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# A COLAB Model of Workplace Transformation in the Criminal Justice Context

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## Introduction

The interface between health/welfare (WS) and criminal justice services (CJS) is a complex adaptive environment. It is a meeting of different "interests, identities, values, and assumptions….embedded within prevailing institutional logics (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008, p. 103). These

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logics are differentiated by different emphases being placed on issues of security/control and care that can challenge interagency relationships. It is however a rich environment for researchers to build knowledge about interagency collaboration, innovation, organisational learning using standard research methods such as observation, interview, surveys, etc. It is also an opportunity for them to take a more active role and develop methods on how to change practice rather than only observe it. It is possible for researchers to do both: develop knowledge whilst changing practice simultaneously (Vygotsky, 1997). Researchers in the prison environment have been criticised for not supporting the implementation of their own research recommendations (Kerrison et al., 2019). In response to this, we present in this chapter a model of organisational transformation in which researchers may offer this support in the criminal justice context and facilitate innovation and organisational transformation. The chapter presents the efforts of a consortium of European researchers and practitioners (COLAB-H2020-MSCA-RISE-2016/734536) working together to merge their combined knowledge of methods of organisational change in other fields and apply these to the CJS. A more detailed description of these individual constituent methods, and how our model was developed, can be found elsewhere (Hean et al., 2020a).

Sannino and Sutter (2011) describe interventions that promote organisational change as a toolkit. The COLAB consortium aimed to develop such a tool kit that has relevance specifically for the CJS context. The key items in the toolkit, and the learning processes it elicits, were created through a cross comparison of methods in which the COLAB members

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had particular expertise. These were adapted to the CJS context. The tool kit took the Change Laboratory as its baseline model but combined this with the strengths of three other methods: Boundary Crossing Workshops (e.g., Kerosuo & Engeström, 2003; Virkkunen & Newnham, 2013; Teräs, 2016), Activity Clinics (Clot et al., 2000; Clot, 1999) and Codesign (Aakjær, 2014, 2018). The chapter does not delve into the theoretical complexity of each method. This detail is well covered in these latter references. It aims instead to describe the key components of this hybrid toolkit (hitherto the COLAB model) in an accessible manner that has relevance for the criminal justice context.

All of the methods that contribute to the COLAB model in some way stimulate innovation in the workplace. These manage joint activity, encouraging participants to engage in a process of cocreation. This is a more creative process than mere cooperation or coordination of work activity. It is a relational process that allows a cross fertilisation of ideas and collective learning to take place.

This learning within the model occurs at many levels. Aakjær's application of codesign (2014, 2018), recognises the individual level learning process taking place during the sessions when participants are exposed to the unfamiliar perspectives of other participants. They assimilate these external perspectives of the heterogenous groups participating in the intervention and adapt their own views accordingly. Individual reflection is central to this learning process.

The workshops, through which the interventions are delivered, also provide an opportunity for the participants to reframe a particular situation or problem collectively (Brandi & Elkjaer, 2011; Elkjaer, 2003). From the Activity Clinic perspective, this collective learning is the product first of the collaboration interactions between the researcher

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facilitating the intervention and the participating professionals. Professionals then appropriate the dialogical frameworks introduced by researchers to facilitate the examination of current and historical working practices. The learning hence moves to a space situated between participant workers, as they learn of each other's resources and perspectives (Kloetzer et al., 2015). Change Laboratories and Boundary Crossing Workshops refer to this space as a zone of proximal development or "the distance between the present everyday actions of the individuals and the historically new form of the societal activity that can be collectively generated as a solution" (Engeström, 1987, p. 174).

All the constituent interventions that fed into the COLAB model describe this collective/collaborative learning and the formation of innovations as an iterative and experimental process that takes place over multiple cycles and with the help of the facilitating researcher (Engeström, 1999; Kajamaa, 2015). The iterative cycles represent a means for rehearsal of new roles and relations between workers and agencies (Halse et al., 2010), which forms the basis for social innovation in practice (Aakjær & Darsø, 2014). Change Laboratory interventionists spell out the dimensions of these cycles in most detail in the description of the so-called expansive learning cycle (Engeström, 1999; Kajamaa, 2015). This forms the underpinning of the potential model intervention being developed through COLAB, a model aimed at facilitating the collective learning process within the CJS context (Fig. 8.2).

