gradual shift in language, replacing stigmatizing terms such as "prisoners" with more inclusive labels like "learners," reflecting an effort to reduce marginalization. The research highlights the challenges of fostering a culture of learning within coercive environments and underscores the potential of prison education to reduce recidivism, improve post-release employment prospects, and promote personal transformation. Despite UNESCO's significant advocacy, aligning global educational standards with the realities of prison systems remains a challenge. The thesis concludes with recommendations to expand UNESCO's digital resources and encourage multi-stakeholder collaboration to enhance the effectiveness of prison education worldwide.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

“All social movements involve conflicts which are reflected intellectually in controversies. It would not be a sign of health if such an important social interest such education were also an arena of struggles, practical and theoretical” (John Dewey, 1986).

Background

Established in 1945 as a specialized agency of the United Nations, UNESCO has played a pivotal role in the post-war era as the leading international body overseeing education and fostering global cooperation in this domain (Mundy, 1999). Its origins can be traced back to pre-war internationalist movements that championed intellectual cooperation to promote global understanding (Elfert et al., 2023). Since its inception, UNESCO has continuously adapted to evolving communication strategies and program delivery methods, exerting substantial global influence in setting educational norms and shaping human rights frameworks (UNESCO, 2024; Elfert et al., 2023). This commitment to fostering intellectual and moral solidarity is rooted in UNESCO's belief that political and economic cooperation alone cannot ensure global peace (Elfert et al., 2023; Sluga, 2010). Articulated in its constitution, this ideal emphasizes a humanistic and idealistic approach to education, advocating for unity in diversity and focusing on what unites humanity (Laves & Thomson, 1957; Elfert et al., 2023).

Since the 1970s, UNESCO has played a key role in shaping and advancing the discourse on lifelong learning, emphasizing the integration of learning and living. This concept was first introduced in the Faure Report, *Learning to Be: The World of Education Today and Tomorrow* (Faure et al., 1972), which advocated for universal and continuous learning beyond traditional educational institutions (Faure et al., 1972; Elfert, 2015). The report proposed 'lifelong education' as a foundational concept for educational policies in both developed and developing countries (International Commission on the Development of Education, 2013). Nevertheless, there is

limited evidence regarding the extent to which the report has influenced policies globally (Elfert, 2015).

The idea of lifelong learning was reinforced by the Delors Report, *Learning: The Treasure Within* (1996), which emphasized the creation of a learning society focused on the common good and individual empowerment. Through the Delors Report, UNESCO promoted innovative concepts, governance strategies, tools, and frameworks to address educational needs. The report introduced the four pillars of lifelong learning—learning to know, learning to do, learning to be, and learning to live together—envisioning a learning society where individuals could pursue education according to their needs and interests in a flexible, unrestricted manner (UIL). In 2019, UNESCO launched the project *Futures of Education: Learning to Become*, which aims to reimagine the future of education through international collaboration and public participation, culminating in a global report which attributes to education the power to transform the world (UNESCO, 2019).

Within the framework of lifelong learning, the right to education is understood as encompassing continuous and ongoing learning across various fields and settings, addressing people of all ages and backgrounds. This right requires non-discrimination and equal opportunities for all learners (Elfert, 2015). The Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960), the first legally binding international instrument dedicated entirely to the right to education, further underscores UNESCO's commitment to eliminating all forms of discrimination and promoting inclusion and equality in education (Daudet & Singh, 2001).

Individuals who have been incarcerated often possess lower levels of education, fewer vocational skills, and more limited social networks compared to those who have never been incarcerated (Morani, Wikoff, Linhorst, & Bratton, 2011). Educational programs are particularly beneficial for this group (Crayton & Neusteter, 2008). Education in prison addresses education deficits and provides substantial benefits, such as reducing recidivism and enhancing post-release employment opportunities (Evans et al., 2018; Torrijo & De Maeyer, 2019). Models of prison education vary, ranging from 'education as corrections' to 'education for empowerment,' with the latter emphasizing equality, tolerance, personal development, and the challenging of stereotypes (Reuss, 1999). Both models align with the “learning through life” principle outlined in the Delors

Report, which stresses the importance of enabling individuals to "retain mastery of their own destinies" (Elfert, 2015).

Research statement

Incarceration and high recidivism rates remain significant global challenges, often related to a lack of effective rehabilitation strategies. Prison education is universally recognized as a key tool for reducing crime and recidivism (Vandala et al., 2019). However, it remains a marginal issue, with ongoing debates about its role and effectiveness (Evans et al., 2018). Torrijo and De Maeyer (2019) suggest that UNESCO could take more proactive steps to enhance prison education, while Marc de Maeyer (2019) observes that 'basic research in the prison education field is still in its infancy internationally,' highlighting the need for further investigation. Given UNESCO's commitment to promote inclusion and equality, the thesis examines how the organization articulates and implements lifelong learning principles in the context of prison education.

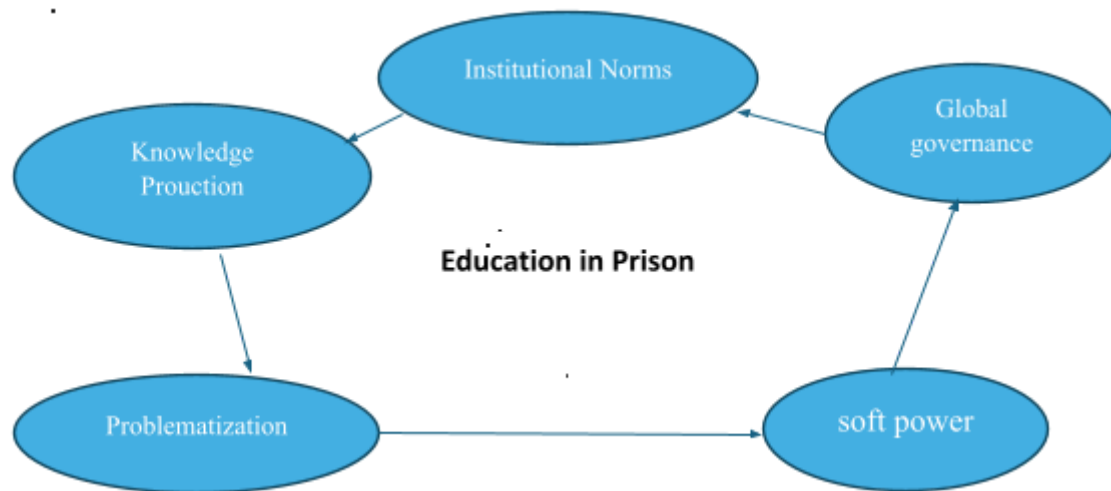
Structure overview

This thesis employs document analysis to examine the research questions, applying thematic analysis to interpret the selected data. The research includes a theoretical framework that conceptualizes the topic, a methodology chapter, and a conclusion reflecting on the findings. The thesis is guided by the following research questions: (I) What key characteristics of prison populations, particularly their educational needs and challenges, are highlighted in UNESCO's publications? (II) How do UNESCO's publications describe the purpose and benefits of prison education?

CHAPTER 2

Theoretical Framework

This thesis situates UNESCO's approach to prison education within a theoretical framework that integrates three key concepts: global governance, soft power, and problematization. These concepts provide a foundation for the analysis, illustrating UNESCO's influence on global educational norms, its use of educational initiatives as tools of soft power, and the problematization of crime.



Global Governance

UNESCO's Role in Global Education

The concept of global governance is crucial for understanding how UNESCO exerts its influence on education worldwide, particularly in the context of prison education. As a pioneer in global governance, UNESCO plays a central role in setting international standards and norms through its guidelines, publications, and initiatives. Established after World War II as part of a new multilateral world order, international organizations (IOs) like UNESCO were designed to promote education as a vital element of societal development. These organizations have contributed significantly to the globalization of educational norms, policies, and technologies. Yet, the history of global education governance is marked by many ambitious future visions that were never realized, as often IOs over mandates, constituencies, partners, funds, authority and the very right to define programmes, instruments and priorities (Elfert & Ydesen, 2023).

