Facilitation of developmental tasks in prisons:

applying the method of human-centred co-evaluation

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Abstract

Collaboration and learning are especially needed in times of change in work and how things are organized. This chapter describes a novel method for developing work practices and enhancing professionals' proactiveness through collective, participatory experimentation and evaluation. We used the human-centred co-evaluation method in a low-security closed prison in Finland to advance prison staff's activating, reciprocal rehabilitative work with inmates. The design, implementation and evaluation of prison officers' developmental task of recording the inmates' behaviour and needs into their sentence plans are illustrated. Besides describing how the method was applied in practice, we also identified and discussed the gaps within prison work or between the developmental HCCE project and the prison culture as resources for learning.

1 Introduction

The changes and transformations of work call for a culture of collaboration, innovation and learning, in prisons and elsewhere. To promote such a culture and the prison staff's capacity to take a proactive stance in developing their collective work, a new facilitation method of *human-centred co-evaluation* (Hyytinen et al., 2019; hereafter HCCE) was applied in a low-security closed prison in Finland. The basic idea is to

support employees in their collective efforts to develop work practices by designing and implementing developmental tasks simultaneously with setting goals and finding ways to evaluate and learn from them. In addition to practices, the aim is also to develop the proactiveness of the prison personnel. Proactiveness means that employees take anticipatory actions to create change in how jobs, roles and tasks are executed (Grant & Parker, 2009). Professionals' proactiveness also contributes to their well-being (Honkaniemi, Lehtonen & Hasu, 2015; Mäkitalo, 2005). Along with other formative interventions (see Chapter 8), the HCCE method can be seen as a design to stimulate proactivity by enhancing participants' innovation and reflection about the future. 'Formative' here means that facilitators offer participants resources to engage in practical experimentation that can lead to generative, novel outcomes (Sannino, Engeström & Lemos 2016). Simultaneously, HCCE helps staff to "learn by evaluating" both outcomes and the collaborative processes of experimentation.

In an ongoing research project[1], the HCCE method has been used to enhance two strategic aims of the Criminal Sanctions Agency (CSA) in Finnish prisons: the prisons' digital services and the activating rehabilitative work included in the everyday duties of prison officers with inmates to reduce the risk of reoffending. Historically, the latter has been a task of the prison staff involved in instruction in the prison – e.g. social workers, psychologists and educators – while prison officers have mainly been responsible for control and security. Involving prison officers in rehabilitative work can be viewed as a long-term sea change in the orientation, tasks and division of labour in correctional services. Our aim in this chapter is to describe how developmental tasks with rehabilitative work were co-designed, implemented and co-evaluated between the prison staff, management and researchers. This is the first time the HCCE method has been applied in prisons, and the main focus of the paper is the process of putting the method into practice.

The HCCE method, being part of a broad field of developmental evaluation (Patton, 2011), is about using evaluation for learning and development. Engeström and Sannino (2012, p. 46) argue that all process theories of learning carry with them

instructional assumptions that facilitators need to be aware of. Learners, in our case prison personnel, always proceed differently from what researchers or facilitators had planned. In formative developmental efforts, neither the outcome nor process are universalistic and given, and researchers do not have a monopoly over them (Engeström & Sannino, 2010). The HCCE offers an expanded view for exploring development efforts and their consequences by viewing 'impact' as a qualitative learning challenge, rather than an accountable target to be achieved (Saari & Kallio, 2011). Evaluation studies drawing from activity theory are not typically interested in causal connections but collect evidence of historically formed relationships, social processes and cyclical nature of change (Kajamaa, 2011).

We pay attention to "gaps" opening either within the range of prison activity or between the HCCE method and the prison culture. Following Engeström & Sannino (2012), we have taken these gaps between participants' activities and developmental interventions as potential resources with which to promote learning processes. At the end of the paper, we discuss the gaps observed in the project, how they inform our understanding of the change taking place, and how researchers have considered the gaps in shaping the HCCE process.

