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The wicked problem of prison education: what are the perceptions of two key stakeholder groups on the impact of tame and wicked approaches to prison education?

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List of abbreviations and acronyms

ACCT	Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork
AE	Adult Education
ATPE	Association of Teachers in Penal Establishments
BIS	Department for Business Innovation and Skills
CAS	Complex adaptive systems
CECJS	Centre for Education in the Criminal Justice System
CJS	Criminal Justice System
CPD	Continuing professional development
CRC	Community Rehabilitation Company
CSCS	Construction Skills Certification Scheme
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
DIUS	Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills
ESOL	English for speakers of other languages
ETF	Education and Training Foundation
FE	Further Education
GLH	Guided learning hours
HMPS	Her Majesty's Prison Service
IAG	Information, Advice and Guidance
IAL	Informal adult learning
IfL	Institute for Learning
IOM	Integrated Offender Management
IQA	Internal Quality Assurance
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
KPT	Key Performance Target
LONCETT	London Centre for Excellence in Teacher Training
LSC	Learning and Skills Council
LSP	Learning support practitioner
MDT	Mandatory drug test
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
NATFHE	National Association of Teachers in Further & Higher Education
NOMS	National Offender Management Service
NPM	New Public Management
NPS	New Psychoactive Substances
OLASS	Offenders' Learning and Skill Service
OLSU	Offenders' Learning and Skills Unit
PET	Prisoners' Education Trust
PLA	Prisoner Learning Alliance
PLSU	Prisoners' Learning and Skills Unit
POA	Prison Officers' Association
PSD	Personal and social development
PSI	Prison Service Instruction
ROLC	Register of Learning Concern
SFA	Skills Funding Agency
UCU	University and College Union

Abstract

Today's prison system in England and Wales has been developed as one solution to the issue of how society should deal with offenders, and part of this approach is to provide an education service that contributes towards the rehabilitation of offenders by helping them to gain qualifications that can lead to employment. For almost two hundred years the role of prison education has been based on the perceived purposes of prisons, which have dictated how offenders have been treated and what role prison education has to play in this treatment. At present three sets of policies, further education, prison education and penal policy, are used by government to determine the role of prison education and deal with the issues it presents. This thesis uses the concept of 'wicked' problems to investigate what two key stakeholder groups, prison educators and their managers, believe are the key issues in prison education and the impact of the policy approaches that are used to deal with them. The concepts of wicked and tame problems are derived from Rittel and Webber's analysis of the rational planning approaches that were being applied in the 1960s to complex social policy issues such as housing and health. From this Rittel and Webber proposed that there were ten criteria that could be used to characterise an issue as 'wicked'. These ten criteria underpin the questions used to answer the main research question for the thesis: 'What are the perceptions of two key stakeholder groups on the impact of tame and wicked approaches to prison education?' The research was founded in an interpretivist-constructivist philosophy and adopted a qualitative approach in the form of in-depth interviews with 12 participants, consisting of three managers and nine educators, all based in one prison setting in the north of England.

From the analysis of the interviews it was concluded that both the educators and the managers acknowledged the complexities of the system within which they worked and some of the issues that arose from this situation. They also believed that policy makers and the prison system adopted tame approaches to deal with these issues and, whether consciously or unconsciously, replicated some of these in their own approach prison education. There were some areas of agreement between the views of the educators and their managers on the key issues in prison education, how they may be addressed and if they could be solved. However, there was not a sufficient level of consensus to be able to formulate an agreement on which issues were the most pressing, or to devise an approach to deal with them, a situation which in itself confirmed that prison education was a wicked problem. This thesis therefore suggests that the first step in attempting to address the problem of prison education is for stakeholders to better appreciate its wicked nature, for only then can further steps be taken towards building a shared understanding of the issues through the involvement of all stakeholders. It has to be accepted by all stakeholders, including government and policy makers, that there may be ways of improving the situation by addressing some of the issues, but there is no 'right' answer to the wicked problem of prison education that will solve all of the issues 'once-and-for-all'.

Chapter One

Introduction to the research

This thesis presents an investigation into the perceptions of two key stakeholder groups, prison educators and their managers, on the impact of tame and wicked approaches to prison education. The concepts of tame and wicked problems are derived from Rittel's (1972) critique of the first generation systems approach to problem solving; which was developed further by Rittel and Webber (1973) in their analysis of the rational planning approaches that were being applied to complex social policy issues, such as housing and health. Rational planning approaches viewed social issues as being 'tame' in that, although they may be complex, they could be understood, manipulated and controlled in a rational way to provide a solution. This tame approach is based on an agreed objective understanding of what the issue is and how it can be addressed. However, Rittel and Webber argued that complex social issues are 'wicked' in their nature and cannot be fully dealt with in a scientific, rational way as there is no agreement on what the issue is or on how it should be dealt with, also, as there is no ultimate solution, the scientific, rational approach is doomed to fail. Rittel and Webber proposed that there were ten criteria which could be applied to government approaches to public policy planning issues that could lead to them being characterised as wicked. This thesis uses the concept of 'wicked' problems to investigate what two key stakeholder groups, prison educators and their managers, believe are the key issues in prison education in England and Wales and the impact of the policy approaches that are used to deal with them. As the criminal justice and prison education systems of Scotland and

Northern Ireland are substantially different to the systems in England and Wales, the decision has been made not to include them in the research.

Background and rationale for the research

The issues that are faced by the prison education workforce are not widely known, as prison education is hidden from public view. Its purpose remains not only a mystery to outsiders, but often also to those responsible for its management and those employed to deliver it. Teaching takes place in classrooms with locked doors and barred windows, surrounded by fences topped with razor wire and walls twenty feet high and six feet deep. The prison system in England and Wales, as it is today, developed in response to the issue of how society should deal with offenders. A tame approach was adopted by devising a criminal justice system that simply removed the offenders from society and locked them up in prison. However, this solution gave rise to a new wicked issue, what should be done with offenders whilst they were incarcerated to prevent them from re-offending when they were released? For Foucault one of the fundamental principles of imprisonment was that 'penal detention must have as its essential function the transformation of the individual's behaviour' (1977: 269). In order to effect this transformation a number of approaches have been used including, hard labour, solitary confinement and the 'silent' system, along with the more enlightened approaches of training, religious instruction and education. Each of these has been used at different times in the prison system's history, some of them concurrently and they have all been criticised for having a limited effect on the numbers of offenders in prison and the rates of re-offending (MoJ, 2015).

The different approaches to the wicked issue of what should be done with offenders whilst they were incarcerated, have been constructed within penal policy discourse, which in turn has determined the content and delivery of prison education. Prison education affects, and is affected by, a number of stakeholders, each with their own perspective on the issue of how society should deal with offenders. Each of these perspectives possesses its own solution to the issue, which is promoted through a particular discourse on the role and purposes of prison education and it is this 'proliferation of … discourses [that] is indicative of a wicked problem' (Southgate et al., 2012: 16). Prison education discourse contains statements on the role and purposes of prison education that are inextricably linked to the role and purposes of prisons. The changes in the prison system and prison education can be linked historically to changes in sociological, political and policy discourse.

Prison education has developed alongside the prison system over a period of almost two hundred years, with the need for some form of education in prisons first being proposed by John Howard in 1777. Beginning with the Gaols Act of 1823, educating offenders has been one of the approaches used to bring about a change in their behaviour. From 1823 to the present day the perceived role and purposes of prison education have been linked to the role and purposes of prisons, which have been determined by penal policy. Throughout its development prison education has taken the form of religious instruction, literacy and numeracy skills, music, art, maths, English, I.T and practical skills such as plumbing and carpentry. However, until the establishment of the Offenders' Learning and Skills Service

(OLASS) in 2005, it was a fragmented and localised service, and some would argue that this is still the case (Rogers et al., 2014).

Prison education today is part of the further education (FE) sector and is delivered via the Offenders' Learning and Skills Service (OLASS), with the teaching delivery shared between three FE colleges and one independent learning provider. Prison education services are contracted by the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) and co-commissioned with the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) who provide offender management services in public and private sector prisons and in the community.

As the prison system has evolved to what it is today, the social, economic and political factors that have influenced changes in the management of the system, have also had an impact on prison education and prison educators. The consequence has been that the tame approach, which has been applied to the issue of how to deal with offenders, has shaped the content, delivery and management of education in prisons.

The research context

I began my teaching career in 2000, when I was employed by the local adult education (AE) service to teach maths in a local prison education department. From 2001 I also taught sociology and anthropology on an undergraduate degree programme, this was delivered by the prison education department in conjunction with the local university. During the time I have worked in prison education there have been changes in penal and education policies which have affected my role as a

prison educator. These policies have led to changes in the content and extent of the curriculum, the types and numbers of offenders attending education classes, working conditions and employment contracts.

The prison education workforce is not directly employed by the prison service, they are classed as civilian 'guests' and are employed by the education contract provider, usually a further education (FE) college, who deliver the education provision. This means that they are bound by three sets of policies, those applying to FE, those applying specifically to prison education and those applying to the prison service. Furthermore, the prison education workforce works in a 'nested organisation' (Mueller and Lawler, 1999), the education contract provider, that is itself nested within another nested organisation, the prison service. The consequence is that they are in a dual-nested position, which often subjects them to conflicting sets of policies and principles. Therefore, the perceptions of the prison education workforce on the impact of tame and wicked approaches to prison education are formed within the context of the prison system, an environment where security, not education, is the primary aim.

As well as policy changes, the research location has also undergone a number of other changes that have impacted on educators and their managers. In 2002 the capacity of the prison where the research was conducted was expanded by 40% with the building of four new wings and an extension to the existing facilities, including new classrooms. Consequently, more educators were employed to cover the expanding curriculum. The prison population and how it is categorised have also changed. In 2006 the Offenders' Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) was

established in this region and the re-tendering of prison education services took place. This resulted in the education contract being transferred from the local education authority to an FE college based in the north-west of England. Since this initial transfer the re-tendering process has taken place approximately every four years, which, for most of the workforce, has meant a change of employer and employment contracts. In 2010, funding for prison education was passed to the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) and the subsequent curriculum changes and the focus on literacy and numeracy skills meant the closure of all undergraduate degree programmes at this location. These changes resulted in my redeployment as a Learning Support Practitioner (LSP), essentially a teaching assistant. In 2015, government policy and political discourse continued to affect prison education with a 24% cut in funding and a proposed 'new' evidence-based, rigorously tested approach to prison education promised by the then Justice Secretary Michael Gove. One outcome of the funding cut was a reduction in the number of funded student places and the consequent reduction in the number of teaching staff.

As this research was based partially on my own experiences, it has to be acknowledged that personal bias may be present and there is also the need to consider my position as an insider-researcher, which provided a unique opportunity to carry out this research. I have knowledge and personal experience of the tame and wicked approaches to prison education, the impact of policy changes, the complex issues faced by prison educators and the conflicts that can arise at both an individual and organisational level. In order to provide an insight into the

perceptions of other members of the prison education workforce, prison educators and their managers, the Main Research Question (MRQ) of the thesis is:

What are the perceptions of two key stakeholder groups on the impact of tame and wicked approaches to prison education?

To answer this, a number of sub-questions (SQ) are needed, which are:

1. **What are the major characteristics of current prison education in England and Wales?**

2. **What are tame and wicked issues?**

3. **What are the criteria that characterise wicked issues?**

4. **Can these criteria be applied to prison education?**

5. **What is the nature and views of the two key stakeholders groups?**

6. **How are the criteria of wicked issues expressed, explicitly and implicitly, through the perceptions of the two key stakeholder groups?**

7. **How do the perceptions of the two key stakeholder groups compare to one another and to the views of other stakeholders?**

8. **Do the key stakeholders' responses fulfil the criteria of a wicked problem?**

The structure of the thesis

This thesis begins with sub-question one: **'what are the major characteristics of current prison education in England and Wales?'** This will be examined in Chapter Two by providing an outline of the present state of prison education in England and Wales, how it is organised and how it is funded. The prison education system in England and Wales is one part of a complex prison system, which itself is part of the

complex Criminal Justice System (CJS). In order to gain an understanding of this complexity Chapter Two will also consider Plsek and Greehalgh's (2001) work on complex adaptive systems (CAS) and how this can be applied to explain the different stakeholders' views of prison education. The chapter will then move on to present a historical account of the development of prison education and how its role and purposes have been determined by the role and purposes of the prison system. The next section of the chapter will present a range of stakeholders' views on what they believe are the current issues in prison education. The chapter will conclude by identifying the similarities in these views, to illustrate the complexity that different values, mental models and priorities bring to the context of prison education.

Chapter Three addresses sub-questions two, three and four. The chapter begins with a discussion of tame and wicked issues through a critique of the first generation systems approach to problem solving and an examination of the use of the term 'wicked problem' in academia and the media. The chapter will then move on to explore Rittel and Webber's (1973) ten criteria that characterise wicked issues to determine whether these can be applied to prison education. It will conclude by considering what might be the implications of adopting a tame approach to prison education.

Chapter Four presents the research methodology adopted and justifies the choice of a qualitative approach in order to gather data via in-depth semi-structured interviews with two key stakeholder groups, prison educators and their managers. This chapter also considers the the impact that my role as an insider-researcher

(Costley et al., 2010) had on the research and the practical and ethical issues that arose from this.

Chapter Five addresses sub-questions five and six by analysing the data from the educators' interviews and presenting their views on the issues in prison education and how they believe these issues can be addressed. The chapter concludes with an examination of how the responses typify both tame and wicked issues.

Chapter Six also addresses sub-questions five and six, in this case by analysing the data from the managers' interviews and presenting their views on the issues in prison education and how they believe these issues can be addressed. This chapter also concludes with an examination of how the responses typify both tame and wicked issues.

Chapter Seven addresses sub-question seven by comparing the views of the two key stakeholder groups, prison educators and managers, to draw out the similarities and dissimilarities, it then compares these to the views of other stakeholder groups. In order to address sub-question eight the chapter concludes by examining whether the key stakeholders' views fulfil the criteria of a wicked problem.

Chapter Eight will revisit the main research question and draw together the key findings of the research. It will provide a conclusion and make recommendations for policy makers, education managers and prison educators and propose what further research could take place. The chapter will also look at the changes that have taken

place during the course of the research and provide a reflection on the research and its limitations.

Having provided an introduction to the research and an outline of the chapters, this thesis will now move on to address the first research sub-question: '**what are the major characteristics of current prison education in England and Wales?'**

Chapter Two

Introduction

A link between the prison system and society was made by the Home Secretary Winston Churchill in a House of Commons speech, when he stated that, 'the treatment of crime and criminals mark and measure the stored-up strength of a nation' (Hansard, 1910: Col.1354). The treatment of crime and criminals has been determined by penal policy and the attitudes of politicians and policy makers, which have also dictated the role and purpose of education in prisons. The aim of this chapter is to answer research sub-question one: **'what are the major characteristics of current prison education in England and Wales?'** The first part of the chapter will provide an account of the present state of prison education in England and Wales and introduce Plsek and Greenhalgh's (2001) complex adaptive systems (CAS) theory in order examine the complexity of the Criminal Justice system (CJS). The chapter will then chart the historical development of prison education and its relationship to both penal and education policy. It will do this using an expanded version of Ruck's (1929) three periods of development and administration of the British penal system. The chapter will conclude by presenting a range of stakeholders' views on the current issues in prison education.

The present state of prison education in England and Wales

At the time of writing the prison system in England and Wales comprises of 123 prisons located across 11 regions, 14 of these are contracted prisons run by the private sector, 111 prisons are for males and 12 for females (Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1 Map of the prison estate in England and Wales indicating the location of prisons, red indicates a high security prison and grey a privately contracted prison. The inset shows the prisons in Greater London (NOMS, 2015)

National Offender Management Service

Prisons Map

The number of people in prison as of the week ending 21st August 2015 was 82,012 males and 3,944 females, giving a total of 85,956 (Howard League, 2015).

As part of the government strategy on Integrated Offender Management (IOM) the Home Office works in conjunction with the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), whose role is to protect the public and reduce re-offending through its management of the Prison, Probation and Court Services. By overseeing these services their aim is to:

> keep those sentenced to prison in custody, helping them lead law-abiding and useful lives, both while they are in prison and after they are released
> (HMPS, 2015: n.p.)

The National Offender Management Service (NOMS) is an Executive Agency of the MoJ. The role of NOMS is to provide offender management services in the community, via the National Probation Service (NPS) and Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs), and in custody, via public and private sector prisons. Their aim is to reduce re-offending, whilst also ensuring best value for money, through the purchasing and delivery of rehabilitation services such as the education and training of offenders and ex-offenders (NOMS, 2014: n.p.). The Skills Funding Agency (SFA) is an executive agency which is sponsored by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) to fund skills training for further education (FE) in England. The SFA and NOMS are co-commissioners of prison education services and the SFA is accountable for the funding and the performance management of the Offenders' Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) contracts in England, with the aim of integrating offender education with mainstream academic and vocational provision. To achieve this, the contract providers are mainly further education (FE) colleges and the contracts are generally awarded on a regional basis. In Wales the

education services are provided by the prison service and a private contractor

(Table 2.1).

Table 2.1 Prison education contracts in England and Wales by provider and the prisons they are responsible for (August 2015)

OLASS contract provider	Contracted regions and prisons
NOVUS (formerly The Manchester College)	London, North East, North West, Kent & Sussex, Yorkshire & Humber, East Midlands (2), Kent & Sussex (1,) West Midlands (1)
Weston College	South West
MK College	South Central, East Midlands, West Midlands
A4E	East of England
G4S	HMP Parc Wales
The Prison Service	Wales

It can be seen that the largest contractor is NOVUS (the new Justice Section of The

Manchester College (TMC)), with the responsibility for delivering education services

in 64 prisons throughout England. It has around 3,000 employees working with

approximately 65,000 offenders; i.e. 64% of the prison population (NOVUS, 2015).

Prison education is just one aspect of the prison system, which in turn is part of the

larger Criminal Justice System (CJS) (Figure 2.2).

Figure 2.2 A simplified diagram of the Criminal Justice System highlighting the position of prison education (circled in red) (Dick, 2012: 4)
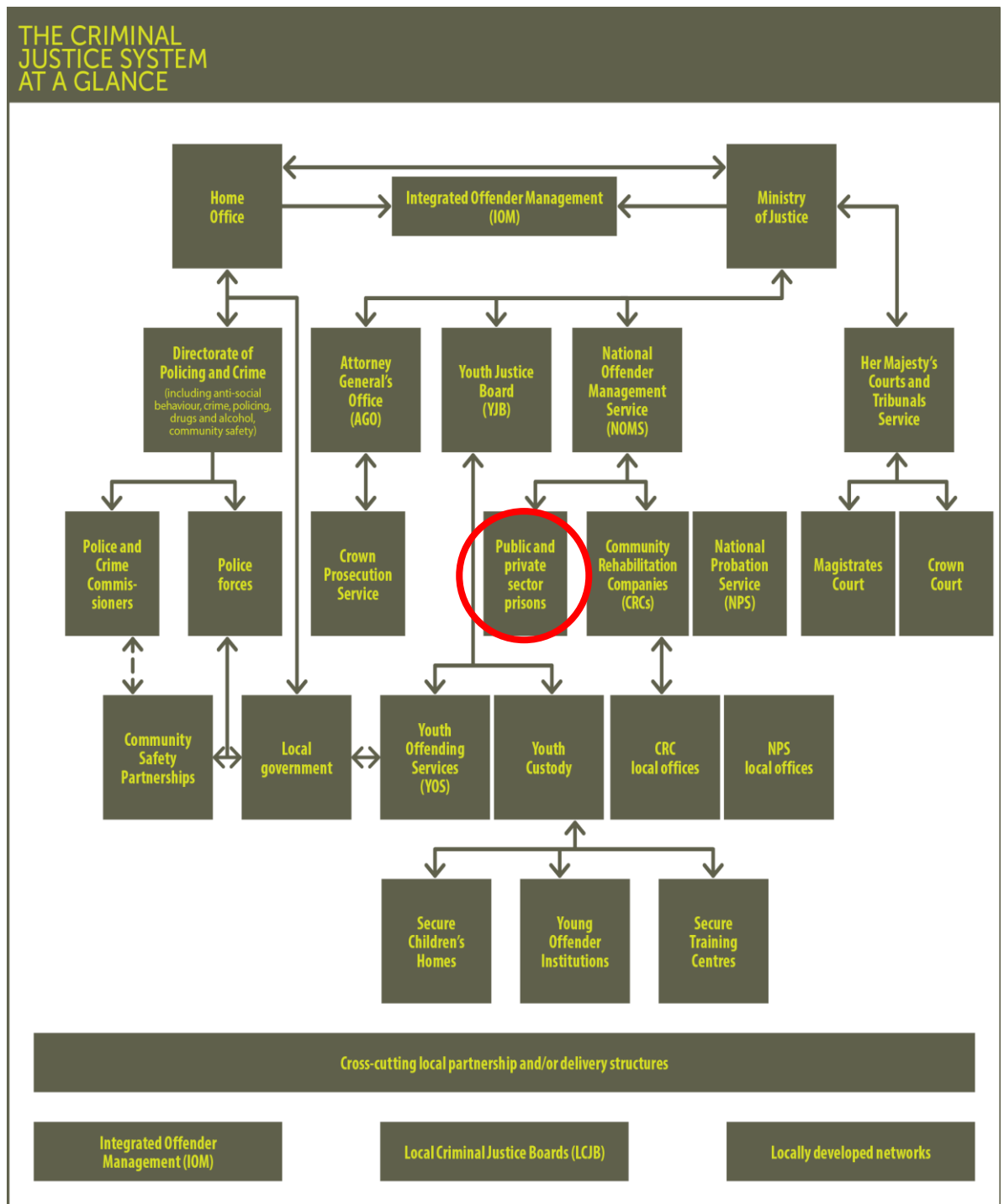
Complex Adaptive Systems

The CJS is an example of a complex adaptive system (CAS), which Plsek and

Greenhalgh defined as:

> a collection of individuals with freedom to act in ways that are not always totally
> predictable, and whose actions are interconnected so that one agent's actions changes the
> context for other agents
> (2001: 625)

Plsek and Greenhalgh proposed a set of concepts that could be applied to a CAS in

order to provide an understanding of how it worked. Using two of these concepts,

the thesis will now apply these to the Criminal Justice System (CJS) in England and

Wales and, in particular, to prisons and prison education.

Concept one - systems are embedded within other systems and co-evolve

The formal prison system in England and Wales has changed considerably since it

was first established by the Gaols Act of 1823, which also introduced the role of

prison schoolmaster. Since this time prisons and prison education have developed

in parallel, with changes in penal policy impacting on the organisation and

management of the penal system, as well as prison education and educators. The

present day system of prison education is embedded within the prison system,

which itself is embedded with the CAS of the CJS (Figure 2.2). Lawler's (1992)

concept of 'nested collectivities' can be used to explore the extent of the

embeddedness of prison education in the prison system. He developed the concept

to describe the position of individuals in organisations who 'are simultaneously

members of at least two groups, one encompassed within the other' (1992: 327).

To illustrate the concept, Lawler uses the example of different departments, sub-

groups within a college, where the level of affiliation that is felt by individuals is influenced by the distance, physical and ideological, between the sub-group and the organisation within which it is nested.

Mueller and Lawler (1999) developed the concept of nested collectivities in their work on nested organisations in educational settings and focused on the impact of organisational structure on levels of commitment and the complications that arise with multiple commitments. They used the example of a university department which is nested within a faculty and which, in turn, is nested within the wider university, much like a set of Russian dolls. The nested organisational structure, considered by Muller and Lawler, can be applied to prison education which takes place in a nested organisation, the Offenders' Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) provider, which is situated within another nested organisation, the prison service, which itself is nested or embedded within the CJS. I have used the concept of nested organisations to develop a model (Figure 2.3) to illustrate the nested position of prison educators working simultaneously in three nested organisations; the OLASS contract provider, the prison system and the CJS.

The nested education organisation consists of the OLASS contract holder which has an Offender Learning Management Team who oversee the Regional Management Teams. The geographical boundaries of the regions correspond to the prison service regions and, within each region prisons are grouped into clusters, with the final level being individual education departments. In England and Wales the prison system is similarly nested from national to regional to cluster and then to individual prisons.

Figure 2.3 An illustration of the nested status of prison educators
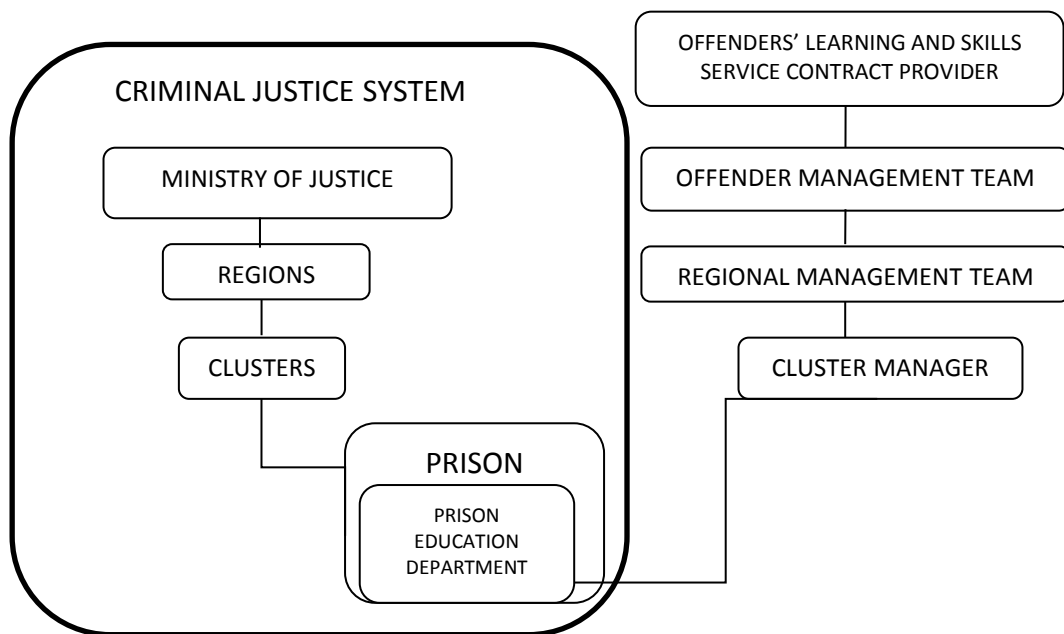
Concept two - agents' actions are based on internalised rules

Agents respond to the environment in different ways based on their own 'mental models' of the system and which depend upon their position within the system. For example, prison officers and offenders may have different mental models and consequently, different views of the prison system. In applying this to the CJS, there are agents and stakeholders who can affect and/or be affected by, the organisation's actions, objectives and policies. Plsek and Greenhalgh only consider the mental models of agents within the CAS; however, in the case of prisons, there are others such as politicians, policy makers, pressure groups, the media, criminologists and the general public who, although they are not all embedded within the environment, still express views about it based on their own mental models.

Politicians have a mental model of prison education, which is expressed through their public views on the role of prison and how offenders should be dealt with. These views may be influenced by their political affiliation and also by an attempt to sway public opinion; for example, in 1993 Tony Blair stated that the Conservative government needed to be 'tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime' (Reiner, 2007: 123). This type of 'sound bite' is used by politicians and the media to express their mental models of the CJS and its role. The influence of the media also contributes to the model held by most of the general public, whose knowledge of prisons is based on what they see, hear and read, rather than first-hand knowledge and experience. One consequence of this is that policy is often driven by populist views, which prioritise common sense and public pressure over expert knowledge (Pratt, 2006).

Criminologists focus on the development of theory to provide explanations for offending behaviour and society's reaction to it and whichever theory they subscribe to will determine their mental model. Pressure groups and charities, such as the Howard League for Penal Reform, also have a mental model, which is based on their belief that 'too much money is spent on a penal system which doesn't work ... and fails to reduce offending' (2015: n.p.); they propose that education, training and employment are the solution to re-offending. The different views of the agents and stakeholders, whether they are inside the system or viewing it from the outside, may be neither shared nor fixed and each one has their own mental model that views the system in a different way.

The present state of prison education

As part of the further education (FE) sector, prison education in England and Wales was severely affected by the 24% cut to the adult skills budget in February 2015 and the further 3.9% cut in July (Association of Colleges, 2015). This impacted on the Offenders' Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) budget and led some OLASS contract providers to carry out a curriculum review, to determine what provision could be delivered within the new budget. At NOVUS, one of the OLASS contract providers, this review was part of the Justice Realignment Project, which also included an offer of voluntary redundancy to all prison education staff. These cuts to services were juxtaposed with government promises of 'liberating prisoners through learning' and policies to 'improve educational outcomes in prison' (MoJ, 2015b: n.p.). The budget cuts and policy changes coupled with the retendering for OLASS contracts are indicative of the present state of prison education in England and Wales which, in 2016, finds itself in a state of flux. This is due to the publication of the Coates review of education in prisons in May 2016 and the government's review of the prison system in November 2016, which have proposed further, and often contradictory, changes to the prison education system.

Having outlined the present state of prison education in England and Wales, the next section will present a historical outline to illustrate how it came to this state. The following examination of the historical development of prison education will be organised and discussed as discrete periods. However, it needs to be acknowledged that each time period has been used simply in order to chart the changes in the prison system and prison education and, in reality, they are not as distinct as they

may appear, as the discourses and practices from earlier periods still continued to influence those that followed them.

Prison education - a historical perspective

This section will provide a historical overview of prison education in England from its early beginnings in the eighteenth century up to the present day. The role of prison education will be examined in relation to the development of the prison system and the perceived purpose of prisons and how both are linked to social and political changes.

Before its consolidation under the 1877 Prisons Act, the British penal system was a piecemeal, locally administered system, that comprised of the Bridewells used to house vagrants, prostitutes and the unemployed and purpose built borough, county and franchised prisons, which held criminals prior to trial. Ruck (1929: 294) proposed that the responsibility for the development and administration of the British penal system could be divided into three periods, Private Endeavour (1777-1835), National Supervision (1835-1877) and National Administration (1877-1929). To expand Ruck's typology to include more recent developments, I have extended the period of National Administration up to 1991, and added two further periods, Privatisation and New Public Management (1991-2004) and Centralisation and Competition (2004 – present day). This section will examine, through the use of these periods, the role of prison education in each period and how it is constructed within the changing social and cultural approaches to imprisonment, the impact of the implementation of policy, the influence of social reformers and the criteria that have been used to define the role and purposes of prisons and prison education.