In the 19th century, the expansion of comprehensive educational systems reinforced the legitimacy of nation-states and became central to global governance. Education became a key area of intergovernmental cooperation and a core focus for international organizations. Within the United Nations framework, institutions like the OECD, the World Bank, and UNESCO have been instrumental in advancing education as a driver of societal development. They have also played a crucial role in promoting the globalization of educational standards and policies. During

the two decades following World War II, UNESCO led global efforts in education in line with its founding mission. However, from the 1970s onwards, the World Bank began expanding its influence on educational policies in developing countries, while the OECD, particularly after the launch of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2000, became increasingly influential in shaping education in industrialized nations and is now extending its reach to low-income countries (Elfert & Ydesen, 2023).

The concept of global governance gained academic prominence in the 1990s, particularly in the post-Cold War era, as scholars sought to explain global changes. James Rosenau (1995), a pioneer in this field, describes global governance as a redistribution of political authority that broadens perspectives on globalization. This framework enhances collective knowledge through international communication, fostering new forms of epistemic authority. Rosenau further distinguishes between governance and government, noting that governance involves informal rule systems that complement formal legal procedures (Rosenau, 2003, p. 13). In global governance, authority is built on expertise and professional knowledge, earning respect across national boundaries (Hewson et al., 1999). From a research perspective, global governance studies focus on the social construction and historical evolution of international authority, viewing it as dynamic rather than fixed (Mundy, 2007).

However, UNESCO's role in global governance is not without challenges. While the organization promotes education as a universal value, educational systems are largely governed by individual nation-states. Consequently, educational multilateralism is shaped not only by the liberal norms championed by the United Nations but also by the economic and geopolitical interests of sovereign states (Mundy, 2007). Moreover, UNESCO faces a dilemma in balancing its commitment to human rights and democratic principles with the need to align its strategies with the economic goals of national development and educational reform. This tension highlights the complexity of UNESCO's position as a global governance organization, operating within the inherently political spheres of education, science, culture, and communication. At times, the politicization of UNESCO's Secretariat has hindered its ability to fully achieve its potential, both in terms of technical expertise and operational effectiveness (Jones, 2006). According to Elfert (2023), the history of global governance of education is full of visions of the future that remain unfulfilled.

The Role of Global Governance in Prison Systems

The regulation of prison conditions and prison education is shaped by both national and international frameworks. Although few international treaties explicitly address prison education, the broader goal of universal education implicitly includes people in prison. Even so, research within prisons has identified that learning opportunities vary widely and may be dependent on the type of prison, and the extent to which nations adhere to international treaties on prisoner treatment depends on how well these treaties are incorporated into domestic law (van Zyl Smit, 2010; Carey, 2022). This section reviews international instruments related to education and criminal justice systems.

Following World War II, the recognition of universal human rights led to the development of an international framework for overseeing prison conditions, which eventually included education as part of rehabilitation efforts. This began with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1948, laying the groundwork for international human rights law. Article 26 of the UDHR affirms that "everyone has the right to education," aimed at the full development of the human personality and the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms (van Zyl Smit, 2010). Aligned with the UDHR and the three reports mentioned in the introduction, UNESCO has played a significant role in promoting inclusive education. In 1990, UNESCO launched the global Education for All (EFA) initiative, aimed at providing quality education to every child, youth, and adult worldwide. Nonetheless, strategies for EFA must become more inclusive, particularly by incorporating social learning processes within specific contexts (Ainscow et al., 2008).

Several secondary legal instruments also address the right to education at an international level. One relevant example is the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (1955) of which Rule 104 states that "all people in prison should have access to education" with particular attention to those with literacy difficulties and juveniles. Although these instruments are considered "soft" international law and are not directly binding, the Human Rights Committee often references them when interpreting the ICCPR (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights), especially regarding prisoner provisions. As a result, the UN Standard Minimum Rules are recognized as reflecting certain legal obligations (Rodley & Pollard, 2009, cited in van Zyl Smit, 2010).

Additionally, international bodies such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture (SPT) promote and regulate the use of existing standards and norms. UNESCO cooperates with UNODC to build the capacities of policymakers and educators in educational activities that can empower learners (UNODC, 2022). The SPT has the preventive mandate focused on a proactive approach to preventing torture and ill treatment, and it strives to balance the need for strong international oversight with states' resistance, thereby enhancing international controls (Evans & Haenni-Dale, 2004; Nowak & McArthur, 2008). Nonetheless, regulating prison conditions at a global level involves the challenge of integrating internationally recognized human rights standards into the regulatory frameworks. This challenge varies across regions. In nations with established legal and bureaucratic systems, the focus is on ensuring that existing structures align with broader international norms. Conversely, in less developed countries, the priority is both to establish national regulatory mechanisms and to ensure their adherence to international human rights standards simultaneously (van Zyl Smit, 2010).

Soft power

Soft Power as a tool for global governance

Global governance increasingly relies on a modern form of power known as soft power, in contrast with hard power. Joseph Nye first introduced the concept of soft power, defining it as the ability to influence others through persuasion rather than coercion, using intangible resources such as culture, ideology, education, and constitutional values. In the post-Cold War era, there has been a shift towards these less tangible and more indirect means of influence, with nations striving for respect and admiration through positive global engagement (Nye, 1990; Vuving, 2009). Soft power can be categorized into two primary sources: international sources, including foreign policies and actions, and domestic sources, encompassing internal policies and actions. Both sources emphasize policies and actions that uphold justice, collective welfare, and fair play. This focus reflects the influence of political liberalism, which shapes both domestic and international aspects of soft power (Gallarotti, 2022).

Soft power's political importance has increased due to greater interdependence among states and the high costs associated with hard power tactics. It now emanates from a nation's

cultural appeal, political ideals, and policies, making it a crucial element of international relations (Nye, 2021). The effectiveness of soft power is context-dependent, influenced by the global environment and prevailing values (Baldwin, 1979; Nye, 2006, as cited in Wojciuk et al., 2015). Consequently, the sources of soft power are socially constructed, shaped by shared perceptions and interactions (Lukes, 2007, as cited in Wojciuk et al., 2015).

Moreover, education and culture have become potent tools of soft power. Unlike more culturally specific sources like religion or politics, education is universally valued, making it a versatile soft power instrument across various cultures and nations (Blanchard & Lu, 2012; Nye, 2004, as cited in Wojciuk et al., 2015). The education system not only drives a nation's economic and social progress but also affects its international standing and diplomatic relations (Nye, 2009). Soft power through education can stem from both deliberate policies aimed at attracting foreign interest and unintended outcomes of domestic success (Wojciuk et al., 2015).

UNESCO's Historical Use of Education as a Tool of Soft Power

The discussion of soft power extends to UNESCO's educational strategies. By promoting ideals such as universal education, human rights, and sustainable development, UNESCO and other international organizations shape national educational policies and practices while enhancing their international prestige and legitimacy. Rather than imposing mandatory regulations, these organizations encourage nations to adopt specific educational models by highlighting their benefits. For instance, UNESCO's emphasis on inclusive and universal education aligns with soft power objectives aimed at fostering global peace and social cohesion. Education is also considered a 'social investment,' as it creates an economically productive population that supports social policies and mitigates unemployment and poverty risks (Allmendinger & Leibfried, 2003).