The chapter proceeds as follows. The next section is an introduction of the HCCE method. Second, we will familiarize the reader with the main features of the Finnish prison system, including Prison A where the study took place. This leads on to the presenting the developmental process as a narrative, examining first how developmental tasks were designed, implemented, and co-evaluated at Prison A. At the end, we have discussed the challenges or gaps found during the process, and conclude by highlighting the value of the HCCE method in systematic long-term developmental efforts.

2. The method of human-centred co-evaluation (HCCE)

The method of human-centred co-evaluation was recently developed by Eveliina Saari, Kirsi Hyytinen and their colleagues to support innovations or developmental tasks concerning the digitalization of services, and in particular embedding, disseminating and upgrading them in practice. A core device of the method is a multi-criteria evaluation framework through which several impacts of an innovative local

developmental task can be considered (Fig. 1). The framework is a modification of the work by Djellal and Gallouj (2013) of pragmatist origin, while the conceptualization of learning and development of the HCCE method is based on cultural historical activity theory (Hyytinen, et al., 2019). [2] The HCCE method instructs participants to listen and encourages them to reflect and communicate about the topic and guides them to proactive creation of further actions.
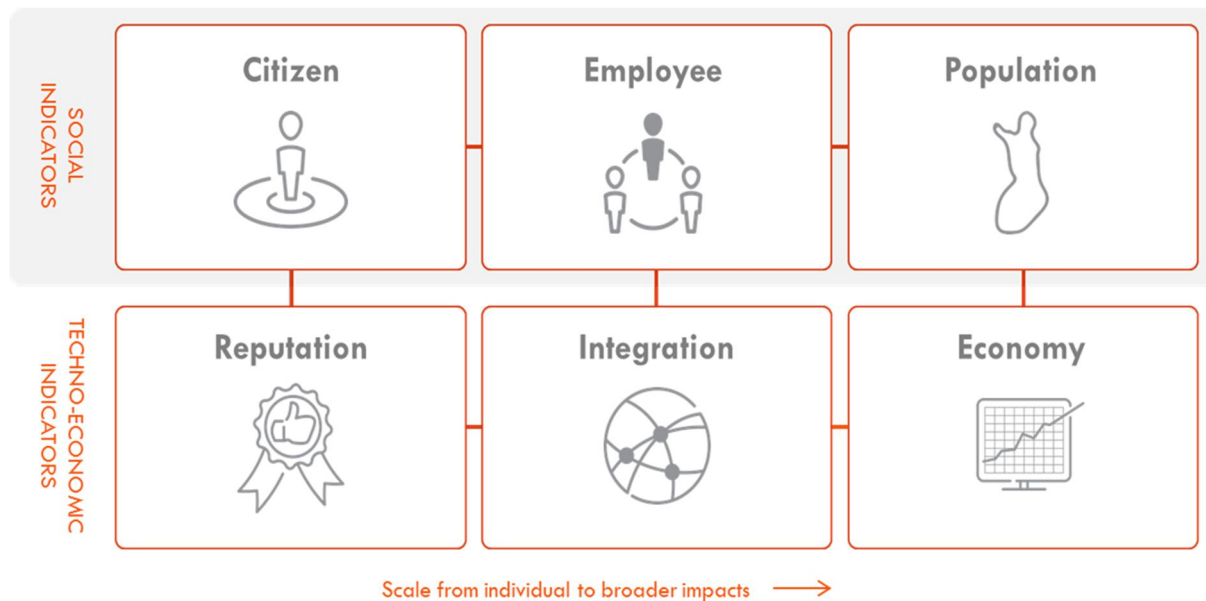

Figure 9.1. Impact dimensions of multi-value evaluation framework (Hyytinen et al, 2019).