The Period of Private Endeavour 1777 - 1835

In this period, prisons were the responsibility of the local magistrate and varied from a cellar in a local ale-house to purpose built facilities, such as Newgate Prison in London. No effort was made to reform the prisoners, as the sole purpose of prison was as a place of confinement for wrongdoers whilst they were awaiting trial. The penal system was there to act as a deterrent to potential offenders and the general outcome for the majority was either execution or transportation. The system was based on the principle of retribution which 'implies the notion that the offender has deserved his punishment' (Grünhut, 1948: 3).

John Howard's 1777 survey *The State of Prisons in England and Wales* highlighted the appalling conditions in which prisoners were being kept. His report proposed a series of reforms that included proper sanitary arrangements, segregation of the sexes and the appointment of chaplains. Howard believed that the way to reform the prisoner was to instil a moral work ethic through religious instruction and useful work (Fox, 1952). This call for reform was continued by others such as Elizabeth Fry who, in 1818, campaigned for female prisoners in Newgate Prison to have access to 'training, plenty of useful work, religious instruction … and education' (ibid.: 29). This view was reinforced by the Gaols Act of 1823, which stated that all criminals should be subject to a reformatory regime of 'religious and … educational instruction' (ibid.: 34), the act also proposed that prison chaplains should act as schoolmasters. This act signified the beginning of a reformatory phase in criminal justice and a change in attitude, from retribution through harsh punishments, to reform through work and education. The aim was to equip prisoners with the

practical skills required to gain employment on their release from prison. However, education classes were not compulsory and needed the approval of the prison governor. The notion of reform through work and education is still evident in today's prison system, in that part of its purpose is to give prisoners the opportunity to acquire training and skills that can lead to employment on their release.

The Period of National Supervision 1835 - 1877

The Prisons Act 1835 initiated a period of National Supervision, which saw the appointment of government employed prison inspectors who had the responsibility to oversee the administration of the prison system, although they had no power to enforce government policy. This period also saw the ending of transportation and a reduction in the number of capital offences that attracted the death penalty. Following the removal of these two penalties, crime rates increased and the purpose of prison changed from a place to hold prisoners prior to trial, to a place of confinement, which led to a dramatic increase in the prison population.

There was a growing distrust of the reformatory regime that focused on education and hard work, which was fuelled, in part, by the media reports of the London garrotting panics of 1852 and 1862 (Davis, 1980; Sindall, 1983). Critics of the reformatory regime proposed that it was ineffectual in deterring criminals or reducing recidivism. In 1863 a Committee of the House of Lords stated that the primary role of the prison was not 'the moral reformation of the offender' and proposed a return to a retributive punitive model, where the prison regime

consisted of 'hard labour, hard fare and a hard bed' (Fox, 1952: 2,46), with

education having only a minor role.

The Period of National Administration 1877 - 1991

The retributive penal approach continued into the period of National

Administration, which began with the 1877 Prisons Act; this took the control of

prisoners and prisons away from local authorities and placed it in the hands of

central government. This move was mainly driven by economic concerns, as each

borough had to maintain its own prison there were a large number of small prisons

which were consolidated into larger establishments. The act also made provision

for the establishment of a Prison Commission, with the responsibility to oversee

and report on the new national standards of hygiene and organisation that were to

be applied in all prisons. Prison officials became salaried public servants who

enforced the regime of dull, monotonous labour which had continued from the

previous era. Some consideration was given to the provision of a basic education to

'those most in want of it' (Hinde, 1951: 147), but this was at the discretion of the

prison governor.

In 1895 the Gladstone Report proposed that the purpose of imprisonment should

be that:

> whenever possible to turn them [prisoners] out of prison better men and women, both
> physically and morally, than when they came in
> (1895, para. 25)

This change was to be achieved through a regime that combined deterrence and

reformation in the form of moral instruction and useful labour, the same proposal

offered by Howard one hundred years earlier. The Gladstone Committee's

recommendations were incorporated into the 1898 Prisons Act that set out which

prisoners were eligible to receive a basic education, when and where teaching

would take place, what was to be taught and how it would be examined. It was also

proposed that provision should be made for the employment of paid teachers who

would work under the direction of the Prison Chaplain. This regime remained

unchanged until 1921 and the appointment of a new Prison Commissioner, Sir

Alexander Patterson, who believed that 'you cannot train a man for freedom in a

condition of captivity' (Fox, 1952:2). Patterson proposed that education in prisons

should be used to encourage creative expression through music, art, discussions

and play readings, as well as lessons in basic skills. To achieve this change the 1922

Inquiry into Prison Education by The Adult Education Committee of the Board of

Education, recommended the introduction of adult education (AE) into prisons and

appealed for volunteers with 'standing and experience' to teach and to act as

educational advisers to the governors of local prisons, among those who

volunteered were university professors and head masters (Hinde, 1951). Classes

were offered on the same basis as community based AE, in that the majority of

teaching staff were volunteers and prisoners attended the classes in the evening

after work. The aim was to train the prisoners in citizenship, so they could become

responsible members of society on their release. However, the curriculum

depended upon the skills and knowledge that the volunteers had to offer, so it

often lacked consistency and continuity.

In 1947 the Prisoners' Education Advisory Committee recommended that prison education should continue to be financed by the Home Office, but its control and administration should become the responsibility of the new Local Education Authorities (LEA), that had been established by the 1944 Education Act. This change did not impact on the curriculum, as education still took place in the prisoners' own time and the subjects that were taught were still dependent on what was available. However, there was an impact on the status of prison educators as the classes were no longer to be staffed by volunteers but by paid, qualified teachers employed by the local authority. The Association of Teachers in Penal Establishments (ATPE) was founded in 1958 and lasted for 25 years until it was amalgamated into the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education (NATFHE) Union in 1983 (UCU, n.d. :n.p.).

A Home Office prison service review *Education in Prisons* (1969), highlighted the inadequacy of prison education and proposed that it should not just be alleviating the boredom and monotony of prison life, but should be helping prisoners to gain an understanding of themselves and others. The review also stated that education programmes should provide training in skills that were linked to local employment markets and it was essential that prison education was brought 'into line with all that is best in the national mainstream of education' (Home Office, 1969: 13). In order to achieve this alignment, it was stipulated that any teachers who were recruited should have appropriate training, qualifications and experience of adult learning.

The election of a Conservative government in 1979 brought a radical change which saw the introduction of neo-liberal policies and New Public Management (NPM) principles into the public sector, although initially the management of the prison service and prison education was left to the civil service professionals and practitioners. This approach changed in the 1990s as the government's lack of confidence in the professionals' abilities to run the prison service effectively saw the reorganisation of Prison Department headquarters and the introduction of a professional management team recruited from private industry (Bryans, 2000). Managers were given the 'right to manage', which challenged the autonomy of the professionals who were expected to conform to the purposes of the organisation in which they worked. The government also introduced new financial and efficiency measures to ensure that prison solved the problems associated with crime and criminality and was not just 'an expensive way of making bad people worse' (Reiner, 2007: 131). In this period there was growing criticism of the professions and an increasing lack of trust, from both the government and the general public. This change in attitudes towards the professions and their perceived lack of success in solving difficult social problems, was the starting point for Rittel and Webber (1963), who coined the term 'wicked' to describe social problems that were proving difficult to solve. The use of the term 'wicked', what defines a 'wicked' problem and how it can be applied to issues in prison education will be explored in Chapter Three.

The Period of New Public Management and Private Finance 1991- 2004

This period was typified by the government's drive to increase efficiency and competitiveness in the public sector through the application of the NPM principles of:

> hands-on professional management, explicit standards and measurements of performance, results rather than procedures and a stress on private-sector styles of management (Hood, 1991: 4-5)

In this period the neo-liberal policies and NPM principles introduced by the Conservative government were reinforced in the Criminal Justice Act 1991, which made provision for the building of privately funded prisons and the contracting out of education provision. The growth of NPM in the prison service was typified by the focus on increased productivity and cost-effectiveness, which is evidenced by the number of Key Performance Indicators (KPI) and Key Performance Targets (KPT) that were introduced this period (Bryans, 2000), although it was not until 1999 that the first education KPI was introduced.

Despite the recommendations of *Education in Prisons* (Home Office, 1969), prison education was still fragmented, localised and generally isolated from mainstream education. The 1992 Further and Higher Education Act reinforced this situation, when it differentiated between further education (FE) in colleges for 16-19 year olds and recreational education for adults in adult education (AE) services. The outcome was that any policies related to professional standards and teaching, applied only to those prison educators who were employed by FE colleges, leaving those employed in AE services even more isolated. Following their election in 1997

New Labour proposed a national Prison Service Education Curriculum Framework. This was followed in 2000 by *Education in Prisons* (PSO4205)(HM Prison Service), which underpinned the key education targets and performance standards for prison education services. In 2001 the government established the Prisoner Learning and Skills Unit (PLSU), later the Offender Learning and Skills Unit (OLSU), it also transferred the responsibility for prison education to the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), which worked in partnership with the Home Office to improve the quality and quantity of learning and skills in prisons.

In 2003, the Carter Review proposed that a new National Offender Management Service (NOMS) should be established to provide a continuous 'joined-up' service that managed offenders in custody and following their release back into the community. The review also proposed a new Offenders' Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) that would develop a new prison education structure which would focus on developing an offender's employability skills in preparation for their release. These changes heralded a new period in the history of prison education, which would see greater government involvement in determining the content and delivery of prison education programmes and a time of greater uncertainty and upheaval for prison educators under the OLASS re-tendering process.

The Period of Centralisation and Competition 2004 - present day

This period began in 2004 with the establishment of the National Offender Management Service (NOMS), which was accountable to the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and was responsible for the running of prison and probation services, rehabilitation services and contract managing private sector prisons and services,

including education (NOMS, 2014). The New Public Management (NPM) principles introduced into the prison sector in the early 1990s continued to determine its management, with one of the key aims of the new service being to provide a cost effective and efficient system. This was to be achieved through a reduction in spending, further contracting out of support services and the closure of less efficient prisons.

The Offenders' Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) market strategy of competitive tendering for prison education was initially piloted in 2005, before being fully implemented in 2006. In partnership with the MoJ and the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), the remit was to provide offenders with the literacy, numeracy and basic IT skills that would enable them to gain employment on their release (DIUS, 2007a). The previously fragmented and localised nature of prison education provision was partially resolved with the introduction of OLASS and the awarding of all education contracts to further education (FE) providers, which finally brought all prison education departments into the FE sector. The initial OLASS contracts were to run for three years, after which they were put out for re-tendering. At the time of writing, OLASS is in its fourth iteration, usually referred to as OLASS 4. The contracts were due for renewal in July 2016, but were deferred pending the publication of the Coates Report in May 2016 and have now been extended to July 2017. The cycle of re-tendering of the OLASS contracts has meant that since 2005 some prison educators will have had four different employers, each with their own management structure and work practices. The implementation of OLASS 4 also took the responsibility for determining the content of the curriculum away from the

education contract providers and gave it to managers with no educational experience, the prison governors.

One consequence of the new centralised system was that for the first time the regulations and policy reforms, that had previously only applied to those prison educators employed by the FE sector, now applied to all prison educators. In order to promote excellence in FE practice, an independent professional body for teachers and trainers, the Institute for Learning (IfL), had been formed in 2002. Membership of the IfL was voluntary and its aim was to support the values of professionalism, innovation, autonomy and integrity in FE (IfL, 2011). The regulation of teaching qualifications and the introduction of compulsory registration and continuing professional development (CPD) were introduced by the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) in 2007. The IfL was charged with monitoring the new qualification and CPD regulations and, to ensure compliance from the FE workforce, membership of the IfL became compulsory. However, the level of support that prison educators were able to receive to achieve the qualifications and required hours of CPD, had to be set in the context of the secure environment in which they worked. As the new regulations were aimed at a generic FE workforce, no consideration had been given to the difficulties prison educators might have in meeting them whilst working in a secure environment.

From 2004 and the establishment of the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) three sets of policies, FE, prison education and penal policy have shaped prison education provision, as successive governments have promoted reforms based on the perceived link between improving the literacy and numeracy skills of

prisoners and their employability when released. In 2005 the House Of Commons Education and Skills Committee's *Report on Prison Education*, recommended that the government should see learner-centred education as a priority; however, this was disregarded in favour of an employer-driven approach, as the then Minister for Offender Education, Lord Filkin stated, 'the sole priority of education is to get offenders into work, anything else is a means, not an end' (OCR, 2005: n.p.). Despite the demise of New Labour and the election of the coalition government in 2010, this focus on skills for employment remained central to both prison education and penal policy. A review of offender learning in 2011, set out a series of reforms to prison education that were set in the context of the wider reforms of FE. The resulting Prison Service Instruction (PSI 06/2012) *Prisoner Training and Employment* detailed the mandatory actions required to 'achieve positive learning outcomes for prisoners' (MoJ, 2012: 2). The PSI was revised in 2014 to include the specification for prisoner employment, training and skills, which reinforced the utilitarian view of prison education as a means to an end, that end being employment opportunities for the ex-offender.

In 2011 the efficacy of the 2007 regulations was questioned by the Department for Business, Innovation & Skills (BIS) (2011a: 2011b) and, following a review, it was recommended that government should 'revoke partially the regulations governing teaching qualifications and in their entirety those that govern CPD and registration with the IfL' (BIS 2012: 16). As well as removing the need for compulsory membership of the IfL, the review recommended the setting up of an FE Guild that would have the task of improving the professionalism and esteem of the FE sector,

including prison education. The resulting Education and Training Foundation (ETF) was a sector owned organisation with the aim to 'raise the quality ... of the education and training system, in order to achieve consistently excellent outcomes for learners and employers' (ETF, 2014: 1). This focus on the needs of learners and employers was reiterated in the government's *Further Education Workforce Strategy,* which detailed the reforms that were needed in the FE sector in order to raise the quality, effectiveness and efficiency of teaching staff, so that they could 'drive economic growth and social mobility' (BIS, 2014: 8).

In 2015 the new Conservative government's Secretary of State for Justice, Michael Gove, gave a speech to the Prisoner Learning Alliance (PLA), in which he outlined his vision for the future of prison education. The PLA, which consists of 23 expert organisations involved with prison education, approved of the Justice Secretary's commitment to reforms in prison education (Prisoners' Education Trust, 2015). Michael Gove acknowledged that there are 'many ironies, paradoxes and curiosities in our [society's] approach to incarceration' and called for policy reforms to be 'rooted in solid evidence' (Prisoners' Education Trust, 2015: n.p.). In order to achieve this reform, in a written statement to the House of Commons (HCWS178, 2015), he proposed an urgent review of the provision of prison education to be led by Dame Sally Coates, the Director of Academies South for United Learning. The review board was tasked with identifying ways in which prisons could offer the right courses and qualifications to enable prisoners to secure jobs on release. The recommendations of the review, *Unlocking Potential: A review of education in prisons* (2016) were that prison education should include more personal and social

development (PSD) courses and more arts, music and sports activities alongside the basics of maths and English. However, following the result of the EU referendum in June 2016 the government instigated a review of the prison service. The report *Prison Safety and Reform,* published in November 2016, recommended that education in prisons should be focused on developing prisoners' maths and English skills.

This section has charted the development of the prison system from 1777 to the present day and shown how the changes in the role and purposes of prison education have been inextricably linked to changes in the role and purposes of the prison system. The implications of these changes will be considered in the next section of this chapter, which examines what the current issues are in prison education.

What are the current issues in prison education?

Examining the present state and the history of prison education outlined above, it can be seen that there are a number of stakeholders each with their own mental models of what prison education is, or should be. These include government, policy makers, academics, pressure groups, prison educators and their representatives and the prisoners themselves. Each of these has a view that contributes to the current issues in prison education and these will be discussed in this section.

Government and policy makers' views

In 2005, the House Of Commons Education and Skills Committee's *Report on Prison Education* identified a number of issues that prevented the effective delivery of

education services. These issues included churn - the movement of prisoners in, out and between prisons, short sentences, physical space, the attitudes of prison staff and the focus on security, issues that existed within the regime itself and which are still present today.

The European Commission (2013) has also commented on the specific challenges faced by prison educators working in an environment that prioritises security over education. As well as security issues, the Commission highlighted the need for training related to the specific challenges that prison educators face, as well as qualifications that are relevant to teaching in prison. They further highlighted the isolation that prison educators experience, firstly from mainstream educators who do not understand the constraints within which prison educators work, and secondly, isolation from each other, due to the lack of networking opportunities.

In his address to the Prisoner Learning Alliance (PLA)(2015) the Justice Minister, Michael Gove identified the key problems with prison education as being its inadequate standards, lack of prisoner engagement, the failure to provide the incentive for prisoners to learn and the low priority that prison staff gave to education. He suggested that the way to solve these problems was to give prison governors more control over education provision and to provide new incentives for prisoners to engage in education. In his later statement to the House of Commons he proposed that the quality and methods of prison teaching needed to be improved to ensure that prisoners learned the skills they needed to make them employable once released (HCWS178, 2015).

Academics' views

The London Centre for Excellence in Teacher Training (LONCETT) carried out a two year project that investigated the initial teacher training needs of London-based prison educators employed on Offenders' Leaning and Skills Service (OLASS) contracts. The project report (Simonot et al., 2008) highlighted a number of factors that impinged on teaching and learning in prisons and were particular to the prison context. These included intermittent and unpredictable attendance, classes operating on a roll-on roll-off basis, whereby students can join or leave a course at any point, behaviour management linked to mental health, drug and alcohol dependency issues, manipulation and 'grooming' by students, results based funding and a security-focused prison regime. The report also identified three sets of factors that were particular to prison education, which were categorised as organisational, cultural and pedagogical factors. The first category, organisational factors, included the low priority afforded to education in prison, overcrowding, churn and the lack of professional status for prison educators. Cultural factors included, an environment that is unsettled and is typified by disruption and discontinuity and negative attitudes towards education from both prisoners and uniformed staff. The third category focused on pedagogical factors, including poor learner motivation, the challenge in making learning materials and content relevant to the learners' situation and dealing with a wide range of abilities and needs in a single learning group.

Costelloe and Warner (2003) proposed that the key issue in prison education is the environment in which it takes place; they believed it was not just the physical

environment, but also its overriding purpose, security. In mainstream educational establishments security is designed to keep people out and protect the insiders from harm, whereas security in a prison setting is designed to keep people in and protect outsiders from them. Within the prison environment there are constraints on when prisoners are allowed to move and where they are allowed to be, these restrictions also apply to educators. When interacting with prisoners there are difficulties in building relationships of trust in a secure environment where no personal anecdotes or details can be revealed, as this may lead to grooming and manipulation by prisoners.

Pressure groups' views

The Prisoner Learning Alliance (PLA) is a group that brings together a number of stakeholders from statutory and third sector organisations with the aim of influencing policy and practice in prison education. They identify a number of issues in prison education including, the lack of opportunities for students to progress beyond Level 2, outdated and difficult to access IT resources and the lack of support and continuing professional development (CPD) for teaching staff. To address these issues the PLA propose that there should be more Personal and Social Development (PSD) courses and Informal Adult Learning (IAL) opportunities, that are not dependent upon Skills Funding Agency (SFA) funding, and better integration of education into the prison regime.

Prison educator representatives' views

The University and College Union (UCU), which represents teachers in further and higher education, carried out a study on prison education in 2014, conducted in conjunction with the Centre for Education in the Criminal Justice System (CECJS) at the Institute of Education, University of London. The findings were based on the questionnaire responses of 278 prison educators working in England and, although it was only a small sample, the study identified a number of issues in prison education. In common with LONCETT and the European Commission, the study found that the prison regime and security issues had a considerable impact on teaching and the availability of resources. Similarly the isolation felt by prison educators was compounded by the insecurity of employment terms and the inequalities in salary and terms of employment in comparison to the mainstream FE workforce. The respondents also cited the high turnover of prisoners (churn), insufficient access to learners' past educational records, behaviour management and learners' drug and alcohol dependency, as issues that impacted on their teaching practice. However, the issues that were seen to have had the most impact were the practice of competitive tendering for prison education contracts under the Offenders' Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) provision and the funding by results policy which meant that, in the view of the respondents, 'profit was the overriding concern of the prison contract providers' (Rogers et al., 2014: 3).

Prison educators' views

Other than through their representatives the views of prison educators are rarely

heard, although one such opportunity has been afforded via the *Guardian's*

anonymous 'secret teacher' media blog, where one prison educator stated that:

> The hardest part of the role is the conflict between education and prison, and the way the prison regime dictates every part of the day. The men work in the morning for more than three and a half hours, which makes even the most enthusiastic learner difficult to engage. I cannot count the number of times I've been told, "At least you've got a captive audience." But it's not like that. Men come and go with alarming regularity and it's hard to deliver an outstanding lesson when all 10 of my students have an impending court case, or a visit, or a video link, or a baby on the way whom they won't meet for several years. Their priority is not usually education.
> (Anon, 2014: n.p.)

Prison educators have also had the opportunity to express their views in the prison

newspaper, *Inside Time,* where one Personal and Social Development (PSD)

education manager commented on his curriculum, which he said had been

'eviscerated, completely savaged and largely demolished by OLASS 4' (Kirk, 2012:

20). He acknowledged the importance of employment to avoid recidivism but

regretted the fact that, in his education department, prison education was nothing

more than a 'qualifications factory'.

Prisoners' views

Prisoners' views on the issues with prison education have been expressed through

the Prisoners' Education Trust (PET) bi-annual survey, which appears in the prison

newspaper *Inside Time.* The key findings from the most recent survey, published in

2014, expressed prisoners' concerns about the level of the courses on offer and the

lack of opportunity to progress beyond Level 2 with one prisoner stating:

> I was forced to do Level 2 English and Maths while here, but to me it was a waste of time as
> I am at a higher level
> (PET, 2014: 16)

Another prisoner commented that:

> the education in this prison is fine until you are at a higher level than the courses available
> so it would be good to have a wider range of courses you could study at higher level
> (ibid.: 17)

Other issues, highlighted in the survey, were the poor support for distance learning

and for learning in general from the prison officers, the lack of IT facilities and the

general feeling that profit came before education. However, the prisoners did

comment positively on the support, encouragement and motivation they received

from prison education staff.

From the above it can be seen that different stakeholders have identified a variety

of issues in prison education, these have been grouped under four headings and are

summarised in Table 2.2 below.

Table 2.2 Current issues in prison education

Origin of issues	Specific issues in prison education
Issues that arise from the prison regime and environment	Churn - the movement of prisoners in, out and between prisons
	Short sentences
	Focus on security
	Lack of incentives for prisoners to learn
	Intermittent and unpredictable attendance
	Roll-on, roll-off classes
	Overcrowding
	Disruption and discontinuity
	Constraints on the movement of prisoners and educators
	Difficulty in building relationships of trust
Issues that arise from attitudes and behaviours	Lack of support from prison staff
	Low priority afforded to education
	Behaviour management linked to mental health, drug and alcohol use
	Negative attitude towards education from prison officers
	Negative attitude towards education from prisoners

(Continued)

Table 2.2 *(Continued).*

Origin of issues	Specific issues in prison education
Issues that arise from the curriculum and teaching	Low level of courses on offer
	Lack of opportunities to progress beyond Level 2
	Outdated and difficult to access IT resources
	Results based funding
	Dealing with a wide range of abilities and needs in a single group
	Availability of resources
Issues focussing specifically on prison educators	Inadequate teaching standards
	Lack of job specific training for educators
	Lack of job specific qualifications for educators
	Prison educators isolated
	Lack of professional status for prison educators
	Insecurity in employment terms and lack of parity with FE sector
	Competitive tendering of prison education contracts
	Prison contract providers' focus on profit rather than education

When considering the issues in prison education, different stakeholders have different mental models of what prison education is, or should be. Each stakeholder or stakeholder group will possess different views, priorities, values and frames of reference on which they draw when identifying what they believe are the issues in prison education. Table 2.3 specifies which issues were identified by which stakeholders and it can be seen that the stakeholders' views, whether they are inside the system or viewing it from the outside, have similarities and dissimilarities that are typical of a complex adaptive system (CAS), as each stakeholder has their own mental model that views the system in their own way.

Table 2.3 Current issues in prison education identified by different stakeholder groups

Stakeholder	Specific issues in prison education
Government and policy makers	Churn - the movement of prisoners in, out and between prisons Short sentences Negative attitude towards education from prison officers Focus on security Lack of incentives for prisoners to learn Overcrowding Low priority afforded to education Inadequate teaching standards Lack of job specific training for educators Lack of job specific qualifications for educators Prison educators isolated
Academics	Churn - the movement of prisoners in, out and between prisons Focus on security Intermittent and unpredictable attendance Roll-on, roll-off classes Overcrowding Disruption and discontinuity Constraints on the movement of prisoners and educators Difficulty in building relationships of trust Behaviour management linked to mental health, drug and alcohol use Low priority afforded to education Negative attitude towards education from prison officers Negative attitude towards education from prisoners Results based funding Dealing with a wide range of abilities and needs in a single group Lack of professional status for prison educators
Pressure groups	Lack of opportunities to progress beyond Level 2 Outdated and difficult to access IT resources Lack of job specific training for educators Lack of job specific qualifications for educators

(Continued)

Table 2.3 *(Continued).*

Stakeholder	Specific issues in prison education
Prison educator representatives	Churn - the movement of prisoners in, out and between prisons
	Focus on security
	Behaviour management linked to mental health, drug and alcohol use
	Outdated and difficult to access IT resources
	Results based funding
	Availability of resources
	Prison educators isolated
	Lack of professional status for prison educators
	Insecurity in employment terms and lack of parity with FE sector
	Competitive tendering of prison education contracts
	Prison contract providers' focus on profit rather than education
Prison educators	Churn - the movement of prisoners in, out and between prisons
	Focus on security
	Negative attitude towards education from prisoners
	Results-based funding
Prisoners	Narrow range of courses on offer
	Lack of opportunities to progress beyond Level 2
	Outdated and difficult to access IT resources
	Lack of support from prison staff
	Prison contract providers' focus on profit rather than education

As well as the issues listed above, I propose that further issues originate from the

nested status of prison educators, illustrated by Figure 2.3. The nested status of

prison educators arose from the implementation of a centralised prison education

system that was introduced under the new Offenders' Learning and Skills Service

(OLASS) scheme and the awarding of all education contracts to the further

education (FE) sector. The mainstream FE colleges that deliver the OLASS contracts

and the prison system are both nested organisations, where individuals working in

these organisations are governed by education and penal policies respectively. However, the nested status of prison educators means that they are governed by FE, prison education and penal policies simultaneously. These policies determine the purpose of prison education, its content, mode of delivery and the type and calibre of the people employed to deliver it. Being subject to these different sets of policies puts prison educators in a position that is underpinned by the fact that, although they work within a prison setting, they are not employed by the prison service. Prison educators and their managers are expected to deliver all of the policy requirements of their employers, whilst being restricted by the policies and practices of their hosts. They are part of, but set apart from, the host organisation, often geographically distant from the OLASS provider and ideologically distant from their hosts. They have to work co-operatively with those who, to a large extent, determine their working conditions and environment and the fact that prison education is delivered in the prison estate, but is not part of the prison service, presents a complex set of issues in an environment where security overrides any other consideration.

Conclusion

This chapter has addressed research sub-question one: **'what are the major characteristics of current prison education in England and Wales?'** The chapter began by providing an outline of the present state of prison education and its place within the Criminal Justice System (CJS). Here it highlighted the complex nature of the CJS and the issues that arise from the way in which prison education is nested simultaneously in the CJS, the prison system and the Offenders' Learning and Skills

Service (OLASS) contract provider system. Consideration was also given to the mental models that the various agents and stakeholders have and how these influence their views of prisons and prison education.

Having established the present state of prison education, the chapter then provided a historical account of its development, which was structured in relation to the historical development and changes in the administration of the British penal system. This section illustrated how the changes in penal and education policies impacted on prison education and educators. Following on from this the chapter concluded by examining the current issues in prison education as viewed by a range of different stakeholders and identified four sets of issues (Table 2.2), that were of concern to the stakeholder groups. These issues were then categorised (Table 2.3), into which groups raised issues in order to emphasise that different groups have different values, different concerns and different priorities, in relation to prison education. Having identified the issues in prison education and the similarities and dissimilarities in the views of different stakeholder groups, the next chapter will explore Rittel and Webber's (1973) concepts of tame and wicked problems, before moving on to examine whether these can be applied to the prison system and prison education.

Chapter Three

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to address research sub-question two: **'what are tame and wicked issues?'**, research sub-question three: **'what are the criteria that characterise wicked issues?'** and research sub-question four: **'can these criteria be applied to prison education?'** The first section of the chapter will define the concepts of 'tame' and 'wicked' issues and outline how they developed from Rittel's (1972) critique of the first generation systems approach to problem solving. The next section will examine how the concept of a 'wicked problem' has been applied to a diverse range of issues such as academia, health and society as well as its use by the media. The chapter will then move on to examine Rittel and Webber's (1973) ten criteria that characterise a wicked problem to determine whether they can be applied to prison education. The chapter will conclude by questioning what the implications are of adopting a tame approach to the wicked problem of prison education and put forward the argument that prison education can be classified as a wicked problem.

What are tame and wicked issues?