Following World War II, UNESCO significantly expanded both its role and prestige, although it faced constraints within the post-war multilateral system. By the mid-1950s, rising East-West tensions and challenges to universal human welfare visions led to shifts in UNESCO's decision-making structure (Jones, 1988; Sewell, 1975; Laves & Thompson, 1957, cited in Mundy, 1999). The reintegration of the Soviet Union into UNESCO in 1954 raised governance concerns, necessitating a balance between governmental and non-governmental initiatives. In

response, UNESCO promoted 'fundamental education,' advocating for educational equality and community-linked literacy in developing countries. While financial constraints limited these efforts mostly to advocacy and research, UNESCO's 1950s initiatives emphasized the importance of compulsory mass schooling (Jones, 1988; Sewell, 1975, cited in Mundy, 1999).

The early 1960s marked a turning point, as Western development aid increased. During this period, UNESCO played a key role in evaluating educational needs in the developing world, securing funding from the World Bank, and positioning itself as an intermediary between developing countries and Western aid channels (Sewell, 1973, 1975; Hoggart, 1978, cited in Mundy, 1999). However, by the early 1980s, UNESCO's influence in educational multilateralism began to decline due to competition from other multilateral organizations and internal discord between Third World and Western member states. Despite recent efforts to reclaim leadership in education, UNESCO continues to face challenges in countering the dominant influence of institutions like the World Bank in shaping global educational policies. Overall, UNESCO's educational initiatives have consistently aimed to bridge the gap between its broad mandate and limited budget, as well as the disparity between the universal ideals in its constitution and the diverging interests of its member states (Mundy, 1999).

Problematization and Power

This section examines the concept of problematization through the theories of Nikolas Rose, Michel Foucault, and other critical criminologists, exploring how criminality is identified and managed within broader societal structures. Problematization is linked to global governance and soft power, building on Foucault's theories that further developed as 'studies of governmentality'. Governmentality refers to the exercise of power not only through direct state control but also through the dissemination of knowledge that shapes individual behavior (Garland, 1997). This framework is relevant for understanding how crime is problematized within legal and societal contexts.

In *Discipline and Punish* (1977), Foucault provides a foundational perspective on modern punishment practices, notably describing what he calls "the gentle way in punishment," in contrast to the physically brutal public spectacles of earlier times. He positions criminology as a power/knowledge apparatus, suggesting that knowledge about crime is not neutral but closely

ties to the exercise of power. This knowledge serves to justify and legitimize various forms of intervention, whether punitive or rehabilitative. According to Foucault, crime control mechanisms do more than punish individuals; they guide populations by shaping behavior through laws and norms designed to prevent deviance. Crime, in Foucault's perspective, is not an objective or natural category but a socially constructed "problem." Consequently, criminology plays a central role in this process by defining deviant behaviors as criminal, based on the needs of those in power, thus legitimizing state control.

Donzelot (1979), as cited in Garland (1997), builds on Foucault's notions by arguing that, in the modern Welfare State, expert authorities mediate between the state and individuals. Donzelot underlines how governmental power permeates institutions like schools and prisons, shaping individual aspirations while maintaining control. This form of governance fosters self-regulation among individuals through societal norms, aiming to prevent crime. While promoting liberal values such as freedom and autonomy, it simultaneously regulates how these freedoms are exercised through legal sanctions and societal expectations. Similarly, Rose and Miller (1992), as cited in Garland (1997), extend Foucault's ideas by suggesting that professional groups problematize social issues, including those related to the penal system, to align with both state objectives and individual choices. Rose (1999) further argues that problematization frames phenomena as requiring intervention, thereby shaping institutional responses. He emphasizes that problems emerge in various contexts (e.g., moral, political, economic) with authorities defining them based on specific criteria such as institutional norms or legal regulations. This process creates dividing practices, such as distinguishing sickness from health or criminality from madness.

Traditionally, criminal law and justice have treated criminal acts as extraordinary, categorizing individuals labeled as criminals as a distinct and problematic group. This labeling leads society to distinguish convicted individuals from others and justify the special nature of the reaction against them (Hulsman, 1986). However, scholars like Hulsman (1986) challenge this view, arguing that these categorizations are restrictive and that critically examining the criminal justice system can reduce the stigma associated with criminal records. This stigma often leads to social exclusion, particularly for formerly incarcerated individuals.

Labeling theory further enhances the stigmatization process that follows criminal conviction. According to theorists like Becker (1963) and Lemert (1972), being labeled a criminal alters an individual's self-perception, leading them to view themselves as deviant. This separation is reinforced by terms such as "offender," "convict," and "felon," all of which carry negative connotations (Evans et al., 2018). As a result, individuals with criminal records often face diminished social opportunities, as their criminal past becomes a defining characteristic that influences future interactions (Uggen, Manza, & Behrens, 2004). While existing research has examined this stigma, further studies are needed to explore effective strategies for reducing it, especially in the context of prison education (Evans et al., 2018).

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

This study examines the research questions through document analysis within a qualitative research framework. Like other qualitative methods, document analysis involves examining and interpreting data to extract meaning, deepen understanding, and generate empirical knowledge (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). It systematically reviews and evaluates pre-existing documents, in this case, books categorized by the UNESCO Digital Library. This method is appropriate for this study as it provides comprehensive and objective insights into UNESCO's perspectives on prison education within a manageable timeframe. Moreover, document analysis allows efficient examination of stable data raising minimal ethical concerns (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Documents cover a broad time span, numerous events, and diverse settings, offering a comprehensive view of UNESCO's stance on prison education (Yin, 1994).

Data Selection

The present research explores UNESCO's perspectives on prisoners and prison education. Data were sourced from the UNESCO Digital Library, which offers a wide range of publications, documents, and other materials either produced by UNESCO or pertaining to UNESCO's fields of competence. According to the UNESCO Constitution (1955), the UNESCO Digital Library serves as a crucial instrument in advancing UNESCO's mission of fostering peace by promoting mutual understanding and cooperation among nations. It facilitates the exchange of publications,

artistic and scientific materials, and intellectual resources, thereby supporting cross-cultural knowledge and collaboration. The search was conducted using keywords such as "prison education," "people in prison", "lifelong learning in prison", "prisoners' human rights," "education in prison," "prison libraries," and "basic education in prison." The documents selected span publications from 1995 to 2023.

In determining which documents to include, I applied the four criteria outlined by Flick (2018): 1) Authenticity, 2) Credibility, 3) Representativeness, and 4) Meaning. After thoroughly reviewing several publications based on these criteria, four books were chosen for analysis: *Education in Prison: A Literature Review* by Behar & Bormac (2021), *Books Beyond Bars: The Transformative Potential of Prison Libraries* by Krolak (2019), *Fostering a Culture of Reading and Writing: Examples of Dynamic Literate Environments* by Hanemann and Krolak (2017), and *Basic Education in Prisons* by the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning and the United Nations Office at Vienna, Crime Prevention and Justice Branch (1995).

The selected books are representative of prison education, offering a diverse yet converging perspective on its challenges and potential. The UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (1995) is the oldest of these texts. This analysis focuses on Parts One and Two of the book, out of a total of four parts. Part One focuses on common elements in primary and secondary reports to present a cohesive understanding of prison education, highlighting the perspectives of prison education practitioners and, where available, the voices of inmates. In contrast, Part Two challenges prison systems to confront the inherent contradiction between education and punishment. Hanemann and Krolak (2017) broaden the scope by placing prison education within the broader context of promoting dynamic literate environments, emphasizing the importance of fostering a culture of reading and writing among individuals facing literacy challenges, such as those in prison. In a subsequent work, Krolak (2019) examines the pivotal role of prison libraries, arguing that they support prisoners' access to education and assist in the rehabilitation process, helping them build new lives upon release. Finally, Behar (2021) presents a literature review on prison education from a multifaceted perspective, advocating for a holistic range of educational resources to meet the diverse needs of incarcerated individuals. In this review, Behar (2021) emphasizes the key characteristics that define prison education, as outlined in various international declarations, conventions, and standards.