In the dimension on the *citizen* or *service user* (see Fig. 9.1, first quadrant), participants analyse the value of the developmental task from the viewpoint of an individual inmate. The emphasis is on client orientation and the significance of a service for him or her. The dimension on *employee* directs the discussion on changes in the content of work, including work roles, relationships, knowledge and tasks. The impact on clients/service users and employees captures value from the perspective of an individual or a small group of individuals, whereas the impact on *population* helps participants to elaborate on value from a wider perspective, such as of a specific geographical region or its

[2] A manual of the method is freely available in Finnish (Saari et al., 2018). It has spread into a nationally applied developmental evaluation method in citizens' digital help services, in school experiments and elsewhere. See https://www.ttl.fi/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/kokeilut-kaytantoon-tyokirja.pdf

population. Regarding the *reputation*, the focus is on the effects on brand image and on the visibility of actors involved in service development. The value of the developmental task in relation to many interlinked services and to the technology is evaluated in the *integration* dimension. With the last dimension, *economy*, the economic effects of the developmental task can be discussed by considering them from the perspectives of both a single actor or a group of actors and broader society.

The HCCE process is supported by three facilitated workshops. In the first workshop, the participating employees and their supervisors brainstorm and choose one or few local developmental tasks that can respond to clients', employees' or the organization's needs, after which they carefully design and prepare them. In the second middle-way workshop, the participants consider the impacts of developmental tasks from the user and the worker perspectives. In this phase, it is still possible to modify the developmental task and its criteria if necessary. The third co-evaluation workshop takes place after the experimentation has been put into practice to evaluate its impacts according to six dimensions (Saari et al. 2018; Fig.9.1). In it, the work developers, employees, service users and decision makers are brought together to learn what has been achieved, and what should be accomplished and done in near future. In our study, only the first and third workshops were implemented.

The structure of HCCE is based on the aquarium technique (Aalto-Kallio & Hakulinen, 2009) common in developmental efforts when discussion and listening alternate between "inner circle" and "outer circle". In the third co-evaluation workshop this means that first, the developmental task is co-evaluated with the framework (Fig. 9.1) inside "the inner circle" consisting of those having designed, implemented and used it. Participants will evaluate how the developmental task has succeeded in each of the six dimensions. The aim here is to create new meanings for the developmental task and seeing new opportunities (Hyytinen et al., 2019). We will come back to the HCCE method after taking a look at the Finnish prison system, Prison A and the prison officers' rehabilitative work with prisoners.

3. Features of Finnish correctional services and "Prison A"

In Finnish prisons, *prison officers* are the ones that most often see inmates while taking care of many practical and control tasks in prison wings. They may advise inmates to attend prison activities as well as to contact social workers, psychologists, priests, or instructors when needed. Health care professionals, while present in prisons, operate outside the prison system in a national unit responsible for prisoner health care, but other rehabilitative staff are officials of Correctional Sanctions Agency (CSA) in Finland. *Senior officials*[3] are responsible for working with inmates in their progress with sentence plans and partly act as prison officers' supervisors. Sentence plans are made outside prison in a regional assessment centre of CSA. Besides a director, a prison has two assistant directors, one of which is responsible for security, and the other for rehabilitative programmes for inmates. We can see how the divide of welfare and control is built into the division of labour.

Prison A is a closed low-security prison with approximately 120 male inmates and a staff about 80 people. It is known for its culture of good and fluent interaction between inmates and staff. Its assistant directors meet twice a week with senior officials. Senior officials meet prison officers occasionally in wings, during coffee breaks and in annual development discussions, but they do not have the formal right to make supervisory decisions. The prison officers do not have meetings with each other or with other professionals, apart from annual training programmes.

Inmates may voluntarily work or participate in a wide range of educational or rehabilitative activities. Remand prisoners stay for several weeks up to a maximum a few months in the prison which makes long-term work with them difficult. Since 2018, the prisons have been collecting written feedback from inmates when they leave the prison. At Prison A, inmates' responses so far have been positive, although the first phase of entrance to prison had aroused negative experiences.