The increasing complexity of problems faced by the world was identified by Guilford, in his inaugural speech to the American Psychological Association in 1950. This was part of the growing recognition that attempts to solve social issues, such as poverty, poor housing and crime rates, had largely failed and that a new way of thinking about these issues was needed. Two 'schools of thought' developed in the USA, which aimed to provide new and creative approaches to problem solving. These two schools did not acknowledge each other's contributions and developed

radically different approaches, which became part of what was known as the 'Buffalo-Berkeley divide'(VanPatter et al., 2007: 14). On the east coast was the Creative Education Foundation at the University of Buffalo, where Kepner and Tregoe developed their model of problem solving, based on rational thinking processes that used mathematical operations and comparisons, in order to find the best outcome with minimal negative consequences. This was known as the KT model, which became used extensively by business managers and was the foundation of the multi-national KT Management and Consulting Service (Kepner-Tregoe, 2014). An alternative approach, that rejected the efficacy of the rational approach to problem solving, was developed on the west coast by Rittel and Webber at Berkeley, University of California. Rittel used the term 'wicked problem' to define intractable, difficult to solve, project planning problems associated with improving the environment, monitoring health systems or managing the penal system. Whereas the term 'tame problem' was used to define those problems that, although they may be complex, were easy to manipulate and control through the application of the first generation systems approach to problem solving (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1 Steps in the first generation systems approach to problem solving

Step	Action
One	Understand the problem
Two	Gather information to understand its context
Three	Analyse the information
Four	Generate solutions, or at least one
Five	Assess the solution(s) and decide which comes out best
Six	Implement the solution(s)
Seven	Test the solution(s)
Eight	Modify the solution(s), if necessary, and learn for the next time

Adapted from Rittel (1972: 391)

Rittel contrasted the properties of 'wicked' and 'tame problems' in his paper *On the Planning Crisis: Systems Analysis of the 'First and Second Generations'* (1972), where he criticised the step-by-step first generation systems' rational approach to problem solving which, when attempting to solve a 'wicked problem', failed at the first step, to understand the problem. Rittel determined that 'you cannot be rational in planning: the more you try, the less it helps', and the reason why the first generation approach to solving social problems had failed was a combination of the 'dilemmas of rationality and ... the wicked nature of problems' (1972: 395,396).

Rittel and Webber developed this critique of rational planning in *Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning* (1973), where the concept of wicked problems was used to describe those issues which, in a socially complex world, were deemed to be unsolvable by rational systematic processes. These were contrasted with tame problems which may appear complex, but ultimately can be solved. Rittel and Webber began with a consideration of the anti-professional critique that arose, not just from the general public, but also the academic community. They proposed that this critique derived from the nature of the problems that professionals were expected to solve and the traditional scientific methods they had been using, which were no longer suitable for dealing with complex social problems. This approach to problem solving was based on the assumption that the professions 'are the medium through which the knowledge of science is applied' in order to transform society (Rittel and Webber, 1973: 158). They further proposed that the lack of success in solving wicked problems was not the fault of the professions, but a failure by policy makers to understand the wicked nature of the problems and a belief that the type

of planning that could be applied to scientific problems, could equally be applied to complex social problems. One such complex social problem is crime in society which, as has been documented in Chapter Two, has been approached as a tame problem that could be solved by building a system that removed offenders from society and subjected them to a regime designed to change them into law-abiding citizens, before returning them to society.

How has the concept of a 'wicked problem' been applied?

Since its formulation by Rittel and Webber the wicked problem concept has been applied to such diverse issues as, health inequalities in the UK (Blackman et al., 2006), policy formulation (Briggs, 2007; Bore and Wright, 2009), leadership (Grint, 2008; Wright, 2011), child abuse (Devaney and Spratt, 2008), the 'brain drain' (Logue, 2009), teacher training (Southgate et al., 2012; Barrett, 2012), climate change (FitzGibbon and Mensah, 2012), quality in higher education (Krause, 2012), a critique of contemporary criminology (Watts, 2013) and the sustainability of educational leadership (Bottery, 2016).

Over recent years it has also been utilised by a particular section of the popular press, where it has been linked to the insolvability of social problems. The use of the wicked problem concept in the *Guardian* newspaper from 2009 to 2015 and the different issues it has been applied to is summarised in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 The use of the wicked problem concept in the *Guardian* from 2009 to 2015

Date	Author	Context
November 2009	Polly Toynbee, *journalist*	*David Cameron, social policy butterfly* David Cameron alights upon each of the wicked issues that obstruct Labour's attempts to abolish poverty (Comment is free)
May 2010	Mike Hulme, *Professor, University of East Anglia*	*There's no right and wrong to tackling climate change* Climate change is a wicked problem (Environment Network)
March 2012	David Walker*, former director of public reporting at the Audit Commission*	*Regionalism: a thoroughly wicked issue* The term wicked issue may not be so much in use but there's no shortage of intractable problems that governments try – and fail – to solve by reorganisation (Public Leaders Network)
March 2012	David Phipps, *director of research services and knowledge exchange York University, Canada*	*What is knowledge mobilisation and why does it matter to universities?* The social sciences and humanities matter ... because they help us understand and address "wicked problems" such as poverty, housing, immigration, climate change ... (Higher Education Network)
June 2012	Robert Ashton, *business author, and solver of 'wicked' problems*	*How do you tackle a 'wicked' issue?* Solving social problems is difficult enough, but when you're not even sure how to define the problem, things get even tougher (Social enterprise blog)
July 2012	Geoffrey Rivett, *vice-chair of Homerton University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust*	*What does the history of the NHS teach us about the 'wicked problems' we face?* The Nuffield Trust's timeline is a reminder there are many issues within the health service difficult or impossible to solve (Healthcare Network)
May 2013	Jean Hartley, *professor in public leadership at the Open University Business School*	*How to do public leadership in tough times* Many of the difficult policy, organisational and network problems encountered by public leaders tend to be wicked problems (Public Leaders Network

(Continued)

Table 3.2 *(Continued).*

Date	Author	Context
December 2013	Steve Halliday, *chief information officer at Solihull council*	*Social media networking can help solve even the most 'wicked' problems* Greater integration in local government can make sure the right people are working on society's toughest issues (Public Leaders Network)
March 2015	Gareth Wright, *Leadership Vanguard Initiative*	*Collaboration is not human nature - but here's why it should be* Global warming, uneven access to clean and affordable energy, the gap between rich and poor and increased politically instability, are all among a growing list of "wicked problems" that old thinking has no hope of solving (Xyntéo Partner Zone)
April 2015	Mike Hulme, *Professor, University of East Anglia*	*Fossil fuel disvestment is a misguided tactic* Climate change is a so-called 'wicked problem' that is not amenable to single action strategies (Environment Network)

Bore and Wright coined the term 'wickedity' to 'encapsulate the ideas behind a wicked problem' (2009: 254), which was typified by 'social problems [that] are never solved, they are simply re-solved over and over again' (ibid.: 245). They applied the term 'wicked' to fundamental educational issues, such as the curriculum and pupil achievement, that were constantly subject to policy reviews and seen as being 'problematic and difficult to resolve' (ibid.:243). In his paper on 'Bastard and Wicked Leadership', Wright (2011) applied Rittel and Webber's wicked problem lens to issues of school leadership and government policy. He argued that the managerialist approach to education, typified by New Public Management (NPM) principles, had led to a 'one-size-fits-all' set of policy solutions that did not take into account the complex nature of schools and their settings. This

'one-size- fits-all' approach can equally be applied to other educational settings, including prison education. As discussed in Chapter Two, in the work of Plsek and Greenhalgh (2001), tame approaches that used traditional scientific, mechanistic ways of problem solving were unsuitable for complex adaptive systems (CAS), such as healthcare, education and criminal justice.

Having outlined the development and application of the concept of a wicked problem, this chapter will now address research sub-question three: **'what are the criteria that characterise wicked issues?'** and research sub-question four: **'can these criteria be applied to prison education?'** through an examination of each of Rittel and Webber's criteria of wicked problems to determine whether they can be applied to prison education.

An examination of Rittel and Webber's ten criteria and their application to prison education

1. There is no definitive formulation of a wicked problem

It is not possible to have an agreed statement of what a problem is, as the definition of what the problem is will depend upon who is asked. Different stakeholders will have different views on what the problem is and consequently on what the solution should be. In the tame approach, typified by the first generation systems approach (Table 3.1), the first steps to solving a problem are to understand the problem and its context. However, deciding what the problem is, is what makes it a wicked problem, therefore it is not possible to get beyond step one of the tame first generation systems approach. Each agent will view the problem based on their

own mental model and within a specific context, therefore whatever they define as the solution, is dependent upon what they have defined as the problem. Wicked problems can be viewed from a range of perspectives and when considering one part of the Criminal Justice System (CJS), prisons, there are a range of views on the role of the prison system, each with their own perspective on the formulation of the problem and the preferred solution. Politicians, policy makers, prison educators, prison governors, prison officers, professional bodies, funding bodies, the education service providers, education managers, pressure groups, the general public, criminologists and finally, the offenders themselves, will all have their own views on the problem and their own solutions. Each of these different views also gives rise to conflicting discourses on the purpose of prison and prison education, some of which were examined in Chapter Two, and it is this 'proliferation of terminology and discourses [that] is indicative of a wicked problem' (Southgate et al., 2012: 16).

2. Wicked problems have no stopping rule

In solving a tame problem there are agreed criteria which determine when a solution has been reached. For example, a mathematical problem stops when a successful solution is found. However, with wicked problems, which are inherent in complex social systems where services are provided to support citizens, there are no criteria by which to measure a successful end point of the problem, as a project meant to 'tackle' the problem may be halted through lack of time or money. Changes in management structure and government can also bring an end to a

project. The ending therefore may be 'this will have to do'; which is not a solution, but an acknowledgement that the problem has only been partially addressed.

Applying this criterion to the wicked problem of prison education, a number of solutions have been put into action, but an end point that satisfies all stakeholders has yet to be reached. As seen in Chapter Two the 'problem' of how to deal with offenders has, in some circumstances, been reframed by successive governments in response to pressure from stakeholders. This has led to changes in government policy and, whether it is education policy or penal policy, it has meant that a particular solution has been either been modified, abandoned or reintroduced. Each time new solutions are introduced they have to start with the system as it already is, as a system as complex as the CJS cannot be demolished and rebuilt from scratch. When considering the wicked problem of prison education it is not possible to start with a blank slate and build the perfect system, account needs to be taken for what is already in place, therefore:

> to get some purchase on Wicked Problems we need to start by accepting that imperfection and making do with what is available is not just the best way forward but the only way forward
> (Grint, 2008: 17)

3. Solutions to wicked problems are not true-or-false, but good-or-bad

With tame problems the solution reached is either true or false and can be tested against established or recognised criteria that are unambiguous and the solution can be independently verified by an external scrutiniser. The solution is presented as a fact that fulfils the following criteria; it is a statement of objective reality; it is empirical; i.e. measureable and verifiable; there is a consensus, in that it is agreed

on by all; it is not subject to discussion or influenced by subjective feelings, it just *is* (Steadman-Jones, 1998). Wicked problems have no true-or-false solutions that can be subjected to these four criteria, as any proposed solutions are subjectively evaluated, based on their impact on stakeholders' interests. Whether a solution is good-or-bad is a subjective evaluation, not based the actual state of affairs, but how the stakeholders believe it should be. The evaluation is based on values, which differ from facts, in that they can be disputed and are neither right nor wrong.

Determining whether a solution to the wicked problem of prison education is good-or-bad, depends upon the impact it has on individual stakeholders. What may be seen as good by politicians and policy makers, may not be welcomed by offenders or prison educators and, as the problem is not solved but 're-solved over and over again' (Bore and Wright, 2009: 245), each subsequent solution may be viewed as either better or worse than the previous one. For example, the government 'solved' the issue of an inefficient prison system through the contracting out of support services, including education. The contracting out process, initiated through the introduction of the Offenders' Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) in 2005, effectively centralised what had been a fragmented and localised prison education service and brought all prison education into the further education (FE) sector. This issue continued to be 're-solved' with each subsequent iteration of OLASS, in the form of OLASS 2, OLASS 3 and OLASS 4. Whether the impact of this and the consequent rounds of re-tendering for the education contracts, in particular OLASS 4, has been viewed as good or bad, is based on stakeholders' subjective views. This is evidenced by the distinctly divergent views, which were discussed in Chapter

Two, where the Prisoner Learning Alliance (PLA) believed that OLASS 4 had had a positive impact, but offenders and prison educators viewed it in a much more negative light.

4. There is no immediate and no ultimate test of a solution to a wicked problem

When dealing with tame problems it can be determined whether the solution has been successful or not, as once the solution has been implemented it can be tested (Table 3.1, steps six and seven) and its impact measured. Trying to test the solution to a wicked problem raises a number of issues, as it is not possible to anticipate the impact the solution might have, or determine how successful it has been. Rittel and Webber propose that the implementation of any solution may have unforeseen consequences and, as there are any number of possible solutions, the one that appears to have the best chance of success may also have negative consequences that outweigh its positive aspects. However, the impact and extent of these cannot be predicted or measured, as a solution, once enacted, may continue to influence stakeholders' interests for a number of years.

In the case of prison education, the only way to test whether a solution has been successful has been to implement it; for example, the policies that have been implemented to improve prisoners' learning outcomes (Home Office, 1969; DIUS, 2007; MoJ, 2012). The problem with this approach was the assumption that the problem was a tame one and the success of the policy intervention could be measured through the use of criteria such as exam results or recidivism rates. Furthermore, no consideration was given to the impact the policy may have had or whether the criteria were a valid measure of its success. For example, the link

between education and recidivism rates is tenuous at best, the number of adult prisoners participating in learning in 2013/14 was 95,300 (SFA, 2015a) but almost half (45.4%) of adult offenders released from custody between October 2012 and September 2013 re-offended within one year (MoJ, 2015a).

5. Every solution to a wicked problem is a 'one-shot operation'; because there is no opportunity to learn by trial and error, every attempt counts significantly

With tame problems it is possible to try a number of solutions (Table 3.1, steps five and six) and have a number of attempts at finding a solution, without it having any adverse consequences and once the solution is found, it can be applied to any subsequent problem of the same nature (Table 3.1, step eight). For example, in trying to solve a mathematical equation there can be any number of trials before arriving at the correct solution and what has been done can be undone and a different approach tried. With wicked problems this is not the case, whatever solution is applied, it will have consequences that cannot be reversed, the action cannot be undone, therefore every solution is a 'one-shot operation'. Once a policy has been implemented, even if it is discarded at a later date, its consequences will have already been felt. Unlike a tame problem, it is not possible to experiment to see 'what might happen' and to then reverse-engineer any changes to start over again with a blank slate, there is no trial and error approach to wicked problems. It is not possible to build a complex social system, observe how it works, then demolish it and build a different one, without there being significant consequences to account for. Starting afresh will not eliminate the previous thoughts, feelings and values of the individuals who are part of that system. This strategy of redesigning a

system was identified by Rivett (2012) in his analysis of government solutions to the wicked problem of the National Health Service (NHS) through their repeated redesigning of the system. The founding of the NHS in 1948 was dubbed 'the biggest single experiment in social services that the world has ever seen' (Bevan, 1948, quoted in Timmins, 2008: n.p.). Just one year after its inception there was already concern regarding the rising costs and the poor standards of general practice. To address the wicked problems posed by the NHS, successive governments have attempted to redesign the system, this led Rivett to conclude that it was difficult to determine whether the government was 'part of the problem or part of the solution' (2012: n.p.).

This 'repeated redesign' approach has also been applied to the Criminal Justice System (CJS), where every attempt to solve the wicked problem of how to deal with offenders 'once and for all', has led to the implementation of reforms to the system, the offenders and the workforce; some of which have had irreversible consequences for some stakeholders, including prison educators. When a new penal policy is implemented it may have unforeseen consequences that impact beyond the immediate environment. For example, a change in sentencing policy may lead to a substantial increase in the prison population, which in turn places a strain on the infrastructure and services, including education. This then produces a new set of wicked problems to be 'solved'.

6. Wicked problems do not have an enumerable (or exhaustively describable) set of potential solutions, nor is there a well-described set of permissible operations that may be incorporated into the plan

Tame problems have a finite number of possible solutions and can be solved using the first generation systems approach to problem solving, outlined in Table 3.1. This approach may generate more than one solution, but there will be a finite number that can be successfully applied. A tame problem is not necessarily a simple one; it may be very complex and involve a large number of calculations and experiments in order to solve it. For example, an engineering problem that requires a locomotive to be designed so that 'it is able to store energy during braking and then use it to drive the locomotive forward again' (IMechE, 2014: n.p.), is not a simple problem, but it is a tame one, as has already been proved by a team of engineers from Transport for London. With wicked problems there may be any number of conceivable options on which to draw to devise a solution and which option is pursued is based on subjective judgement, rather than a logical assessment of all possible solutions (Table 3.1, step five). With wicked problems it is not possible to comprehensively present every potential solution, as there are 'no criteria which enable one to prove that all solutions to a wicked problem have been identified and considered' (Rittel and Webber, 1973: 164).

When addressing the wicked problem of what to do with offenders there is a range of potential options, each of which will have an impact on prison education. One option is that offenders should be punished by being locked up for 24 hours a day and do not 'deserve' to be educated, particularly as they do not pay for the

privilege. This option would solve the problem of prison education by eliminating it altogether. A second option is that offenders should be helped to reintegrate into society by providing them with the skills to gain employment on their release. This option focuses on providing education in the basic skills of maths, English and I.T. which, when linked to vocational skills, aim to increase the employability chances of the offender. A third option is that offenders should be provided with the opportunity to address their offending behaviour and to make fundamental changes in the way they think about themselves and others. This option proposes an education regime based on creative expression through music, art, discussions and play readings being supplied by volunteers or charitable organisations. A more radical option would be to decriminalise a large number of offences, which would mean fewer prosecutions and fewer people entering the prison system, thereby reducing the prison population, a solution that has yet to be considered by any government. Throughout the history of prison education each of the first three options have been implemented at one time or another, sometimes simultaneously, and all have had limited success, only to be superseded by a different option, leading back to a re-examination of the wicked problem of how to deal with offenders.

7. Every wicked problem is essentially unique

Although the problem to be dealt with may be similar to other or previous problems, there is no way to be sure that the differences between them are more distinct than the similarities. There is no guarantee that whatever strategy has been successful in dealing with an issue in the past, it will have the same outcome in the

future. Or what has worked in one system can be transferred to another system, no matter how similar they appear to be. When addressing wicked problems, their essentially unique character mitigates against the transference of solutions from one context to another. For example, education strategies and policies that have been applied in one educational setting will not necessarily have the same level of success or impact in a different setting; although there may appear to be similarities, there will be cultural and organisational differences.

In addressing the wicked problem of prison education, further education (FE) policy makers have made the 'one-size-fits-all' assumption that the environment and the learners in prison are no different to mainstream colleges and that the conditions which could be met in mainstream colleges, could also be met in prison education. For example, the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) 2007 requirements for teachers in FE to undertake further teaching qualifications, compulsory registration with the Institute for Learning (IfL) and continuing professional development (CPD), did not take account of the context of the secure environment in which prison educators worked. Similarly, the former Justice Secretary, Michael Gove, suggested that strategies used by the armed forces to teach basic literacy and numeracy skills to 'poorly educated adults' could be adopted by the prison service to achieve the same results (HCWS178, 2015). However, this suggestion is based on the assumption that what has worked for the armed forces can be transferred to the prison system, but no matter how similar they appeared to be to Mr Gove, with the wicked problem of prison education this

is almost certainly not the case and it is this uncertainty that points to prison education being a wicked problem.

8. Every wicked problem can be considered to be a symptom of another problem

A problem can be defined as the difference between how things are and how they ought to be. The use of the word 'ought' suggests judgment and subjectivity, whilst also implying uncertainty that the solution will be effective. With tame problems this uncertainty can be overcome through experimentation and trial until a solution is found (Table 3.1, steps four - seven). However, when addressing wicked problems, the view of how things are and how they ought to be is less simple, as it involves moral and political choices that are connected to subjectivity, individuality and emotions. In attempting to find a solution to a wicked problem, there is a need to know the cause of the difference between how things are and how they ought to be, if this cannot be agreed on then the problem cannot even begin to be addressed. Also, as already argued in criterion five, every solution to a wicked problem is a one-shot solution, therefore any uncertainty as to the efficacy of the proposed solution cannot be overcome through experimentation and trial until the 'correct' solution is found. In this case, getting all the stakeholders to agree on what the cause of the problem is, is part of the problem as each stakeholder will have their own belief as to what has caused the problem and how it should be solved. Also, as Rittel and Webber propose that every wicked problem can be considered to be a symptom of another problem, it is difficult to determine what the cause of the original problem actually is.

In applying this criterion to prison education, the wicked problem of prison education cannot be divorced from the wicked problem of how society should deal with offenders, as prison education is only one small part of the complex Criminal Justice System (CJS) (Figures 2.2 & 2.3). As discussed in Chapter Two, systems are embedded within other systems and as such affect, and are affected by, each other. Poor parenting, spending time in care, childhood abuse and neglect, drug dependency and difficulties at school, symptoms that are associated with offending behaviour are also symptoms of the bigger problem of social deprivation (Williams et al., 2012). It could be argued that solving the wicked problem of social deprivation would reduce the levels of crime and the number of offenders; however, there is no agreement on the cause of crime and therefore, as discussed above, no single solution. This situation is further compounded by government policy (DfES, 2004, 2005; MoJ, 2008, 2011, 2012) that sees improving learning and skills as the solution to the problem, rather than being just one part of it and ignores the fact that crime is a symptom of other more complex issues. This thereby illustrates that any solution that is driven by one symptom of the wicked problem is unlikely to provide the required outcome.

9. The existence of a discrepancy representing a wicked problem can be explained in numerous ways. The choice of explanation determines the nature of the problem's resolution

When approaching a wicked problem it is difficult to determine what causes it and how this cause can be explained, this is because there may be many explanations and there is no way of testing which one is correct. For example, when using the

tame first generation systems approach to address the problem of crime in society, the first question to be asked would be, what are the causes of crime? Once this question has been answered the next question would be, how can these causes be explained? Once an explanation has been found, then the problem can be resolved. However, there is a whole range of answers to the first question, from poverty or poor educational achievement, to biological causes such as heredity or individual genetic abnormalities (Ellis, 2005). The view that there was a link between poor educational achievement and offending was the foundation of the reformatory prison regime, which was enshrined in the Gaols Act of 1823 and which introduced education and training for prisoners. Poor educational achievement has been used to explain the problem of crime in society and has led to the development of prison education services to raise offenders' education levels, which in turn impacts on the likelihood of them re-offending. However, applying this solution to all offenders is based on the erroneous assumption that they all lack educational qualifications, but this is not the case. The Prisoners' Education Trust found that of those who completed their 2014 survey, only 20% had no previous qualifications and 11% possessed a degree or its equivalent (PET, 2014). Therefore, one explanation does not account for all cases, other explanations and solutions may be equally valid and, as they depend upon individuals' subjective attitudes and views, people 'choose those explanations which are most plausible' (Rittel and Webber, 1973: 166). Whatever the approach to the problem the choice of solution offered is based on the original explanation of what that problem is and, as this is decided by government policy makers, there may be a limited agreement with the views held by other stakeholders.

10. The planner has no right to be wrong

In science if a theory or hypothesis is refuted, then the scientist is not held

personally responsible for its failure. However, those professions whose job it is to

deal with wicked problems are often held personally responsible for the

consequences, even though they are implementing policies which they did not

devise. In this case it is not the planner who has no right to be wrong, but the

people who are implementing the plan. However, the planner must have the right

to be wrong because of the nature of wicked problems as characterised by the first

nine criteria, if the problem fulfils all of these criteria it is not possible to solve it, so

the planner will probably more often be wrong than right.

Rittel and Webber's argument for criterion ten is based on a specific 'type' of

professional, as found in classic sociological discourse and defined by the 'traits'

approach, which consisted of a list of attributes that could be applied to particular

occupational groups to determine their status. These traits were used to constitute

individuals as professionals, prescribe the behaviour that constituted

professionalism and to chart the evolution of particular occupations through the

professionalisation process (Flexner 1915; Tawney 1922; Carr-Saunders and Wilson

1933; Parsons 1939). This view of the professions came under attack in the 1960s

and 1970s and was typified by a move from public trust to a loss of faith in the

professions and a growing revisionist sociological critique (Collins, 1990). At this

point in time the professions still held positions of power, in which they were

responsible for the planning decisions that determined policies and standards.

However, due to the social and political changes that have taken place since the

1970s the 'type' of professional used in Rittel and Webber's argument is not relevant to contemporary society. The key change was the advent of Thatcherism, which was typified by neo-liberal policies and the application of New Public Management (NPM) (Hood, 1991) principles to public sector services. The loss of confidence and trust in their abilities to run public organisations led to professionals being replaced by managers, who would succeed where the professionals had failed (Clarke and Newman, 1997). The professionals' skills and expertise that had been used to bring about social improvement for the public good, were replaced with the NPM principles of 'hands-on professional management, explicit standards and measurements of performance, results rather than procedures and a stress on private-sector styles of management' (Hood, 1991: 4-5). Managers were given the 'right to manage', this challenged the autonomy of professionals who were no longer the planners who made the decisions, but were expected to conform to the purposes of the organisation in which they worked.

Rittel and Webber propose that, 'planners are liable for the consequences of the actions they generate' (1973: 167) but, in the case of prison education, the planners are the government ministers, not the education professionals and the actions generated are the outcomes of government policies. As planners are aiming 'to improve some characteristics of the world where people live' (ibid.), whether they are seen to be right or wrong will depend upon the impact of these actions, as viewed by different stakeholders. With wicked problems the number of stakeholders, the different criteria by which success or failure can be measured and the difficulty in defining the problem in order to implement a solution, are all linked

to the complexity of the issue and the social context within which it is set. In the case of prison education, for the education contract provider and the prison governor, the success of prison education is measured by the number of exams passed, whereas for the prison educator it can be when a student manages to stay focused on a task for the whole lesson. As there will be a number of stakeholders involved in wicked problems any evaluation of whether the planner is right or wrong will be judged by different, and possibly contradictory, criteria.

Having explored Rittel and Webber's ten criteria and whether they can be applied to prison education, this chapter will now consider the implications this has for prison education and educators.

What are the implications for prison education and educators?

The wicked problem of prison education has traditionally been approached as if it were a tame problem that can be solved through the application of linear, scientific thinking. Unfortunately 'the quest for elegant (scientific) solutions is part of the problem not the solution' (Grint, 2008: 18), if this was not the case then it would not be a wicked problem. Michael Gove's call for prison education policy to be 'rooted in solid evidence' (Prisoners' Education Trust, 2015: n.p.) and the latest government review of prison education, are founded on the first generation systems approach to problem solving. There is a nothing wrong with basing decisions on 'solid evidence', the problem arises when the assumption is made that the evidence that has been gathered is enough on which to base an informed decision. This tame policy approach to prison education has been based on two assumptions, the first is that there is a shared understanding of the problem and

the second is that there is a consensus on how to tackle it. These assumptions have informed the government's approach on the best way to deal with offenders; i.e. remove them from society and place them in prison. These assumptions have also fuelled the beliefs that the purpose of prison is to bring about a change in offenders' behaviour and that some form of education is capable of facilitating this change. As was discussed in Chapter Two in the historical development of prison education, the incarceration of offenders and the need for the offender to change have generally been constant throughout the development of the prison system. However, the belief in whether education can facilitate a change in offenders' behaviour has been subject to the prevailing penal policy and political views of the time.

Prison education policy has been devised by politicians and implemented by senior managers with very little, if any, consultation with other stakeholders. Wicked theory suggests that government ministers and policy makers need to accept that there are no 'quick fix' solutions to wicked problems and the reason penal policies have failed to successfully address the issue of how society should deal with offenders, is because they applied a narrow, linear approach to a socially complex wicked problem. To arrive at an understanding of the problem requires input from all the stakeholders, and in addressing the wicked problem of what to do with offenders, there is lack of consensus on what constitutes an appropriate solution for, 'part of the wickedness of an issue lies in ... disagreement over the appropriate solution' (Briggs, 2007: 11). Therefore, before any progress can be made in addressing the issue of how society should deal with offenders, there needs to be

an understanding of what the nature of the problem is and whether it is wicked or tame. Attempting to address the wicked problem of prison education entails an examination of 'what it is for' and needs to consider the views of a diverse range of stakeholders, including offenders, prison educators, prison officers and governors, politicians, policy makers, pressure groups and the general public.

Conclusion

This chapter has addressed research sub-question two: **'what are tame and wicked issues?'** by defining the concepts of tame and wicked problems and explaining how they developed from Rittel's (1972) critique of the first generation systems approach to problem solving and Rittel and Webbers' (1973) analysis of rational planning and social policy issues. The chapter then provided a review of the application of the 'wicked problem' concept to issues in academia, health and society, as well as its use by the media. Through an examination of Rittel and Webber's (1973) ten criteria of a wicked problem the next section addressed research sub-question three: **'what are the criteria that characterise wicked issues?'** and research sub-question four: **'can these criteria be applied to prison education?'** Having answered these two questions and then considered the implications of the tame approach to the problem of prison education, this chapter has concluded that prison education does fulfil the criteria of a wicked problem. This thesis is an investigation into the perceptions of two key stakeholder groups, prison educators and their managers, on the impact of tame and wicked approaches to prison education. The next chapter examines how the research was designed and carried out, in order to capture these perceptions.

Chapter Four

Introduction

This thesis is an investigation into the perceptions of two key stakeholder groups, prison educators and their managers, on the impact of tame and wicked approaches to prison education. This chapter examines how the research was designed and carried out in order to capture these perceptions via semi-structured interviews. There is a relationship between theory and research, which is evidenced in the methodology, methods and strategies adopted by the researcher (May, 1997) and that relationship is the focus of this chapter. The chapter will firstly consider the theoretical aspects of the research by providing an outline of the philosophical basis of the research and a justification for the choice of a qualitative approach. It will then detail how the participants were selected, how the data was collected and analysed and the ethical aspects of the research, which will include a discussion on the impact that my role as an insider-researcher had on the research and the ethical issues that arose from this.

