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Translating policies and standards into practice and from practice to policies – major challenges

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1. INTRODUCTION

Let me first of all thank the organisers at the Council of Europe for this opportunity to meet old friends and former colleagues from all over Europe. I have really looked forward to this day!

When you retire after a long career in the prison and probation service work – in my case more than 40 years – you seldom miss the daily challenges brought about by prisoners and staff, and definitely not those brought about by politicians and the press. What you really start missing is the inspiration that you may get from committed and dedicated colleagues; not least the rewarding perspectives and insight from the international collaboration. Having retired, I am indeed disconnected from all this, and therefore the organisers are courageous to entrust this comprehensive subject to a person who is no longer part of the international flying circus of prison and probation experts.

As a matter of fact, the question is quite simple: How do we connect the estimated and noble principles with the tough and demanding everyday life in our prisons and probation units? Put differently: How do we transform ideals into reality; and how do we ensure that reality is reflected in the ideals?

Unfortunately, the answer is not as simple as the question.

But it is crucial to look for answers. If we let some of our ordinary prison officers – or even some of the prisoners and probationers – attend a conference like this, or any of the hundreds of international professional conferences held every year, I am sure they would have the feeling that we were in two different worlds.

The same applies in our individual countries in which prisoners and prison officers often find it difficult to see the link between political statements or often well-intentioned and humane opinions from central authorities and the everyday life lived at the front line, which is the way to which it is often referred to by staff with a not very well chosen expression from war zones.

Even though we have all signed the same international instruments, such as the European Prison Rules and the European Rules on Community Sanctions and Measures, we all know that there are considerable differences in the way that these rules are implemented – if implemented at all. This is the very reason for the famous and by now quite well-worn quote from Sir Winston Churchill, who said at the establishment of the Council of Europe: “Show me your prisons and I shall say in which society you live”.

This gap widens if we move outside of Europe and to a global level.

Last autumn I made a lecturing tour around a couple of South American states. Both states have undertaken to observe the United Nations Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners and have not only signed, but also incorporated the United Nations Convention against Torture into national legislation, and they have prison legislation corresponding more or less to that of my own country. To mention an example: the purpose of punishment is stated to be 'social reintegration', and in principle prisoners retain all civil rights. Their legislation prohibits inhuman and degrading treatment, prisoners must, as far as possible, be given a single cell, proper food, good sanitary conditions, right to education, etc.

The reality described by local experts – and which I was allowed to see myself to a limited extent – is entirely different. It is characterised by considerable over-occupancy, very poor, dilapidated and filthy conditions, mistreatment of prisoners, widespread corruption and many other ailments.

I am obviously fully aware that this discrepancy between ideals and reality is mainly related to insufficient financial means, but not exclusively. It is also a consequence of political prioritisation.

Turning the spotlight towards ourselves – towards Europe – my claim is that not one single country lives fully up to the ideals that we have created at international or national level. As mentioned, great varieties are seen from one country to the next, but no one can lean back with an easy conscience and praise himself.

This gives us a credibility problem. Partly relative to our own staff, who may find it difficult to know what to believe, and partly relative to clients, who may, for good reasons, perceive us as hypocrites, but also relative to the public and the politicians, who often mix up the ideals that they have heard of with the reality that is unknown to them. That creates the foundation of an unrealistic public debate – a debate often characterised by populism – in which people talk past each other.

Before venturing into my analysis, I have to make the reservation that it cannot be ruled out that the way in which various kinds of general or ideal statements can be translated into practice may differ. To mention an example: mechanisms might not be entirely the same no matter whether it is about politics and standards in international conventions, recommendations, decisions or other instruments or it is about values and ideals developed at national political level or at national prison and probation headquarters, or, not forgetting, from scientific research. However, a detailed analysis of any such differences would fall outside the time frame available for this presentation, and I will therefore take the liberty of assuming that mechanisms are generally more or less same.

2. FROM IDEALS TO PRACTICE

To ensure that policies and standards are implemented in a good and professional manner, they indeed have to be feasible! Sometimes you may be left with the impression that people wording international recommendations, etc., feel bound to follow the doctrine of the old

saying 'nothing is impossible for those who don't have to do it!'. Or as once said by a trade union leader: 'Take care not to lift the flag so high that the feet are lifted up off the ground.' There ought also to be a code for drafters of international instruments telling them to focus on the general lines as the important thing rather than going in too much detail. In return, you could also expect that national politicians would take the lead in realising the standards.