To enhance rehabilitative work, CSA has started a long-term transformation of the occupational roles of prisons. In 2019, new form of education was launched for officers to become "responsibility workers" who in the future would do most of the rehabilitative work with a particular inmate, including sentence plan work. Senior officials, in turn, would guide and supervise responsibility workers in their work with inmates. Some

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[3] The formal title is senior criminal sanctions official.

officers would continue to work without being responsibility workers. This future planned structure, while aimed at supporting rehabilitative work, is now causing uncertainty and feelings of injustice, not least because the salary categories will be renewed accordingly. In this situation, it was necessary in Prison A to make clear that rehabilitative work concerns everyone in the prison, regardless of their occupational status.

4 Rehabilitative work with prisoners

This study originates from a long-term R&D collaboration between the Correctional Sanctions Agency in Finland and the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health. Previously, the ombudsman of the Finnish Parliament had remarked that in Finnish closed prisons, inmates remain too passive and isolated in their cells, and that the CSA needed to pay attention to this problem. This corresponded with the CSA's strategic aim of enhancing more dialogic and activating elements in prison activities for inmates. The way to do this was to develop prison officers' *rehabilitative work* (in Finnish, the word is *lähityö* literally meaning "near work") with prisoners, by promoting local and national developmental tasks that were partly designed and implemented by prison staff.

Using all opportunities for activating inmates to engage in crimeless activities is central (Ylisassi et al., 2016, p. 74). For officers, making contact through discussion, building trust, and guiding inmates to instruction staff for further support were characteristics of what we call rehabilitative work. Combining a rehabilitative approach with maintaining control is not easy and requires sensitivity, knowing prisoners (dynamic security) and situational awareness from prison staff. The staff's descriptions of turning difficult situations into successes by using an activating approach explain the opportunities of rehabilitative work (Ylisassi et al., 2016).

Next is an illustration of how a developmental task was co-designed, implemented and co-evaluated with the HCCE method at Prison A.

5. The HCCE facilitation and developmental task process at Prison A

Preparation

The HCCE project at Prison A proceeded on three levels: 1) the national Advisory Board of the project, which decided on a suitable prison and Prison A agreed to participate in the project, 2) the local collaboration between researchers and prison employees (an assistant director and a social worker) responsible for the HCCE project in the prison, and 3) the HCCE workshops.

A lot of preparation was needed. First, the researchers (the first three authors of the chapter) presented the project idea to a group of managers, senior officials and officers at Prison A. It became clear that there was a good culture of rehabilitative work, but they had not yet experimented with new practices nor systematically developed their structures for supporting rehabilitative work. The project thus needed to start with designing the developmental tasks. The practices of "the incoming phase", after the inmate enters the prison up to settling in a wing, was chosen as a prison activity to be experimented with.

The developmental tasks were about to be designed in two similar workshops, after which they were subjected to pilot testing for three months by several officers. The core workshop participants were chosen from among prison officers who were mainly responsible for the security and control of the prison and were increasingly supposed to do rehabilitative work.

Second, individual and group interviews with the personnel of Prison A were carried out so that researchers could become familiar with people, get to know their work and their views about ongoing changes, especially concerning rehabilitative work, and to collect suitable material (mirror data) for the design workshop.

The design workshop

Third, the design workshop was planned. The researchers collected interview excerpts depicting the current situation and the assumed future in brief sentences, model concepts (Virkkunen, 2007) that reveal a core purpose of the activity. The former with its aim was articulated as "relaying information and learning to know the inmates – getting along during prison time" and the latter as "Activating inmates to talk, influencing the thoughts -> getting along in society". They indicate not only a difference

or gap between different aims or purposes, but also a temporal gap between now and the future. The interview excerpts and the model concepts were then shown to participants in the design workshop to prompt discussion about task ideas. In addition to the researchers, the participants of the design workshop were prison officers, senior officials, social workers and assistant directors. Service users such as prisoners could join the HCCE workshops, but in this study, it was not possible for reasons related to research ethics.

