

Prof. emer. Jaakko Virkkunen

## **A course on the Change Laboratory method for researchers**

**The Change Laboratory** is a method for formative intervention in work activities developed by Prof. Yrjö Engeström and his colleagues in the CRADLE research center at the University of Helsinki. The method is based on collaboration between researchers and the practitioners in an activity. Contrary to many methods of intervention in work activities that focus on producing incremental improvements in work practices, the Change Laboratory method has been designed to initiate and support a concept-level transformation in an activity. It also produces unique data about the causes of problems and developmental possibilities in the target activity. That data can be analyzed to produce insights and generalizations concerning the challenges and developmental possibilities in the kind of activity as well as on processes of expansive learning and transformation of activities. The method is based on the Cultural Historical Activity Theory, the Developmental Work Research Methodology, and the Theory of Expansive Learning (Engeström, 2000; Engeström, 1987/2015).

**The objective of the course:** The course gives a basic knowledge of the concepts and principles the method is based on as well as how to plan, carry out, and follow up a Change Laboratory intervention. This knowledge prepares the participants to start developing the competence of applying the method in practice. The various ways of analyzing the data produced in the intervention are also discussed during the course.

**The participants:** Researchers that are interested in applying the Cultural Historical Activity theory and plan to carry out a developmental intervention in some work activity with another researcher. (The use of the method requires collaboration between at least two researchers as well as with the practitioners of a work community).

**Work methods in the course:** Working in the course consists of lectures, case examples, application exercises and discussions. It is recommended that the participants familiarize themselves with Virkkunen & Newnham's book: "The Change Laboratory. A tool for Collaborative Development of Work and Education" published by Sense Publishers in 2013.

**The teacher:** Prof. emer. of Developmental Work Research Jaakko Virkkunen from the University of Helsinki has been actively involved in the development of the Change Laboratory method and has used it in formative interventions in various kinds of public and private work activities for studying expansive learning and transformation processes in work activities.

## **Course program**

### **Tuesday 15.12.**

- 13.00 Introduction of the course and the participants
- 14.00 The Change Laboratory as an application of the three principles of formative intervention:
  - 1) activity as the unit of analysis
- 14.45 *Coffee*
- 15.15. 2) double stimulation
  - 3) ascending from the abstract to the concrete
- 16.30 *End of course day*

### **Wednesday 16.12.**

- 9.00 Specifying the Change Laboratory intervention
- 10.00 Discussion on how to specify the Change Laboratory intervention
- 11.00 Planning the CL intervention as an expansive learning process
- 11.45 *Lunch*
- 13.00 Planning and carrying out Change Laboratory sessions
- 13.45 *Coffee*
- 14.15 Planning tasks to stimulate the questioning of prevalent practices and ways of thinking
- 15.15 An exercise on planning the CL as an expansive learning process and on planning a task to stimulate questioning
- 15.50 Discussion on the exercise
- 16.30 *End of course day*

### **Thursday 17.12.**

- 9.00 Historical analysis and the modeling of contradictions within the activity system
- 10.00 Discussion on historical analysis and modeling of contradictions
- 11.00 Actual empirical analysis in the Change Laboratory
- 11.45 *Lunch*
- 13.00 Discussion on actual empirical analysis
- 13.45 *Coffee*
- 14.15 Constructing a new model for the activity
- 15.15 Discussion on modeling
- 15.45 Experimental implementation and follow up of the new model
- 16.30 *End of course day*

### **Friday 18.12.**

- 9.00 Types of results of Change Laboratory interventions/ analysis of realized interventions
- 10.00 Review of and discussion on the core concepts and ideas of the course. Concluding discussion
- 11.30 *End of the course*

## References

<http://www.helsinki.fi/cradle/>

Engeström, Y. (2000). Activity theory as a framework for analyzing and redesigning work. *Ergonomics*, 43(7), 960-974.

Engeström, Y. (1987/2015). *Learning by Expanding. An Activity-Theoretical Approach to Developmental Research*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.  
(<http://lhc.ucsd.edu/MCA/Paper/Engestrom/expanding/toc.htm>)

Virkkunen & Newnham (2013) *The Change Laboratory. A tool for Collaborative Development of Work and Education*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers. An e-version of the book is available on Ebrary, EBSCO and SpringerLink.

<http://site.ebrary.com/lib/alltitles/docDetail.action?docID=10826794&p00>

<http://link.springer.com/book/10.1007%2F978-94-6209-326-3>