To mention an example, the Members of Parliament in Norway have passed a parliamentary decision on the activities of the Directorate of Norwegian Correctional Service (*Kriminalomsorgen*) which laid down the fundamental correctional principles, including the principle of prisoners' rights and the principle of normalisation. In doing so, they emphasised that the authorities must aim at having objectives that are more than merely something existing on paper, rather they must have a genuine impact of sentence enforcement in practice.

This is the task entrusted all of us, and we have different possibilities of solving this task.

2.1. Stakeholder information and communication

To implement international standards, etc., it is necessary in most cases to formally transform them into national law or procedures. In certain cases it will happen through automatic incorporation into national law, but most often it happens by translating the recommendation or other instrument into the national language and making it available to the relevant national prison and probation systems.

Another fundamental condition for implementing ideal requirements, regardless of their origin, is therefore that they are made known to those actually concerned. It goes without saying and needed not be mentioned at all. Nevertheless, this is an issue often pointed out by the CPT in connection with inspections that even the most basic rules like the European Prison Rules are not available to ordinary staff members and clients, or at least they are not directly available. Often there are links to the very basic rules on the websites of the national prison and probation authorities, but it is necessary to be proactive to find them, and only seldom is there time for that during the daily work. It is even more difficult to find more peripheral or specific recommendations or instruments. That would require a visit to the websites of the relevant international organisations, which hardly many ordinary staff members at our institutions would think of doing. As regards the prisoners, in most countries it would not even be possible to access the Internet and browse relevant websites for such information.

It takes a huge effort to spread familiarity with and knowledge of standards and policies to all corners of the organisation. Because it does not suffice to point to them once and for all. It is an ongoing process required to ensure that these ideals and standards become inherently reflected in the professional conduct of staff members. It is about training and continuing education, to which I shall come back; and it is about using ever better means of communication both to staff and to clients. One way could be to allow prisoners Internet access, as the prison services of several countries are about to or are in the process of doing.

All such matters are the responsibility of top-management, as are also all other initiatives required to create coherence between values and practice. This responsibility rests with us, those of us sitting in this room.

2.2. Integration of values and visions

At managerial level, we have several tools that we can use to create coherence between the general requirements and values and the everyday reality at our institutions.

One of them is to develop visions and value programmes for our own prison and probation systems based on international rules and recommendations.

It became trendy in private enterprises almost a generation ago to introduce value-based management – to develop vision and mission statements as guiding principles for all employees of the enterprise. The Correctional Service of Canada, the federal correctional system of Canada, was probably the authority within our field of work which first grabbed the idea and drafted a Mission Statement. Subsequently, the idea has spread. In Denmark we drafted a so-called Programme of Principles in the early 1990s, and today every single employee of the system knows principles like the principle of normalisation as the back of their hands. This principle did not come to us out of the blue. It was developed from a number of the rules given in the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners and the European Prison Rules. The same applies to the fundamental value of our work, which has been coined in the phrase ‘the art of balancing a strict and a soft approach’. It is an expression of the general international requirement that the purpose of punishment is social reintegration and that the security and treatment activities are therefore in general of equal importance. (Of course this does not mean that there must be a state of equilibrium in every respect and at all times. In many situations, the ‘soft’ (treatment) approach prevails, in others the ‘strict’ (security) approach).

For policies and standards to have any impact in the last link of the chain, it is essential to involve all relevant parties involved in the formulation process to the extent possible. It may be a time-consuming and demanding process, but as a former director-general once said: ‘Democracy is like slowly groping your way towards the right decision, rather than walking directly to the wrong one.’ I am afraid that the long way is a necessity if values are to be embedded in all links of the chain in reality.

Visions are intended to set the direction of the organisation, whereas values are mainly intended to influence conduct and attitudes. However, it is essential to emphasise that even though a general understanding is created of the formulation of visions and values, the development of visions and values cannot stop by that.

It is crucial to make every single institution, every single field of work and ultimately every single employee pose the question: What does this or that value mean to me and the particular work that I have to perform? Having answered that question, there is a chance that the values have become internalised and accordingly drivers of conduct. Then it is necessary to follow up to ensure that staff conduct also corresponds in practice to the policies and standards adopted. As regards the institutions, this can be achieved by identifying detailed strategic goals, which I shall revert to shortly. As regards the individual employee,

performance can be evaluated at periodic (for example annual) staff development interviews with his or her direct superior. I shall revert to that as well.