Research philosophy, epistemology, ontology and methodology

Guba and Lincoln (1994) propose that there are three questions that determine the researchers' world view and therefore influence any research they undertake, these are, the epistemological question, the ontological question and the methodological question. These questions deal with the researchers' beliefs about the nature of the world, how, or if, it can be known and how knowledge might be gained. The epistemological question is concerned with determining 'what is (or should be) regarded as acceptable knowledge?' (Bryman, 2016: 24); whereas the ontological

question is concerned with 'what is the form and nature of reality … and what can be known about it?' (Punch, 2009: 17). The methodological question is concerned with 'how can the inquirer go about finding what he or she believes can be known?' (Guba and Lincoln, 1994: 108).

The epistemological question

In social research there are epistemological positions which, in simplistic terms, align to either a scientific, objective, positivist view or a non-scientific, subjective, interpretivist view. The positivist philosophy has its foundation in the work of Comte (1896) and was developed by Durkheim in *The Rules of Sociological Method* (1938) and *Suicide: A Study in Sociology* (1952). Durkheim proposed that social scientists should study 'social facts', which were external to individuals and were 'capable of exercising on the individual an external constraint' (1938: 13). These social facts ranged from the availability of facilities to social norms to the forces of public opinion (Thompson, 1982). The rules for observing social facts should be based on objective criteria and, in order to avoid any ambiguity, the subject matter should be defined before the study begins. Positivist epistemology 'advocates the application of the methods of the natural sciences to the study of social reality' (Bryman, 2008: 13).

Interpretivist philosophy has its foundations in the work of Weber (1922) and his concept of *Verstehen,* which Parsons notes can be translated as 'understanding', 'subjectively understandable' or 'interpretation in subjective terms'. In his analysis of Weber's work Parsons proposes that:

with the social sciences … our interest in human beings and their cultural achievements is not that of abstract generality but of individual uniqueness … [and] … our interest in them is directly determined by their relevance to the values [of the researcher] (1949: 592)

The interpretivist approach proposes that the role of social science is to understand the lived experiences of others and, in order to do this, the researcher needs an understanding of the beliefs, social rules, conventions and institutional practices of the individuals being studied (Fay, 1996). Interpretivist epistemology maintains and promotes an anti-positivist stance in that it:

- Seeks to understand the social world and social actions

- Is concerned with subjectivity, understanding, agency, complexity, uncertainty and contradictions (Denscombe, 2007)

- Determines that knowledge is gained from the interpretations that individuals make of their own world and subjective experiences (O'Donoghue, 2007)

- Acknowledges that 'researchers are inextricably part of the social reality being researched; i.e. they are not "detached" from the subject they are studying' (Grix, 2010: 84)

The knowledge that was the basis of this research was the subjective views of the participants in relation to what they perceived as the issues in prison education and the ways in which those issues were dealt with, therefore this research adopted an interpretivist epistemology.

The ontological question

As with epistemology there are a set of assumptions associated with different ontological views, which fall broadly within the spheres of objectivism and constructivism. The objectivist view is based on realism and proposes that 'the world exists and is knowable as it really is' and should be 'investigated empirically' (Cohen et al., 2011: 8). In this view, culture is external to and acts upon individuals and 'social phenomena confront us as external facts that are beyond our reach or influence' (Bryman, 2008: 18). In contrast to this constructivism proposes that 'people create culture continuously' (Becker, 1982: 521) and that, rather than being acted upon by culture, individuals construct their own social reality that is both local and specific (Lincoln and Guba, 2000). Schwandt posits that there are historical, social and cultural aspects to these constructions and that 'we do not construct our interpretations in isolation but against a backdrop of shared understandings, practices [and] language' (2000: 197). This research adopted a constructivist ontological position, as the notion of shared understandings, practices and languages was particularly pertinent to the research, due to the 'closed' nature of prison education that has its own culture derived from the institutional setting within which it takes place. The participants' interpretations of their experiences in the prison education system are based on this shared culture, but are also influenced by their role within the system, as well as the language that is specific to prison culture.

The methodological question

The research for this thesis was undertaken from an interpretivist/constructivist position that focused on the interpretations, meanings and cultural significance of the lived experiences of prison educators and their managers. The most appropriate methodology to adopt was a qualitative approach that aimed to study, evaluate, understand and explain the subjective experience of the participants. This was achieved by gathering narrative data, elicited from semi-structured interviews with nine prison educators and three prison education managers. Qualitative research is 'an umbrella term that encompasses [an] enormous variety of methodological traditions, strategies and designs' (Punch and Oancea, 2015: 144) and in its 'broadest sense is research that produces descriptive data' (Taylor and Bogdan, 1984: 5). The use of a qualitative approach was particularly relevant for this research, as it aimed to 'investigate little-known phenomena' and to explore 'where and why policy and local knowledge ... are at odds' (Marshall and Rossman, 1995: 43). In order to achieve this aim the research used the key elements of qualitative research as proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994), in that it was designed to:

- Reflect the everyday life of individuals and the organisation in which they work

- Explain how the participants understand and manage their day-to-day situations

- Capture the participants' perceptions and reproduce these honestly.

- Present an analysis in the form of words that can be used to contrast and compare

In any research project there are 'criteria for assessing the quality of [the] … research' (Bryman, 2012: 30). However, the type of criteria and how they are applied, differs according to whether the research is quantitative or qualitative. For Lincoln and Guba (2000) the primary criteria for assessing qualitative research, undertaken from the constructivist perspective, are authenticity and trustworthiness. The criterion of authenticity is based on the 'fairness' of the research and whether it impartially represents the different viewpoints of the participants. This was achieved in the research through the scrupulous reporting of the participants' responses in order to provide a balanced range of views. The trustworthiness of the research can be evaluated through the four criteria, 'credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability' (Guba and Lincoln, 1994: 114). Research credibility can be achieved through respondent validation, where the participants are provided with a copy of the research findings in order to verify their accuracy. In this research all of the participants were asked if they would like to have a copy of the transcript of their interview to ensure that it was an accurate record of their responses and, although six of the participants expressed an interest in reading the final report, they all declined the opportunity to read the transcripts.

The research focused on a specific group of individuals in a specific setting, consequently this limits the possibility of transferring the findings to other contexts. However, an attempt to achieve the criterion of transferability was made through

the use of 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973), to provide an in-depth, detailed account of the research participants and their perceptions of the workplace culture. The third criterion, dependability, was addressed via an 'auditing approach' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), which entailed maintaining a record of research decisions, supervision discussions and copies of interview transcripts. The fourth criterion, confirmability, is a determination of whether the researcher has allowed their values to influence the research. There were issues attached to this criterion, as my experiences of teaching in prison education and my role as an insider-researcher needed to be accounted for, how this was addressed is discussed in the section on ethics.

Sample

The sampling strategy adopted was purposive sampling, which involved selecting participants that were relevant to the research, in this case prison educators and their managers, so selection was 'based on a specific purpose' (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003: 713). The number of participants was determined by the number of people who volunteered to be interviewed. Permission was obtained from the education manager and the education governor to ask for volunteers to take part in the research. All of the educators and managers at the location were sent a letter outlining the research and inviting them to take part (Appendix A) and, of a potential 28 participants in the setting, 12 educators and three managers agreed to be interviewed. The cluster manager was approached face to face and asked if she would be willing to be part of the research; this initial request was followed up via email, with further details and a copy of the invitation letter. The request was

referred to her manager and it was agreed that she could be interviewed, thus making a total of 16 confirmed participants, 12 educators and four managers. The final number of participants was nine educators and three managers, as when they were contacted to arrange the time and place for the interviews, four of the confirmed participants did not respond. This sampling strategy resulted in a sample that was not representative of the department or of prison education as a whole, therefore, it might not be possible to generalise their views to all prison educators and managers. However, as the aim of the research was to 'acquire in-depth information from those who are in a position to give it' (Cohen et al., 2013: 157), it might be possible to draw some comparisons with other prison education settings.

Structure and roles in a typical prison education department

Depending upon the size of the prison within which it is located, a typical prison education department will consist of a manager, a deputy manager, team leaders, educators, learning support practitioners (LSP), information, advice and guidance workers (IAG) and administrative support staff. The educators are employed on a range of contract types, which can be either full-time, part-time, permanent or providing cover for sickness and absence and a teaching contract may include permanent and cover elements. The role of the LSP is to support the educators and learners in the classroom and the IAG workers carry out the initial assessments and interviews that determine which education courses the prisoners are allocated to. All of these staff are classed as civilians and are employed by the education contract provider. The research participants, apart from the cluster manager, were all based in the same location in different curriculum areas and had different roles and

responsibilities. An outline of the participants' roles and responsibilities is provided below along with the number of years they have worked in prison education and the subjects they have taught. The details for the educators are provided in Table 4.1 below but, as each of the managers has a different set of responsibilities, they are presented separately.

Table 4.1 Pen pictures of the educators

Name	Years in service	Subject areas taught
Anna	14	Parenting, Life Skills, English
Bridget	14	ESOL, English, Life Skills, Employability
Chris	7	I.T.
Hannah	20	Catering, Life Skills, Employability
Jane	19	Life Skills, Employability
Liz	12	Business Studies, Maths
Mike	2.5	English, Maths
Rita	7	English Social History & Comparative Religions
Thom	7	ESOL

Educators' Key Responsibilities

- Teach designated hours as required, with a flexible approach to delivering across curriculum areas as needed to fulfil contractual requirements

- Develop or contribute to a Scheme of Work and develop lesson plans to ensure compliance with curriculum best practice and quality targets

- Contribute to curriculum development

- Ensure the safeguarding of learners

- Integrate literacy, language, numeracy and ICT skills within the programme

- Ensure that learner records are accurate and maintained in line with data protection and college policies.

- Compliance with college & stakeholder policies and procedures.

- Lead and support in delivery and accreditation of learner focused educational provision.

- Timely and accurate reporting on funding and compliance activity.

- Participate in continual professional development activities to ensure skills and qualifications are in line with sector best practice.

- Ensure compliance with Health & Safety legislation and prison security requirements
  NOVUS, 2016

Managers' roles and responsibilities

Leo is an Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) worker who has worked in prison education for six years. In his role he interviews prisoners who have completed their initial skills assessment in order to identify which activities they will undertake as part of their rehabilitation pathway. At the time of his interview Leo was on a three month secondment as the Employability Team Leader, as well as teaching his key responsibilities included:

- Leading and developing a specific curriculum area to comply with best practice and national targets
- Ensuring the safeguarding of the learners and that learner records are maintained in line with data protection and college policies
- Day to day management of the teaching team in line with college policies and procedures
- Ensuring compliance with Health & Safety legislation and prison security protocols
  NOVUS, 2016

Heather is an Education Department Deputy OLASS (Offenders' Learning and Skills Service) Manager who is also responsible for internal quality assurance (IQA) in the department. She has worked in prison education for eight years in various roles, initially as an I.T. tutor. After six years, she gained promotion to Team Leader then Senior Team Leader and then to Deputy Manager of the department, a post she has held since November 2015. As Deputy Manager, she is responsible for sorting out the problems that arise in the day-to-day running of the department as well as:

- Arranging staffing and annual leave
- Budgeting
- Preparing reports
- Attending the governing governor's meetings
- Liaising with education and training governors and other agencies
- Taking on the responsibilities of the manager in their absence

Barbara is an Education Cluster Manager based in a regional office and is the lead senior manager responsible for a geographical cluster of six prisons, as shown in Figure 2.3. She has worked in prison education for four years managing different types of prisons but in the same role with the same job title, her management responsibilities include:

- Curriculum development and implementation
- Managing and leading delivery teams
- Promoting access to employment for offenders
- Recruitment and staff development

Data collection

The data was collected through the use of in-depth semi-structured interviews, where each participant was asked identically worded questions in the same order. Taylor and Bogdan argue that qualitative research interviews should be like a conversation between equals and be 'non-directive, unstructured, non-standardized, and open-ended' (1984: 77). The rationale for structuring the questions was that they formed a logical progression to explore the participants' views on the issues in prison education and their perceptions of how these are dealt with. Asking identical questions ensured that comparisons could be made between the participants' responses, which could then be analysed in the context of Rittel and Webber's (1973) ten criteria of a wicked problem. The interviews took

the form of a conversation, where the formal questions were supplemented by less formal questions and probes to elicit more detailed accounts.

Piloting the interview questions

A pilot study is a feasibility study that is used to test the planned research methods, or a particular research instrument, in order to guide the development of the research (Baker, 1994; Prescott and Soeken, 1989). One benefit of conducting a pilot study is that it provides an opportunity to make any adjustments or revisions to the research tools that will be used in the research project (Sampson, 2004). In this research the interview questions were piloted with a member of the research population, who gave feedback regarding the interview process and the relevance of the questions. Bryman (2016) argues that the pilot should not be carried out with a member of the proposed sample as it may affect the representativeness of the group. However, as this research makes no claims to represent the views of all prison educators and managers, this was not considered to be an issue. Additionally, the views of anybody outside the target population would not have been relevant to the main research question, which focuses on the perceptions of prison educators and their managers.

Sampson highlights that it is 'often only when data is evaluated that any gaps in a research design begin to show up' (2004: 399) and this was the case when carrying out an initial analysis of the data from the first interview. During the analysis it was found that the questions (Table 4.2) were not specific enough to elicit data that could be analysed in the context of Rittel and Webber's (1973) ten criteria of a wicked problem. Therefore, the interview questions were amended and expanded

to be more specific to each criterion, the amended questions and the criteria they were designed to fulfil are detailed in Table 4.3.

Table 4.2 The piloted interview questions

What do you believe are the key issues in prison education today?
How are these issues dealt with?
What do you think is the best way to deal with these issues?
What other ways of dealing with the issues do you think there could be?
How do you see the future of prison education?

Table 4.3 Amended interview questions and which criteria of a wicked problem they were designed to fulfil

Question	Criterion
1. As a prison educator/manager what do you believe are the key issues in prison education today?	1. There is no definitive formulation of a wicked problem 9. The existence of a discrepancy representing a wicked problem can be explained in numerous ways. The choice of explanation determines the nature of the problem's resolution
2. Do you think that other people would agree with your views on what these issues are?	1. There is no definitive formulation of a wicked problem
3. Do you think it is possible to identify one clear solution to these issues?	6. Wicked problems do not have an enumerable (or exhaustively describable) set of potential solutions, nor is there a well-described set of permissible operations that may be incorporated into the plan

(Continued)

Table 4.3 *(Continued).*

Question	Criterion
4. How do you think they could be successfully addressed?	4. There is no immediate and no ultimate test of a solution to a wicked problem 5. Every solution to a wicked problem is a 'one-shot operation'; because there is no opportunity to learn by trial and error, every attempt counts significantly 9. The existence of a discrepancy representing a wicked problem can be explained in numerous ways. The choice of explanation determines the nature of the problem's resolution
5. Do you think it would ever be possible to have a prison education system which has resolved all of the issues you have identified?	2. Wicked problems have no stopping rule
6. What kind of system would you need which could solve all of the issues you have identified?	5. Every solution to a wicked problem is a 'one-shot operation'; because there is no opportunity to learn by trial and error, every attempt counts significantly 9. The existence of a discrepancy representing a wicked problem can be explained in numerous ways. The choice of explanation determines the nature of the problem's resolution
7. In your experience do you think the changes that have been made to prison education have been the right ones?	3. Solutions to wicked problems are not true-or-false, but good-or-bad 10. The planner has no right to be wrong
8. There are strategies that have been applied in mainstream education, for example … how successful do you think they could be in prison education?	7. Every wicked problem is essentially unique

(Continued)

Table 4.3 *(Continued).*

Question	Criterion
9. Do you think that the issues are symptoms of a bigger problem?	8. Every wicked problem can be considered to be a symptom of another problem
10. Who do you think is ultimately responsible for addressing the issues you have identified?	10. The planner has no right to be wrong

Carrying out the interviews

It was not possible to carry out the interviews in the work setting, as permission would not be given to use recording equipment on prison premises, therefore arrangements were made for the interviews to take place at a location and time that was convenient for the participants, which meant that ten interviews took place in the participants' homes and two in my office at the university. A number of practical issues arose when interviewing in the participants' homes, these included interruptions from pets and incoming phone calls, which necessitated a pause in the interview so they could be dealt with. The length of the visit to the participants' home was often considerably longer than the interview itself; this was because the social niceties had to be observed before and after the formal interview took place, as I was a guest in their home. The pilot interview was undertaken in October 2015 with the remainder of the interviews taking place between December 2015 and April 2016.

The interviews were standardised, as they all began with an explanation of the purpose of the interview and the interview process. All the participants consented to the interviews being recorded on a digital recorder, with each interview being

stored in an individual password protected folder, which was only identifiable by a

coded number and letter as in A1, A2 etc. I began the interview by explaining

purpose of the research and gave each participant a letter with details of the

research, which they could keep (Appendix B) and a consent form, which they

signed and returned to me (Appendix C). I assured them of confidentiality and

anonymity and that, although they may choose to discuss the contents of the

interview with their colleagues, I would not do so. I also asked if I could use their

forenames to identify quotes in the final thesis and all but one agreed. However,

the decision was later taken to change the names, as it may have been possible to

identify individuals from the details in the quotes; the participants were informed

of this change and none of them objected. The first questions were informal and

were used to gain biographical information about the participants and to enable

the participants to 'relax' into the conversation. The biographical details also

contributed to the analysis, as the participants' educational qualifications,

curriculum area and length of service were relevant to the views they expressed

and 'because such information is useful for contextualizing people's answers'

(Bryman, 2012: 473). All of the participants were asked the same questions in the

same order, the only exception being the change in the wording of question one

depending upon whether the participant was an educator or a manager. The

interviews also contained some supplementary individualised questions and

examples to elicit more detailed responses.

All the information regarding the location, date, time, the length of the interviews

and the date they were transcribed, was stored in a password protected Microsoft

Excel file. The length of interviews varied from 25 minutes to 73 minutes, with the average being 51 minutes. At the end of the interview, each participant was thanked for taking part and asked if they had anything else to add, or any questions to ask me. They were also asked if they would like to read a copy of the interview transcript. All of them declined, although six of the participants did express an interest in reading the final thesis and the cluster manager also requested an executive summary of the findings to show her manager. Following each interview notes were made on the demeanour of the interviewee and any interruptions or issues, the notes also included a personal reflection on the interview process.

Data management and analysis

The data was analysed through a combination of thematic and narrative analysis, where the key themes were derived from the interview questions which were supported by the examples given by the participants. The thematic approach is based on Ryan and Bernard's (2003) technique, which highlights similarities and differences in the data and involves cutting out quotes from the interviews and sorting them, according to question and/or issue. The first stage of the analysis entailed sorting the data from the interviews question by question, with key phrases from the responses being highlighted in the transcripts and then copied to a spreadsheet to enable comparisons to be drawn between the educators' and managers' responses. The responses to question one: **'as a prison educator/manager what do you believe are the key issues in prison education?'** were further organised into categories by the types of issues identified.

In order to be able to draw a comparison between the issues identified by the participants and other stakeholder groups, the issues were organised under the headings:

- Issues that arise from the prison regime and environment

- Issues that arise from attitudes and behaviours

- Issues that arise from the curriculum and teaching

- Issues focusing specifically on prison educators

These categories correspond to those used in Table 2.2 but, from the issues identified by the participants, it was necessary to add a fifth heading:

- Issues that arise from policies and funding

Once all of the key phrases had been entered on the spreadsheets, the second stage of the analysis was to consider all of the data from the educators' interviews and to identify the similarities and dissimilarities in the views and also to identify any outliers and how these might be accounted for. The same principles were then applied to the managers' interviews, with further reading and rereading of the transcripts being undertaken throughout the process in order to highlight instances where the participants' responses typified tame and wicked approaches to prison education. The results were then used to draw comparisons between the educators' and managers' views and these were then collectively compared to the views of other stakeholder groups. The final stage of the analysis was to identify if and how, the participants' responses fulfilled the criteria of a wicked problem.

The data analysis also utilised a narrative approach in order to interpret the stories the participants told about their experiences and the examples they used to

illustrate the points they were making. This form of narrative analysis is useful for 'interpreting texts that have ... a storied form' (Reissman, 2008: 110) and 'is an approach that emphasizes the stories that people employ to account for events' (Bryman, 2016: 590). The stories that the participants told were based on their individual and collective experiences of teaching and managing in prison education. There were some similarities with the stories and experiences of each of the participants, which also reflected my own experiences. There were also some assumptions made by the participants that their experiences and views would be mirrored in my own, this was the case in some instances, but not in all. The implications of these assumptions and the impact that they may have had are considered in the next section of this chapter which discusses my position as an insider-researcher.

Insider-research and its implications

A key consideration in the research was my position as an insider-researcher and any potential impact this may have had on the design, implementation and analysis of the research. Hellawell highlights the advantages and disadvantages of insider-research and how the researcher can use their position on the 'insider-outsider continuum' (2006: 483), to develop reflexivity in their writing and be able to identify where they stand in relation to their participants but, more importantly, also be aware of how the participants perceive the research relationship. It is acknowledged that 'the unique perspective of the researcher inevitably makes a difference to the research' (Costley et al., 2010: 1) and that 'insiderness' can be a

'double-edged sword' (Mercer, 2007: 5), in that insider-research has both negative and positive implications which need to be considered.

For 'outsiders' gaining access to carry out prison-based research can be difficult, as Nahmad-Williams (2011) found when she applied to the Ministry of Justice for permission to interview prison education staff. One of the advantages of being an insider is gaining access to potential participants and their knowledge. Insider-researchers also have insights into the lived experiences of the participants and can draw on these when interviewing in order to obtain richer data. Insider-researchers know the everyday language and jargon used in the setting and also have an understanding of the organisation, its hierarchy and its structure, all of which can be an advantage (Brannick and Coghlan, 2007). However, when carrying out research with colleagues, there may be issues of objectivity and authenticity, because the insider-researcher 'knows too much or is too close to the project and may be too similar to those being studied' (Kanuha, 2000: 444). Also when carrying out research with colleagues, the insider needs to be aware of the issues that can arise from the pre-existing relationships, roles and boundaries within the setting and how these should be managed.

My role in the organisation and my relationship with the participants affected my role as a researcher, as I have worked closely with some colleagues as their learning mentor and have friendships outside the workplace with others. I therefore needed to be aware that this may have affected the data collection; for example, when asking colleagues to take part in the research, I could not be sure of their motivation for agreeing to do so. One advantage that the insider-researcher has is

that they have 'the same background knowledge and sub-cultural understandings' (Platt, 1981: 76) as their interviewees, who will be more open, as the insider is aware of the organisational culture of the setting within which they work. However, this shared understanding can also affect the colleague/researcher boundary as, 'when undertaking insider interviews, there is a feeling of pressure to show some verbal or visual cues of agreement with the participant's viewpoint' (Floyd and Arthur, 2012: 174). This occurred in some of the interviews when the participants asked for my opinion or sought agreement on the issues we were discussing, so I endeavoured to make my responses suitably vague, so that I did not lead or influence them in any way. Some participants also assumed a shared understanding of the issues through the use of phrases such as, 'you know what I mean', 'you know what it's like' and 'you remember when'. When this occurred I nodded and agreed, but did not offer any further opinion.

Ethical considerations

Ethical problems in qualitative research particularly arise because of the complexities of 'researching private lives and placing accounts in the public arena' (Birch et al., 2002: 1). Insider-research raises a number of ethical considerations and my relationship with the participants gave rise to a particular set of issues related to the 'hidden ethical and methodological dilemmas of insiderness' (Labaree, 2002: 19). As a researcher, I have certain obligations towards my participants and these are enshrined within the notions of informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity. Prior to the commencement of the research, ethical clearance was gained from the university's Faculty of Education ethics committee (Appendix D).

Following this the participants were contacted to arrange a place and time for the interviews and also given information regarding the purpose of the research and what their involvement would be. This was also discussed again immediately before the interviews took place. As a record of their agreement, the participants signed a consent form (Appendix C) and were given a letter to keep, which contained an outline of the research and my contact details (Appendix B).

Any participant involvement in a research project requires an element of trust on their part and this must be reciprocated by the researcher, who should not attempt to manipulate or exploit them. The trust displayed by the participants is part of what Costley et al. refer to as 'an ethic of care' (2010: 57) that the insider-researcher has towards their participants. This trust was evident in the personal experiences and opinions that the participants shared with me and also when they were asked if they wanted to read an interview transcript, as most of them replied, 'there's no need, I trust you'.

Confidentiality

The maintenance of confidentiality for the participants and the safe storage of the information gleaned from the interviews was achieved by storing the data in password protected files that only I had access to. Tolich (2004: 101) describes confidentiality in insider research as:

> being like an iceberg, with the tip above the water relating to 'traditional' confidentiality … ensuring that the participant remains anonymous [but] below the surface lies internal confidentiality – the risk that people involved in the research may be able to recognize each other

Whilst my adherence to maintaining confidentiality was assured, the participants' could not be, as they may have broken their own confidentiality by discussing with other participants what had been said in the interviews. Before, during and after the interviews, I took care not to mention the names of any of the participants or what had been discussed in their interviews. Some participants were aware of the identity of some of the other participants as they mentioned them by name. If this occurred, I did not confirm it and assured them that I did not discuss any of the interviews with anyone else. To reinforce the colleague/researcher boundary and also due to security restrictions, the interviews were not conducted in the workplace.

Anonymity

Since the introduction of the Data Protection Act (1998), the consideration of anonymity is not just an ethical concern; it can also have legal implications. 'The confidential and anonymous treatment of participants' data is considered the norm for the conduct of research' (BERA, 2011: 7) and to this end, the anonymity of the participants has to be assured. This is generally achieved by allocating the participants a number 1, 2, 3 etc. or through the use of pseudonyms. In this research I asked the participants if I could use their forenames to identify quotes in the final thesis and all but one agreed. However, due to the nature of the information that had been disclosed in the interviews, the decision was taken to change the names, as it may have been possible to identify individuals from the details in the quotes. The participants were informed of this change and none of them objected. As well as anonymity for the participants, consideration also has to

be given to the anonymity of the work location. According to Trowler institutional anonymity is problematic for insider-researchers and he suggests, 'it is normally best to assume that the reader will be able to identify your institution, should they wish to' (2011: 3). In order to address this issue, the specific location has not been identified and any reference to it or any of its employees has been removed from the interview transcripts.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined how the research was designed and carried out in order to capture the perceptions of the two key stakeholder groups on the impact of tame and wicked approaches to prison education. The chapter began by stating the philosophical basis of the research and the justification for adopting a qualitative approach; it then detailed how the participants were selected and how the interviews were conducted. It concluded with a consideration of my position as an insider-researcher and the ethical aspects of the research. The next chapter will present the findings of the research in the responses of the first stakeholder group, the educators, in order to address research sub-question five: **'what is the nature and views of the two key stakeholder groups?'** and research sub-question six: **'how are the criteria of wicked issues expressed, explicitly and implicitly, through the perceptions of the two key stakeholder groups?'**

Chapter Five

Introduction

The previous chapter detailed how the research was designed and carried out in order to capture the perceptions of the two key stakeholder groups, prison educators and their managers, on the impact of tame and wicked approaches to prison education. In providing an outline of the present state of prison education and its place within the complex organisation of the Criminal Justice System (CJS), Chapter Two addressed research sub-question one: **'what are the major characteristics of current prison education in England and Wales?'** It also considered the mental models that the various agents and stakeholders have and how these influence their views of prisons and prison education, it concluded by examining the current issues in prison education as viewed by a range of different stakeholders. Chapter Three sought to explain the complexity of the CJS in terms of wickedity and wicked problems, which addressed research sub-question two: **'what are tame and wicked issues?'** The chapter then provided a review of the application of the 'wicked problem' concept to issues in academia, health and society as well as its use by the media, before addressing research sub-question three: **'what are the criteria that characterise wicked issues?'** and research sub-question four: **'can these criteria be applied to prison education?'** Chapter Three concluded that prison education could be defined as a wicked problem and from this conclusion a series of questions was developed to elicit the perceptions of prison educators and their managers on how they viewed tame and wicked approaches to prison education. This chapter presents the responses of the first

stakeholder group, the educators, in order to address research sub-question five: **'what is the nature and views of the two key stakeholders groups?'** and research sub-question six: **'how are the criteria of wicked issues expressed, explicitly and implicitly, through the perceptions of the two key stakeholder groups?'**

Educators' responses to interview question one

The first question asked, **'as a prison educator what do you think are the key issues in prison education?'** This elicited a wide variety of responses, which were grouped under five headings based on the perceived origins of those issues. To aid comparison with the views of other stakeholders, the first four headings were those used in Table 2.2 which were:

- Issues that arise from the prison regime and environment

- Issues that arise from attitudes and behaviours

- Issues that arise from the curriculum and teaching

- Issues focusing specifically on prison educators

From the issues identified by the participants it was necessary to add a fifth heading:

- Issues that arise from policies and funding

A number of issues were identified in direct response to question one, but as the interviews progressed further issues were also identified and these are included in the analysis.

Issues that arise from the prison regime and environment

One issue, that all the educators expressed strong views about, was that the prisoners had no choice of whether to attend education classes or not. When convicted prisoners first enter the prison system they have an induction period during which they undertake an initial assessment of their literacy and numeracy levels and they are interviewed in order to identify which activities they will undertake as part of their rehabilitation 'pathway'. The activity they attend is determined by the results of their assessment; all prisoners undertake this assessment, whether they are new to the system or are returning to it. Unless they can provide evidence of having qualifications above Level 2, prisoners are allocated to an education class. However, some prisoners do not want to attend and prison educators then had to deal with the impact of this, as Chris stated:

> the problem with prison education is that the students are forced to do I.T., they don't want to do it so it's trying to actually get them to learn ... the only reason they are doing it is so they can either be a wing cleaner or sit in their pads all day, so we're actually forcing them to do it

This element of coercion also had consequences should the prisoners fail to comply, as Bridget had found that:

> forcing people into education ... doesn't work, because then ... if they refuse to work we have to nick 'em ... because they don't want to do something they're not interested in

To 'nick' a prisoner means to give them a formal reprimand, which has to be documented and entered on the prisoner's file. The prisoner is then called before a governor to explain their non-compliance and the educator has to attend to explain why the reprimand has been issued. Although the prisoner may receive a

punishment in the form of withdrawal of privileges, they will still have to attend

education classes. In that sense, education was seen as being part of the

punishment for refusing to work in education. As Thom said:

> education is used as a punishment ... you **must** go to education, you **must** do this, you **must** do that, otherwise your privileges will be taken away (Thom's emphasis)

The policy of sending prisoners to education who do not want to be there, also led

to conflict in the classroom. Anna felt that some prisoners were unsuitable to be in

the classroom, but were sent because of pressure from the prison and the

education contract providers, to fulfil their Key Performance Targets (KPTs) by

ensuring that all the classes were full, which meant that she was left to deal with

the consequences:

> sometimes I felt I was keeping people in the classroom that really, really didn't want to be there ... it's fighting a daily battle ... there were people that were totally unsuitable to be in a classroom but they were still pushed in there ... it's like a sort of a triangle, X College want you to do one thing, the prison want you to do another ... so you are sort of in-between, plus the college want you to have numbers and you are the one that has to deal with them whether these people are violent or shouldn't be there, it's good for everybody else

The general consensus between the educators was that, for the prison system, the

role of the education department was a 'dumping ground' and its only purpose was,

'to keep them [prisoners] occupied and get them off the wing' (Hannah).