In the design workshop, discussion around the current and future model concepts suggests that the transformation of prison work is more complex than merely improving separate processes – rather, it is more likely to be a systemic change that transforms not only individual officers' practices and work orientation, but also the roles and division of labour of the prison. The discussion raised new perspectives, such as control is not separate from activating rehabilitative work: rather, the latter builds *dynamic security* in the prison. It was argued that a functioning security culture of a prison is a precondition for rehabilitative work to be successful. The discussions included many critical expressions as well: e.g., members of organized crime can strengthen the criminal culture and thus hamper rehabilitative work in prison departments.

An illustration of a prisoner's path at the incoming phase when the prisoner is admitted to prison was used to help design developmental tasks in the workshop. The discussion was facilitated by asking how the relaying of information, learning to know the inmates, and activating inmates to talk takes place in these steps. In reflecting on the inmates' path, the researchers emphasized the need to integrate all service actions along the inmate's path as much as possible. The need for integration prompted participants to look at improving communication among prison functionaries: how information gained during different steps would reach relevant functionaries later. Another repeated input by researchers was to turn discussion into what we can do, rather than what those outside prison should do.

As an outcome of the design workshops, two new local developmental task ideas came out. The first was officers' recording of inmates' behaviour, specific situations or needs into the digital sentence plans. Here, the officers saw an opportunity to make their rehabilitative work more *visible* both at prison, region and national levels of

correctional services. Recordings could give more weight to prison officers' perspectives in decisions concerning the inmates. The second developmental task was a renewed "introduction" to inmates when they enter a dwelling department. This addresses an issue identified as problematic by inmates and thus indirectly gives voice to the inmates.

In the recording task, officers wrote down both positive and negative things about inmates' behaviour and initiatives for their sentence plans. While the aim of both developmental tasks is to improve communication between inmates and staff and within and between occupational groups, we here have concentrated on the recording developmental task for simplicity.

The collaboration between the prison staff and researchers was crucial for the success of the project. They jointly have at least two or three encounters per month, either at Prison A or online, for planning its sequent steps. The prison "responsibles" (a social worker and an assistant director) usefully commented on the researchers' plans, made suggestions, motivated people in the prison and were responsible for organization of and communication about the workshops and the developmental tasks.

Implementation of the developmental tasks

After a pilot project involving some officers, the implementation of the developmental tasks started by introducing them in the official annual training programme of all officers at Prison A. The important transition of leadership from external researchers to prison happened in this phase. Researchers still supported the training with a PowerPoint presentation about the developmental tasks, and they observed this part of the training online, participating with only minor comments at the end about the forthcoming co-evaluation workshops.

The training consisted of useful dialogues about the developmental tasks but critical voices were also heard. A representative of the regional assessment centre participated by giving a talk about the important "why" of recording – the assessment centre needs to make important decisions about an inmate's moving to an open (half-way) prison, and good decisions require that there are grounds for those decisions. The everyday life of prison wings, as witnessed by officers, is an important source of facts for decision making.

During the training, the prison assistant manager was expecting everybody to participate by putting the developmental tasks into practice. This is a hierarchical top-down mandate through which an employer has a "direction right" to tell employees what they need to do. This is in opposition to the principles of the HCCE and many other developmental methods in which participation is voluntary and an employee's autonomy is respected, even encouraged. This cultural gap between employees' autonomy and hierarchy exists in developmental efforts in all salaried work but seems to be particularly strong in hierarchic organizations such as correctional services. We will come back to this in the discussion.

After the training, the researchers devised paper forms for prison staff to record their experiences with the developmental tasks, and the prison managers formulated the necessary documents for the task of recording. Most officers implemented the developmental task and recorded their feedback about them on paper forms, while some refused to do so "before this extra task is considered in their salary". During the implementation, a social worker interviewed inmates about the developmental tasks. Researchers condensed all the experiences collected for use in the co-evaluation workshop and elaborated assisting questions in each dimension (Fig. 9.1) for the co-evaluation workshop.