2.3. Strategic goals

A very common way of creating consistency between theory and practice is to translate policies and standards into strategic goals for the whole enterprise or part of it.

In certain countries, the government and/or the political majority will make a performance contract governing the work of the national prison and probation service and determining, in greater or less detail, its political goals for a specific number of years. In Denmark, this happens every four years in connection with the negotiations on the national budget. It is a quite detailed plan, which is drafted following lengthy political negotiations based on a proposal made by the Department of Prisons and Probation and the Ministry of Justice. Before drafting such proposal, we normally receive input from various leadership teams and staff organisations. By combining the targets and a timeline for the performance of the individual elements, Parliament can meticulously follow whether the policy is implemented in practice by the organisation.

Similarly, the central administration can conclude a derived performance contract with the individual institutions and operational managers of the individual institutions to ensure that the policy is implemented even at the most distant unit.

The determination of such strategic goals may naturally also reflect the more general values originating from the visions and policy programmes of the organisation, which reflect, in turn, the fundamental international recommendations, etc.

It also gives dynamic development to build on rolling (that is periodic) performance targets. This development can take into account new priorities and new insight into and knowledge of what works and what does not work.

The value of determining strategic goals is obviously highly dependent on the control carried out to ensure that the goals are actually reached.

Apart from setting directions for the organisation, this is probably the most important managerial task. It is all about follow-up, follow-up and once again follow-up!

It requires a visible management, a management with the courage to rise to the occasion if things are not acceptable on time. To achieve that, management must be able to ask the right questions and not settle with vague and imprecise answers. Finally, it requires credible follow-up for management to convince the organisation that 'things matter – get them done!' However, top management can demand good target achievement only through clear and precise communication and equally clear and explicit division of responsibility, and only if the group of managers is composed of individuals with the right education and approach to rise to the challenge.

I shall revert to that later.

If no strategic goals are set by Parliament, such goals must be set by top management within the framework of legislation and the current national and international values. Management follow-up is also essential in this situation to ensure that the organisation moves in the right direction.

Some jurisdictions use key performance indicators to allow management to monitor whether the goals are reached. They can also be combined with so-called traffic light indicators, which are created from ordinary incident reports and allow management to follow on a daily basis whether things are as they were supposed to be (green light), whether there are any signals of danger (amber light), or whether a goal has not been reached (red light).

Another option is to establish an internal controller unit or an internal inspection unit charged with making visits to the institutions to guide them in proper performance. We know by experience that this kind of follow-up works the best if the purpose is to help people become better instead of catching them in doing wrong.

By and large, we should not forget as top-managers that motivation and confidence create higher job satisfaction and accordingly often better results than formal control does. As chief executives, we should not forget that – just like we do ourselves – our subordinate managers require a managerial framework to have room for manoeuvre. Experience shows that a far too narrow focus on performance management may easily lead to burnout and target displacement and to lack of confidence in both superiors and subordinates. That is poisonous to the organisation.

Here as well it is about striking the right balance.

2.4. Organisational structure

At national level, there is hardly any doubt that the way in which a prison and probation system is organised will have an impact on the speed and efficiency by which policies and standards can be implemented.

This means that a flat and unbureaucratic organisation can change directions and implement new standards quicker than a rigid, hierarchical organisation with many levels.

Similarly, it will be easier to start an efficient bottom-up process in a flat organisational structure with only few levels in the decision-making chain structure in order to gather information on day-to-day experiences for the purpose of bringing it to the knowledge of top management and from there eventually to international organisations to be used in the work done at international level.

2.5. Management-level

The responsibility for translating international regulations and recommendations into national rules and standards rests with top management. However, this responsibility must be shared with Parliament, which is in charge of enacting the necessary legislation and

providing the necessary political support for the implementation of external recommendations, etc.

When the formal, legislative structure is in place, top management has the full responsibility for translating rules and recommendations into a practical reality.

Top management is responsible for setting the direction and formulating the operational policies, procedures and standards to support the realisation of the goals within the given political framework. As already mentioned, this can be effected through visions, strategic goals and similar means. In reality, this may be the easy part of being a manager.

A recent study among Danish business managers showed that managers are in general good at determining the direction, but have greater difficulties in creating commitment across the organisation.

There is hardly any reason to believe that things should be different when it comes to managers at various levels of prison and probation authorities.