The expansive learning cycle is a series of epistemic actions, that lead participants collectively to define, redefine and restructure the object of their activity (Vygotsky, 1997; Engeström, 1987; Leont'ev, 1978). We explore each of the actions within the cycle below and as applied to the CJS context. Overall researchers anticipate that innovations and workplace transformations generated through this cycle will, in codesign terms, allow participants to discover *what is* (framing current problems), imagine new solutions (*what could be—reframing problems*) and explore the viability of new solutions (*what will be*) (Aakjær, 2018) (Fig. 8.1).

**Fig. 8.1** Expansive learning cycle capturing collaborative learning within the Change Laboratories model (adapted from Engeström, 1987, 1999, 2004)

# The Structure Within Which Collective Learning Is Located

As with the expansive learning cycle process, the description of the structure of the Change Laboratory, that is put in place to manage this collective learning, served as the "baseline" structure for the development of the COLAB model also. We chose this method because of its international application and success as a means of workplace transformation in a variety of workplace contexts including paper mills, factories, entrepreneurial contexts, elderly care, hospitals, schools and newsrooms (see e.g. Engeström et al., 1996; Kerosuo et al., 2010; Virkkunen & Newnham, 2013; Sannino & Engeström, 2017).

The central tenet of the Change Laboratory structure is that researchers facilitate a series of workshops attended by key stakeholders (prison officers, prisoners, health professionals for example). Before these begin, researchers will have conducted a traditional ethnographic research phase at the prison site, collecting observations, interviews and artefacts that reflect the everyday work activity of the prison site. Chapters 2–7 of this volume are typical of this phase. When this phase is complete, researchers and the practice organisation may choose to take an active stance, and transform this data into a cycle of organisational change. The COLAB model describes this cycle.

During the workshops, participants reflect on their working practices at multiple levels (Fig. 8.2). In the vertical plane, the researcher encourages them to explore their working practice in the past, present and future. In the horizontal plane, they do this along a spectrum of abstraction (concrete to abstract). At the most concrete, they work with an item that mirrors their working practice and illustrates the problems within it. Researchers will use the materials they have collected in the ethnographic phase of the intervention as this *mirror*.

At the other end of the abstraction spectrum, participants use theoretical *models* to help them reconceptualise their work activity. This
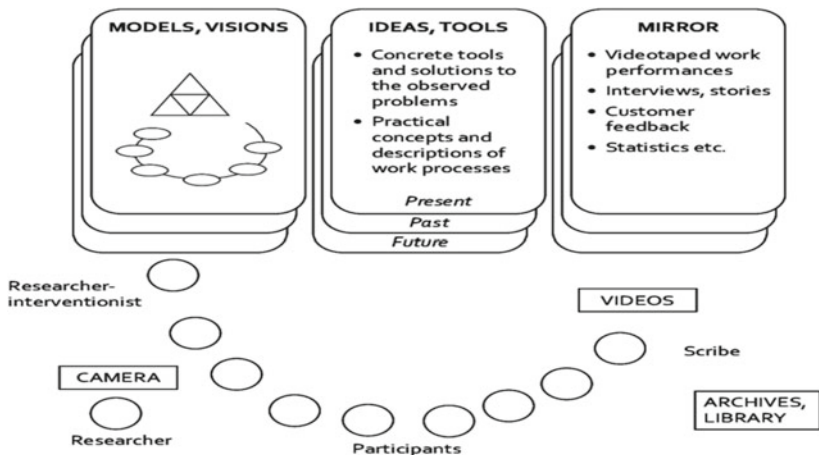


**Fig. 8.2**  Prototypical layout of the Change Laboratory (Engeström et al., 1996)

helps them make sense theoretically of the built-in contradictions generating the troubles and disturbances depicted in the mirror. Although, theoretical models can be chosen that best make sense to participants, cultural-historical activity systems theory (CHAT) (Sannino & Sutter, 2011) is often used as a tool. Here workplace activity becomes the unit of analysis that drives discussion between workshop participants. This perspective sees the person engaged in the work activity (the subject) as not separate from the social world they inhabit. They are part of the social world and in turn the social world is part of them. Human activity is therefore a social/collective, mediated by cultural artefacts (Leont'ev, 1978; Vygotsky, 1997). Work activity is articulated in terms of a dynamic and multidimensional system and the motivation for doing this work. Prisoner rehabilitation may be one such overarching motive; prison security and control of the prisoner another.