As well as the prisoners who did not want to attend education, there was another

group who were not seen as being suitable to attend education classes, these were

the prisoners who were elderly or had a physical or mental disability that the

educators felt they were not trained to deal with. An example given by Jane was of

a 66 year old pensioner who was sent to her class, another example came from

Bridget who was sent a prisoner his late 60s who had Alzheimer's.

The notion that the regime was restrictive to prisoners as well as educators,

highlighted the conflict between the different philosophies of education and the

prison regime, which some educators believed led to a loss of humanity for the

prisoners. This was of particular importance to Bridget who believed that the

system:

> doesn't treat them as adults, silly little things like they're not allowed a cup of tea at
> break time ... it's only in education that they can't ... if they need to go the toilet they
> need to pick up this pass, like they're a child

The idea that prisoners should be treated in a particular way will be discussed

further in the next section, which focuses on issues that arise from attitudes and

behaviours.

One issue that concerned some educators was the lack of support for prisoners

once they had been released. Hannah's view was that 'there's no follow-up for

them ... they're just pushed out of the gate and left to their own devices'. Anna

thought that the whole idea of education:

> was to stop reoffending ... but I think there are gaps there, once you've done your job,
> once they were outside there's no-one there to pick them up again to actually work on
> what they've learned

Other educators also felt that the needs of the prisoners were seen to be secondary

to the needs of the system and that there was no consideration of those prisoners

with specific needs, such as the elderly, the disabled and foreign national prisoners, who do not have English as their first language. For example, Bridget described how security protocols had prevented her from being able to work with two prisoners who were hearing impaired and used sign language to communicate. She requested to do a training course to learn sign language, so that she could communicate with them, but the request was refused, 'because it would be a secret language ... and nobody would know what I was saying to them'. Thom identified similar security issues when working with foreign national prisoners:

> the provision for the foreign nationals is considered to be less important than the provision for the mainstream [prisoners] ... they arrive in the classroom, don't speak the language, don't know the laws ... no visits from family and friends and they're not allowed to speak their own language, they have to use English

In the educator's experience the impact of the 'tame' one-size-fits-all approach to prison education that used coercion to ensure that targets were met, was having to work in a regime that was typified by 'wicked' contradictions and conflicts. One example of this was the frustration that Bridget experienced when she was not allowed to acquire the skills she felt she needed, in order to be able to teach hearing impaired prisoners.

Issues that arise from attitudes and behaviours

Along with the difficulties experienced in dealing with the prison regime and environment, the educators also had issues that arose from particular attitudes and behaviours. The main issues were the lack of support from prison staff at all levels and the negative attitudes displayed towards education by a significant number of officers and governors. The educators gave examples of officers, whose role it is to

enforce discipline, who had failed to assist the educators when they had problems with the prisoners' behaviour. This lack of support was seen by the educators as an expression of the negative attitude displayed by a large percentage of the prison officers and governors, which added to the difficulties the educators experienced. Chris saw the issue as:

> not getting the right support from ... the prison officers, you shout for a prison officer and they don't always come and give you any help ... you don't get any support with discipline ... especially [from] the governors ... it makes it all very difficult to try and discipline the students in the class

This lack of support left some educators feeling vulnerable to verbal and physical attacks, as Hannah had found when she asked an officer for assistance:

> I called the officer into the classroom the other day, I wanted help and the officer just stood there and said, 'what do you expect me to do?' and then went back and sat on the table

Some educators also believed there was a lack of support from their employers and some of their managers. It was thought by Chris that the managers were out of touch with the issues that affected the educators because, 'once they get to management, they're not on the front line anymore so they just take a step back'. Liz agreed that, 'management have lost what it's like to be on that front line'. However, this was not always seen to be the fault of the managers, but the people who put them there; for example, Rita believed that the blame lay at a higher level and that:

> they got people in those posts that weren't proper managers, they weren't trained as education managers, as far as I know, X came back from lunch one day and suddenly there she was, a manager

Bridget's explanation for the negative attitude and perceived lack of support was that:

> some officers see education as namby-pamby and they [prisoners] should be just locked up behind their door and I don't particularly think the governor has got a clue, his only interest is getting his tick in his box, that's what I think his main priority is, let's get this tick in this box and we [the prison] look good

Some educators thought that the officers' negative attitude towards education also extended to the prisoners, as evidenced by the type of language that some officers used when talking to them. One such incident was related by Jane, who was shocked by the attitude of an officer at a wing meeting:

> he was effing this and effing that, so I pushed him in the back and I thought 'why are you speaking like that? ... you are the people that are supposed to be setting an example' ... afterwards I said to him 'that was **shocking**' ... twice he said the c.u.n.t. word, he went 'that's all they understand', even the guys [prisoners] thought it was a shocking way to speak to anyone (Jane's emphasis)

Liz also commented on the officers' use of bad language when talking to prisoners:

> the language that's used towards them, there's a lot of effing and blinding going on, I think that is quite harmful

Some participants felt that the lack of respect for prisoners also affected the educators, they felt that there was a lack of recognition and respect for the educators, not just from the prisoners and prison staff, but also from the educators' managers and employers. Bridget's impression of her employer's attitude was that:

> there is no recognition of what we are doing and how hard we are working ... somebody from high up in X college came and said 'well guys, you've made us 1.2 million this year' ... but what do we get, no pay rise, no bonus and we're looking at redundancies ... what's the point to all that hard work then?

One conclusion drawn was that the attitudes of some of the prison staff and

governors made it very clear to the educators that they were not welcome in the

prison. Bridget felt, 'totally excluded ... it's very much us and them'. This affected

the relationship between the education department and the uniformed staff, who

had different views on the purpose of prison education. The educators felt that the

role of prison education, from the prison's point of view, was to get prisoners off

the wings, tick the governor's boxes and fulfil KPTs and from the prisoners' point of

view, it was to get the qualifications to be a wing cleaner so they didn't have to do

education. Educators had different views on the purpose of prison education, for

Bridget: 'it's about equality not punishment ... growth, development' and for Thom

education should be:

> used to support the offenders irrespective of what backgrounds they come from ... it's to
> give them the skills and the confidence ... to give them a better life on their release

The different attitudes and the 'them and us' situation are summed up by Liz:

> I think we come up against prison versus education, most of the teachers would like to be
> far more humanistic but the officers often just see them as a prisoner ... they're [prison and
> education] fighting against each other instead of working with each other

a sentiment echoed by Jane:

> their [the prison's] purpose is punishment, ours is about educating that person so they can
> make different choices, have different options ... maybe my naivety thinks it should be
> about the learners

The different views expressed by the educators and their understanding of the

views expressed by other stakeholders, illustrates Plsek and Greenhalgh's (2001)

second concept of complex adaptive systems (CAS) discussed in Chapter Two. This proposes that agents and stakeholders develop different mental models of the system, which correspond to their position in that environment and these may be neither shared nor fixed. In the examples given by the educators, the different mental models were expressed through the perceived attitudes of the prison officers, governors, education managers and educators towards others and their role within the system.

Behaviour management and the impact it had on the prisoners and educators was identified as an issue and particularly the prisoners' increasing use of New Psychoactive Substances (NPS). These are synthetic cannabinoids, so-called 'legal highs', known as Spice or Black Mamba, and have been linked to a surge in violent behaviour in prisons (POA, 2016). It was an issue for Hannah who said:

> the amount of Spice, that's rife … some, well maybe a majority, have mental health issues … and some of them shouldn't actually be in a prison environment … they should be in a mental health institute that can support them and help them better than we can because we're not trained that way

Chris had also experienced this issue as she had found that:

> drug use is a big thing, especially Spice, there are a lot of guys come in with it, who've been taking Spice on the wings

As had Bridget, who was concerned that she was unable to help the prisoners as:

> what we've got at the moment in prison is Spice and a hell of a lot of it … you don't normally get people turn up off their heads on drugs outside of prison … we've had no training to deal with that … when that guy is vomiting all over the floor or peeing himself, we don't know what to do **for him** … or the rest of the learners that are watching him … it's way out of our remit (Bridget's emphasis)

One of the main problems for the prison service is that there is no urine or blood test that can detect the use of NPS (POA, 2016) and their use has a number of side effects including, 'convulsions, paralysis, psychosis, extreme bizarre behaviour, tachycardia and increased aggression' (Abdulrahim and Bowden-Jones, 2015: 318).

Mike had a different perspective on the issues that arose from attitudes and behaviours. He believed that the attitude of some of the educators was questionable and rather than challenging the behaviour of the prisoners, some of them 'tended to please and appease them so that they didn't play up'. Mike also felt that 'some of the teachers like the power of giving warnings' and some used it too much. He believed this was because 'teachers are conditioned ... they become part of the system'. Bridget also commented on the fact that some educators exploited the power that they had as there were some who were:

> constantly nicking [a formal reprimand dealt with by a governor], constantly striking [a report of bad behaviour entered on a prisoners' record] ... some teachers don't try and negotiate or try and explain ... some teachers don't have any respect at all for the guys ... sometimes teachers will come into the staffroom and talk about who they are going to strike that afternoon ... it's already in their head ... what's all that about? It's power

Many of the educators' comments implied that prison officers and governors saw the prison as a tame system with a clearly defined purpose, punishment, and where the purpose of education was to 'get the prisoners out of their cells' (Anna). However, some of the educators also had a relatively tame approach to prison education, as they were very clear in what they believed was its purpose. For Bridget, 'prison education is about equality', for Thom it is 'to give them skills' and for Jane it was to educate the prisoners 'so they can make different choices'. This lack of agreement on the purpose of prison education would indicate that it is a

wicked, rather than tame issue, even if not all the educators recognise this all of the time.

Issues that arise from the curriculum and teaching

All of the educators identified issues with the content and delivery of the prison education curriculum. These included the limited number of subjects available and the amount of time that was allocated within the education contract for each course to be completed, known as guided learning hours (GLH). The number of guided learning hours for each course is set by the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) and is dependent on the level and complexity of the course. For a Level 1 I.T. course consisting of three modules, the expectation is that these will be completed in 60 guided learning hours spread over three weeks, this includes the time needed to sit and pass the exams. When a student is enrolled on a course, the education provider receives 80% of the funding cost for that course, with the remaining 20% being paid only when the student completes the course.

The overall consensus was that the focus was on quantity and numbers of successful course completions, rather than the quality of the prisoners' learning experience. The emphasis on quantity was evidenced by the prison strategy of filling all of the classrooms to their maximum capacity, a process that entailed 'rounding-up' unoccupied prisoners on the wings and sending them down to the education department. This approach aimed to achieve the maximum number of students completing the maximum number of courses within the guided learning hours. For Chris the issue of quantity over quality was exacerbated by the governor who:

is just throwing anybody in education without even talking to them ... we've got no idea why they're here ... we've got no paperwork to go with that inmate ... a lot of the problem is it's bums on seats, it's all about money ... they just need to get them off the wing and they're not bothered what we're doing with them as long as they haven't the responsibility of looking after them

The phrase 'bums on seats' was also used by Bridget and Jane, to describe the prison's approach to education. All of the prison educators believed that the focus on quantity rather than quality in teaching was indicative of the target-setting, value-for-money business approach to prison education. Chris believed that the guided learning hours were unrealistic and put pressure on the prisoners and the educators as:

the guys have 60 guided learning hours ... they've got to complete three exams ... if they fail they're off the course so there's no chance for them to re-sit

The focus on quantity was perceived to impact on the quality of the teaching, as the purpose of education was to serve the prison and the contract provider, rather than the students, as Thom stated:

educators on my level are feeling they are in this production line sausage factory environment ... churning things out and the quality of the provision is being reduced as a result

Mike also likened prison education to a production line:

there's no way with the time at Level 1 to get the information ... they're rushed through ... the reality is ... it's a case of getting people in, getting them through exams ... it's always about the goal of X college

Another issue with the curriculum was the narrow range of subjects being taught; i.e. literacy, numeracy and I.T., that aimed to enable prisoners to gain employment

on their release. The narrowness of the curriculum was seen as being detrimental to the prisoners, Rita believed that:

> if you're only focusing on basic skills are you really training them for anything else ... I don't think they are getting anything like they need to survive in the big, wide world ... and the proof of that is that the prison population has gone up ... the curriculum is poor

Six of the educators specifically commented on the curriculum, identifying that there were 'no progression routes for students beyond Level 1' (Chris, Hannah, Liz, Jane), 'no social sciences or arts' (Rita) and that the courses had been 'diluted down to maths, English and I.T.' (Anna).

Liz raised the issue of the length of the teaching sessions, which she thought were too long at three and a half hours without a break. She also commented on the amount of paperwork that had to be completed, particularly the amount of time it took as:

> when you've done the paperwork you have to photocopy the paperwork and keep it in your classroom to prove you've done it

Other educators also commented on the amount of paperwork they had to complete, including prison specific documentation such as ACCTs (Assessment, Care in Custody & Teamwork), ROLCs (Register of Learning Concern) and strike forms. Bridget felt that the amount of paperwork and the time it took to complete diverted her away from teaching, she summed it up as:

> they want an all-dancing, all-singing lesson with starter activities, plenaries, power points, role plays ... and in between that do your reviews on your individual learning plans, set targets ... fill in your ROLCs, don't forget your register, your weekly support forms, enrolments and completions and your marking

The lack of resources, or resources which were out of date, was also an issue. Those listed by the educators included computers that used floppy disks and Microsoft Office 2003 software, lack of funds to buy resources for projects, broken furniture, tatty and out of date books and limited access to the internet. Prison security limits the educators' access to the internet and, in this specific prison location, prisoners have no access at all. Liz believed the reason for the paucity of resources was the education contract provider's 'lack of financial investment' in prison education.

The Skills Funding Agency (SFA) perceive prison education as a tame issue through their use of a one-size-fits-all approach to funding, which applies the same criteria to all further education (FE) provision. This over-simplified view of prison education does not take account of the context within which the teaching takes place and the impact that this has on the educators and the prisoners. For example, the number of guided learning hours that are allocated to each course is based on the assumption that all of the necessary learning will take place within that allocation to enable the prisoner to pass the end of course exam. This focus on all prisoners completing a course in a fixed amount of time in order to pass an exam affected their learning experience and, in Thom's view, it resulted in prison education being run like a 'sausage factory production line'.

Issues focusing specifically on prison educators

The first issue identified was the lack of job specific training, Rita said that when she started to teach in the prison there was no training or induction and she was 'just thrown in at the deep end, you sink or swim'. Not only was there no specific

training to prepare the educators to teach in prison, but they were also expected to

deliver subjects that they were not qualified to teach. For Jane this amounted to

'babysitting', as her impression was that the education managers thought that

'anybody can cover any subject', which she believed devalued education. The lack

of subject specific qualifications was highlighted by Mike, who felt that, in his

experience, many prison educators' qualification levels did not match those of

teachers in mainstream education and that some of them who had been teaching in

prison for a long time were 'not that bright'. He also felt that some of the educators

were insecure about their knowledge levels and this insecurity manifested itself in

their attempts to undermine new staff.

Only one educator, Hannah, thought that there was an issue with the lack of parity

with educators in the mainstream FE sector and that people who taught in prison

were treated less fairly than those who worked for the same employer in the

mainstream college as:

> the college are supposed to be non-profit making ... but they're making a hell of a lot
> money out of us ... half the time we haven't got the resources we need ... we're not on the
> same pay level as people that are working in colleges and yet we are more vulnerable to
> being attacked ... verbally as well as physically

Different comparisons between mainstream and prison education were made by

Rita and Mike. Rita commented on the 'ineffective management' which was 'not a

patch on those in secondary schools'. Mike thought that teaching in prison was 'the

easiest teaching I've ever done' as, in his experience, there were low expectations,

not just of the prisoners, but also of the staff. These low expectations meant that

some staff had become 'cosy' and 'institutionalised' so that they just used

'handouts that had been used for years and years' rather than engaging with the students. Mike found this quite different to his experience of teaching in schools.

There is also here an interesting contrast between Hannah's perception that teaching in prison education was more difficult than in mainstream education and Mike's view that teaching in prison was, 'the easiest teaching' he had ever done. These different perceptions of the same system are the result of each educator viewing the problem based on their own mental models, which can be influenced by their gender, length of service, the type of contract they are employed under as well as their teaching experience and qualifications. In this category there were also issues that were thought to be unique to prison education, such as the use of coercion to ensure prisoners attend education classes, the behavioural issues linked to drug use, the challenging environment, the narrow curriculum and prison specific paperwork.

Issues that arise from policy and funding

The fifth set of issues raised by the educators were those issues that arose from policy and funding. As stated in Chapter Two, prison educators are subject to three sets of policies, further education (FE), prison education and penal policy, which shape prison education provision and for Mike it was 'government policy that creates the issues'. Anna felt the way that policies were implemented led to 'continuous changes, that happen on a daily basis' and that this was the consequence of privatisation and 'education being run as a business'. She believed that the issues were related to the contracting out process and that 'as soon as it went private ... [it became] a business that has to be seen to be performing' which

meant that 'the college is interested in making money, not in learners'. All of the educators gave examples of what they believed were the outcomes of treating prison education as a business. Thom and Jane felt the focus on money devalued the quality of the teaching provision and for Anna and Chris the value-for-money approach to prison education was a source of stress for educators. Liz, Thom, Bridget, Rita, Mike and Hannah all believed that there was too much focus on paperwork and targets and not enough on supporting and developing the prisoners as learners. Finally Anna was concerned that the education providers were attempting to distance themselves financially from prison education by establishing an independently run prison education sector and that this would lead to further cutbacks in resources and staff.

The educators are working in a system that is founded on a tame approach to prison education, which assumes that what can be achieved in one context, FE colleges, can be achieved in others, such as prisons. By applying the same policies to prison education as to all of FE, the politicians and policy makers are attempting to solve wicked problems as if they are tame ones. Examples from educators on the impact of this approach, indicate that it causes more problems than it solves by devaluing the quality of teaching provision and focusing on targets, rather than developing the prisoners as learners.

Educators responses to interview questions two to ten

The educators' responses to question one expressed their personal views on how the issues affected and were affected by, not just themselves, but other stakeholders including the prisoners, prison officers, education managers,

governors and the general public. Having identified what prison educators thought were the key issues in prison education, question two asked: **'do you think that other people would agree with your views on what these issues are?'**

Some educators gave the immediate answer 'no definitely not', all of them acknowledged the wicked nature of prison education by proposing that that there would be no agreement on the issues and by giving examples of those who wouldn't agree and why. The educators thought the key stakeholders who would disagree with their views were the general public, prison officers, governors and education managers. The reason given for the disagreement was that different people would identify different issues, depending upon their view of the purposes of prison, as Rita stated there would be: 'lots of different views based on individual philosophies and politics'. This was echoed by Jane's response of 'different views from different perspectives' and what Mike identified as 'different agendas'.

Prison officers were seen to be hostile towards prison education, governors were thought to be out of touch and disinterested and education managers at local, regional and national level, were seen to be out of touch with the reality of teaching 'at the coal face'(Liz). Both Mike and Chris observed that even those managers who had once been educators themselves, 'forget what it's like in the classroom'. Liz commented on the view of the general public who she believed, 'just want them [offenders] locked away'.

Having stated that there was no agreement six of the educators then qualified their answers by adding that there was some agreement on the issues and proposed that 'yes, amongst most of my colleagues' (Anna), 'people who are the same level ...

colleagues have said the same things' (Thom), and that 'a percentage of people would agree, tutors who have the same issues' (Hannah). Chris and Mike also proposed that their colleagues would agree with them on what the issues were, although Mike thought that there might be some disagreement between his male and female colleagues. Interestingly, Liz thought that agreement on the issues extended to government and policy makers and gave the example of a new prison officer training scheme that a former colleague of hers was involved with:

> she is going to work on a national basis working with prison officers and their behaviour to young offenders ... it's quite a national thing that's going on ... so the officer becomes a motivator and is there as a figurehead not as somebody who locks you away every night

As with the responses to question one there were a range of opinions expressed, again with some areas of agreement.

Having established what the key issues were for the educators and whether they thought that there was any agreement on these, question three asked**: 'do you think it is possible to identify one clear solution to these issues?'**

None of the educators thought it was possible to have one clear solution to the issues that they had identified, although Thom thought there was a possibility 'to have some kind of model, but I don't think it's ever going to be clear cut'. The complexity of the system was a factor cited by Rita in that, 'prison education is just one small cog in a larger system, managing it and being in it is complicated' and Mike proposed that:

> there's lots of aspects that impact on offender learning, there's loads of them [solutions], but there wouldn't be just one, it's too complex

Other reasons why there was no one solution to the issues, were given by Liz who believed it was:

> because the sentencing system is so unequal, the prison looks at it based on the prison's needs, the focus is on the system rather than the prisoners, but prisoners have got different needs, it's all money driven and target driven

The idea that individual views and attitudes determined the solution were also identified by Jane:

> because one cap doesn't fit all I don't think there's one solution, there might be many different solutions, different mindsets, different boundaries, agendas, morals, moral codes, expectations, there's not one answer that says 'this will work'

and for Anna:

> there isn't just one solution but a range of solutions, you can't just do one thing and that's going to solve all our problems, because we are all different

Although Hannah agreed that 'there will never be one clear solution to solve all the issues no matter what you do', she thought that some of the issues could be addressed, but that it would need attitudes to change.

There are wicked elements in these responses, as the educators all agreed that it was not possible to have one clear solution to the issues they had identified, due to the complexity of the system and the different views of the people within it. Having all agreed that it was not possible to have a single specific solution to the issues they had identified, the educators were then asked: **'how do you think they could be successfully addressed?'**

A number of ways to address the issues were offered by the educators, but before any issues could be addressed Anna thought the first step was 'for everybody to get together and decide what we actually want', in other words, what is the purpose of prison education and how can we best achieve it? Anna was proposing that what was needed was a shared understanding of the issues, which may then lead to an agreement on how they should be tackled. However, there is no guarantee that this could be achieved and, as there was was no wholehearted agreement from all of the educators on what the issues were or how to successfully address them, this further illustrates the wicked nature of prison education.

Having stated what she believed the issues were, Anna proposed that they could be successfully addressed with a more flexible prison education system that would help to change the prisoners' mindsets. However, what the prisoners also needed was to have a post-release support system that would help them to deal with issues such as housing and employment. She suggested that it would be worth looking at prisons in Europe, to 'see what they've got, what are they doing that is different to what we're doing'.

Rita believed that the first step should be 'to talk to the people who are actually in the prisons', but also that there was a need 'to educate the general public about prison education'. Liz proposed that 'the management should listen to us and the students', to identify what the issues were and how they could be addressed. She also suggested that what was needed was a 'proper strategic plan and not knee-jerk reactions' to the issues.

Hannah agreed with Anna, as she also thought it was important that once the prisoners had been released, 'they know they have the support system when they walk out of the gates [and] that they've got the possibility of a job'. She also thought that the issues she had raised could be successfully addressed, if 'the inmates see education as a reward and not as a punishment', although this would entail a change of attitude, not just from the prisoners, but from the officers too.

For Thom what was needed was a 'fundamental change in philosophy, because education is about people not business'. Like Hannah, he also believed that education should not be used as a punishment, that there should be a flexible and diverse range of learning opportunities and the content and delivery of these should be determined by the educators. Thom also thought that the way to solve the issues faced by the educators, would be for the education providers, managers and governors to 'be in touch with what is really going on'.

Bridget believed that the solution would require a fundamental change in the system, which could be achieved through better information sharing and communication from the top down. This would help to break down the barriers between the education department and the prison and make the education department an integral part of the prison, which focused on 'rehabilitation not punishment'. She also believed that focusing on rehabilitation would need a change of attitude towards the prisoners, so that they were treated as 'human beings and not as commodities to make money from'.

For Jane, any solution needed to take into account 'different needs and different aspirations', so that every prisoner would receive the help and support they

needed, particularly those with mental health issues. Jane also thought that having more learning opportunities, rather than 'just a curriculum that's geared for government funding ... aimed predominantly at achievements', would be of benefit to the prisoners and the educators.

Chris thought that there was only one possible answer to the issues she had identified and this was to 'bring things on line that the gentlemen actually want to do ... bring back art and more therapeutic courses they're actually going to enjoy'. Having said there was only one answer, she also thought that there should be 'more workshops where it's hands-on' and that English and maths should be taught 'alongside something they actually want to do'. She went on further to suggest that the Governing Governor needed to get rid of those officers who did not support education and any prisoner that was caught using Spice should be given extra time on their sentence.

In order to successfully address the issues they had identified all of the educators suggested that changes needed to be made to some aspect of the present system. These included changes to the content and delivery of the curriculum, which needed 'courses that allow inmates to reflect on their situation, for example, social sciences' (Rita), 'more workshops with a proper working day' (Hannah) and more 'art and therapeutic courses' (Chris). Better communication and information sharing by managers and governors was also suggested 'because they [the prison] don't know what we're [education] about and we don't know what they're about' (Bridget), that way prison officers may come to 'realise how difficult our job is' (Liz). It was further proposed that 'some of the prison officers' attitudes towards inmates

need to change' (Hannah) alongside the need to 'change the prisoners' mind-set' (Anna). There were also suggestions that 'we need a fundamental change in philosophy, [because] education is about people not business' (Thom) and whether the purpose of imprisonment was 'breaking rocks or turning them [prisoners] into thinking human beings' (Rita).

Although Mike agreed with Chris that changes should be made to the curriculum to ensure that courses were relevant to what the prisoners wanted to achieve, he was the only one who thought that it was the attitudes and the attributes of educators that were the key to successfully addressing the issues he had identified. Mike believed that:

> at the end of the day, teachers need to be more knowledgeable ... it doesn't matter what background you are from, whether you're an offender or whether you're at school, if you understand the teachers that are in front of you, the ones that have got the knowledge, you respect them ... and it empowers you to learn

All of the educators proposed ways of addressing the issues they had identified but, as with the responses to question one, there was limited agreement as to what these would be. There was also a direct link between the issues each educator had identified and their proposed solutions. For example, Chris proposed that the solution to the issue of prisoners being 'forced' to attend education could be addressed by providing 'courses that the men actually want'. Anna and Hannah's concern at the lack of support for prisoners once they had been released, could be addressed by 'having somebody on the outside as soon as they get out ... keeping an eye on them' (Anna). The solution to the issue of quantity not quality, in prison education was 'more autonomy for staff and more flexibility in the content and

delivery of courses' (Thom) and 'not just a curriculum that's geared for government funding [and] … aimed predominantly at achievements' (Jane).

Having given their own views on how they believed the issues could be addressed the educators were then asked: **'do you think it would ever be possible to have a prison education system which has resolved all of the issues you have identified?'**

There were educators such as Hannah, Jane, Thom, Rita and Mike, who believed that it was not possible to resolve all of the issues they have identified. Mike's view of the system confirmed this, as his belief was that:

> like any environment, there'll always be issues, government policy creates a lot of issues, there needs to be an understanding of the bigger picture, not just a tick in a box, the bigger picture needs explaining

Whereas Chris, Bridget, Liz and Anna believed the system was relatively tame and were more optimistic that the issues could be resolved, although it was acknowledged that there were wicked elements that meant it would not be simple process. For example, Bridget proposed it could only be possible:

> if we could all sing from the same hymn sheet, if we all worked together and everybody had the same mindset, if we had a joined up system where everybody had the same view and aim where rehabilitation is the focus

A point also made by Anna, who believed that eventually it would be possible to have a system that addressed the issues, but that it would take everybody working together to help the prisoners. The wicked nature of the issues was reinforced by Rita, who thought that:

> education is not the only aspect to consider, there would need to be lots of changes made to the present system, it desperately needs overhauling … it needs to be thought through

Liz thought that it would be quite easy to make the changes by removing the 'layers of bureaucracy' and having a 'massive change of management', in order to get rid of the complacency and corruption that she believed existed in the present system. She also proposed that the biggest barrier to change was at the senior management level as, 'they've got the power and they don't want to lose it'. The difficulties of changing the system were also acknowledged by Thom, as he believed that any changes would lead to further issues arising, he expressed the wickedity of this situation in his view that:

> I don't think there's ever going to be an ideal model, as we develop and grow something's always going to come up that we have to address

All of the educators agreed that changes would have to be made, but not what those changes would be and for relatively wicked thinkers like Thom, whatever solution was devised, there would never be a point in time when all of the issues in prison education would be resolved.