2.5.1. The primary task of top management is to create commitment to the ideas among managers at the next level of management. They are the ones to take the direction and ideals to the front-line staff. Therefore it is highly important to convince them that the direction chosen is the right one and that the strategic goals are relevant and realistic.

This requires a group of local managers who are well aware of what is expected of them. One way of achieving such situation is to involve the group of managers in the formulation of the operating policies which are to support the realisation of the general policies and values.

Another way could be to teach them “transformational leadership” (Ingstrup and Crookall, 2004) which works by influencing the values and priorities of staff. It takes more than a memorandum to do that. Leaders inspire followers through optimism, enthusiasm and emotional appeal and by setting a personal example.

2.5.2. Another prerequisite is comprehensive and targeted management education and not least ongoing continuing education and coaching of managers to enable them to constantly re-inforce their professionalism.

2.5.3. Thirdly, top management has to create a clear division of responsibility to ensure that managers at all levels are fully aware of their tasks and responsibilities. This applies both to specific day-to-day tasks that have to be solved when translating ideas into practice and not least more generally when it comes to the expectations of the managers’ managerial qualifications among the rest of the organisation. To this end, it may be helpful to create a set of general managerial values that will make it evident to everybody what ‘good management’ is in the prison and probation system in particular.

To mention an example, in the Danish Prison and Probation Service, we have made a handbook listing eight management expectations for which all managers will be held accountable.

Examples of those management expectations are:

- You must reach the common goals
- You must ensure respect for decisions
- You must show drive
- You must be motivating
- You must deal with conflicts
- You must take into account criticism and learn from mistakes
- You must give clear information
- You must think across the context of the entire prison and probation system

The handbook is made as a practical tool for the day-to-day management work. This entails that each of the management expectations is accompanied by practical guidance for how to meet the relevant expectation.

The performance of the individual manager will be measured once a year by assessing whether they have solved the specific tasks following from performance contracts, etc., and whether they have lived up to the general management expectations.

Obviously, this is only one way of doing it. However, our method has earned recognition from leading external managerial experts.

2.5.4. The fourth and final element is that it may be useful to gather managers at different levels at periodic management conferences to give them the possibility of exchanging experiences and allow top management a direct opportunity to communicate new political signals and new input from international forums – and in general just to ‘keep the soup boiling’.

2.6. Employees

When it comes to translating international ideals and values into national policies and procedures and from there into everyday life, the employees ‘on the floor’ are, from a direct perspective, mainly in a receiving position, but not only. I shall revert to that because involvement also plays a role at this level in order for the translation process to succeed.

The question is how to best make employees ready to accept the general values and motivate them to use the values in their everyday work at the institutions.

It will hardly surprise anybody in this room that the barriers encountered may sometimes seem almost insurmountable. It may seem like a kind of natural law that directives and recommendations coming from above will be viewed with scepticism by the ‘man on the floor’, and that the scepticism will grow the higher up or the further away the directives or recommendations come from. In this connection, designations like “desk officer”, “civil service mandarin” and “top-level bureaucrat” are not always intended as praise!

The ultimate consequence of this distance between management and staff may be the growth of an unhealthy sub-culture among first-line prison officers intended to cover their colleagues’

abuse of power and ill-treatment of prisoners. In my own country, we have seen discouraging examples of such sub-culture in certain institutions – also recently.

What can managers do to increase the acceptance and understanding among prison officers of the ideals and values originating from international bodies or from Parliament or from the central prison and probation authorities?

Several tools have turned out as useful for this purpose.

2.6.1. First we have to focus on recruiting staff having a reasonable educational level prior to employment – and not least having attitudes in line with the fundamental values chosen for the system. This will usually be clarified through various psychological tests and professional recruitment procedures.

2.6.2. A prerequisite for being attractive to highly qualified candidates is, however, that we can offer attractive pay and working conditions. There is seriousness behind the joke when we say: ‘Pay them well – if you pay peanuts, you get monkeys!’

I am fully aware that we cannot, just like that, raise the salary for our employees to an attractive level compared with other public-sector (or private-sector) jobs, no matter how much we would like to. It is, however, our task to work for influence and try to convince the politicians and the authorities granting the funding that our employees are doing very difficult and burdensome work that society ought to appreciate more. It could be added with an easy conscience that it would no doubt pay in the long run if we are to meet the goals that the politicians themselves are establishing for our activities.