Data Analysis

For this study, data were analyzed using inductive thematic analysis with open coding applied to the selected documents. This approach allowed the research to remain open to emerging patterns rather than being confined to a pre-existing framework (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

The thematic analysis followed the six-phase process outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). First, the researcher familiarized herself with the data by actively reading and re-reading the selected documents. Second, initial codes were generated from the data (see Appendix A), forming the foundation for identifying potential themes. Inductive coding was used in this process. Initially, the themes included “labels assigned to people in prison,” “discrimination within prison populations,” “alienation and exclusion of prisoners,” “importance and benefits of education in prison,” “purpose of education in prison,” and “approaches to prison education”

Third, the initial themes were reviewed to ensure they aligned with the coded extracts and the entire data set. This process led to the refinement and combination of certain themes and sub-themes, as some were interconnected, such as “discrimination within prison populations” and “alienation and exclusion of prisoners,” where the latter is a consequence of the former. The theme “approaches to prison education” was eliminated, as it did not align specifically with the study’s findings. The final themes were identified: “the terminology of UNESCO” “discrimination and social perceptions of prisoners” “prison culture and learning culture” and “the definition and the scope of prison education within the lifelong learning framework”. Subsequently, the themes were organized and clearly defined for presentation in the analysis. Finally, specific extracts were selected to accurately illustrate and support these themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In the analysis, the themes are presented in bold for clarity.

CHAPTER 4

Findings and Analysis

The first research question in this study investigates the characteristics of prison populations as presented in UNESCO’s publications, with a focus on the terminology used to describe

incarcerated individuals, the discrimination they experience—particularly in accessing education—and the relationship between a learning culture and the prison environment. The second research question explores the purpose and benefits of education in prisons, highlighting both the actual and potential effects of education on inmates' personal development, social integration, and post-release outcomes.

The terminology of UNESCO

In the publications associated with UNESCO, individuals in prison are presented in various ways. The labels used to refer to them may differ within the same text and across different books; however, certain denominations are frequently repeated. A significant debate in the field of the criminal justice system centers on the language used to refer to prisoners (Behar, 2021). As Behar (2021) notes, quoting the researcher Scott (2014), "the words we use to refer to people predispose us to act towards them in a different way." (p. 27). Behar (2021) cites Behan (2018) and argues that imprisonment not only defines individuals while they are incarcerated but, in some countries, "the label of ex-prisoner can be attached to them for the rest of their lives." (p.27). The UNESCO Institute for Education (1995) often uses the term ex-offender in literature : "eventually, nearly all prisoners become ex-offenders and are released into the society in which they offended," and "tolerance is no longer shown by the general population towards the reintegration of ex-offenders, so that their social alienation is likely to increase." (p. 17).

Moreover, within materials produced by UNESCO and its affiliates, individuals who have committed crimes are referred to by various terms, including prisoners, offenders, inmates, incarcerated people, people in prison, prison community, and prison population. The terms inmates, prisoners, and offenders seem to be used interchangeably within texts, prison population is typically used when discussing statistics, while prison community is often used in the literature as opposed to the outside community, and when talking about prison culture and its values, norms, and characteristics. According to the UNESCO Institute for Education (1995) and Krolak (2019), a key purpose of legal punishment is to protect society, often referred to as the "outside community" or "wider community," from crime. Behar (2021) uses these terms to highlight how "the considerable amount spent on imprisonment has a negative impact on wider society" (p.13) and to stress that education in prison "should mirror programs of education offered to the wider

community outside the prison context." (p.42). The term community seems to create a wider distance between people inside and people outside the bars, but this may be inevitable. Thus, UNESCO Institute for Education (1995) explains that the deprivation of many liberties within prisons leads to a need for defense against the rules imposed by the "wider community." This need is addressed by establishing the prisoners' own community, complete with its norms and values. However, the UNESCO Institute for Education (1995) notes that this division between the outside community and the prison community can be problematic, as it may lead to mutual rejection.

Furthermore, the term prison population is utilized in similar contexts within UNESCO's publications. Behar (2021) uses the term prison population mostly when discussing demographics or characteristics of the group, for example when he writes that "prison population increased by 24 percent from 2000 to 2018," (p.13) and "women and girls now make up 7 percent of the global prison population."(p.35), or "the overwhelming majority of the prison population are male" (p. 35). Similarly, UNESCO Institute for Education (1995) uses the term in comparable contexts, for example when arguing that "approximately one-third of the population in prisons in the French community of Belgium is totally or functionally illiterate," (p.24) and "in Europe, non-Europeans are overrepresented in the prison population." (p.24). Lastly, Hanemann and Krolak (2017) also use this term when discussing prison education statistics, for example when noting that "in Brazil, according to a study from 2007, 70 percent of the prison population had not completed basic education and 10.5 percent of prisoners were illiterate" (p.24). Behar (2021) includes a direct testimony from a former prisoner advocating for more neutral terminology: "to stop using negative terms and to simply refer to us as people—people currently or formerly incarcerated, people on parole, people recently released from prison, people in prison, people with criminal convictions". (p. 27). However, despite this appeal, Behar (2021) continues to use 'negative terms' such as 'prisoners' or 'offenders' throughout the text. Hahnemann and Krolak (2017) few times adopt more neutral language, for example when noting that "the number of *people incarcerated* is growing" (p. 22).

Nonetheless, in some instances, individuals' legal status does not entirely define them but rather plays a secondary role within UNESCO's books. Behar (2021) specifically emphasizes the importance of using descriptive terms like learner(s) or student(s) when discussing education in

prison. Similarly, the UNESCO Institute for Education (1995) suggests replacing "inmate" with "student" to better reflect adult education practices in prison. Thus, the UNESCO Institute for Education (1995) frequently uses the terms students or learners in the context of prison education. For example, it states, "learning will not take place unless the student is motivated to learn," (p.28) and "against a background of alienation and systemic coercion, it is important to involve the individual student in the assessment of learning needs" (p.29). (UNESCO Institute for Education, 1995). Behar (2021) also uses the terms student and learner, particularly when discussing the importance of citizenship education for incarcerated individuals, arguing that this focus can shift perspectives from prisoners to students and ultimately to citizens. According to Costelloe (2014), cited in Behar (2021), prison education positively impacts individuals by enabling them to reconceptualize their place in society and create new identities.

Furthermore, Krolak (2019) uses the term lifelong learners to describe prisoners in the context of highlighting the value of prison libraries: he writes that "the value of a prison library lies in its ability to help inmates become or continue to be lifelong learners." Hanemann and Krolak (2017) also refer to learners when discussing prison libraries, which help create a literate environment that can offer *learners* the opportunity to continue their studies and obtain recognized qualifications. They further argue that the value of a prison library lies in its ability to establish a love for reading and provide *users* with opportunities for further education, entertainment, distraction, and self-reflection; in this context, incarcerated individuals are referred to as users of the library.

Additionally, Garland (2001), cited by Behar (2021), discusses the concept of "othering." in relation to people in prison. Behar (2021) cites Cohen (2021), who argues that the process of "othering" incarcerated individuals involves placing them outside the boundaries where societal values and principles of fairness are applied. Behar (2021) further suggests that labeling prisoners as "others" can erode and potentially eliminate their civic, political, and social rights, such as the right to education. Muth et al. (2016), cited by Behar (2021), assert that "othering" people in prison potentially stigmatizes them and "removes other dimensions of their lives such as personalities, experiences, connections, consciousness, history, and culture." (p. 27). Behar (2021) agrees that "othering" undermines individuals' efforts to move beyond their prisoner identity, compromises their potential for transformation, and directly impacts the provision and

practice of prison education. Mark Mauer (2011), quoted by Behar (2021), identifies disenfranchisement as a factor that reinforces the othering of prisoners, separates them from their community and complicates social reintegration, as it is generally determined from the assumptions about people in prison that portray them as qualitatively distinct from citizens in the outside world (Behar, 2021).