Having established whether or not the educators believed it was possible to have a prison system that addressed all of the issues they had identified, they were then asked: **'what kind of system would you need which could solve all of the issues you have identified?'**

For Rita the first thing the system would have to be was 'fit for purpose' and in order to achieve this the system needed well qualified teachers who were 'more professional'. Rita proposed that to teach in prisons:

> teachers have got to have academic professional qualifications ... they go in to their PGCE to come out as prison teachers and it's a specialism just like school education ... something you can actually opt to do

She believed that this professionalisation should also extend to the uniformed workforce, who should be educated to degree level. The system also needed to have 'more truly academic subjects, more challenging subjects that would develop better educated, thoughtful, more insightful inmates'. For Rita, the only way any of this could be achieved was to 'take education out of the hands of the education providers'. However, she also acknowledged that looking for a solution to the issues in prison education would be a process of trial and error as:

> all sorts of measures have to be thought about and you're not necessarily going to get it right the first time because ideals often fall into a difficult situation, sometimes they just don't work or maybe something else would work better

For Bridget the system would have to be one where:

> everybody has the same aim and the same views and where rehabilitation is the focus, where information is shared, people need to talk to each other and share skills, education needs to be seen as part of the system not excluded from it

Communication and commonality were also the key for Mike, who believed that what was needed was 'a system where everyone communicated' and where there was 'an agreed agenda and agreed goals'. Anna proposed that what was needed was:

> a more joined-up system where people don't fight against each other, working together with a common purpose, trying new ideas and being enthusiastic about them

Anna also thought involving the prisoners was important and the system needed to 'look at what the learners want', Jane agreed with this, as she believed that what was needed was a system that would 'treat the prisoners like individuals and treat

them with respect'. For Thom what was needed was:

> an education system that focuses on what it's actual primary goal should be, the learners ... not driven by targets, it would need more flexibility by not having to conform to directives that are not, in reality, practicable [and] stop paying lip-service to the things that are not important ... [a system where] people get together and really work through the challenges [through] open communication, get the people who make the decisions to realise what it's like on the ground, they need to see what it's like, they need to take responsibility and stop blaming the educators

Hannah thought that a system that provided a better prison environment for the prisoners would be of real benefit. One way to achieve this was to provide workshop facilities that gave the prisoners 'experience of what it is like to work in the outside world' and where maths and English were embedded in practical skills, such as carpentry and plumbing. Hannah also considered that some of the prison officers' attitudes towards prisoners need to change and, to improve the environment on the wings, she proposed that all prisoners should be housed in single cells.

Chris also identified changes that could be made to the present system, she suggested increased security, with more staff searches to prevent drugs being smuggled into the prison and more mandatory drug tests (MDT) for staff, as well as prisoners. She also thought that the education provision should be audited more frequently to ensure that teaching quality was in place all the time and not just when inspections were due.

The kinds of systems needed to solve the issues the educators had identified contained both tame and wicked elements. The tame elements were those solutions that could realistically be achieved and have outcomes that could be measured, for example, increased security, more audits and improvements to

workshop facilities. The wicked ideas were more abstract as they required a system where 'everyone has the same aim and the same views' (Bridget) and based on a common purpose with shared goals, information, skills and flexibility and where education was an integral part of the prison system.

The length of service of the educators ranged from 2½ years (Mike) to over 20 years (Hannah) with the average being 11 years 4 months. It was acknowledged by all of the educators that prison education had changed in the time they had been teaching, so question seven asked: **'in your experience do you think the changes that have been made to prison education have been the right ones?'**

The answers to this question were mixed, in that the educators identified that some of the changes they had experienced had been positive and had led to improvements in prison education, whereas others had not, with some changes that were initially seen as positive, ultimately having a negative impact. Improvements had been seen in the standard of teachers being employed as Hannah said, 'they used to take anybody on, because they had classes to cover', Liz agreed with this as she remembered that:

> we did have teachers who weren't qualified who would just sit in front of the class and nothing was taught, [we now have] better qualified teachers

Another change that had had a positive impact was the introduction of interactive white boards, which meant for Hannah that 'resources have improved, but the technology is still ten years, if not more, behind the outside'. Chris commented on the fact that a recent initiative to follow up on those prisoners who were absent from classes was a positive change and that the governor was now 'chasing up

those who don't attend'. One positive change Bridget had noticed was that when she had first started teaching in prison, 'there was no real structure or focus on passing qualifications', but that this had now improved.

The changes that were perceived to be the 'wrong' ones were the changes that had been made to the curriculum, which were seen to have had a negative impact. Mike cited the reduction in guided learning hours (GLH) and the number of classes and Anna felt that the changes to the types of course taught, had resulted in a poorer curriculum which was 'just maths, I.T. and English'. Hannah commented on the deterioration in the standard of behaviour of the prisoners which, coupled with the increase in drug use and the decrease in the number of experienced prison officers, had led to an increase in stress levels for the educators. Bridget believed that the more structured approach to education, which she had observed, had had positive outcomes. However, she also felt that the rigidity of the structure impacted in a negative way and was a source of stress, in that it had led to 'a massive increase in workload' so now 'too much is expected of the teachers in the sessions, we have to fit in too many things'. For Bridget, this was evidenced by less time for preparation, teaching and marking and the increasing amount of time spent completing administrative paperwork. Thom agreed that:

> all this paperwork is supposed to show that the learner is getting the best but actually it is to show that somebody is doing their job ... it is strangling the educators, as the emphasis is on **how** you do your teaching as opposed to actually teaching (Thom's emphasis)

The loss of autonomy for the educators was also highlighted by Rita and Liz. Jane was of the firm belief that 'changes are made for political reasons' and her view on the changes she had witnessed was that:

they make them up as they go along, it's just trial and error, education's changed every flipping year and everything's always a priority, apart from us

One change that was a cause of deep concern for Anna, was the recent move by her employers to establish an independently run prison education division. She believed that this was a strategic business decision, that would distance the main college from the 'troubled' prison education sector and absolve them from any responsibility. This change, along with all the other negative changes she had experienced, was the reason she had decided, after 14 years, to say 'this isn't for me anymore' and to leave prison education.

The solutions to tame problems are presented as facts that are objective, empirical, agreed on by all and not influenced by subjective feelings. However, wicked problems cannot be subjected to these four criteria, as any proposed solutions are subjectively evaluated based on their impact on stakeholders' interests. The educators' responses indicated that the tame policy approach, adopted in order to 'solve' the issues in prison education, had not provided solutions that could be evaluated objectively, as some changes were believed to be 'good', whereas others were believed to be 'bad'.

Having discussed the changes to prison education that the educators had experienced and whether they believed these changes were good or bad, they were then asked if comparisons could be made to other educational settings with the question: **'there are strategies that have been applied in mainstream education, for example … how successful do you think they could be in prison education?'**

The examples given to aid the comparison included the National Curriculum and assessment strategies such as exams; a further example given was the former government minister, Michael Gove's, suggestion that strategies used by the armed forces to teach basic literacy and numeracy skills, could be adopted by the prison service. Other examples were gleaned from strategies already mentioned by educators in relation to mainstream education, thereby picking up on points the educators had already made.

Thom agreed that some of the strategies from mainstream education could be applied to prison education, such as exams and coursework, but these would have to be adapted to fit in with the prison education contract, which runs for 52 weeks of the year. The prison regime and security protocols severely curtail what resources are permitted in a prison setting and also restrict conversations with and about prisoners as Rita said:

> you can't make the same assumptions with the inmates as you can with other people, there is a difference in what you can and can't talk about with people outside, there's no real security issue about going home and talking about work if you're in a school

Thom found that security also affected his relationship with his students as:

> conversation is limited in prison for security reasons so you can't develop a teacher-student relationship, you've got build a wall around you to protect yourself from the powers that be and the men, there's always that invisible barrier that you have to maintain to protect yourself

Other aspects of the prison regime were also cited as reasons why strategies applied in mainstream education would be difficult to apply in prison education. For example, students in mainstream adult settings were attending education because

they wanted to, whereas prisoners had no choice, as Bridget, Thom and Hannah said 'the prisoners are **forced** to be there' (their emphasis).

The use of drugs and alcohol and the impact it had on the behaviour of the prisoners, was cited by Chris and Bridget as an issue that they believed was not the norm in mainstream education, but was becoming increasingly so in prison. A further factor that mitigated against employing mainstream strategies in prison education, was the perceived negative attitude of the prisoners, not just towards education, but towards each other and the whole prison system. Furthermore, mainstream education did not experience churn, the movement of prisoners in, out and between prisons, which meant that prison educators were dealing with 'a transient clientele' (Jane) so that, 'one minute they're there and the next minute they're gone' (Chris).

The general impression was that these factors were unique to prison education and it was implied that teaching in prison was more difficult than in mainstream education, although this was not the view of all the educators. Some of the educators, who had taught in mainstream or compulsory education before teaching in prison, provided a different view. Liz and Mike both made comparisons with their experiences of teaching in mainstream education, Liz said she found it much easier to teach in prison than in a college and for Mike:

> offender learning is the easiest teaching I have ever done because of the lack of work and preparation you have to do, in secondary school you have to keep up with the knowledge of the curriculum ... teachers in prison wouldn't last 5 minutes in a school

Rita and Mike also believed that the standard of teaching was lower in prison than in mainstream education, Mike attributed this to some prison educators' lower levels of knowledge, Rita saw it as 'poor education of the educators'.

The examples given as to why it is not possible to transfer strategies from mainstream education into prison education highlighted what the educators believed were factors unique to prison education. It is these cultural and organisational factors, such as churn, coercion, security protocols and the prison regime, which demonstrate that prison education is a wicked problem. This is further complicated by the fact that there was no agreement within the group on whether these factors make teaching in prisons more, or less difficult, than teaching in mainstream education.

Having identified what the educators thought were the key issues in prison education, whether there was any agreement on the issues and how the educators thought they could be addressed, they were then asked: **'do you think that the issues are symptoms of a bigger problem?'**

The educators' responses to this question provide a classic example of a wicked problem, in that they all agreed that the issues that they had identified were symptoms of a bigger problem, but did not agree on what that problem was. Rita, Hannah, Thom and Anna believed that it was 'the prison system', that was the bigger problem and, particularly for Hannah and Anna, it was the way that prison education was run as a business that focused on profit. Rita and Thom thought the root issue in the system was politics and that the key purposes of prisons and

prison education were too heavily influenced by political agendas. For Thom it was the:

> people that put these systems in place ... the policies and procedures are made by people who have their own views and agendas, the politicians ... who make the decisions are out of touch with what's going on in reality, the overall problem is politicians, policies, how they are introduced and how the system is managed

For Chris, Bridget and Jane, the issues were symptoms of problems with and in society. Chris made the link between drug use and unemployment, as she believed that drugs, particularly the use of Spice, was a 'quick way to get high, to be happy, everything else snowballs from it'. Bridget and Jane both believed that society did not care about ex-prisoners and that it had let them down by failing to provide adequate support with issues such as housing, mental health and employment opportunities, that would help them reintegrate into society. Jane saw a clear division in society between 'them and us' and made the link between social inequality and the need for some people to commit crime in order to survive. Bridget's view on society was that 'we let them [prisoners] down, society is selfish, society is missing the human side, it's too materialistic'.

Mike and Liz also thought that the bigger problem was with society, but focused specifically on attitudes towards education. Liz believed that:

> nobody values education any more, they don't value anyone with intellect, it's about scrambling to the top and making money, respect has been taken away from teachers, they're undermined at every stage of what they do

Mike also believed that there was a problem with society's negative attitude towards education and that there were problems with the education system at all levels, which were getting worse. He was particularly concerned with the lack of

professionalism displayed by some prison educators; he spoke about 'teachers who can't be bothered to teach' and gave examples of prison educators who had been bullied and ridiculed by their colleagues and managers.

Having established what they believed the bigger problem was, the final question asked of the educators: **'who do you think is ultimately responsible for addressing the issues you have identified?'**

The immediate answer from seven of the nine educators was 'the government', Anna later mentioned the government's responsibility for funding prison education, but Thom did not mention the government at all. Hannah, Jane and Rita believed that the education and criminal justice ministers were also responsible, as they were the ones who made the policies that affected prisoners and prison educators. It was perceived by Bridget that, when dealing with the issues in prison education the government:

> don't seem to have a clue what's going on, they throw money without looking at the issues, a lot of politicians don't live in the real world, they don't understand

Liz and Jane agreed with Bridget that the government was out of touch with the issues in prison education and gave no thought to the impact of their policies. Also, they both believed that the prison education contract providers were making profits that were not being reinvested back into prison education and that the government should take more control in the way the funding was managed. Mike was very sure that the responsibility lay at the highest level of the system, the government, because he believed that in any hierarchy 'shit rolls down'. Whilst acknowledging that the government were responsible for funding prison education

and the impact that this had, Anna believed that the responsibility for the issues she had identified, should be addressed at the local level and that, 'it should start in the department with the management, [what] we need [is] some honesty'.

Thom was the only educator who did not identify the government, or any particular individual as being responsible for addressing the issues, as he believed that:

> it's everybody's responsibility, it starts with the individual, we have to create forums where things can be discussed, tried and implemented, it's everybody's responsibility to drive forward the way that change is made

How do the educators' views exemplify tame and wicked issues?

Tame issues are those issues which may appear complex, but ultimately can be solved, whereas wicked issues are those which, in a socially complex world, may well be judged to be unsolvable (Rittel and Webber, 1973). Further problems arise when there is a failure to understand the wicked nature of the issues and consequently apply rational systematic processes to solve them. The educators are working in a complex system, that appears to take a tame policy approach to the wicked problem of prison education and some of the issues they identify are a consequence of this approach. However, within the group, there is not always an agreement on what these issues are and how they should be dealt with. Therefore, it is not possible to make an agreed statement of what the problem is, as each educator has their own subjective definition and subsequently their own solution. There are both tame and wicked elements in the participants' responses, meaning that some solutions are tame, 'more security, more audits' (Chris) whilst others are based on the more wicked idea that 'everybody has the same aim and the same

views' (Bridget). The educators recognise the tame approaches adopted by policy makers and the prison system and, whether consciously or unconsciously, some of them replicate these in their views on prison education. It is fair to say that the educators recognise the complexities of the system within which they work and the issues that arise from this; however, there is limited agreement on what the issues are and whether they can be solved.

Having presented the educators' responses to the interview questions, the next chapter will present their managers' responses to the same ten questions.

Chapter Six

Introduction

Chapter Five presented the educators' responses to the ten interview questions and it also highlighted the tame and wicked aspects of these responses. This chapter will develop the analysis further by presenting the managers' responses to the same ten questions, in order to address research sub-question five: **'what is the nature and views of the two key stakeholders groups?'** and research sub-question six: **'how are the criteria of wicked issues expressed, explicitly and implicitly, through the perceptions of the two key stakeholder groups?'** Three managers from different levels in the organisation were interviewed and, as with the educators, a number of issues were identified in direct response to question one but, as the interviews progressed, further issues were also identified and these have been included in the analysis.

Managers' responses to interview question one

The managers' responses are grouped under the same five headings used for the educators' responses which are:

- Issues that arise from the prison regime and environment

- Issues that arise from attitudes and behaviours

- Issues that arise from the curriculum and teaching

- Issues focusing specifically on prison educators

- Issues that arise from policies and funding

The managers' interviews followed the same format as the educators' interviews, as they were asked the same questions in the same order, with the only change

being the phrasing of the first question to be: **'as a manager what do you think are the key issues in prison education?'**

Issues that arise from the prison regime and environment

The main issue that Leo identified was the inconsistencies in the system when a prisoner had attended their induction interview and had chosen to be allocated to a particular course by the IAG service, only to be sent to a different course by the prison allocations officer. He gave the example of a prisoner who wanted to get a qualification in bricklaying, but was allocated to an art class. Leo believed that this happened because the focus in the prison was on meeting the key performance target (KPT) for the number of prisoners unlocked each day, so in his view:

> the prison don't follow the pathway ... the prison only care about statistics ... they want to fill up the places without considering whether it's the right thing to do ... I believe it's a sausage factory, in the door and out the door ... the learner's been forgotten about ... there's a lot of money to be made off prisoners and at the end I think they are worse off

This issue was also raised by Barbara as she believed that, 'the prison is more concerned with numbers unlocked, rather than what is taught'. Leo felt that the prison regime impacted on the education service more heavily than other agencies such as the Careers, Probation and Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation Services, because the targets for education were more difficult to meet, which for Leo, led to 'unacceptable amounts of stress being put on teachers'.

Although all of the educators had commented on the way prisoners were compelled to attend education classes, Leo was the only manager who noted that 'prisoners are **forced** to do education' (Leo's emphasis). All the managers agreed that there was an issue with the lack of activity places for those prisoners who

wanted to engage in education or training, these had been affected by the cut-backs in funding for education, which had led to courses being cancelled and some classes being closed. Barbara explained how changes in the numbers and role descriptions of the prison officers (benchmarking), had also 'had an impact on the education service', as education classes had to be cancelled if there was no prison officer available for security patrol.

Issues that arise from attitudes and behaviours

The first issue identified in this category, was the prison officers' and governors' negative attitude towards education which, for Heather, was linked to the second issue, the feeling that the education department was excluded from the rest of the prison and there was a 'them and us' situation. She believed that:

> from the uniformed side and the governor's perspective I don't think they have a true perception of what is involved ... it's a different attitude ... I think some of it will be historical views that education in prison is a waste of time and especially when they see repeat offenders coming back in

and Leo believed that:

> most of the officers don't care, most of the governors don't seem to care, a lot of the prisoners don't care either, they only do education to get paid, have a telly and buy baccy

A further issue identified by Leo, was the difficulties encountered in managing the behaviour of prisoners who had mental health issues, some of which he believed had developed as a consequence of drug abuse. Leo believed that there was a problem with New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) such as Spice and although drug use accounted for some of the behavioural issues, he thought that it did not explain

the negative attitudes of some prisoners and the fact that many prisoners, 'don't know how to communicate in a civil way'. He further believed that in prison 'not much was done to address their behaviour' and the issue of behaviour management could not be resolved, until prisoners 'learn how to be a human being ... and then how to engage with different people'.

One issue raised by Heather, which was not mentioned by the other managers, was the prisoners' motivation to learn and 'actually getting the learners to the classes'. Once they were in the classes Heather felt it was the educators' responsibility to motivate the prisoners, and that there was a 'need to make our teaching more innovative and engaging to motivate the learners as ... that's something that's lacking'.

Issues that arise from the curriculum and teaching

One issue that was of concern to both Leo and Barbara, was the focus on quantity not quality in prison teaching, which they believed was evidenced by the number of unsuitable students sent to the education department and the focus on measurable outcomes, once they were there. Barbara thought that, 'governors are more bothered about how many they can unlock' and gave the example of one governor who had said, 'I don't care if they're [the prisoners] basket weaving or making paper ships, as long as they're busy'. Barbara also believed that more thought should be given to prisoners' needs and the allocations officer 'shouldn't just slot learners into vacant places'. Heather believed that 'quality is a massive issue in all areas', and 'the quality of teaching' needed to improve, but that this would be difficult to achieve with out of date resources and technology. However, she

believed the key thing that affected teaching quality was the lack of non-contact time that educators had in which to prepare resources, assess work and provide constructive feedback to learners. Heather thought that because of the length of the lessons and the limited amount of non-contact time, that 'everybody is overworked ... it's not humanly possible to do what's expected of you within your role in the time allocated'. The amount of non-contact time was determined by the prison's core day and the length of the teaching sessions, which meant that educators in this location were expected to be in the classroom from 8.10 am until 12.15 pm and from 1.15 pm until 4.30 pm.

An issue that was linked to the curriculum, was the narrow range of courses that were available. Leo, Heather and Barbara all commented on the need for a more varied and interesting curriculum that would allow prisoners to study more subjects at a higher level. Leo emphasised the importance of enrichment and creative courses, such as history, drama, art and creative writing and he believed if education managers were more willing to experiment, these subjects could become part of the curriculum. For Barbara and Heather, the curriculum needed to be more specialised, rather than applying a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to teaching and learning.

From the issues identified in this category all of the managers expressed a concern with the tame policy approach to prison education which promoted quantity over quality in the form of target setting and measureable outcomes.

Issues focusing specifically on prison educators

In this category there was only one issue raised by a manager that applied specifically to prison educators. Heather was concerned about the educators' restricted access to the internet to support teaching. Internet-based teaching resources could not be accessed in the classrooms, as none of the computers in the classrooms were connected to the internet.

Access to the internet in prisons is considered to be a security issue, so educators in this location only have access to a limited number of internet sites outside of the classroom, whilst prisoners have no access at all.

Issues that arise from policy and funding

The delivery of prison education is via the Offenders' Learning and Skills Service (OLASS), who determine the funding as well as the types and levels of course that are taught. This was seen as an issue by Barbara, because OLASS 'only allows teaching up to Level 2' so it was 'not fit for purpose' as it adopted a 'one-size-fits-all' approach. Heather agreed that prison education policies did not account for the diverse range of students and that prison education 'needs to be more specialised'. All three managers agreed that the funding of prison education was an issue, as the Offenders' Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) and the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) dictated what courses could be offered and how much money could be spent on each learner. Barbara believed that:

> the way we are funded to provide education is a big barrier ... payment by qualification is restrictive [as we are] not able to differentiate spending levels according to need

Leo thought that educators were unable to do their jobs properly and they were 'stifled' because of the lack of money. The lack of funding was also of concern to Heather, who had seen the impact of cutbacks in finance which had affected teaching and the number of courses on offer. Leo commented on the amount of money to be 'made from prison education' and Barbara believed that some of the agencies involved in the prison 'are in it for the money'. Although the level of agreement between the managers on the issue of funding may indicate that this was a tame issue, this was contradicted by the different views on the impact of the funding regulations.

Managers' responses to interview questions two to ten

Having identified what they thought the key issues were the managers were then asked: **'do you think that other people would agree with your views on what these issues are?'**

The initial response from the managers was that there would be some people who would agree with their views. This was an assumption made by Leo, as he believed that:

> as a whole when you're talking to the staff we all, we mostly feel the same, [that] the prison only care about statistics and getting people off the wings

Heather thought that 'the teachers would agree on those issues', such as the lack of resources, attendance and the need to motivate the learners. Barbara also thought that 'to a certain extent', there would be agreement with the issues that she had identified, but that this would be from the prison service and 'certainly some

partners would recognise similarities', such as the way prison education is funded and the need for a more individualised education system.

The wicked aspect of prison education was highlighted by the managers' acknowledgment that there would be some disagreement with the issues that they had identified, as Leo accepted that 'a lot of people may have a different take on it'. Heather also acknowledged that 'teachers might come up with some different ones [issues]' and that 'uniformed staff and governors', who 'don't have a true perception of what is involved in teaching', may also not agree with her views. Barbara proposed that these different views were due to the fact that 'everyone has got their own frustrations in relation to how things impact their work as ... everyone has their own agenda'.

Having established the key issues and whether the managers thought there was any agreement on what they were, question three asked: **'do you think it is possible to identify one clear solution to these issues?'**

All three managers stated that they did not believe that there was one clear solution, Heather thought that this was because of the different attitudes towards education, particularly those of the prison officers. She believed that:

> we as prison educators understand the importance of prison education ... I think from the uniformed point of view ... some of them would say that there is no point in it [education] ... they may not be interested in education themselves, maybe they feel that people aren't able to be rehabilitated

Leo thought that there would not be one solution, but it might be possible to have a model based on 'the way the military handle it', where the prisoners have 'an individualised plan' that firstly addresses their offending behaviour and then

focuses on education and training, but this 'would need changes in the way it [prison education] is run'. Barbara believed that it was not possible to have a prison education model 'that captures all of the individual differences', nor was it the solution to the issues in prison education:

> because it's all about the individual and we're never going to have the financial resources to support everyone … it needs to be focused on the hard to reach

All three managers agreed that it was not possible to identify one clear solution to the issues they had highlighted, but each gave a different reason as to why this was the case, a situation which indicated that this was wicked problem. This was further complicated by Leo's tame assumption that what had worked in one system, the military, could be transferred to another one, prisons.

Having agreed that there was no single solution to the issues the managers were then asked: **'how do you think they could be successfully addressed?'**

In order to successfully address the issues she had identified, Heather believed that better communication was the key. She thought it was important that the education department should be building relationships and be working as part of the prison team to 'break down the "us and them" attitude'. This could be achieved by education managers attending the governing governor's meetings to explain things from education's point of view. Heather also proposed that more money was needed 'to employ more staff and to give staff less contact time and more development time'.

Leo and Barbara agreed that one solution was to focus on working with prisoners

on an individual basis in order to challenge and address their behaviour, before

considering any education or employment options. For Barbara, this support

needed to be planned to 'help individuals to acknowledge their issues and help

them take responsibility for rebuilding their lives' and should continue after the

prisoners were released. She also suggested that solutions may be found by looking

at what strategies are used to address prisoners' behaviour in European prisons.

Leo proposed that the prison system needed to adopt the model used in military

prisons, where prisoners were given '**real** help from **real** specialists [and] ... **real**

mental health care' (Leo's emphasis), but in order to do this he believed that,

'massive changes need to be made [we need to] basically wipe the board and start

again'. Barbara's solution was not as radical as this, she proposed that what was

needed was to, 'be able to work collaboratively' and that there needed to be an

effective way of measuring the impact of education on recidivism. She also

suggested that changes needed to be made to the prison education system, such as

having 'strategies that are owned more locally' and, in order to solve the issue of

the 'one-size-fits-all approach ... the provision needs to be segmented to deal with

different types of prisons and prison populations'.

All of the managers proposed ways of addressing the issues they had identified,

some more radical than others, and, although there were some elements of

agreement on what the issues were, there was limited agreement on how they

should be addressed. There was a direct link between the issues the managers had

identified and their proposed solutions. For example, Heather suggested that better

communication was the solution to the 'us and them' situation between the education department and the prison staff.

Having given their own views on how they thought the issues they had identified could be addressed, the managers were then asked: **'do you think it would ever be possible to have a prison education system which has resolved all of the issues you have identified?'**

In response to this question Leo and Barbara viewed the system as relatively tame, as they believed it would be possible to change some aspects of the system to resolve the issues they had identified. Leo thought that it would be possible to have a better prison education system, but 'there needs to be a culture change ... we need to get that [the prisoners'] mindset right first'. Barbara agreed with Leo, in that changes needed to be made to the present system, so that 'it focuses on the harder to reach' and there also needed to be changes made to the process by which prisoners entered the education system. Heather recognised the wicked aspects of the system, as she was of the firm belief that it would never be possible to have a system that had resolved all the issues, because they were too complex.

Having established whether or not the managers believed it was possible to have a prison system that addressed all of the issues they had identified, they were then asked: **'what kind of system would you need which could solve all of the issues you have identified?'**

Leo thought that the existing system needed to be discarded and that the only way to solve all of the issues was, to 'get a brand new system in and get rid of the old

one'. His new system would focus on addressing the prisoners' emotional intelligence to, 'get their behaviour right first, then focus on education'. For Leo, this would require a more supportive atmosphere, similar to the ethos of the women's prisons he had visited, where he had observed that the female prisoners had a better mental capacity and a clearer understanding of why they were doing education courses. He compared this to the 'macho-fuelled, testosterone-filled' atmosphere in a men's prison, where the focus was on 'building the body, not the mind' and laughingly concluded that 'men just simply don't think'. The new system would employ what Leo considered to be '**real** specialists, **real** help, **real** evaluation and **real** agencies' (Leo's emphasis), who were not concerned with making money, but in supporting the prisoners to change their lives.

Unlike Leo, Barbara did not want to abandon the present system, but suggested that changes could be made to prison education policy so that the system would be flexible and more tailored to prisoners' personal, as well as educational development. She also thought that prisoners should not be 'poured into qualifications before they are ready, [because] if we're spending £4200 a year, let's make sure it's on something worth having'.

Heather proposed changes to only one aspect of the system, the curriculum, and she suggested that the courses on offer in the prison should 'mirror' those offered in local colleges, for example the Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS). She also thought that, although the needs of the learners and the local labour market had to be considered, the curriculum should be changed to make it more

varied and more interesting by offering 'more choice of subjects and more subjects at higher levels'.

The kinds of systems needed to solve the issues identified by the managers contain both tame and wicked elements. The tame elements were those that could realistically be achieved, for example, the changes to policy suggested by Barbara and the changes to the curriculum suggested by Heather. Leo's 'brand new' system tame approach did not take into account the wicked nature of the system and the possible consequences of making the radical changes he suggested. He proposed replacing some of the stakeholders with 'real specialists', but unless he replaced all of the stakeholders, including the prisoners, the structure of the new system would not eliminate the previous thoughts, feelings and values of the individuals who had experienced the changes.

Regarding changes that had already taken place in the present system, the managers were asked to comment on whether: **'in your experience do you think the changes that have been made to prison education have been the right ones?'**

Leo had worked in prison education for six years and Heather for eight, both had worked as educators before becoming managers and both felt that most of the changes they had experienced had not been the right ones. They also agreed that funding cuts, which had led to a reduction in staffing levels and the narrowing of the curriculum, had definitely had a negative impact. Leo felt strongly about the fact that there were no 'enrichment or creative activities', although he did concede that 'some prisons still have broader curriculum'. Heather also commented on the changes in the curriculum, which had 'gone from offering a higher level

qualification and a varied curriculum, to offering a lot less' due to funding cuts by the Skills Funding Agency.

Barbara had worked in prison education for four years as a manager but, unlike Leo and Heather, she had no experience of teaching. She stated that:

> there's not been that many changes that I've seen and that's half the issue, the pace of change is incredibly slow in the sector

One change that she could recall was the 'benchmarking' process, a government cost reduction programme that involved changes to the prison regime and staffing (House of Commons Justice Committee, 2015). One of the major outcomes of the benchmarking process was the reduction in the number of prison officers and Barbara felt that this had had a:

> significant impact in terms of staff confidence and their concern with health and safety, [but] the risk is perceived as to be more than it is in reality, there's a perception of risk rather than an actual one

Barbara further believed that the reduction in the number of prison officers had led to a reduction in the number of students attending education classes which, in turn, had significantly impacted on the education provider's earning potential as, 'when you're being paid by the qualification, [if there are no students] you can't earn your cash'. Despite the perceived negative impact of the changes, Barbara believed that they had been the right thing to do, 'particularly from the tax-payers' perspective'. Another thing that Barbara also thought was positive was that the education contract provider had established an independently run prison education sector. She believed that this:

> acknowledges the importance of sector as own entity [as] it is specialist and it requires labelling as such for people to understand [also] it makes everybody feel a bit more valued

Having discussed the changes to prison education that the managers had experienced, they were then asked if comparisons could be made between prison education and other educational settings with the question: **'there are strategies that have been applied in mainstream education, for example … how successful do you think they could be in prison education?'**

As prison education is part of the further education (FE) sector, the example given to aid the comparison was an FE college. There were distinct differences in the managers' views on the possibility of transferring strategies from the mainstream into prison education, and although two of the managers, Leo and Heather, had teaching experience in a prison, none of the managers had ever taught in mainstream education.