2.6.3. A decent physical and mental working environment is also a prerequisite for enabling our staff to maintain their enthusiasm and professional and human approach to the work required by our values. That alone is a huge challenge for us as chief executives to achieve considering the very strenuous and demanding workday that our staff at the institutions must deal with on a daily basis. How to solve that task is a theme that could be an independent subject of several conferences, seminars and workshops, and I do not have sufficient time to dig further into it now.

2.6.4. There is one thing, though, that I want to mention, which is also related to working environment. This is the value of clarifying our expectations of the employees so that they know – as also managers know – what is required of them and what factors will be used to assess their performance.

In Denmark, we have also drafted a guide for what we consider ‘good work’ of prison and probation officers. ‘Staff expectations’, as the guide is called, describes the conduct required of employees to do their work in the best possible way.

The expectations are as follows:

- You must master your profession
- You must be committed

- You must assume responsibility
- You must respect decisions
- You must have the ability to put yourself in another person's place
- You must be collaborative
- You must communicate in a decent manner
- You must think across the context of the entire prison and probation system

Not surprisingly, these expectations correspond to the expectations of managers.

The list of expectations has also been made usable in the daily work by combining the expectations with guidance on and examples of educational methods. To change culture you have to tell stories of people who performed well, invented new ways of doing things or created best practice within your organisation (Ingstrup and Crookall, 2004). As is the case with the management expectations, the staff expectations are intended to make the individual employee know what he or she will be held accountable for at the annual staff development interview.

2.6.5. Moreover, it goes without saying that it is also crucial to employees that their basic training is continuously updated and that they are regularly offered continuing education.

2.6.6. As mentioned initially, education, good working conditions and clear requirements do not suffice if you want the employees on the floor to assume ownership of the fundamental values and ideals. It is also vital to include all employees in the implementation process. As regards the extent to which employees are to be given influence on the wording of the general policies and standards, I shall revert to that shortly. However, when we talk about ensuring that the translation of the general values is implemented at even the most distant unit and thereby gains true significance for our clients, it is necessary, as already mentioned, that each single unit and each individual employee is 'forced' to ask the reflexive question: What does this value or principle mean to me in my particular function? Only when the individual employee has made this clear to himself or herself and it has been accepted by management, is there a chance that the value will be realised in practical everyday life.

2.7. Relations work

The last step of translating values into reality is to ensure that the clients – whom it is all about – are treated in accordance with the recommendations and ideals falling down from above.

In most prisons, this process is impeded by a barrier consisting in a heartfelt and almost automatic adversarial relationship and inherent scepticism and distrust between prisoners and (in particular) prison officers – a barrier being built up consciously or unconsciously by both parties. This barrier is contributing not only to rendering futile the previously mentioned initiatives to transfer ideals into practice. This barrier or wall also contributes to making prisons a dangerous and destructive place for both prisoners and prison officers to stay. Therefore there are many good reasons for breaking down this barrier.

To succeed, the process requires a deliberate choice from both parties to meet the other party half way. However, it is also necessary that we make the tools that I mentioned previously available to the prison officers and, not least, it is necessary to allow prisoners real influence on their own destinies instead of stripping them of any kind of influence, as often happens in traditional prisons.

This may sound unrealistic to many people, but it is in fact possible if both parties show good will.

By using this approach, prisoners and prison officers in a couple of Danish prisons have actually, at their own initiative, succeeded in making everyday life more endurable and more rewarding to both prison officers and prisoners. In one of the prisons, they have even drafted rules of good conduct for both parties, and they have made written commitments to each other to follow the rules. Such step requires courage from both groups because it is not entirely unproblematic to show opposition to the existing hardliners in both groups.

The most recent example of such collaboration is a relay race for both prisoners and staff that will be held later this month – inside the walls of one of our remand houses – in connection with a national campaign against cancer. They are working these days to spread the concept to other prisons and remand houses.

In practice, this kind of mutual initiatives have helped prisoners gain greater confidence in prison officers and contributed to a better and more safe working environment for prison officers. The main effect is that it becomes possible to a greater extent to realise the underlying ideas and values of the European Prison Rules on education, treatment, etc.

The real art is to make such initiatives take root and spread. It is still too early to say whether we will succeed. However, if we do not adapt prison life to make it supportive and motivating for prisoners to make efforts themselves to leave crime behind, all the resolutions, treatment programmes and educational offers in the world will be of no use. If we talk to prisoners as second-rate people, how can we then believe that they will gain respect for us and faith in our intention to help them? If we do not give prisoners influence on their own fates, how can we seriously demand of them that they take ownership of their own futures?