Discrimination and social perception imprisoned individuals

UNESCO publications often describe the treatment of imprisoned individuals in terms of discrimination. This is done in various ways. According to Krolak (2019), individuals who end up in prison are marginalized by default, as they are excluded from the community. Additionally, these individuals are more likely to come from challenging social backgrounds, often originating from poor and marginalized groups and communities (Krolak, 2019). Minority communities and marginalized groups are commonly overrepresented in prisons worldwide (Behar, 2021). The UNESCO Institute for Education (1995) argues that "prisoners are one of the marginalized groups in society, but in their case, they have consciously and intentionally been deprived and placed on the fringe of society because they have committed crimes." (p.1).

Furthermore, according to the publication associated with UNESCO, inmates are discriminated against specifically in the provision of education. Krolak (2019) asserts that individuals who have committed crimes face discrimination in education. These individuals are more likely to have had limited or no educational experience and often suffer from difficulties with reading and writing. Hanemann and Krolak (2017) note that people in prison are generally less educated than the rest of society, with fewer holding educational certificates. The UNESCO Institute for Education (1995) supports this statement, stating that the picture of literacy in prisons demonstrates a widespread trend of low expectations and academic success. Additionally, these minorities are discriminated against by criminal justice systems, which are often particularly adept at catching and punishing those with low educational attainment compared to those who know how to navigate the system (UNESCO Institute for Education, 1995). However, it is important to note that poor academic success does not imply that the level of intelligence and potential performance is inherently inferior to that of the general population (UNESCO Institute for Education, 1995). Hence, given these explicit connections between

crime, poverty, and educational disadvantage, Krolak (2019) emphasizes the importance of addressing this bias and working on improving prisoners' foundational skills. He further argues that "like every other citizen, prisoners deserve a good education, and the continued failure to educate prisoners comes with tremendous economic and social costs" (p.11). (Krolak, 2019).

Additionally, UNESCO's literature employs various descriptive terms to refer to individuals who have committed crimes. For instance, Krolak (2019) describes prisoners as an "at-risk group," stating that this designation is particularly applicable to prisoners. Lehmann (2011), cited by Krolak (2019), refers to prisoners as a "user group with special needs" due to their generally low educational levels, disadvantaged social and economic backgrounds, and high rates of substance abuse and mental illness. Hanemann and Krolak (2017) further emphasize that those who end up in prison are often "the poorest, least educated, and most vulnerable people." (p.22). Hanemann and Krolak (2017) place people in prison within the most vulnerable and marginalized groups, stating that "libraries have a long-established commitment to providing services to the most vulnerable and reaching out to marginalized groups, such as *prisoners*, the visually impaired, migrants, housebound people, homeless people and hospital patients " (p.19).

Vulnerability of the prison population is further explored by the UNESCO Institute for Education (1995), which outlines common characteristics of the prison community, particularly for those incarcerated for non-political offenses. According to a characterization of the prison population in the United States by Bellorado, cited by UNESCO Institute for Education (1995), many prisoners have a history of school failure, low self-esteem, apathy or hostility towards education, lack of social skills, possible drug dependence, and a propensity for emotional disturbances. Additionally, due to their challenging backgrounds, prisoners are likely to exhibit symptoms of paranoia, severe verbal deficiencies, interpersonal problems, and behavioral difficulties (UNESCO Institute for Education, 1995).

Hanemann and Krolak (2017) further consider the negative impact of prison on mental health, noting that the prison environment can be abnormal and destructive to one's personality in several ways. They highlight that young people in the adult criminal justice system face a significantly higher risk of assault, suicide, and reoffending within a year of release. This phenomenon is referred to as post-incarceration syndrome; a form of post-traumatic stress sustained because of being incarcerated for prolonged periods of time, which often results in

psychological effects such as learned helplessness and anxiety (Hanemann & Krolak, 2017). Learned helplessness describes the quitting or the give up response that follows the conviction that whatever a person does doesn't matter (Martinek, 1996).

Prison Culture and Learning Culture

A recurrent theme in the materials produced by UNESCO and its affiliates is the concept of prison culture, which exists in both large and small penal institutions (UNESCO Institute for Education, 1995). According to the UNESCO Institute for Education (1995), prison culture emerges from the various pains of imprisonment experienced by inmates, such as the deprivation of liberty, goods and services, heterosexual relationships, autonomy, and security. These imposed deprivations create a need for defense, leading to the establishment of a prison community with its own norms and values. This common culture helps protect inmates from environmental pressures (UNESCO Institute for Education, 1995). According to the Council of Europe (1990), as cited in Behar (2021), respecting and accepting certain aspects of prison culture by educators is crucial for motivating and encouraging participation among incarcerated individuals.

In some instances, UNESCO publications link prison culture to a sense of alienation. UNESCO Institute for Education (1995) argues that the prison community is bonded by a shared sense of alienation, as prisoners have been "deliberately alienated from the outside world." (p. 17). According to Behar (2021) this feeling of isolation arises from the significant personal, familial, social, political, and cultural consequences of imprisonment, such as exclusion from family, friends, community, and society. Consequently, the UNESCO Institute for Education (1995) asserts that "there is no denying that the various actors in the penal system regard its functions and priorities in very different lights." (p.16). Alienation is particularly pronounced among incarcerated migrants, who often represent a significant portion of the prison population and face language barriers and specific pedagogical and social needs (Behar, 2021).

UNESCO publications also highlight the relationship between prison culture and perceptions of authority. Behar (2012) cites the Council of Europe (1990) who notes that prison culture may be characterized by a critical view of authority, anger at social injustice, and solidarity among inmates. About social injustice and solidarity, UNESCO Institute for Education (1995) offers an intriguing insight, suggesting that despite the many challenges of prison life, it provides a

level of equality not found in the outside world, as everyone has a bed, food, a similar income, and a similar way of life. The author further explains that if prison life can be organized to help inmates thrive and support each other, it achieves something they may not experience elsewhere (UNESCO Institute for Education, 1995). The prison environment can also facilitate discussions about personal issues, such as illiteracy, that might carry more stigma outside than inside the bars (UNESCO Institute for Education, 1995).

Furthermore, according to UNESCO Institute for Education (1995) a subculture exists among many inmates, particularly recidivists, characterized by a "macho" attitude among male prisoners. This attitude is marked by defiance, bravado, and a mix of solidarity and self-reliance. This macho ideology views a "real man" as fearless, callous, and violent, placing individuals at high risk for crime and criminal careers (Zaitchik et al., 1993). Researchers such as Sado, Kupers, and London (2001) suggest that male convicts' conformity can be seen as a projection of prison masculinity, serving as a strategy to mask perceived weakness or vulnerability while asserting status within the prison community. Nevertheless, according to UNESCO Institute for Education (1995), despite this "macho culture," some inmates feel more comfortable discussing their struggles with reading and writing than they do in the outside community, as they are aware that others share the same challenges, reducing the stigma associated with such admissions.

Another aspect of prison culture described in UNESCO's publications is the strategic use of system rules. For instance, inmates are more likely to participate in educational or other activities if these promise sentence reductions or other advantages; education is often seen as a tool to shorten sentences (UNESCO Institute for Education, 1995). In this context, Hanemann & Krolak (2017) mention a law implemented in Brazil in 2012 that allows prisoners to reduce their sentences by reading books. Similarly, Uruguay's Prison Education Programs enable sentence reductions for prisoners who enroll in educational courses (Hanemann & Krolak, 2017). However, many prisoners have a poor relationship with education due to their backgrounds, bringing into prison a deep-seated antipathy towards educational activities, which they view as alien and likely to lead to further failure (UNESCO Institute for Education, 1995).