Leo thought that it would not be possible to transfer strategies from the mainstream into prison education, because of the differences in the types of students and their motivations for attending education. He believed that:

> in a prison, I don't think they've [the prisoners] got the mental capacity for it or the behaviour for it, with colleges and FE on the outside most people who are doing the courses want to do them, that's the difference, in prison education's seen as a punishment, prisoners are doing it because they get paid so they can buy baccy

Heather acknowledged that learners in prison were, a 'diverse group of learners with diverse needs', who needed a higher level of support than could be provided in prison education. She believed that if prison education could be 'run very similar to

how it's run outside ... that would be better for engagement, motivation and attendance' and would improve success rates.

Barbara was firmly convinced that in her view, 'a lot of the commonalities from mainstream are transferable' to prison education, but then went on to list the differences between mainstream and prison education that would prevent this. These included differences in delivery; for example, the use of roll-on roll-off programmes, where prisoners can join or leave a course at any point, how the curriculum was managed, the environment and the intermittent attendance of the learners. Barbara concluded that prison education was completely different to mainstream, even the teaching was different in that:

> it's a very different skill set in terms of your approach to teaching, pretty much everyone who is teaching in a prison could easily go and teach in a college or a school, I wouldn't be confident of saying it the other way round

This assertion was based on Barbara's belief that prison education was a specialist area, where the teachers had developed the skills to deal with difficult situations and a restrictive environment and so would be able to adapt to any educational setting. Barbara conceded that there was the potential for any local college to offer education services in prison, but that 'it would be naive of them to think that it would be an easy thing to do', as the way the curriculum was managed 'is extremely different to being in a core college' and because they lacked inside knowledge of the prison environment and the impact it had on being able to deliver a standardised curriculum.

Before asking question nine, I provided a recap on the issues that each of the managers had identified and then asked: **'do you think that the issues are symptoms of a bigger problem?'**

All of the managers agreed that the issues they had identified were part of a bigger problem and the bigger problem was the way the Criminal Justice System (CJS) operated with regards to prison education. Leo proposed that, 'all the problems are down to money', and he also thought that there was a 'problem with society as a whole with too many people locked up for silly things'. Whilst he denied believing in conspiracy theories, he did believe that some people benefitted financially from prisons being full. Heather agreed the bigger problem was, 'the funding and financial element', but focused specifically on how it affected prison education. Barbara focused on policy rather than finance, as she believed that the bigger problem was prison education policy, which was 'not fit for purpose for every person that comes through the system'.

Having established what they believed the bigger problem was, the final question asked of the managers: **'who do you think is ultimately responsible for addressing the issues you have identified?'**

All three managers felt that the responsibility for addressing the issues they had identified lay at government level. Leo thought that ultimate responsibility lay with the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and that what was needed was 'more reviews and more people on the ground', so that ministers were aware of what was happening; he also thought that, instead of having different agencies in the CJS, everyone should be working for the same agency, the government.

Heather thought that decisions should be made at government level, by 'whoever's in charge of the money and how it's allocated' and that prison education should be a government priority, although she acknowledged that 'it's probably not, but it should be, it's a bleak outlook, but it's probably a true reflection'.

Barbara thought that the government had ultimate responsibility, but that this needed to change as, at government level:

> the understanding just isn't there about society and how people live ... these people that are making policy decisions, they've no real grasp on what the reality is for a lot of people who find themselves in a prison environment

For Barbara, the responsibility for addressing the issues should belong to the governors of the individual prisons, who should have more autonomy to 'be able to make decisions about their own prison and their own population' and the role of the government should be limited to providing funding and setting general policy directives.

How do the managers' views exemplify tame and wicked issues?

Tame issues are those issues which may appear complex, but ultimately can be solved, whereas wicked issues are those which, in a socially complex world, may well be judged to be unsolvable (Rittel and Webber, 1973). As with the educators, the managers are working in a complex system, that appears to take a tame policy approach to the wicked problem of prison education and some of the issues they identify are a consequence of this approach. The managers adopt a relatively tame approach to prison education, as it may be possible to achieve many of the solutions they offer; for example, 'more money to employ more staff' (Heather),

'more reviews' (Leo) and 'help [for] individuals on a one-to-one basis' (Barbara). The managers' responses are influenced by their position in the organisation and there are some distinct differences in their views, these are most apparent in their perceptions of the changes that they have experienced. The experience of being an educator who has been promoted to a management position, albeit temporarily in Leo's case, is evident in Heather's use of the phrase 'we as prison educators' and Leo's belief that 'we [educators] all feel the same' about the issues in prison education. The managers recognise some of the complexities of the system within which they work and the issues that arise from this; however, there is limited agreement on what the issues are and whether they can be solved.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the managers' responses to the ten interview questions and has also highlighted the tame and wicked aspects of these responses. The next chapter will provide a comparison between the educators' and managers' views and then compare these to other stakeholders' views on the issues in prison education, which were detailed in Chapter Two and summarised in Tables 2.2 and 2.3. The chapter will then determine whether the responses of the managers and educators fulfil the criteria of a wicked problem.

Chapter Seven

Introduction

Chapter Five presented the views of the educators and Chapter Six the views of their managers, in order to address research sub-question five: **'what is the nature and views of the two key stakeholders groups?'** and research sub-question six: **'how are the criteria of wicked issues expressed, explicitly and implicitly, through the perceptions of the two key stakeholder groups?'** The aim of this chapter is firstly to address research sub-question seven: **'how do the perceptions of the two key stakeholder groups compare to one another and to the views of other stakeholders?'** The chapter will begin with a category by category comparison of the key issues identified by the educators and the managers and will then compare these to the issues identified by other stakeholder groups, as discussed in Chapter Two and summarised in Tables 2.2 and 2.3. The chapter will then examine the ten criteria used to define a wicked problem in order to address research sub-question eight: **'do the key stakeholders' responses fulfil the criteria of a wicked problem?'**

Comparison of the key issues identified in each category

When comparing the views of the managers to those of the educators on **'issues that arise from the prison regime and environment',** there were only two sets of issues identified by members of both groups. The first was the coercion of prisoners into attending education classes, which was related to the second issue, the prison and education providers' focus on meeting targets and the impact this had on education. Both Thom, an educator and Leo, a manager, used the analogy of a

'sausage factory' to describe what they believed was a factory production line approach to prison education.

In the category that examined '**issues that arise from attitudes and behaviours',** there were three similarities in the issues identified by the managers and the educators. The first issue was the prison officers' and governors' negative attitude towards education, the second was the exclusion of the education department from the rest of the prison and the third issue was behaviour management linked to drug use and mental health issues. Educators Hannah, Chris and Bridget agreed with manager Leo's view that there was a problem with New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) such as Spice.

One issue raised by manager Heather, which was not mentioned by the educators, was the difficulty the education department experienced in getting the prisoners to attend education classes and, once they were there, motivating them to learn. An issue highlighted by the educators, which was not noted by the managers, was the lack of support received from the prison staff and some education managers, who were seen to be 'out of touch' (Chris) with the issues that affected the educators in their day to day work.

The category with the greatest number of similarities between the managers' and the educators' views was the '**issues that arise from the curriculum and teaching'**. All of the participants highlighted the impact of the focus on quantity, rather than quality in prison education. The phrase 'bums on seats' was used by some educators to describe how the prison governor was more concerned with filling classrooms with prisoners who did not want to be there, rather than providing a

meaningful learning experience for those who did. All of the managers commented on the shortcomings of the curriculum and the need to broaden the range and level of the subjects on offer. Six of the educators also commented on the 'diluted down' (Anna) curriculum that had 'no social sciences and arts' (Rita, Anna) and 'no progression routes for students' (Chris, Hannah, Liz, Jane). From the issues identified in this category all of the participants expressed a concern with the tame policy approach to prison education, which they believe promoted quantity over quality in the form of target setting and measureable outcomes.

In identifying **'issues focusing specifically on prison educators'**, there were no similarities between the views of the managers and the educators. There was only one manager, Heather, who identified an issue in this category, which was the educators' restricted access to the internet, thus limiting their access to internet-based teaching resources. One reason why there was only one comment from a manager in this category may be because there were only three managers interviewed, and if more interviews had been carried out, then other issues may have been raised. The educators identified issues such as; the lack of job specific training and qualifications (Rita, Mike), churn, which is the movement of prisoners, in to, out of and between prisons (Jane, Chris), teaching and management standards (Mike, Rita) and the lack of parity with the rest of the further education sector (Hannah).

In the final category, the educators and the managers both commented on **'issues that arise from policy and funding'** and identified a number of different issues. Both groups were concerned about the impact that policies and funding had on the

prisoners and prison education. For the educators, one issue was the potential for 'making money' by running prison education 'as a business' (Anna) and the impact this might have had on the educators and the prisoners. Hannah believed that the college's focus on making money, combined with the prison's focus on meeting targets, resulted in a very stressful situation for the educators. This also had an impact on the prisoners, as the educators felt that they could not support and develop them as learners as much as they would like. Some educators believed that government policy itself was responsible for creating some of the issues, such as the 'continuous change' experienced by educator Anna. The managers were concerned about the lack of funding for prison education and they all agreed that it had had an impact on prison education, but did not agree on what that impact was.

In each category, the managers have identified different issues to those noted by the educators and this may be due to the different positions that they occupy within the prison education system. The educators and managers are expected to function in a system that is founded on a tame approach to prison education and where they are expected to implement the same policies as their counterparts in mainstream further education. The issues highlighted by the participants, such as the constraints on the curriculum (Barbara, Thom), the impact of security protocols (Heather, Rita) and the drug-related behavioural issues highlighted by manager Leo and educators Hannah, Chris and Bridget, all contribute to the distinctive nature of prison education. However, these wicked aspects of prison education do not seem to be taken into account by policy makers when devising their tame solutions to the issues in prison education.

Having compared what the two groups thought were the key issues and highlighted similarities and dissimilarities, the next section will compare the educators' and managers' responses to questions two to ten.

Comparison of the educators' and managers' responses to questions two to ten

When asked to consider, **'do you think that other people would agree with your views on what these issues are?'**, both the educators and the managers thought that, whilst some people would agree with their views, others would not. Five educators, Anna, Thom, Hannah, Chris and Mike assumed that the other educators would agree with their views, but that prisoners, prison officers, governors, managers and the general public would not. As a sub-group in a nested organisation, (see Figure 2.3) the group allegiance and level of affiliation (Lawler, 1992) that may be felt by Anna, Thom, Hannah, Chris and Mike, would underpin their assumption that all educators shared the same mental model and therefore felt the same way about prison education. However, this may not be the case, as within close-knit social groups there is a 'tendency to overestimate the similarities between people' (Hogg and Vaughn, 2002: 408) in the group and disregard their differences. Participants from both groups also acknowledged that not everyone would agree with their views and used phrases such as 'different mental models' and 'different agendas', to explain why there would be no agreement on what the issues were, thus recognising the wicked nature of prison education.

When asked, **'do you think it is possible to identify one clear solution to these issues?'**, all three managers agreed with the educators, in that they did not believe that there was one clear solution to the issues they had identified. Educator Thom

and manager Leo, both considered the possibility of having some kind of model that could go part way to solving some of the issues, but for Thom this would never be 'clear cut'. Even though all of the participants agreed that it was not possible to identify one solution to the issues, they did not agree on why that might be. Educators Rita and Mike believed it was not possible to identify one solution due to the complexity of the issues; whereas educator Liz thought it was because the prison system focused on the needs of the system itself, rather than the needs of the prisoners. Educators Jane, Anna and Heather, believed it was not possible to identify one solution, because there were so many different views on what the solution to the issues should be.

In their response to question four, **'how do you think they could be successfully addressed?'**, educators Rita, Bridget and Liz agreed with the manager Heather, that communication was the key to addressing the issues they had identified. However, they disagreed that it was the education department's responsibility to communicate more effectively with the prison staff, as they thought that the onus was on the governor, officers, education managers and contract providers to communicate more effectively with the educators and prisoners. Another area of agreement was between educator Anna and manager Barbara, who both suggested that looking at what had worked elsewhere; for example, in European prisons, might provide solutions. These two areas were the only ones where there was any correlation between the educators' and managers' views. Comparing the managers' and educators' ideas on how the issues could be successfully addressed provides a classic example of a wicked problem, because there was an agreement that

changes needed to be made to the system, but not on what the changes should be or how they should be implemented.

This situation typifies the wicked nature of prison education, as the lack of agreement between those professionals working at the 'chalk face', means that, even at a local level, ways of addressing the smallest of issues cannot even begin to be addressed. Furthermore, this inaction opens up the possibility for others, such as government ministers and policy makers, to apply their own approaches to attempt to solve the issues.

In deciding **'do you think that it would ever be possible to have a system which has resolved all of the issues you have identified?',** five of the educators, Hannah, Jane, Thom, Rita and Mike, agreed with manager Heather, as they thought that it would not be possible, under any circumstances, to resolve all of the issues they had identified. The other educators, along with managers Leo and Barbara, agreed that it might be possible to have a system that had resolved some of the issues identified, but this would need a number of radical changes to the present system. Although all of the participants agreed that the system needed to change, they did not agree on what the changes to the system should be, or how they should be implemented.

In their responses to question seven, **'what kind of system would you need which could solve all of the issues you have identified?'**, all of the participants had a vision of what kind of system would be needed, even those participants who had previously stated that it would not be possible to have such a system. For most of the educators, the 'ideal' system would be one that was fit-for-purpose, where

everyone had the same aims and views, a system that focused on rehabilitation, with agreed agendas and goals and with everyone working together for a common purpose. The managers proposed a system based on aims that were more concrete, such as the changes suggested by Heather, who thought that the curriculum should more varied and more interesting. Managers Leo and Barbara both suggested that the prison systems' priorities should be changed, so that the system helped prisoners to address their behaviour and personal development needs, which, in turn, would enable them to more successfully address their educational needs.

In the responses to question eight, **'in your experience do you think the changes that have been made to prison education have been the right ones?',** there were differences between the educators, differences between the managers and differences between the educators and the managers. From the participants' responses, there were three types of changes identified. Firstly, there were changes that some participants thought were the right ones, as they believed that these changes had had positive consequences. For example, educators Hannah and Liz believed that having better qualified teachers and better resources, were positive outcomes of the changes to prison education that they had witnessed. Secondly, there were changes that some participants believed to be the wrong ones, as they believed that these changes had had negative consequences. Manager Leo and educators Mike, Anna and Heather, all believed that the changes to prison education funding were wrong, as they had led to a reduction in the number of classes and the narrowing of the curriculum. Thirdly, there were the changes that had had both positive and negative consequences, for example, educator Bridget's

belief that the change to a prison education system that focused on exams and academic achievements had resulted in better outcomes for the prisoners, but had also resulted in an increased workload for the educators. Only four of the educators, Liz, Hannah, Chris and Bridget, and one of the managers, Barbara, identified any changes that they believed had had only positive outcomes. Barbara thought there had not been enough changes, but those that had happened had been the right ones, even if some stakeholders, for example, the educators, thought that they had had a negative impact, as the changes had had a positive impact for other stakeholders, such as taxpayers.

There was a sharp contrast between manager Barbara and educator Hannah's views on change and risk. Barbara considered that the changes to the prison regime and the reduction in the number of prison officers, had led the educators to believe that they were at increased risk in the classroom. However, in her position as a cluster manager, Barbara believed that this was not the case and stated that there was only 'a perception of risk rather than an actual one'. This was clearly contradicted by educator Hannah's belief that changes had led to an increase in the risks to teaching staff as, in her experience, 'not having enough uniformed staff to deal with the inmates', had left the educators more vulnerable to verbal and physical attacks from the prisoners. Furthermore, Barbara's view was not supported by Day et al. (2015: 4-5), whose report for the Prison Reform Trust found that:

> The past two years have seen a worrying deterioration in safety and standards in prisons ... the benchmarking exercise to cut costs and maximise efficiencies, [has] resulted in dangerously low staffing levels, restricted regimes and sinking staff morale

Manager Barbara also thought the move by the education contract provider to establish an independently run prison education sector was a positive change; whereas educator Anna believed that this change would have a negative impact, as it would shift the blame for any failures in the system from the main college to the new sector. Educators Hannah, Anna and manager Barbara's views of the impact of the changes they had witnessed illustrate the wicked nature of prison education, as any solutions to wicked problems have been subjectively evaluated, based on their impact on each stakeholder's interests.

To explore the nature of prison education the participants were asked, **'there are strategies that have been applied in mainstream education, for example ... how successful do you think they could be in prison education?'** In both groups, there were some participants who believed that it might be possible to transfer strategies used in mainstream education into prison education, but these would have to be adapted to fit in with the prison regime and the way the prison education contract was delivered. Educators and managers both gave examples of what they believed were the factors that were unique to prison education and that would make it difficult to employ mainstream strategies in prison education. Manager Leo and educators Bridget, Thom and Hannah thought that the coercion of prisoners to attend education classes, the content and delivery of the curriculum and having to teach in an environment that was hostile towards education and had an overriding focus on security, were factors that made prison education unique. Manager Barbara's observations of educators coping with these cultural and organisational factors fuelled her belief that prison educators could teach anywhere, a view which

was in stark contrast to Mike's observation that 'teachers in prison wouldn't last five minutes in a school'. Mike's view was based on his belief that the prison environment affected some teachers, who were 'conditioned to become part of the system' and, because they had been there so long, many had 'become set in their ways' and would therefore find it difficult to work in any other setting. In this example Barbara and Mike are using the same reference point, the prison environment, but drawing different conclusions based on their own mental model, which is influenced by their position within the prison education system.

Comparing the responses to the question, **'do you think that the issues are part of a bigger problem?'**, there was a similarity in that all of the participants believed that the issues that they had identified were symptoms of a bigger problem, but there were different views on what that bigger problem was. There was some agreement between the educators Rita, Thom, Hannah and Anna, who all thought the bigger problem was with different aspects of the prison system. Thom and Hannah believed that politicians and political agendas had too much influence in the management of prisons and prison education and were concerned about the impact of policies that 'are made by people with their own views and agendas' (Thom). Whereas Hannah and Anna were concerned about the way the prison education system was 'run as a business that has to be seen to be performing' (Anna). These views corresponded, to some extent, with the views of the managers, who also identified the Criminal Justice System (CJS) as the bigger problem, but were concerned with the way the system was funded, as 'all the problems are down to money and whoever is pulling the strings' (manager Leo).

Manager Leo also agreed with educators Chris, Mike, Liz, Bridget and Jane, who saw the bigger problem as 'society', but again each educator focused on a different aspects of society, such as drug use (Chris), social inequality (Jane), society's disregard for ex-prisoners (Bridget, Jane) and society's negative attitudes towards education (Thom, Liz), that they believed contributed to the bigger problem.

When considering, **'who do you think is ultimately responsible for addressing the issues you have identified?',** seven of the educators and all three managers felt the responsibility for addressing the issues they had identified, lay with the government. It was thought that the Ministry of Justice, government ministers and policy makers 'don't seem to have a clue what's going on' (educator Bridget) and have 'no real grasp on what the reality is ... in a prison environment' (manager Barbara). Two of the educators disagreed with the majority, Anna believed that issues should firstly be addressed at a local level by management and Thom believed it was 'everyone's responsibility to drive forward the way that change is made'.

This section then has provided a comparison between the responses of the managers and the educators and, in order to review the similarities and dissimilarities in the issues identified by the educators and the managers, a comparative summary is presented in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1 Comparative summary of current issues in prison education identified by educators and managers

Origin of issues	Current issues in prison education identified by educators	Current issues in prison education identified by managers
Issues that arise from the prison regime and environment	Prisoners are forced to attend and remain in education Prison focus on meeting KPTs Students with complex needs Needs of prisoners secondary to needs of system Loss of humanity for prisoners No support on release	Prisoners are forced to attend and remain in education Prison focus on meeting KPTs Prisoners not allocated to correct classes Lack of education and training places Not enough prison officers to escort and patrol
Issues that arise from attitudes and behaviours	Negative attitude towards education from prison officers and governors Education excluded from prison– them and us Behaviour management linked to drug use and mental health Lack of support from prison staff Lack of support from some managers Lack of support from employers Officers' negative attitude towards prisoners Educators' lack of respect towards prisoners and abuse of power	Negative attitude towards education from prison officers and governors Education excluded from prison– them and us Behaviour management linked to drug use and mental health Students' lack of motivation
Issues that arise from the curriculum and teaching	Quantity not quality Narrow curriculum No progression routes Teaching sessions too long Limited and out of date resources and technology Amount of paperwork leaves no time for teaching	Quantity not quality Narrow curriculum No progression routes Teaching sessions too long Limited and out of date resources and technology Lack of time affects quality of teaching No differentiation – one size fits all

Table 7.1 *(Continued).*

Origin of issues	Current issues in prison education identified by educators	Current issues in prison education identified by managers
Issues focusing specifically on prison educators	Lack of job specific training Teachers' education levels and lack of subject specific qualifications Churn Lack of parity with FE sector Compares unfavourably with mainstream education	Restricted use of internet to support teaching
Issues focusing on policy and funding	Education being run as a business Focus on money devalues education and puts educators under stress Government policy creates issues	OLASS policies do not account for diversity Funding methods and lack of funding Some agencies only in it for the money

When identifying what they believed were the key issues, the managers and the educators expressed their personal views on how the issues affected and were affected by, not just themselves, but other stakeholders including the prisoners, prison officers and governors. When comparing the responses of the educators and their managers in Table 7.1, it can be seen that there were issues such as the officers' and governors' negative attitudes towards education, behaviour management, the focus on quantity over quality and the curriculum, that were identified by both groups. There were issues that were of concern to the educators, such as the lack of support from some managers and prison staff, which were not noted by the managers. There were also issues noted by the managers, such as the lack of education and training places, which were not noted by the by the educators.

Comparison of issues identified by the participants and those identified by other stakeholder groups

The issues identified by the educators and managers can also be compared to those identified by other stakeholders in Tables 2.2 and 2.3, where there are some areas of agreement. Those issues where there was an agreement between three or more stakeholder groups are shown in Table 7.2.

Table 7.2 Issues on which there was an agreement between three or more stakeholder groups

Issue	Stakeholders
Churn - the movement of prisoners in, out and between prisons	Government and policy makers Academics Prison educator representatives Prison educators Prison educators (participants)
Negative attitude of prison staff	Government and policy makers Academics Prisoners Prison educators (participants) Education managers (participants)
Security-focused prison regime	Government and policy makers Academics Prison educator representatives Prison educators Prison educators (participants)
Outdated/difficult to access I.T. and resources	Pressure groups Prison educator representatives Prisoners Prison educators (participants) Education managers (participants)
Results-based funding	Academics Prison educator representatives Prison educators Prison educators (participants) Education managers (participants)

(Continued)

Table 7.2 *(Continued).*

Issue	Stakeholders
Behaviour management linked to mental health, drug and alcohol use	Academics Prison educator representatives Prison educators (participants) Education managers (participants)
Level of courses on offer and lack of opportunity for students to progress	Pressure groups Prisoners Prison educators (participants) Education managers (participants)
Prison educators isolated/excluded	Government and policy makers Prison educator representatives Prison educators (participants) Education managers (participants)
The quality and methods of prison teaching	Government and policy makers Prison educators (participants) Education managers (participants)
Prison contract providers' focus on profit rather than education	Prison educator representatives Prisoners Prison educators (participants)

The fact that there is a range of issues identified by different stakeholder groups is indicative of the wicked nature of prison education, as each stakeholder or stakeholder group views the issue from their own perspective, which may be from within or without the system. Although Table 7.2 indicates that there is a level of agreement between the different stakeholder groups, it cannot be assumed that any proposed solutions to the issues will have the same level of agreement, as within any complex system, that has a diversity of stakeholders and a number of stakeholder groups, not everyone will think and act in the same way. This is further complicated by the size of an organisation like the Criminal Justice System in England and Wales (see Figures 2.1 & 2.2), as the larger the system and the more

layers there are, the greater the level of social complexity exists. In the case of prison education, a further layer of complexity is added by the nested status of prison education (Figure 2.3) and the intersection of three complex systems, the prison system, the further education system and the prison education system. Thus, as each system has its own function and purpose, any shared understanding of the issues is difficult to achieve, and these extra levels of social complexity make the wicked problem of prison education even more wicked.

Despite the levels of complexity and the diversity and number of stakeholder groups, there is some agreement on what the issues are in prison education. Those issues, on which there is some agreement, could provide a starting point from which to develop strategies to address the issues at both a local and a national level, particularly those issues where the government and policy makers are in accord with other stakeholder groups. The conclusions drawn from the comparisons in Table 7.2 may be limited, as they are based on a small number of stakeholder views, but the data presented does indicate that these stakeholders do have similar views on some of the issues. In addition, what needs to be considered here is whether there is enough agreement on the issues on which to base a meaningful dialogue between the different groups. If different stakeholders can agree on some issues, then there is the potential to build on this agreement and develop strategies to attempt to manage some of the smaller issues, which may then go some way to ameliorating the larger issues. A shared commitment to address the issues is needed, but there is also the requirement to realise that as perspectives change, then new issues may arise that will also need to be addressed.

It may not be possible to solve the issues, but working with all stakeholder groups to acknowledge the different values held by the different groups and developing a shared understanding of who wants what, will lead to a better understanding of what the issues are. Once a mutual understanding of the different values held by each stakeholder group has been established and an acceptance of what can be achieved has been acknowledged, then some progress may be made towards addressing the issues.

This section has provided a comparison between the views of the two stakeholder groups, prison educators and their managers and examined how these compare to the views of other stakeholder groups. It has also proposed that the areas where there is some agreement between the stakeholder groups may form the basis for some action to be taken to address some of the issues in prison education.

Participants' responses and the criteria of a wicked problem

The next section of this chapter will answer research sub-question eight: **'do the key stakeholders' responses fulfil the criteria of a wicked problem?'** It will do this by examining each criterion in turn to determine whether and to what extent, they are fulfilled by the participants' responses to the interview questions.

Criterion 1. There is no definitive formulation of a wicked problem

The responses of the participants and the range of issues identified by them support this assertion, as there are similarities and dissimilarities between the educators' and managers' views and between their views and those of other stakeholder groups, leading to the conclusion that that there is no definitive

definition of what the key issues are. This conclusion is further supported by the responses to question two, where the participants acknowledged that other stakeholders might have different views to theirs and that these different views would be based on their different beliefs about the role and purposes of prison education.

Criterion 2. Wicked problems have no stopping rule

With tame problems, there are a number of steps that can be followed in order to provide a solution (Table 3.1) and agreed criteria that determine when a solution has been reached. With wicked problems this is not the case, because a number of solutions may have been put into action, but it is not possible to identify an end point that has resolved all of the issues to the satisfaction of all stakeholders. The participants' responses indicated that it would not be possible to have a prison education system which had resolved all of the issues they had identified and a number of reasons were given as to why this was the case, including the complexity of the issues and the different mindsets, agendas and expectations of the stakeholders. It was proposed that an end point could be reached if everybody had the same view, but this possibility was nullified by the participants' responses to question two, which indicated that there were different views and different perspectives on the issues in prison education. It was also proposed that it might be possible to solve some of the issues by making fundamental changes to the present system, but the complexity of the system acted against being able to solve all of the issues once and for all. In addition, as identified by the responses to question three, the participants believed that there was not one clear solution to the issues, and,

because there were so many different views, there would never be an end point reached which would satisfy everyone.

Criterion 3. Solutions to wicked problems are not true-or-false, but good-or-bad

The solutions that are applied to wicked problems are subjectively evaluated, based on their impact on stakeholders' interests; therefore, any solution will be judged to be good or bad, based on the values and beliefs held by individual stakeholders. The changes that had occurred in prison education were judged from the participants' perspective and found to be either good or bad, depending upon their perceived impact. Those deemed to have had a positive impact were thought to be good and those that were judged to have had a negative impact were thought to be bad. Some of the changes were judged be good for some stakeholders but not for others; for example, the impact of the benchmarking process, which manager Barbara thought was a good change from the perspective of the tax-payers, but bad for the education providers whose income had suffered as a result. The overall feeling from the participants was that the changes that they had experienced may have been the right ones for some stakeholders, but not for all, as what had had a positive impact on some stakeholders, had had a negative impact on others.

Criterion 4. There is no immediate and no ultimate test of a solution to a wicked problem

The participants identified a range of issues in prison education and any potential solutions they offered were based on their perceptions of what they believed the key issues were. All of the participants believed that changes needed to be made to

the present system and proposed what these changes should be. Their responses suggested that any changes implemented would have a positive impact for the prisoners and for themselves. However, the participants had no way of predicting what the impact of any change might be and how it would affect other stakeholders' interests, as any changes they proposed might have both positive and negative consequences.

Criterion 5. Every solution to a wicked problem is a 'one-shot operation'; because there is no opportunity to learn by trial and error, every attempt counts significantly

In offering potential solutions to the issues they had identified, the participants assumed that particular changes could be made to the present prison education system and that these changes would have positive outcomes. However, because there would be no opportunity to try out the changes without affecting all the stakeholders, any changes made to the system would have consequences and once a change was implemented, even if it was reversed later, its consequences will have already been felt. For example, Leo's solution was to 'get a brand new system in and get rid of the old one'; an action that he assumed would have only positive consequences for the prisoners. However, it is not possible to predict the outcome of Leo's proposed changes and, if these proved to be negative and were then reversed, it would not be possible to reverse the thoughts, feelings and values of the individuals who had experienced those changes.