Co-evaluation workshop

The workshop started with brief presentations about the developmental task, and the prison staff's and inmates' feedback about it. After that, the inner circle, consisting of five prison officers together evaluated it in the light of each dimension. They were asked to consider how the developmental task would generate value from the perspective of each dimension. Participants were guided to consider both positive and negative changes as well as anticipated and unanticipated effects. The questions were tailored to this developmental task at Prison A.

In the first *client/prisoner* dimension, the questions for the inner circle of the workshop included: What are the benefits and harms of recording for the inmates? How useful are officers' recordings for inmates in reaching the aims of their sentence plans? What changes do inmates see in their relationship and communication with prison staff? Does the recording affect relations between inmates, and how?

The impact on *employee* focuses on changes in the content of work, including work roles, relations, knowledge and tasks. The guiding questions were: How has the developmental task affected the prison officer's role? What are the outcomes of recording on trust building and activation with inmates? How has the developmental task affected officers' sense of personal safety? Does the recording fulfil its promise of making the officers' rehabilitative work with inmates more visible to others?

With the dimension of *population* the aim is to steer the discussion to evaluate the recording task from the perspective of a specific geographical region with its population. How can the recording affect an inmate's risk of returning to prison? The *reputation* was enquired about by asking, how could the developmental task influence the public image of Prison A and of national correctional services?

The aim of the *integration* dimension is to provide understanding on how the developmental task aligns with other prison services as well as with data systems. In our case, the main questions were: To what extent has the recording improved the information flow from an officer to other prison staff? To what extent can recording support inmates' path to a crimeless life and reintegration into society? We need to consider here that digital services will be implemented in all Finnish prisons within the next five years or so. How does the task of recording inform the development of digital services in prisons?

Evaluation of *economy* focuses on new potential resources and savings, for example. How do officers' recordings impact the economy and cost-effectiveness of Prison A? How does it affect the allocation of resources such as spaces, time use and workforce?

After the inner circle had evaluated the developmental task according to the six dimensions and the questions sketched above, the outer circle came to the fore. It consisted of people who could promote the developmental task by improving or spreading it into wider use such as actors from the regional office and the evaluation centre of CSA, but collaborators from other services could also be invited. Now the inner circle only listened. The outer circle discussed what they had heard and what they could conclude from the inner circle's evaluation. They summed up their discussion by writing down their suggestions and presenting: 1 what lessons have been learnt? 2 what should be done next? and 3 how could participants in the outer circle contribute by embedding, spreading or improving the task?

Finally, the inner circle discussed, complemented and decided on suitable future actions, based on the outer circle's proposals. They could also remove some of the suggestions and add their own. The co-evaluation workshop ended by suggesting the following steps to be taken. In this workshop, training and preparing a common set of simple guidelines for recording were the next steps.

6 Discussion and conclusion

In our HCCE research project, there was a nationally-experienced strategic need to develop rehabilitative work in prison services. Without this need, the collaborative realization of the HCCE project at Prison A and the developmental tasks would not be there. However, the alignment of developmental, participatory research with the strategy also increases the complexity of the researchers' role: besides being a facilitator, they need to balance and create dialogues between strategic implementation and employee-driven innovation. Here, we have discussed the HCCE process in terms of gaps observed during the process. The HCCE process has helped us focus on the following gaps:

1. *The gap between control and rehabilitation in prison officers' work* reflects the general fundamental and historical contradiction of correctional services between security (punishment) and well-being (care) (Laine, 2011). This gap is visible in the division of labour in the prison (Section 3). Importantly, our study revealed how rehabilitative work is not contrary to security and control, but rather builds on it. Security is not set aside despite the greater emphasis on care. The notion of dynamic security is an important mediator between control and rehabilitation. For officers, rehabilitative work may find its justification precisely through dynamic security. The developmental task process suggests that we are not only dealing with a transition from control to rehabilitative work emphasizing rehabilitation and welfare. Control and enhancing security for individual inmates and staff members should be integrated in designing, implementing and evaluating rehabilitative work. There is a need to find solutions through which both security and rehabilitative work can simultaneously be enhanced.

