Quality employment and quality public services

Prison Services
Anchors of employment quality: a framework

Goal:

• Understanding employment quality of prison staff in different European countries.

Focus:

• Detection of differences in employment quality of prison staff between the countries.
• Explaining these differences by the interplay between political choices and a growing societal complexity.
• Recommendations
Employment quality of prison staff at risk

*Staff-turnover is high to humongous – Sweden, Italy, Greece, UK*

*Prison staff risk emotional exhaustion, and depersonalization – Italy, Greece, UK*

*20% staff shortage – Italy*

*Having a second job is normal – Italy*

*7000 full time prison staff fired in period 2010-2016, the cost of riots since then was £9,363,964 – UK*

*In 2017, 67% of prison establishments were overcrowded – UK*

*3 in 10 officers victim of physical assault – UK*

*Wage cuts up to 50% of net income – Greece*

*No structural training programs – Greece*
But different causes in QWL

- Voice and representation
- Job content
- Working environment
- Employment conditions

Job and employment quality → Well-being
Sweden: can their model survive?

Clear focus on **rehabilitation**:
- Highly trained prison staff
- With broad, varied tasks and a lot of autonomy
- And good employment conditions
- Established social dialogue
- In modern infrastructure
- Without overcrowding or understaffing

But shifting towards focus on **surveillance**:
- More specialization in prison staff functions (staff has to choose)
- More safety-procedures and larger prisons
- Less autonomy and shortened training for recruits
- Less individual counseling

→ Austerity and harsher societal climate against crime

With clear consequences for quality of employment
Sweden: can their model survive?

**Job content** became more **complex**:

- Punitive turn and harder societal climate against crime
  - More security rules/procedures to follow
  - More specialisation in staff functions surveillance vs rehabilitation
- New public management
  - More administration / centralisation
  - Less direct contact with inmates
- More diverse inmates

Combined with **limited budget** and no additional staff

= employment quality (and quality of service) at risk!
Italy: discourse versus practice

Official policy focuses on social re-inclusion and re-education
<-> Prison practice is organized for surveillance
   - Only 6% of the resources are destined for rehabilitation (80% goes to surveillance staff)
   - Overrepresentation of surveillance staff
   - No criteria for assessing quality of prison services
   - Italian prisons are known as ‘hard’.

A focus on surveillance, a harder societal climate and austerity lead to overcrowding and understaffing, both to the detriment of the employment quality of prison staff
Italy: discourse versus practice

**Employment conditions** under increasing pressure:

- Low wages – leading to secondary jobs
- Irregular working hours and frequent overtime due to overcrowding and understaffing
- Limited career opportunities
- Training gap between theory (hard skills) and practice, which requires soft skills
- Narrow jobs, high work pressure and limited autonomy
- More hierarchy (role of management decisive), limiting good support

Combined with **limited budget**

= lower employment quality (and lower quality of service)
UK: at the rock bottom…

**Hybrid of goals**: surveillance & rehabilitation in a context of austerity and harsh societal climate

- Little education and low level training
- Poor employment conditions & little voice
- But requiring professional services to vulnerable inmates

No decision-making power:

- Especially in private prisons
- Often highly hierarchical mega-prisons

*We’re at the rock bottom and it’s going to take a lot to get that back*”
UK: at the rock bottom…

Job content became more complex:
- “Jack of all trades, master of none”
  - Multiple tasks, no time to do anything in detail
  - No time to build a relationship with the inmates
- Limited social contact due to severe understaffing
- Increase in workload due to overcrowding and understaffing

Combined with very unsafe working environment

= generates work related stress
UK: at the rock bottom…

**Employment conditions** further decreasing:
- Insufficient training
  - *Private prisons offer no on-the-job training*
  - *Almost no time of shadowing/tutoring for new recruits*
  - *Limited offer in training despite educational needs*
- Low pay
  - *No relation between training and wage level*
  - *Wage stagnation*
  - *Difficult wage negotiations*
- Limited career opportunities

Combined with **no right to strike**

= low employment quality and low quality of services
Greece: austerity overrules intentions

Growing awareness of the importance of rehabilitation, but **focus on surveillance** in practice:
- 4000 custodian officers vs. 120 ‘reintegration’ officers
- *No structural training for custodian staff*

**Austerity** and harsher societal climate:
- *Understaffing + overcrowding (although improving) make work in prisons hard and unsafe*
- *Employment conditions went down, especially wage & training*

→ *A informal rules, ‘privilege system’ to cope with complexity and uncertainty of prison work*

Strong trade union but limited impact
Greece: austerity overrules intentions

**Employment conditions** deteriorated heavily:
- To up to 50 net wage decrease
- Initial training reduced from 6 months to 1 month (and for some no training at all)
- Training offered only ad hoc, depending on budget
- 44% of prison officers experiences lack of knowledge on how to deal with conflicts
- Working times of sometimes 2 weeks without a day-off

**Job content:**
- A lot of repetitive tasks and little decision making power
- Foreign inmates make work more complex
- Clear relation with organization of prisons
  - More job satisfaction if less hierarchy

**Unsafe working conditions**
- A lot of incidents (even lethal) in last years
Country-specific points of attention

• Sweden
  • *Keep autonomy high*
  • *Keep rehabilitative and surveillance related tasks together*
  • *Limit administration*

• Italy
  • *More training on-the-job*
  • *More staff*
  • *Better employment conditions*
  • *Inclusion of rehabilitative tasks*
  • *More autonomy*
Country-specific points of attention

• UK
  • Safety first!
  • More training on-the-job
  • More staff
  • Better employment conditions
  • More autonomy

• Greece
  • Safety first as well!
  • Structural training programs
  • More staff
  • Better employment conditions in general
  • Less hierarchical organizations
Conclusion

Policy mix

Employment quality

Trade union responses