The staff or service users who are engaged in the workshops have a defined purpose within the prison's overall activity and are representative of a wider professional body or community. Their purpose (the *object* of activity), is some entity that meets a human need (Leont'ev, 1978). A prison officer mapping the needs of the newly admitted prisoner would be an example of such a purpose or object.

The way in which this purpose (or object) is performed is mediated by artefacts (e.g. a paper or electronic assessment proforma), rules (e.g., patient confidentiality) and agreed divisions of labour (e.g., the roles and responsibilities assigned to each worker) within an activity system. Every organisation forms such an activity system, a system that exists in relation to neighbouring activity systems and their different objects of activity (Engeström, 2000) (see the model of vision depicted in Fig. 8.2) (further detail of this framework can be read in Chapters 2, 3, 5 and 6 of this volume). Health/welfare and CJS services are two such adjacent activity systems.

Workshop participants, through discussing their work activity along these vertical and horizontal planes, aim to cocreate a third and middle plane representing *ideas* on how things might be changed in current practice. These ideas surface during discussions between participants as a response to the contradictions they have uncovered in the mirror material. They then explore these in a cyclical and iterative manner with

regard to their potential capabilities in transforming current working practices. A stepwise implementation of their new vision is planned and monitored by the participants (Engeström et al., 1996; Virkkunen & Newnham, 2013). This cycle is a form of organisational learning or expansive learning.

Although innovation of this kind may occur spontaneously during any interagency meeting between the prison and health/welfare services (see Chapter 2 of this volume), this is often serendipitous as the collaborative process is not made explicit and only understood tacitly. The Change Laboratory, on the other hand, codifies this tacit knowledge. It focuses on how information is shared, the manner in which knowledge can be understood across disciplinary boundaries and combined in such a way that new concepts are cocreated. The Change Laboratory recognises that innovation happens at the boundaries between disciplines and that working across boundaries is a key ingredient of competitive advantage (Engeström et al., 1996; Virkkunen & Newnham, 2013). In traditional models of collaboration, such as the interagency meeting, practice problems are often identified by service leaders and policy makers and at a generic or national level. In Change Laboratories, however, problems are identified by frontline professionals, and the researcher/facilitator helps them reconceptualise these. The problems, and solutions created, are therefore context specific. The Change Laboratory allows bottom-up innovations to be developed where frontline professionals are encouraged to develop their own solutions to the challenges they face.

However, the Change Laboratory had not previously been applied to the challenging and security-driven prison context and the interface with health and welfare services. It was anticipated that the method would need adaptation to this new context, particularly if prisoners are to be included in these events as key stakeholders in service transformation.

Although the COLAB consortium had the Change Laboratory as a focal point, it drew on COLAB expertise in Activity Clinics, Boundary Crossing Workshops and Codesign to explore how a "prison ready toolkit" of organisational transformation/innovation could be developed. All three of these methods had or were being trialled by COLAB members in the CJS context at the time of writing and were hence seen as informative to the current context. In this chapter, we present the

final product of this analysis. The product has two main dimensions: An adaptation of the expansive learning cycle describing the organisational learning that could take place within a participating prison (see Fig. 8.1) and the expanded structure of the researcher facilitated and structured workshops (see Fig. 8.3) that built on the base line workshop outlined in Fig. 8.2 (Engeström et al., 1996). The boxes A-H in Fig. 8.3 illustrate how the original Change Laboratory structure has been supplemented with materials/strategies from Boundary Crossing Workshops, Activity Clinics and Codesign approaches.

The authors, utilising their personal experience of each method, extracted the key characteristics of the Change Laboratory and the other constituent models on a 11 dimension framework. This was built on the comparative framework developed by Vilela et al. (2014) to compare participatory methods. The detail of the comparison between methods and the synthesis of the approaches is detailed elsewhere (Hean et al., 2020a).