Criterion 6. Wicked problems do not have an enumerable (or exhaustively describable) set of potential solutions, nor is there a well-described set of permissible operations that may be incorporated into the plan

When identifying how the issues could be addressed and what kind of system would be needed to solve them, the participants proposed a range of potential solutions. However, these did not represent a logical assessment of all the possible solutions, as other stakeholder groups may have offered different ones. This was acknowledged by the participants, in their belief that it was not possible to have just one solution to the issues, as there may be many different solutions. The participants also acknowledged that different stakeholders may have different views and therefore propose different solutions. As shown in tables 7.1 and 7.2 there was some agreement between stakeholders on what the issues were, but it may not be enough on which to make an agreed decision as to which courses of action to take in order to 'solve' the issues.

Criterion 7. Every wicked problem is essentially unique

With wicked problems, there is no guarantee that a solution that has worked in one system can be transferred to another; no matter how similar they appear to be. Prison education is part of the further education (FE) sector, but when asked whether it was possible to run prison education in the same way as a mainstream college, the participants believed that it was not possible, as there were some unique factors in prison education, that would prevent this. Not every issue identified by the participants is unique to prison education; for example, the use of Key Performance Targets (KPT), funding constraints, behaviour management and

limited resources, can also affect educators and managers in all levels of mainstream education. However, the participants identified factors such as the prison regime, security protocols, churn, the coercion of prisoners to attend education, roll-on roll-off programmes, the 52-week teaching contract and the students' use of NPS drugs, which they believed were unique to prison education.

Criterion 8. Every wicked problem can be considered to be a symptom of another problem

The participants all agreed that the issues they had identified were symptoms of other problems, but there was no overall agreement on what those other problems were. Four of the educators and the three managers, believed that the issues in prison education were symptoms of the way the Criminal Justice System (CJS) operated, but they all focused on different aspects of the system to explain the cause of the issues. The other five educators believed that the issues in prison education were symptoms of the problems in and with, society, but did not all agree on what those problems were. Getting all of these stakeholders to reach an agreement on the cause of the problem, presents a problem in itself and if, as the participants believed, every wicked problem was a symptom of another problem, then it is highly unlikely that there will ever be an agreement on the cause of the original problem.

Criterion 9. The existence of a discrepancy representing a wicked problem can be explained in numerous ways. The choice of explanation determines the nature of the problem's resolution

The range of different issues identified in response to question one (Tables 7.1; 7.2), and the types of solutions offered in response to question four, demonstrate that one explanation cannot account for all of the issues and there may be other equally valid explanations. There was some agreement between and within the two key stakeholder groups and some agreement with other stakeholder groups, such as the government and policy makers, academics, prison educator representatives and pressure groups. There were similarities and differences in the participants' explanations of what the issues were and how they should be dealt with, this seems to be because, each participants' explanation was influenced by their background and experiences and their position within the organisation.

Criterion 10. The planner has no right to be wrong

Rittel and Webber's argument for this criterion was based on their view of the professions who, at that point in time, the 1970s, still held some positions of power, where they were responsible for the planning decisions that determined policies and standards. However, the application of new public management (NPM) (Hood, 1991) principles to public sector services has removed many of the professionals' powers and, in the case of prison education, the planners are the government ministers, not the education professionals. This is evident in the responses of the majority of participants, as ten of the twelve firmly believed that, because the

government's policies were the root cause of many of the issues they had identified, it was also the government's responsibility to address them.

The participants' responses support the assertion that prison education is a wicked problem as they clearly fulfil Rittel and Webber's criteria. There is a limited agreement on what the key issues are and, even where there is agreement, there are different views on how the issues should be addressed.

Conclusion

Through an examination of the responses of the educators and their managers to the interview questions, this chapter has addressed the research sub-questions:

- **How do the issues identified by the two key stakeholder groups compare to one another and to the views of other stakeholders?**
- **Do the key stakeholders' responses fulfil the criteria of a wicked problem?**

The chapter began with a comparison between the perceptions of the two key stakeholder groups, prison educators and their managers and it was shown that there are differences and similarities between the educators' perceptions, differences and similarities between the managers' perceptions and differences and similarities between the educators' and the managers' perceptions (Table 7.1). In the comparison of the types of issues in prison education identified by the participants and other stakeholder groups, it was found that there are some issues in common between them (Table 7.2) and it was proposed that this agreement may open up the possibility for some action to be taken to address some of the issues in prison education. The chapter then examined whether the participants' responses

fulfilled the criteria of a wicked problem and concluded that the evidence presented supported the assertion that prison education is a wicked problem. However, classifying prison education as a wicked problem, does not mean that all of the issues it presents are insolvable, as there were some issues on which some stakeholders agreed and, although it cannot be assumed that any proposed solutions to the issues would have the same level of agreement, it has been argued that this consensus could form the basis for a more collaborative approach to addressing some of the issues in prison education.

The next chapter will summarise the main findings of the research and revisit the research sub-questions to determine how they contribute to answering the main research question: **'what are the perception of two key stakeholder groups on tame and wicked approaches to prison education?'** It will then draw a conclusion to the research and provide recommendations for future actions regarding prison education.

Chapter eight

Introduction

The aim of this thesis was to investigate the views of prison educators and their managers in order to answer the main research question: '**what are the perceptions of two key stakeholder groups on the impact of tame and wicked approaches to prison education?'** In order to achieve this aim interviews were carried out with a small group of prison educators and managers in an education department based in a male prison in the north of England. The main function of this chapter is to revisit the research sub-questions and to summarise the evidence used to answer the main research question. The chapter will also present some recommendations for stakeholders and for future research and finally will provide a reflection on the research and its limitations.

Review of the research sub-questions

Sub-question one: what are the major characteristics of current prison education in England and Wales?

To gain an insight into in prison education, how it is run, who runs it, how it is funded and its position within the Criminal Justice System (CJS), it is necessary to have an understanding of the context within which it takes place and how each of these aspects underpin the current issues in prison education. These details were provided in Chapter Two, which outlined the present state of prison education in England and Wales, how it is embedded within the complex CJS and the impact that this has on prison education and educators. Plsek and Greenhalgh's (2001) work on

complex adaptive systems was used to develop a model (Figure 2.3) to illustrate the complexity of the nested position of prison educators working simultaneously in three nested organisations, the Offenders' Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) contract provider, the prison system and the CJS. It was also argued that in a complex embedded system, such as prison education, individuals will have their own mental models of the system which will influence their views on the role and purposes of prison education.

Having outlined the present state of prison education in England and Wales, Chapter Two then detailed the historical development of prison education and how this was inextricably linked to changes in the administration of the British penal system. This section illustrated how the changes in penal and education policies impacted on prison education and educators and how changing views on the perceived role and purposes of prisons had an impact on the perceived role and purposes of prison education. Finally, there was an examination of the current issues in prison education as viewed by a range of different stakeholders which identified four sets of issues (Table 2.2) that were of concern to the stakeholder groups. These issues were then categorised (Table 2.3) by which groups raised which issues in order to emphasise that different groups have different values, different concerns and different priorities in relation to prison education. Table 2.3 is reproduced below.

Table 2.3 Current issues in prison education identified by different stakeholder groups

Stakeholder	Specific issues in prison education
Government and policy makers	Churn - the movement of prisoners in, out and between prisons Short sentences Negative attitude towards education from prison officers Focus on security Lack of incentives for prisoners to learn Overcrowding Low priority afforded to education Inadequate teaching standards Lack of job specific training for educators Lack of job specific qualifications for educators Prison educators isolated
Academics	Churn - the movement of prisoners in, out and between prisons Focus on security Intermittent and unpredictable attendance Roll-on, roll-off classes Overcrowding Disruption and discontinuity Constraints on the movement of prisoners and educators Difficulty in building relationships of trust Behaviour management linked to mental health, drug and alcohol use Low priority afforded to education Negative attitude towards education from prison officers Negative attitude towards education from prisoners Results based funding Dealing with a wide range of abilities and needs in a single group Lack of professional status for prison educators
Pressure groups	Lack of opportunities to progress beyond Level 2 Outdated and difficult to access IT resources Lack of job specific training for educators Lack of job specific qualifications for educators

(Continued)

Table 2.3 *(Continued).*

Stakeholder	Specific issues in prison education
Prison educator representatives	Churn - the movement of prisoners in, out and between prisons
	Focus on security
	Behaviour management linked to mental health, drug and alcohol use
	Outdated and difficult to access IT resources
	Results based funding
	Availability of resources
	Prison educators isolated
	Lack of professional status for prison educators
	Insecurity in employment terms and lack of parity with FE sector
	Competitive tendering of prison education contracts
	Prison contract providers' focus on profit rather than education
Prison educators	Churn - the movement of prisoners in, out and between prisons
	Focus on security
	Negative attitude towards education from prisoners
	Results-based funding
Prisoners	Narrow range of courses on offer
	Lack of opportunities to progress beyond Level 2
	Outdated and difficult to access IT resources
	Lack of support from prison staff
	Prison contract providers' focus on profit rather than education

Sub-question two: what are tame and wicked issues?

This sub-question was addressed in Chapter Three where the first section of the chapter defined the concepts of 'tame' and 'wicked' issues and outlined how they developed from Rittel's (1972) critique of the first generation systems approach to problem solving. Wicked problems were defined as those problems which were intractable and difficult to solve and which, in a socially complex world, could not be addressed through the application of rational systematic processes. Whereas,

tame problems were defined as those problems which appeared to be complex but were relatively easy to manipulate and control and ultimately could be solved. There was then a discussion of Rittel and Webber's (1973) critique of the rational planning processes that were being used to solve socially complex problems and the failure of policy makers to understand the wicked nature of these problems. Examples were given of how the concept of a wicked problem had been applied in academia to areas such as health, leadership, child abuse and teacher training and also where it had appeared in the popular press, most notably *the Guardian*, and been applied to issues such as global warming, poverty and the NHS.

Sub-question three: what are the criteria that characterise wicked issues?
Sub-question four: can these criteria be applied to prison education?

Chapter Three addressed these research sub-questions through an examination of Rittel and Webber's ten criteria of wicked problems to determine whether they could be applied to prison education in order to classify it as a wicked problem. Examples were used to illustrate how prison education fulfilled each of the criteria and from this it was concluded that it could be characterised as wicked problem. The evidence to support this assertion is summarised in Table 8.1 below.

Table 8.1 Summary of evidence for sub-questions three and four

Criterion	Evidence
1. There is no definitive formulation of a wicked problem	The range and diversity of views on the issues in prison education outlined in chapter two and summarised in Tables 2.2 and 2.3
2. Wicked problems have no stopping rule	The policy solutions that have been applied to the issues in prison education have not yet reached an end point that satisfies all stakeholders. For example, the 'problem' of how to deal with offenders has yet to be resolved to the satisfaction of all stakeholders
3. Solutions to wicked problems are not true-or-false, but good-or-bad	A solution applied to a wicked problem is subjectively evaluated as good-or-bad depending upon the impact it has on individual stakeholders. The contracting out of prison education has been judged as good by the Prisoners' Learning Alliance but judged to be bad by some prison educators and prisoners
4. There is no immediate and no ultimate test of a solution to a wicked problem	The outcomes of the tame policy solutions intended to improve prisoner employability have been difficult to measure and appear to have had a limited impact as evidenced by recidivism rates
5. Every solution to a wicked problem is a 'one-shot operation'; because there is no opportunity to learn by trial and error, every attempt counts significantly	Attempts to solve the wicked problem of how to deal with offenders 'once-and-for-all', have led to the implementation of reforms to the system for example, changes in sentencing policy, which have had a significant impact on some stakeholders
6. Wicked problems do not have an enumerable (or exhaustively describable) set of potential solutions, nor is there a well-described set of permissible operations that may be incorporated into the plan	When addressing the wicked problem of how to deal with offenders there is a range of potential options which can be applied; prison education is only one of these options

(Continued)

Table 8.1 *(Continued).*

Criterion	Evidence
7. Every wicked problem is essentially unique	There are some issues that are specific to prison education, therefore, there is no certainty that solutions which have been applied in other educational settings will have the same level of success or impact in prison education
8. Every wicked problem can be considered to be a symptom of another problem	The issues in prison education are part of the larger issues of how society deals with offenders and crime
9. The existence of a discrepancy representing a wicked problem can be explained in numerous ways. The choice of explanation determines the nature of the problem's resolution	With a wicked problem it is difficult to determine what causes it and how this cause can be explained, this is because there may be many explanations and there is no way of testing which one is correct. Poor educational achievement, poverty and family background have all been used to explain the problem of crime in society
10. The planner has no right to be wrong	In the case of prison education, the planners are the government ministers and policy makers. As there are a number of stakeholders involved in wicked problems any evaluation of whether the planner is right or wrong will be judged by different, and possibly contradictory, criteria.

Sub-question five: what is the nature and views of the two key stakeholder groups?

The nature of the two key stakeholder groups was outlined in Chapter Four which provided a pen picture of each participant, their background and experience and their key responsibilities. The length of service for the educators varied from 2½ to 20 years and most of them taught more than one subject. Three of the educators had taught in secondary schools before moving into prison education, but for the

other participants, including managers Heather and Leo, this was their first teaching post. The nature and views of the two key stakeholder groups were more fully explored in Chapter Five, which presented the data from the educators' interviews, and Chapter Six, which presented the data from the managers' interviews. The values of both groups were expressed through their views on the issues in prison education and how they affected the educators, the managers and the prisoners. The values were also expressed in their views on how the issues should be dealt with and by whom and what they believed the role and purposes of prison and prison education should be. The overall feeling from the participants was that their values clashed with those of the prison system and the education contract providers. The educators believed that education should not be about profits and targets, but about equality, growth, development, support and enabling the prisoners to make different choices.

Sub-question six: How are the criteria of wicked issues expressed, explicitly and implicitly, through the perceptions of the two key stakeholder groups?

The views expressed by the participants in Chapters Five and Six showed that there was some agreement on the role and purposes of prison education and some agreement on what the issues were and whether or not they could be solved. However, there was no one issue or course of action that was agreed upon by all of the participants that would 'solve' all of the issues to the satisfaction of all the stakeholders. Nor was there any wholehearted agreement on the type of prison education system that would be the most effective in dealing with the issues that had been identified. All of the participants explicitly acknowledged that there were

different views held by different groups and that these views may conflict with their own. All the participants gave examples of their experiences of working in prison education and their relationships with other stakeholders, which reinforced what they believed, were the differences and similarities between them.

There were tame and wicked elements in the participants' responses, as the managers and some of the educators saw the role and purposes of prison and prison education in very concrete terms and generally proposed relatively tame solutions to the issues they had identified. Other educators had a more wicked approach, in that they recognised the complexity of the system and some of the difficulties in attempting to apply tame solutions to the issues.

Sub-question seven: How do the perceptions of the two key stakeholder groups compare to one another and to the views of other stakeholders?

This was addressed in the first section of Chapter Seven which was a category by category comparison of the data elicited from the first interview question which asked the participants to identify what they believed were the key issues in prison education. There were some key issues identified by both groups such as the officers' and governors' negative attitudes towards education, behaviour management, the focus on quantity over quality in teaching and the curriculum. There were issues that were of concern to the educators, such as the lack of support from some managers and prison staff, which were not noted by the managers. There were also issues of concern to the managers, such as the lack of education and training places, which were not noted by the educators. It was proposed that these differences might have been due to the different positions that

these two stakeholder groups occupy within the prison education system and the different mental models they possess.

The first section continued with a comparison of the responses to the remaining interview questions, where it was found that there were some similarities in the educators' and managers' perceptions and views on prison education. There were also some very marked differences between some participants' views on topics, such as the difficulty of teaching in a prison setting, an issue on which educator Mike and manager Barbara had very divergent views. The second part of the sub-question was a comparison of the issues identified by the participants, summarised in Table 7.1, to those issues identified by other stakeholder groups summarised in Tables 2.2 and 2.3. Those issues where there was an agreement between three or more stakeholder groups were summarised in Table 7.2. From this comparison the following conclusions were drawn:

1. The range of issues identified by different stakeholder groups is indicative of the wicked nature of prison education, as each stakeholder or stakeholder group views the issue from their own perspective, which may be from within or without the system.

2. Although there is a level of agreement between the different stakeholder groups, it cannot be assumed that any proposed solutions to the issues will have the same level of agreement, as within any complex system that has a diversity of stakeholders and a number of stakeholder groups, not everyone will think and act in the same way.

3. Those issues on which there is some agreement could provide a starting

   point from which to develop strategies to address the issues at both a local

   and a national level, particularly those issues where the government and

   policy makers are in accord with other stakeholder groups.

Sub-question eight: do the key stakeholders' responses fulfil the criteria of a wicked problem?

This sub-question was answered in Chapter Seven by examining each criterion in turn to determine whether, and to what extent, they were fulfilled by the participants' responses to the interview questions. The data from the responses supported the assertion that prison education is a wicked problem, and the evidence is summarised in Table 8.2 below. The evidence presented here is derived from the primary data collected via the interviews and reinforces the conclusion, derived from the secondary data in Chapter Three and also presented in Table 8.1, that prison education is a wicked problem.

Table 8.2 Summary of evidence for sub-question eight

Criterion	Evidence
1. There is no definitive formulation of a wicked problem	The range and diversity of the stakeholders' views on prison education and the number and types of issues identified (Table 7.1)
2. Wicked problems have no stopping rule	The complexity of the system and the different mindsets, agendas and expectations mean that some of the issues in prison education will never be solved

(Continued)

Table 8.2 *(Continued).*

Criterion	Evidence
3. Solutions to wicked problems are not true-or-false, but good-or-bad	The changes that had occurred in prison education were judged from the participants' perspective and thought to be either good or bad depending upon their perceived impact
4. There is no immediate and no ultimate test of a solution to a wicked problem	All of the participants believed that changes needed to be made to the present system and proposed what these changes should be. However, they have no way of predicting what the impact of any change might be
5. Every solution to a wicked problem is a 'one-shot operation'; because there is no opportunity to learn by trial and error, every attempt counts significantly	The participants assumed that particular changes could be made to the present prison education system but did not consider the consequences of these changes
6. Wicked problems do not have an enumerable (or exhaustively describable) set of potential solutions, nor is there a well-described set of permissible operations that may be incorporated into the plan	The participants proposed a range of potential solutions to the issues in prison education but also acknowledged that different stakeholders may have different views and therefore propose different solutions
7. Every wicked problem is essentially unique	The participants believed that it was not possible to run prison education in the same way as a mainstream college as there were some unique factors in prison education that would prevent this
8. Every wicked problem can be considered to be a symptom of another problem	The participants believed that the issues in prison education were symptoms of the bigger problems in society or symptoms of the problems in the Criminal Justice System

(Continued)

Table 8.2 *(Continued).*

Criterion	Evidence
9. The existence of a discrepancy representing a wicked problem can be explained in numerous ways. The choice of explanation determines the nature of the problem's resolution	The range of different issues identified in response to question one and the types of solutions offered in response to question four, demonstrate that one explanation or solution cannot account for all of the issues and there may be other equally valid views
10. The planner has no right to be wrong	The majority of participants believed it was government policies that were the root cause of many of the issues they had identified, so it was the government's responsibility to address the issues

The main research question

Returning to the main research question: **what are the perceptions of two key stakeholder groups on the impact of tame and wicked approaches to prison education?** the research has demonstrated that the participants' perceptions of the impact of tame approaches to prison education led them to believe that:

- Government policies do not work, as they do not account for what the research participants believe are the unique aspects of prison education such as the prison regime, security restrictions, the 52 week contract, the coercion of prisoners to attend education classes, the transient clientele and the levels of drug and alcohol use.

- Government policy can often cause more problems than it solves, because it is based on the assumption that prison education functions within the same environment as mainstream further education, and does not take into

account the cultural and organisational factors that impact on the teaching environment. Moreover, by focusing on targets rather than developing the prisoners as learners, government policy is seen by many as devaluing the quality of teaching provision.

- Tame approaches negatively affect the educators' relationships with other stakeholders, because they assume that all stakeholders view the role and purposes of prison education in the same way. The relationship between the participants and the prison staff can vary from indifference to hostility, which manifests itself as an 'us and them' situation, and which is also replicated in some of the prison staffs' attitudes towards the prisoners.

- Tame approaches do not provide the solutions to the issues that the educators have to deal with on a daily basis, because they focus on achieving targets by filling classrooms with prisoners who in many cases do not want to attend, rather than providing the educators with the resources and training that they need to support the prisoners who do want to learn.

On the other hand, the research participants' perceptions of wicked approaches enable them to:

- Recognise wicked aspects of the system, in particular the complexity of the system, how this impacts on themselves and the prisoners, and the difficulty in finding one solution to all the issues in the system.
- Be aware of the conflicts and contradictions in the system, most notably the conflicts that are fuelled by the different views on the purposes of prison

education and the fact that prison education is based within the prison system where the educators and managers are 'guests', but are not a part of that system. There are also the contradictions that arise in a system that expects educators to be able to teach any prisoner, but prevents them from acquiring the skills to do so.

- Be aware of the different mental models, philosophies and agendas, in particular the impact these have on the working environment, the relationships between different stakeholders and the different approaches and attitudes towards prison education and educators.

- Promote wicked approaches to dealing with the issues, such as having a system in which people acknowledge different views, where all of the stakeholders are involved in working together with a common purpose, where there is open communication at all levels and the will to work towards shared aims and goals.

Recommendations for stakeholders

From the evidence gained as a result of this research there are a number of recommendations to be made to three of the key stakeholder groups: government ministers and policy makers, education managers and prison educators.

Recommendations for government ministers and policy makers

1. Government ministers and policy makers need to recognise that prison education is a wicked problem which cannot be 'solved' through the application of tame policies.

2. They need to acknowledge the different values held by different stakeholder groups and understand that any approach to wicked problems needs to consider the views of **all** stakeholders.

3. Decision making about matters of criminal justice, including prison education, should be removed from the political arena, so that they are not party political issues and they can then be approached in a more collaborative way.

4. There is a pressing need to work with all stakeholders towards an agreed understanding of the role and purposes of prison education.

Recommendations for the education managers

1. Education managers, at all levels, need to recognise that prison education is a wicked problem which affects educators and managers in different ways.

2. Education managers, at all levels, need to collaborate with educators and other local stakeholders to identify the local issues on which there is some agreement and, from this, work towards a shared commitment to address those issues.

Recommendations for the educators

1. Educators need to recognise that prison education is a wicked problem which affects educators and managers in different ways.

2. Educators need to collaborate with managers and other local stakeholders to identify the local issues on which there is some agreement and, from this, work towards a shared commitment to address those issues.

Recommendations for future research

This research has presented the views and perceptions of one specific group of prison educators and managers. Suggestions for further research in the sphere of prison education are:

- Interviews with educators and managers in other prison education departments within the same region, which would provide data for a comparison between participants working in different types of prisons.
- Interviews with groups of prisoners, prison officers, governors, senior managers, policy makers and government ministers, to provide their perspectives on prison education.

Outside of prison education there may be opportunities to apply the same approach to other areas of education or those issues, such as child abuse and health inequalities, which have already been identified as wicked problems.

The limitations of the research

This research has taken place with one small group of prison educators and managers who are based in one location. Therefore, it cannot be said that their views and experiences are representative of all prison education departments. It must also be noted that the nature and values of this small group of participants cannot be taken to be representative of the nature and values of all prison educators and managers. However, the research has provided an in-depth, detailed account of the research participants and their perceptions of their workplace culture, which may be used to provide a useful comparison with other similar

settings. The research participants were my colleagues and friends and it could be argued that this would adversely affect the research. The implications of these pre-existing relationships and the advantages and disadvantages of being an insider-researcher were fully considered in Chapter Four, and it may have been useful to work in settings where I was not well known.

Reflection on the research

During the writing up of this research there have been changes both national and personal that have occurred. In May 2016 the Coates Review, *Unlocking Potential: A review of education in prison* was published. The review recommended a more holistic approach to prison education, including changes to the way prison education is funded, more professional development opportunities for teachers, and changes to the curriculum, which, as well as maths, English and IT, should include arts, music and sport activities. The Ministry of Justice accepted all of the report's recommendations and the proposed changes were welcomed by the Prisoners' Education Trust. The referendum in June and the decision to leave the European Union, which led to Prime Minister David Cameron's resignation, also affected prison education, as the new Justice Secretary, Liz Truss, reneged on the government's promise to implement Dame Sally Coates' recommendations and instead instigated a new review of prisons. The *Prisons Safety and Reform* White Paper, which was published in November 2016, proposed a wholesale reform of the Criminal Justice System including prison education, with the aim of introducing a core common curriculum in all prisons that focused on maths and English. Also, the Offenders' Learning and Skills (OLASS4) contracts are due to end in July 2017, after

which prison education funding will become the responsibility of the prison governor who will decide who will be providing the education service. The funding changes could mean that the present contract providers, who may not be based in the local area but have local area management teams, will be in competition with local FE colleges when bidding for prison education contracts. The contracts are a valuable source of income for the providers, for example; in 2013-14 the contract value for OLASS4 in England amounted to £131,544,919, which was shared between the four contract providers, The Manchester College (£74,575,081), MK College (£32,326,834), Weston College (£9,777,390) and A4e (£14,865,614) (SFA, 2015b) .

On a more personal level, of the original 12 participants five have left prison education. Anna, Thom, Mike and Rita have moved on to work in other areas of education and Hannah has retired from teaching.

Final thoughts

This thesis has shown that, despite the levels of complexity and the diversity and number of stakeholder groups, there is some agreement on what the issues are in prison education. This consensus could provide a starting point from which to develop strategies to address the issues in prison education at both a local and a national level. However, before this point is reached, all the stakeholders need to acknowledge the wicked nature of prison education and accept that although there may be ways of improving the system by addressing some of the issues, there is no 'right' course of action that will solve all of the issues once-and-for-all.

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Appendices

Appendix A. Invitation to participate in research

Dear ………….

I would like to invite you to take part in my doctoral research where I hope to interview teachers and managers working in prison education. The aim of the research is to investigate your perceptions of what you believe are the current issues in prison education and how you feel they could be addressed. Your participation in the research will consist of a recorded interview which should take no more than one hour to complete. The interview will take place in my office at the University of Hull at a time that is convenient for you, if this is not suitable then I will arrange to visit you at home or a place that is convenient for you to complete the interview. During the interview you will not be asked to disclose any details about your workplace or students that could break confidentiality, however, should this occur inadvertently the comments will be deleted from the recording and will not be included in the transcription. When the interview has been transcribed the information gathered will be stored in a password protected folder on a personal a computer that only I have access to and when the analysis of the information has been completed the files and the recording of the interview will be deleted.

If you are willing to be interviewed please complete the form below and leave it in my drawer in the staff room, I will then contact you to arrange a time and place for the interview thanks, Fi

---

I have read the information above and am willing to be interviewed as part of your research project

Name………..

Date……….

Appendix B. Information letter for participants

Dear ………….

Thank you for agreeing to take part in my doctoral research. The aim of the research is to investigate teachers' and managers' views of the current issues in prison education and how they feel they could be addressed. Your participation in the research will consist of a recorded interview which should take no more than one hour to complete. During the interview you will not be asked to disclose any details about your workplace or students that could break confidentiality, however, should this occur inadvertently the comments will be deleted from the recording and will not be included in the transcription. When the interview has been transcribed the information gathered will be stored in a password protected folder on a personal a computer that only I have access to and when the analysis of the information has been completed the files and the recording of the interview will be deleted. Anonymity will be respected as no comments or quotes used in the final thesis will contain a direct reference to any individual or workplace. You are free to withdraw from the research at any time and any information that has been gathered will be destroyed.

Thank you Fi Wilkinson

Should you require any further details or have any questions about taking part in the research my contact details are: Sharron Wilkinson, Room 305, Department of Education Studies, University of Hull, Cottingham Road, Hull, HU6 7RX. Tel: 01482 466764. Email: s.f.wilkinson@hull.ac.uk

The contact details of my supervisor are; Professor Mike Bottery, Faculty of Education, University of Hull, Cottingham Road, Hull, HU6 7RX. Email: m.p.bottery@hull.ac.uk

Should you [ie, the participant] have any concerns about the conduct of this research project, please contact the Secretary, Faculty of Education Ethics Committee, University of Hull, Cottingham Rd, Hull, HU6 7RX; Tel No (+44) (0)1482 465031; fax (+44) (0)1482 466137

Appendix C. Consent form

THE FACULTY OF EDUCATION ETHICS COMMITTEE

**CONSENT FORM: (*INTERVIEWS)*

I,   of

Hereby agree to be a participant in this study to be undertaken

By Sharron Wilkinson

and I understand that the purpose of the research is to investigate the perceptions of two key stakeholder groups on what they believe are the issues in prison education and how they could be addressed

I understand that

1.   the aims, methods, and anticipated benefits, and possible risks/hazards of the research study, have been explained to me.

2.   I voluntarily and freely give my consent to my participation in such research study.

3.   I understand that aggregated results will be used for research purposes and may be reported in scientific and academic journals.

4.   Individual results will not be released to any person except at my request and on my authorisation.

5.   I am free to withdraw my consent at any time during the study, in which event my participation in the research study will immediately cease and any information obtained from me will not be used.

Signature: Date:

The contact details of the researcher are: Sharron Wilkinson, Room 305, Department of Education Studies, University of Hull, Cottingham Road, Hull, HU6 7RX. Email: s.f.wilkinson@hull.ac.uk

The contact details of the secretary to the Faculty of Education Ethics Committee are Mrs C McKinlay, Centre for Educational Studies, University of Hull, Cottingham Road, Hull, HU6 7RX. Email: c.m.mckinlay@hull.ac.uk tel. 01482-465301.

Appendix D. Faculty ethical approval form

ETHICAL PROCEDURES FOR RESEARCH AND TEACHING
IN THE
FACULTY OF EDUCATION

FORMAL NOTIFICATION OF ETHICAL APPROVAL

Reference Number: PGR 14/15- 223

Name: Sharron Wilkinson

Programme of Study: EdD Dr of Education

Research Area/Title: The Wicked Problem of Prison Education: what are the
                                     perceptions of two key stakeholder groups on the impact
                                     of tame and wicked approaches to prison education?

Image Permission Form   not applicable

Name of Supervisor: Prof Mike Bottery

Date Approved by Supervisor: 10/05/15

Date Approved by Ethics Committee: 12/08/15

UNIVERSITY OF Hull

Faculty of Education Ethics Committee14-15/1