Despite these challenges, UNESCO believes in the power of education in prison to combat discrimination. Hanemann and Krolak (2017) argue that fostering a culture of reading and writing, which requires the conception of a "truly literate environment", can help break the

cycle of disadvantage among prisoners. A meta-analysis of correctional education studies in the U.S., cited by Krolak (2019), found that employment after imprisonment was 13% higher among those who were exposed to a culture of learning in prison. According to Krolak (2019) a culture of learning can be achieved through prison libraries, which offer positive pedagogical spaces in a coercive environment; prison libraries are "a social space that can inculcate a culture of reading and learning" (p.13). (Krolak, 2019).

In summary, UNESCO's publications exhibit some ambiguity regarding the coexistence of prison culture and learning culture. Behar (2021) contrasts imprisonment, which centers on exclusion, with education, which is fundamentally about inclusion. Although this dichotomy presents a challenge, with structural and institutional obstacles to creating positive pedagogical spaces within a coercive environment, many inmates successfully participate in prison education (Behar, 2021). On one hand, Behar (2021) argues that while education in prison is challenging, it is also rewarding and has the potential to be transformative. On the other hand, the UNESCO Institute for Education (1995) contends that education and punishment are fundamentally incompatible, as the punitive nature of imprisonment is anti-educational and hinders personal growth. The topic of prison education will be explored in greater depth in the following research question.

Definition and scope of education in prison within the UNESCO lifelong framework

Within UNESCO's publications, the concept of education in prison is evolving and open to interpretation, with various descriptions provided. Behar (2021) notes that prison education is not a fixed concept, and its interpretation varies widely. As Behar (2021) writes citing Costelloe (2014), "how we define prison education has a fundamental impact on how we design and provide it." (p. 41). The UNESCO Institute for Education (1995) acknowledges some confusion about the nature and role of prison education but asserts that it should be accessible to the entire prison community, much like schools and colleges serve their local communities. The UNESCO Institute for Education (UIE) has been exploring basic education in prisons, fulfilling its role as UNESCO's specialized center for adult and continuing education research (UNESCO Institute for Education, 1995). As Behar (2021) emphasizes, prison education, like all forms of education grounded in community and adult contexts, should be a voluntary activity that allows for willing engagement by both learners and educators. The Council of Europe in Education in Prison

(1990) recognizes the importance of making prison education voluntary, further arguing that within the prison regime, education should have equal status and support as work. The UNESCO Institute for Education (1995) defines prison education as a process that fosters intellectual and emotional growth in individuals.

UNESCO, as a global governance actor, often frames prison education within the context of international declarations and treaties. Notably, its lifelong education declarations stress that everyone, regardless of age or sociocultural background, has the right to education (UIL, 2014). This is reflected in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN, 1948), which affirms that 'everyone has the right to education,' emphasizing the full development of human personality and the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. According to Behar (2021), this principle underscores the importance of providing access to quality education from the first day of incarceration through to and beyond the day of release. Other key international instruments cited by UNESCO include the European Prison Rules (2020), particularly Rule 28, which states that prison education "shall aim to develop the whole person bearing in mind his or her social, economic, and cultural context," and the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE), supporting the development of individuals, communities, and societies through various forms of adult education within the criminal justice framework. The Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (1990) also recommended that all prisoners have access to education, acknowledging its potential to mitigate the adverse effects of imprisonment (Behar, 2021). Overall, UNESCO highlights that the primary goal of international prison education initiatives is to facilitate the exchange of ideas among prison educators and bridge the gaps between international norms and the actual prison education situation in many countries (Behar, 2021). Programs such as those of the United Nations Secretariat, through its Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Branch, support these exchanges and assist Member States in applying existing standards when requested (UNESCO Institute for Education, 1995).

Building on the importance of voluntary education, UNESCO's publications further describe prison education as not only a right but also a crucial tool and necessity for incarcerated individuals. Krolak (2019) characterizes education as a fundamental right and a crucial instrument for personal growth. The author emphasizes that education is not only essential but also serves as a potent catalyst for transformation and individual development. According to the

UNESCO Institute for Education (1995), since education is a basic human need and right, imprisonment should not deprive individuals of their civil rights, including education. A holistic view of education posits that learning is a lifelong process that should not be interrupted by imprisonment (UNESCO Institute for Education, 1995).

There is a strong emphasis on advancing lifelong learning within the prison system. Behar (2021) describes lifelong learning as the pursuit of knowledge, personal fulfillment, and consciousness-raising. Hanemann and Krolak (2017) highlight the urgent need to equip prisons with spaces that foster lifelong learning, particularly in literacy skills; prison libraries play a central role in creating the necessary environment and resources for lifelong learning. According to Krolak (2019), reading and writing promote lifelong learning through various forms of education, including literacy programs, life skills training, vocational training, creative activities, religious and cultural activities, physical education, and library access. Hanemann and Krolak (2017) write that education can combat inequalities and discrimination by addressing foundational skill deficits, enabling people to fully participate in society.

UNESCO frequently emphasizes the role of education in the rehabilitation and reintegration of prisoners. The rehabilitation model assumes that criminal behavior is not solely determined by heredity (UNESCO Institute for Education, 1995). Today, rehabilitation refers to personal change and transformation, aiming to re-educate individuals who have committed crimes and prepare them for reentry into society (Behar, 2021). Educational programs in prisons are generally seen as having a positive impact on recidivism, with research showing that those who participate in such programs are less likely to reoffend and more likely to secure employment after release (Behar, 2021). Hanemann and Krolak (2017) highlight that the lack of basic literacy and vocational skills can hinder rehabilitation and reintegration, contributing to high rates of reoffending. Krolak (2019) further supports this by stating that "available evidence shows that education is key to the successful rehabilitation of prisoners into society." (p.12). She also emphasizes that prisons have a duty to rehabilitate and reintegrate prisoners, ensuring that their rights to information and education are upheld. According to the UNESCO Institute for Education (1995), developing a prison curriculum should focus on facilitating reintegration, though the specific content may vary across cultural contexts. Education, therefore, becomes an essential part of the correctional treatment necessary for reintegration, despite societal

imperfections (UNESCO Institute for Education, 1995). Hanemann and Krolak (2017) stress that a key goal of the penitentiary system is to rehabilitate and reintegrate prisoners, making prison education a crucial means of improving imprisonment conditions and preparing inmates for active rehabilitation. However, the UNESCO Institute for Education (1995) notes that this rehabilitative approach is embraced only by prisoners who recognize and accept that incarceration serves purposes beyond punishment and isolation.

Moreover, UNESCO argues that education within prison settings is recognized not merely as a tool for personal development and societal engagement but as a necessity tailored to the unique needs of individuals, social situation, and culture. Education transcends its role as a mere tool for change; it is an essential right, with components like training, disciplined attitudes, and reflective practices being crucial even beyond the scope of rehabilitation (Behar, 2021; Rangel Torrijo, 2019). Thus, the UNESCO Institute for Education (1995) contends that while education plays a crucial role in the reintegration of prisoners, it alone cannot guarantee successful outcomes. Factors such as the social environment and labor market conditions significantly impact recidivism rates. The Institute critiques the conventional concept of rehabilitation outside the educational context, which "often focuses on crime prevention and cost-saving rather than fostering the inherent dignity and value of individuals" (UNESCO Institute for Education, 1995). As the UNESCO Institute for Education (1995) emphasizes, "nobody can now deny that prisoners need education," highlighting the substantial benefits that can be derived from educational programs in prisons.

Finally, UNESCO's publications closely associate education with the concept of freedom, as reflected in the theme "Literacy as Freedom" during the United Nations Literacy Decade (2003–2012) (Krolak, 2019). Krolak (2019) describes education in prison as a form of freedom, allowing inmates to choose library services and books, which serves as a reminder that they retain control over certain aspects of their lives. This empowerment enhances their capacity for responsible, self-directed, and critical decision-making. Hanemann and Krolak (2017) similarly argue that reading provides inmates with cultural freedom, enabling them to reflect on their lives, find inspiration, and achieve greater self-awareness. The UNESCO Institute for Education (1995) asserts that freedom is essential for mutual understanding among individuals, stating that without it, "there is only restriction and limitation." (p.156). Ultimately, education fosters

freedom by encouraging personal growth and individuality, which are essential for meaningful rehabilitation and reintegration (UNESCO Institute for Education, 1995).

