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Key Recommendations: Digital Tools in Penitentiary Education

1. Digital Tools and Access:

- Ensure equitable access to digital tools across different countries by first understanding the local context, particularly with internet restrictions (e.g., in prisons).
- Introduce **Training of Trainers (TOT)** programmes before introducing digital tools to facilitate smooth implementation.
- Provide country-specific guidelines on the meaning and usage of digital tools.
- Develop strategies to overcome digital access limitations in unique environments like prisons.

2. Training Approaches:

- **Train staff** not only in using digital tools but also on integrating them into their specific work environments (e.g., prisons).
- Incorporate **basic digital training** into staff development programmes, especially in countries with limited access (e.g., the Netherlands).
- Ensure that online training is **interactive** and not simply a box-ticking exercise.
- **Customise training** for different levels of staff digital literacy, ensuring less experienced and older staff are comfortable with the tools (e.g., in Austria).

3. Addressing Challenges:

- Allocate **additional time and resources** to training staff, particularly in environments with aging or less qualified staff.
- Encourage **blended learning** by incorporating online training topics into face-to-face sessions.
- Identify **common barriers** like staff shortages and tackle these before rolling out digital training tools.

4. Human Interaction and Digital Tools:

- Emphasise that digital tools should **complement human interaction**, not replace it.
- Explore innovative tools like **virtual reality** for training scenarios, but maintain the importance of human oversight (e.g., for emergency training in Estonia or handling violence in the Netherlands).
- Foster mentorship programs that bridge generational gaps, where younger staff support senior staff in using digital tools.

5. Leadership and Strategic Support:

- Leadership should play a pivotal role in promoting and guiding the **digital transformation** within organisations.
- Appoint **experts (e.g., CIOs)** within training academies or institutions to lead digital modernization efforts.
- Leaders should support a **political digital strategy**, ensure sufficient funding, and provide the infrastructure required to drive digital transformation.
- Emphasise the need for both **digital and human relationships** in supporting rehabilitation and reintegration into society.

6. Resourcing and Funding:

- Ensure there is **sufficient funding** and resourcing for digital infrastructure, tools, and training programs.
- Invest in IT labs within prisons and institutions to facilitate hands-on learning and skill development.

7. Cultural and Generational Considerations:

- Acknowledge the **cultural differences** and age-related digital skill gaps when designing and delivering training programs.
- Conduct **training needs analysis** to better understand the specific gaps and competencies required by staff in different regions and institutions.

8. Rewarding and Motivating Staff:

- Consider offering **rewards or recognition** for staff who engage in digital learning and development.
- Promote a culture of **peer learning** by designating **digital champions** within teams to help others adopt new tools.

9. Strategic Planning:

- Develop a comprehensive **digital strategy** that integrates digital tools with human interaction, addresses cultural needs, and sets clear objectives for digital transformation.
- Explore **partnerships with external companies** for effective digital training solutions.
- Design a strategy for using **staff time efficiently** in training, considering remote or after-hours learning using personal devices.

10. Marketing and Promotion:

- Use **marketing** to promote the digital culture, helping to bring staff along with the changes and encouraging adaptation to new digital tools and methods.

11. Balanced Digital-Human Symbiosis:

- Strive for a healthy **balance** between digital tools and human interaction, ensuring both are valued and used appropriately in training and rehabilitative work.

In summary, these recommendations stress **the need for a well-thought-out, context-sensitive digital strategy that includes leadership support, adequate resources, training, and a balance between digital tools and human interaction.**