2. *The gap between hierarchic and participatory cultures of development* (Ylisassi et al., 2016). The HCCE method carries with it an assumption of a participatory, developmental culture that nurtures employees' proactiveness and learning. The traditional hierarchic culture of correctional services is poor in encouraging employees' initiatives and innovation. It is hard for employees to activate and empower their clients (such as inmates) if they work in strongly hierarchical cultures (Ylisassi et al., 2016). Researchers and facilitators need to be aware of how different cultures may create pressures for local workers. In the HCCE project, this gap was considered by trying to create dialogues between the needs experienced by prison officers (invisibility of their work; lack of influencing possibilities) and the Criminal Sanction Agency's official rehabilitative work strategy.

3. *The gap between the novel recording task and prison officers' traditional tasks.* The recording task nudges officers towards writing down things about the inmates in a situation in which prison officers may feel that they lack time, motivation and legitimacy for it. In addition, the HCCE method with its aim of systemic evaluation also requires recording – without making visible the pros and cons of the developmental task as participants see it, the evaluation remains superficial. The recording developmental task thus poses a double challenge of recording to participants (Section 5, implementation of the developmental tasks). This gap was tackled with the very idea of encouraging people to try out. In the training session, prison officers were motivated by hearing how important their recordings were for the regional assessment centre. The promise of having a voice in the co-evaluation workshop gave prison officers motivation to write down their experiences about the developmental tasks.

Marianne Cerf (2011) describes participatory research as a joint production of an "artefact" between a researcher and the practical partners in the research-action process. The developmental tasks in our case are such artefacts. They evolve along with the interactions, and the change proceeds as different actors adopt or modify tasks and make them exist for themselves. In action research type of developmental projects, researchers need to pay attention to the different qualities of knowledge

produced in the process (Cerf, 2011). It remains to be seen if the officers' developmental tasks will finally exist "for themselves", and if yes, in what way they are redefined, made meaningful and evaluated. Even "failed" developmental tasks can be generative for collective learning (De Keyser et al., 2019).

The developmental tasks are not about rehabilitative work only: they also enhance and require multi-professional collaboration between prison staff. Recording observations supports all communication and possibly collaboration within correctional and other services (see chapter 6).

We may see recording and communication as parts the increasing trend of datafication (Thompson, 2017) and digital technology in correctional services (Johnson & Hail-Jares, 2016). Digitalisation enables enhanced information collection and knowledge production for better awareness of work practices. This means better decision making for managers but also prison staff may access information that is useful for their own work. In correctional services, digital information through recording can be used for producing public value for society.

The outcomes of the HCCE project in terms of new practices and employees' proactiveness remain to be studied. The HCCE method provides a welcome theory-based practical complement to implementation and evaluation in formative interventions and it is also a contribution to the wider literature on developmental research. We see that the HCCE process benefits from identifying developmental gaps in and between research and correctional services and learns from them. The six-dimension framework (Fig. 1) can be used to give voice to differing interests and influence the future actions to be taken in prisons and elsewhere.

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Terminology and abbreviations

CSA: The Criminal Sanctions Agency is the governmental organization responsible for all correctional services in Finland.

Developmental task: An experimentation designed, implemented and evaluated collaboratively by employees, managers and researchers.

Gap: a mismatch within or between participants' activities and developmental interventions as a resource to promoting learning processes.

HCCE: Human-centred co-evaluation. A method to support employees in their collective efforts to develop work practices by designing and implementing developmental tasks simultaneously with setting goals and finding ways to evaluate and learn from them.

Rehabilitative work: Work included in prison officers' everyday duties with inmates to reduce the risk of reoffending.

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