## Dimension 1: Establishing the Need for an Intervention (Fig. 8.1A)

The first stage of the intervention, and the learning cycle, is a practice-driven need of some kind (Kajamaa & Lahtinen, 2016; Engeström et al., 2015; Virkkunen, 2006; Victor & Boynton, 1998). This need may lead organisations to actively seek researcher support (solicited help). The researcher approaching the practice organisation with the offer of unsolicited help is less successful. This is a challenge for consortia such as COLAB whose goal was to explore the utility of a model of innovation in the new criminal justice-related context.

Commitment to the intervention from both prison management and workers is essential. Lack of commitment leads to participants derailing or redirecting interventions. There are several reasons why prisons may lack this commitment:

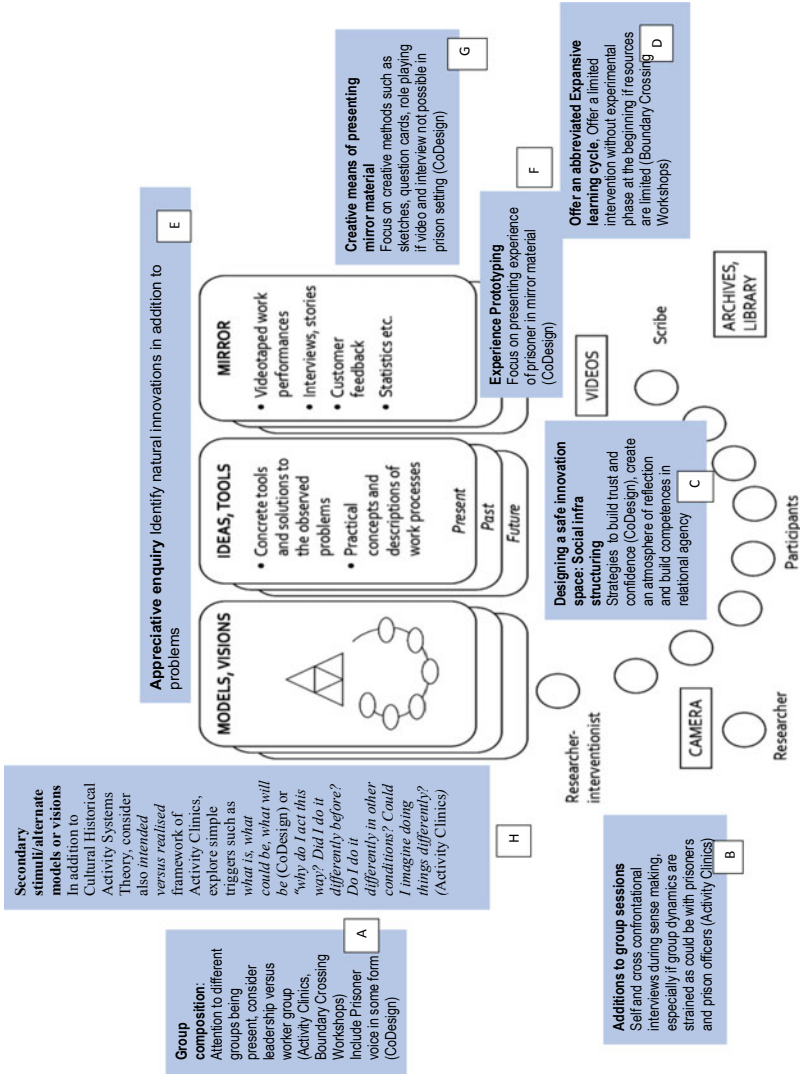- Innovation or service development is not the prison's top priority.

**Fig. 8.3** An intervention model with potential utility in CJS/WS context (based on Engeström et al., 1996)

- Culturally and historically the prison is not ready for an extensive change process (Lahtinen et al., 2019; Hean et al., 2017).
- Time and financial resource constraints in the prison limit their drive to innovate and collaborate.
- Prison sites may be willing to host the initial ethnographic study but the intervention itself is more resource intensive. Prison officers must be freed from their responsibilities and getting all stakeholders in one physical location is difficult to orchestrate. There may also be ethical dilemmas if staff are removed from duty to participate. Here, prisoners' rights are violated if they then have a reduced service or must be locked in cells.
- The outputs of bottom-up interventions cannot be predefined making these less appealing to organisational leaders.