UNESCO and its affiliates have documented numerous benefits of education in prison, both in personal and social spheres, highlighting various strategies, methodologies, and activities that positively impact inmates during their sentences and after release. Zafferoni, as cited by the UNESCO Institute for Education (1995), asserts that education can alleviate some of the negative impacts of imprisonment, helping inmates gain self-esteem and rebuild their lives post-release. Hanemann and Krolak (2017) quotes the Council of Europe (1990), who acknowledges that education can make the prison environment less abnormal and limit the damage caused by incarceration. They suggest that inmates who develop an appreciation for books during their imprisonment have better chances of successfully reintegrating into society upon release. Krolak (2019) emphasizes that creating a literate environment can significantly improve inmates' lives in various ways, including fostering socialization, participation, and positive relationships both in prison and after release. Education in prison addresses foundational skill gaps, facilitating better communication between prisoners, their families, and the community (Krolak, 2019).

Moreover, UNESCO emphasizes the importance of education in prison to foster socialization. Behar (2021) underscores that the core goal of adult education is to enable students to participate in various spheres of life, including school, family, workplace, and community. Education thus motivates students to engage in both public and private spheres. Krolak (2019) notes that prison libraries play a crucial role in fostering socialization by providing a space for community engagement and social cohesion, allowing inmates to explore broader perspectives. According to Hanemann and Krolak (2017), promoting a culture of reading and writing among inmates offers opportunities for socialization and bonding with family and friends, and access to culture and connections to the outside world. For example, the Prison Libraries Learning Program in the UK aims to improve relationships between incarcerated mothers and their children by creating quality family learning opportunities. This program enhances family relationships, develops skills, and promotes the idea that learning is accessible and enjoyable for everyone (Hanemann and Krolak, 2017). Additionally, the program stimulates socialization

through families, equipping prisoners to reintegrate effectively into their families and communities and empowering mothers to participate in their children's education despite their circumstances.

Furthermore, according to Behar (2021), citizenship education and active citizenship are key aspects of education that can promote lifelong learning within the learning environment and throughout the prison. Behar (2021) argues that active citizenship education in prison has many benefits, including making prisoners feel more connected and less alienated from society. Behar (2021) further explains that active citizenship in the penal environment involves volunteering, charitable work, and peer-to-peer support, enabling prisoners to engage with their community and society both within and outside the prison. Costelloe (2014), cited by Behar (2021), emphasizes that citizenship education is a process aimed at transforming inmates' identities from prisoners to active citizens.

Nonetheless, the concepts of socialization and resocialization of inmates can be controversial, as they depend on the social environment inmates return to and the applicability of skills learned in prison to the outside community (UNESCO Institute for Education, 1995). According to the UNESCO Institute for Education (1995), "genuine prospects for socialization arise only when family members are supportive, drugs are avoided, and appropriate money and housing are secured, typically through employment." To address this issue, some education initiatives support inmates during and after their imprisonment. For example, the Free Minds Book Club and Writing Workshop in Washington, D.C., uses literature, creative writing, and peer support to help young inmates reach their full potential. This program operates in three phases: during incarceration, upon transfer to a federal prison at age 18, and after release, providing continuous support to its participants (Hanemann and Krolak, 2017).

In addition to fostering socialization, UNESCO also highlights the role of education in prison as a critical tool for personal development and mental resilience. According to Behar (2021), education in prison also boosts confidence, raises awareness, and improves inmates' mental health, giving them a renewed sense of purpose. As Rodríguez (2006) and Alexander (2011), cited by Behar (2021), highlight, prison education has historically played a crucial role in raising consciousness among inmates, aiding their understanding of societal treatment and discrimination. This transformational process can change perspectives and foster tolerance and

alternative solutions (Krolak, 2019). Reading, according to a Bulgarian study cited by Krolak (2019), builds prisoners' confidence, positively impacting their lives post-release. Promoting a culture of reading and writing enhances self-reflection, inspiration, and self-esteem, encouraging inmates to engage more in public and private spheres (Hanemann and Krolak, 2017; Behar, 2021). Informal education activities, such as discussion groups, visual arts, and physical activities, also contribute to self-expression and self-confidence (UNESCO Institute for Education, 1995). Education can also serve as a healing tool for prisoners. Bibliotherapy, defined as the use of books to aid recovery from mental illness or emotional disturbances, has therapeutic potential, particularly through creative writing (Krolak, 2019). However, the UNESCO Institute for Education (1995) argues that informal education, such as art or creative writing, should not be confused with therapy; it supports inmates' emotional development in a non-threatening manner, fostering better integration within the prison population without treating their creative expressions merely as therapy.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

Conclusion

The thesis examined how UNESCO describes incarcerated individuals, and the organization's perspective on the purpose and benefits of prison education within the framework of lifelong learning. The findings reveal that UNESCO, through its evolving terminology and advocacy, contributes to shaping global educational norms and promoting prison education as both a universal right and a tool for personal and societal transformation.

The first part of the analysis examines the terminology used in UNESCO's publications regarding prison education. UNESCO emphasizes the significance of labels, as the language we use to describe individuals shapes how we behave toward them. In some cases, UNESCO adopts more "humanizing" terms such as "people in prison," "students," or "learners" when addressing prison education, although this shift is still in progress. Additionally, terms like "wider community" and "prison community", and "othering" are frequently employed, but UNESCO

highlights how their usage can foster mutual rejection and widen the divide between those inside and outside the prison system. According to UNESCO, such labels position prisoners outside the realm of societal values and fairness, potentially stigmatizing them by eliminating aspects of their identity, including their personalities, experiences, relationships, consciousness, history, and culture.

The second part of the analysis focused on the multiple layers of discrimination which according to UNESCO is faced by individuals in prison. First, individuals who end up incarcerated often come from disadvantaged social backgrounds, typically belonging to poor and marginalized communities. These individuals face additional discrimination in the realm of education, as many have had poor educational experiences and often struggle with literacy. Nonetheless, UNESCO emphasizes that this does not suggest individuals in prison are less capable or intelligent than others. Additionally, the criminal justice system disproportionately targets and punishes those with lower educational attainment, as they are less equipped to navigate the system effectively.

Additionally, in the perspective of UNESCO, individuals in prison are often among the most vulnerable. Their challenging backgrounds frequently result in low self-esteem and increased susceptibility to emotional disturbances. UNESCO emphasizes the negative impact of the prison environment on mental health, noting that it can be damaging to one's personality in multiple ways. Young people in the adult criminal justice system are particularly at risk, facing higher rates of assault, suicide, and reoffending within a year of release. UNESCO also addresses the post-traumatic stress caused by incarceration, which often leaves individuals with heightened anxiety and feelings of helplessness.

The third part of the analysis explores prison culture and its integration with learning and educational practices. According to UNESCO, prison culture arises from the deprivations experienced by incarcerated individuals, leading to a defensive mindset. This culture is characterized by shared alienation and isolation, which often fosters a critical view of authority, anger at social injustice, and solidarity among inmates. According to UNESCO, this solidarity can have positive effects, such as facilitating discussions about personal issues and educational achievements, and providing a space for expressing vulnerabilities despite the prevalent "macho" culture within inmates. The organization also notes that prison culture involves the systematic

use of prison rules and a general antipathy towards education and learning activities. Despite these challenges, UNESCO believes in the transformative power of education to break the cycle of disadvantage. Prison libraries, in particular, are seen as key tools to fostering a learning culture within prisons.