Though it may seem to be improper bragging, I would mention in conclusion that it appears from a very recent user survey of Danish prisons, which was made after I left the system, that two thirds of prisoners are generally satisfied with the prison conditions and that as many as three fourths of prisoners are satisfied or very satisfied with the conduct of prison officers. This does not mean that the barrier has been removed, but the survey gives rise to cautious optimism when it comes to breaking down the otherwise solid barriers and creating a more fertile soil for social reintegration efforts in the prisons. As once said by the world famous, seriously disabled cosmologist Stephen Hawking: ‘However bad life may seem, there is always something you can do, and succeed at.’ If he can be an optimist, so can we!

3. FROM PRACTICES TO IDEALS

We have now come to the question: How do we ensure that reality is reflected in ideals?

The question is not asked to prevent international ideals and visions from surpassing reality. This is exactly what ideals and visions do by nature. They must be the (realistic) goal to aim for. The question is intended to create visions grounded in reality and to allow those wearing the shoes influence on the way forward.

3.1. The main implication is that international bodies like the Council of Europe and politicians and other high-ranking decision-makers have to listen to the front-line staff. Fortunately, we see an increasing understanding of the value of inviting non-executive practitioners to conferences and as members of committees discussing general issues. The most relevant ones are probably NGOs like the ICPA, EuroPris and the CEP. I am not up-to-date on the current use of practitioners by the Council of Europe and the European Union, but when I worked for the PC-CP a little more than 20 years ago, the general perception was that 'practitioners' were people like us, that is, director-generals and people in similar positions, as opposed to scientific experts and the officials of the two organisations. "Practitioners' were" definitely not prison officers and probation workers in those days. And I believe it is only fair to say that top management at national headquarters and frontline prison staff and probation workers facing everyday challenges may have quite different perceptions of reality.

3.2. Another method is the before mentioned 'best practices method' or the 'learning from the best method' (Ingstrup and Crookall, 1998), which attempts to identify the most efficient procedure developed in some context or area and take it to the higher organisational level and make it an overall ideal that can be spread to other parts of the organisation.

In its most developed form, this method continues to see interaction between policy and practices so that a particular policy will lead to the development of practices, which are then evaluated and distilled into a new policy, which in turn leads to new practices. In this way the organisation becomes a true learning organisation.

3.3. Just like involvement is a key concept for making visions flourish in the real world, involvement is also a key concept in the bottom-up process.

If we want to learn from the experiences and expertise of the infantry, we have to involve them in the decision-making processes that are the basis of our visions and general policies. It is obvious that an organisation like a prison and probation system can never become a true democratic system in the way that the direction and visions will be determined by the majority of the staff members because the democratic legitimacy of the direction and visions rests with the politicians elected by the people and the direction is executed by the top management of the organisation, who have to answer to Parliament. However, staff members can and must have a certain degree of influence. This applies mainly to their own working conditions, but to a certain extent also to the overall framework of the organisation.

Such influence can be exercised through formal cooperative bodies, but also in a more direct and informal manner. Concepts like 'co-creation' and 'user-driven innovation' can play a major role in those contexts. Both concepts are not merely about permitting, but rather directly encouraging front-line staff to develop initiatives suited to spreading and forming the

basis of new policies. Or as the management guru Henry Mintzberg put it: You can't drive change down an organisation. You facilitate the situation so that change can come up. Create a climate where people can individually and collectively think for themselves (Ingstrup and Crookall, 2004).

I will mention two examples that are familiar to me. One of them I have already mentioned, as that is the idea of letting prisoners and prison staff together draft rules on good conduct for both parties. The other is a recent example from the largest remand house in Denmark where management, staff and prisoners have agreed upon the establishment of a new forum consisting of representatives of all three groups. This is not just another forum for exchange of views and information, but a forum that can actually make decisions and see to it that the decisions are implemented. One of the first outcomes was an improved procedure for the reception of new prisoners in the institution, but I expect this democratic innovation, which is in good harmony with the principle of normalisation, will spread and probably over time have an impact on the general policy for user influence.

3.4. A specific form of involvement is user surveys aimed at both staff and prisoners. In addition to being a satisfaction measurement tool, these surveys may also include regime-specific questions and because of factors such as anonymity, the answers to those questions may give the decision-makers new knowledge of actual developments in the system, and accordingly input for a revision of existing policies. One question may be what is required to improve relations between staff and prisoners seen from the bottom of the organisation. The surveys conducted in Denmark have shown an even surprisingly strong mutual wish for closer relations between the parties. Another question could relate to the barriers considered to prevent or make it difficult for prisoners to use their imprisonment for participating in educational or treatment activities as highlighted by all international and national policies. The answers to such questions may give valuable knowledge that can be used to draft realisable visions, etc.

3.5. If we want a more realistic picture of what is going on – or what is not going on – in our prison and probation system, it may also be a good idea to listen to the many volunteers working as NGOs together with or alongside the official system. Whether publicly or privately run, prison and probation systems will be inclined, knowingly or unknowingly, to embellish reality and play down weaknesses. Staff may have the same propensity for loyalty reasons or because they fear that it may have consequences to their employment. NGOs are more free to make critical statements and contribute to a more varied and realistic view of reality, which may give a better basis for decision-makers and vision developers.

4. CONCLUSION

The conclusion of my analysis is that although we might face huge challenges to create a link between ideals and visions on the one hand and the practical reality on the other, we also have quite a few possibilities of improving interactions. Some are based on more or less known tools, others follow from more universal human values. Further to what I just mentioned, I recently saw the following vision statement of an enterprise:

‘To fight for what it’s worth
To love what you consider important
To believe in what it stands for
To enjoy a job well done’

This motto of an Argentine wine maker was written on the label of a wine bottle. But it could just as well have been our motto!

Let me conclude by giving you an example of how international organisations have tried to gather input from a number of practitioners. It is about something as difficult as predicting what the future prisons and probation systems will look like. I am thinking of the joint project of the CEP and EuroPris called ‘Prisons of the future’. The preliminary conclusion of the survey is that, in 30 years, prisons will be more humane and have greater focus on treatment, and probation systems will not be more controlling. I am not mentioning this example because I agree in the prediction. On the contrary. It seems to me that the great focus on radicalisation, the increasing number of gang-related criminals and the increasing number of foreigners with no personal connections to the country in which they serve a sentence point towards more security and more segregation and to less focus on treatment. It might therefore be more likely that the prison system will develop towards greater differentiation to allow some prisons to focus on treatment and humanisation, whereas other prisons will focus on security and control. I also imagine that the probation services will be given more and more control tasks as short prison sentences are replaced by alternative sentences like community service orders and electronic monitoring to an ever greater extent as the trust in those schemes among the general population and politicians requires a significant degree of control. Therefore, my personal prediction would be the entirely opposite of the views expressed so far by the respondents to the survey.

However, what is crucial in this context is not who is right. Only time will show. What is crucial is that we actually try to involve a broader group in the policy-making process at international level.

The only general warning I would give as an old hand is not to go for easy and simple solutions to very complicated problems just to please the sense of justice of politicians and the population in general. This applies to both policy-makers and practitioners.

However, in our line of business, you always have to be an optimist. Maybe we could even learn from the very committed, super-optimistic hotel manager in the movie ‘The Most Exotic Marigold Hotel’, where – to put it mildly – conditions were not (yet?) as they were supposed to be, or as the guests rightfully expected them to be. Whenever they complained, they always

got the response: 'Everything will be all right in the end. So if it is not all right, it is not yet the end!'

But at least I am coming to the end of my presentation.

Let me just end up with a brief summary:

It is possible to make an active effort to facilitate the transformation of international policies and standards by focusing on elements like:

- Intensive stakeholder information and communication
- Integration of values and visions
- Determination of strategic goals
- An appropriate organisation
- Managerial development
- Staff development and
- Relations work with clients

And it is possible to make reality influence policies and standards by focusing on:

- Listening to and involving front-line staff
- Co-creation and user-driven innovation
- User surveys
- Involvement of NGOs

But there is no doubt many other methods as well. As Groucho Marx once said after having given an edifying speech: 'Those are my principles, and if you don't like them... I have some others!'

Thank you for your patience.

Literature:

Ole Ingstrup and Paul Crookall, *The Three Pillars of Public Management*, 1998

Ole Ingstrup and Paul Crookall, *Managing Change in Support of Correctional Programmes*, *Journal of Community Corrections*, Canada, Summer 2004