The fourth section of the analysis explores UNESCO's conceptualization of education in prisons. UNESCO acknowledges that the notion of prison education is not fixed but continually evolves and it is subject to interpretation. Despite this fluidity, UNESCO asserts that prison education should be voluntary, accessible to all incarcerated individuals, and afforded the same status and support as prison labor. Additionally, UNESCO frequently situated prison education within the context of international treaties, particularly the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which recognizes education as a universal right. The organization outlines that the primary objective of international prison education initiatives is to foster dialogue among prison educators and address the divergence between international standards and the actual situation of prison education in many countries.

Furthermore, UNESCO frequently associates prison education with the concept of lifelong learning. Addressing foundational skill deficits in inmates is considered essential for their full participation in society as lifelong learners. As a result, there is a strong emphasis on reading and writing as key tools for lifelong learning, with prison libraries described as spaces where this learning can begin or continue. Additionally, the analysis highlights that, according to UNESCO, citizenship education and active citizenship are important aspects of education that can promote lifelong learning for incarcerated individuals. This concept can be controversial, as most people in prison are unable to fully exercise active citizenship, but UNESCO suggests that inmates can engage in active citizenship through activities such as volunteering, charitable work, or peer support within the prison community.

Moreover, UNESCO frames prison education as a rehabilitative tool for personal transformation and reintegration into society. In this framework, education is viewed as a tool for personal change and transformation, aimed at re-educating individuals who have committed crimes and preparing them for reintegration into society—a concept known as correctional education. UNESCO cites studies that provide evidence of the positive impact of prison education on rehabilitating and reintegrating individuals into society. Nonetheless, UNESCO

believes that prison education alone cannot guarantee successful reintegration, as factors such as the social environment and labor market conditions outside the prison environment significantly impact recidivism rates.

The final part of the analysis emphasizes the benefits of prison education from UNESCO's perspective, both personally and socially. Education in prison fosters self-esteem, improves communication, and encourages participation in various aspects of life. It also promotes socialization by creating spaces for community engagement and social cohesion, enabling inmates to explore broader perspectives. UNESCO underscores the importance of a supportive outside community to sustain socialization post-release and cites initiatives that support inmates during and after incarceration. Moreover, UNESCO highlights the personal benefits of education in prison, such as building mental resilience, improving mental health, and offering inmates a renewed sense of purpose, which is particularly important given the vulnerability of inmates' mental health. UNESCO also underscores the therapeutic potential of education, citing bibliotherapy—using books and creative writing to aid recovery from mental health challenges or emotional disturbances.

The analysis offers valuable insights for the introduction and theoretical framework of the thesis. Through the UNESCO Digital Library, the organization uses soft power to promote international standards and raise awareness of critical issues in prison education. The Library reflects UNESCO's purpose of using education to promote societal development and its broader influence in global governance (Elfert and Ydesen, 2023). UNESCO's publications show how international norms on lifelong learning and human rights can be applied to prison education, suggesting ways to incorporate these frameworks into domestic law. This is important, as nations' adherence to international treaties on prisoner treatment depends on how effectively these treaties are integrated into domestic legal frameworks (van Zyl Smit, 2010; Carey, 2022). The analysis further highlights UNESCO's prison education initiatives, which, according to the organization, aim to foster dialogue among prison educators and address the gap between international standards and actual prison education practices.

By promoting a linguistic shift toward more humanizing labels in prison education discourse, UNESCO challenges the societal problematization of criminals (Rose, 1999). Emphasizing education in prison as a transformative tool for rehabilitation and empowerment,

UNESCO portrays incarcerated individuals as capable of learning and deserving of a second chance. This aligns with the 'learning through life' principle from the Delors Report, which highlights the importance of individuals maintaining mastery over their destinies (Elfert, 2015). UNESCO's commitment to prison education reflects its broader vision of fostering unity in diversity and focusing on shared humanity within a global learning society (Laves & Thomson, 1957; Elfert et al., 2023). The analysis also contributes to labeling theory by demonstrating the risks of using terms like 'at-risk' or 'marginalized groups,' which UNESCO warns may reinforce negative stereotypes if not carefully employed.

Lastly, the analysis builds on Ainscow et al.'s (2008) argument that strategies for achieving Education for All (EFA) must integrate social learning processes within specific contexts. UNESCO emphasizes the need to navigate the tension between learning culture and prison culture by tailoring educational processes to the prison environment. Prison education must address the social, economic, and cultural contexts of incarcerated individuals. Bibliotherapy exemplifies a learning practice successfully integrated into the prison setting. UNESCO's publications also expand on Article 26 of the UDHR, which asserts that education should aim for "the full development of the human personality" (van Zyl Smit, 2010), demonstrating a commitment to an holistic approach that addresses both educational and psychological needs of inmates.

Limitations and Recommendations

First, relying on document analysis may introduce subjectivity, as the selection of documents and focus on specific themes can overlook significant details or alternative perspectives, such as the emphasis on labels used to describe inmates. While document analysis provides stable, unaffected data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), its interpretative nature may lead to selective focus on particular aspects at the expense of other relevant topics. This method is often combined with other qualitative methods, such as interviews, for triangulation (Bowen, 2009). Future studies could benefit from incorporating interviews with UNESCO staff or prison educators, which would help mitigate potential biases inherent in a single-method study.

Moreover, an incomplete collection of documents can lead to biased selectivity (Yin, 1994). This study's scope is limited to four UNESCO publications from 1995–2023, which

restricts the comprehensiveness of the findings. The selected documents may not fully reflect UNESCO's evolving approach to prison education. Although they were chosen for their relevance to the research questions, important developments may be overlooked. Expanding the range of documents and including more recent policy updates would enhance future research. Additionally, the small sample size of the study limits the generalizability of the findings. While the insights are valuable for understanding UNESCO's official stance on prison education, it is unclear if they represent broader trends across various contexts. Future studies should investigate how individual states interpret and implement UNESCO's policies to assess their real-world impact on prison education.

Lastly, this thesis did not examine UNESCO's stance on higher education in prisons or specific educational practices in detail, focusing instead on broader aspects of prison education and basic education. The analysis primarily addresses adult education in prison, forsaking education for underaged incarcerated individuals, which has distinct implications. These areas warrant further investigation, as they may offer valuable insights into how UNESCO's policies are applied across different educational levels.

Addressing these limitations for future research involves broadening the study's scope, employing mixed-method approaches, and collecting direct input from those involved in prison education. This would help bridge the gap between global policy frameworks and the actual experiences of prison education stakeholders. Furthermore, it would be valuable to compare UNESCO's approach with that of other international organizations, such as the World Bank and the OECD, to gain a broader understanding of how global governance addresses prison education. It would also be insightful to study how UNESCO collaborates with other parties such as the civic society and the private sector to address education in prison at an international level within a multi stakeholders global approach.

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Appendix A

Code System

1. **Prison Population & Social Structure** ⇒ Theme: The terminology of UNESCO
 - Prisoners
 - Inmates
 - Prison population
 - Prison community

2. **Social Challenges** ⇒ Theme: Discrimination and social perception of prisoners
 - Illiteracy ⇒ Theme: Prison culture and learning culture
 - Discrimination
 - Minorities
 - Exclusion
 - Marginalization
 - Low literacy skills
 - Barrier to reintegration
 - Hostility towards education

- Macho attitude
- Solidarity within inmates
- alienation

3. **Prison Education and Rehabilitation** ⇒ **Theme:** Definition and scope of prison education

- Education in prison
 - Access to education
 - Education for successful rehabilitation
 - Personal development
- Prison libraries
 - Literate environment
- Empowerment through learning, reading and writing

4. **Reintegration and Social Transformation** ⇒ **Theme:** Definition and scope of prison education

- Social integration
- Barrier to reintegration
- Education as a need
- Education as a transformational tool
 - Potential for change
 - Literate environment

5. **Legal and Institutional Frameworks** ⇒ **Theme:** Definition and scope of prison education

- Legal frameworks and policies
- Education in prison (linked to both frameworks and rehabilitation)
- Access to education
- Right to education