The intervention must be seen as meaningful to all parties and an internal champion/sponsor of the intervention within the prison will improve the chances of the intervention being introduced. Contextual adaptations to the intervention method must be made so that goals and methods employed are appropriate to the prison's current needs. Researchers need to discover the priorities and needs of the prison by asking do the organisation want to innovate? who is driving the innovation (leaders or workers, for example) and for what reasons? Are these reasons resource, outcomes or value driven, or for political reasons? Researchers should introduce the broad objective of the intervention but allow the specific outcomes to be generated later through the cocreation process. Aakjær (2014) for example, using a codesign intervention, began with the broad focus of improving the prison environment for both prisoners and officers by decreasing episodes of threats and violence. However, the solutions to achieving this were cocreated during the interventions that followed. Setting these initial broader aims, requires common goal setting exercises, or what Downing-Wilson et al. (2011) calls mutual appropriation strategies. This moves professionals from a *their* to an *our* intervention perspective.

Researchers and the prison leaders should discuss and plan together the need for an intervention phase after the initial data collection has been completed and explore the human resources required. This negotiation process will take many meetings between researchers, prison/welfare

leaders and key frontline professionals. Constructing a shared understanding of the intervention process is highly necessary for the local ownership and sustainability of the process. Time is required to build this, paying attention to each others' language, skills and logistical parameters. This will decide when the time is right for the organisation and if an intervention is feasible. Trust and reputation are key here and are often the product of years of relationship building between researchers and their local surrounding practice partners.

## Dimension 2: Designing the Structure of the Innovation Space (see Fig. 8.3A, B, D)

After the mandate for the intervention is agreed, an innovation space (Darsø, 2012) in which multiple perspectives are brought together, is created. There is no rule as to the optimal conditions of the innovation space. These vary depending on the resources available and constraints of the prison and participating organisations.

Researchers clarify with prison leaders the resources required to develop an innovation space, and decide together the number, duration and frequency of sessions required. In the Change Laboratory it is usual for 6–10 sessions (2–3 hours each) held with a working group of 15–20 participants. In Codesign, interventions are described in terms of the length of involvement in the prison (8 months to 2 years) with 4–11 participants taking part. These can included prisoners and ex-prisoners (Aakjær, 2014) There may be some instability in group membership and the composition of the participants may vary between sessions. This can threaten the process as the continuity of learning actions gets compromised.

Attention should be given to who attends the workshops in terms of the professions, department or organisations represented (see Fig. 8.3A, C) and the power dynamics these create; whether prisoners, decision-makers (directors, managers and experts) or frontline workers or a mixture of these be included. All of the constituent interventions adhere to the idea that transforming the working environment occurs through the unification of multiple voices. Participants each bring to

the workshop different and only partial perspectives of this object of the activity and their own life histories, experiences and institutional contexts. Boundary Crossing Workshops emphasise that actors be of different groups (e.g. different organisations), each crossing professional and organisational boundaries. Activity Clinics focus on the distinction between workers and leadership and codesign approaches focus on including the voices and knowledge of users/citizens.

Rather than a series of uniform workshop sessions, researchers may alternate between facilitating workshops with larger participant numbers (as seen in Change Laboratories, Boundary Crossing Workshops and Codesign) or combine these with interviews between the researcher and one or two workers as used in Activity Clinics (Clot et al., 2000) (Fig. 8.3B). The latter has potential in the CJS/WS context where conducting workshops in secure environments and managing the power differentials between participants are difficult to manage if larger groups are employed. Larger groups may also be more difficult to convene as getting all actors from all organisations in one physical setting at any one given time proves difficult.

The role of the researcher and participant should be made clear for all engaged in the intervention. The researcher has, for example, the role of collecting ethnographic data before the intervention, although workers/participants in the intervention should be consulted on the research design. Change Laboratories emphasise the importance of researchers as more than observers of practice. They are human agents of innovation, supporting practitioner colleagues by facilitating the innovation process (Virkkunen & Newnham, 2013). The researcher and the organisational management have joint responsibility for negotiating whether to do an intervention that follows the ethnographic phase or not. The distribution of tasks between participants during the intervention should be clarified (e.g. record keeping, facilitation) and participants expected to be active in promoting their own learning.

The developmental process is a lengthy and energy consuming process, that may not sit well with the highly pressurised prison environment. The Boundary crossing Workshop has utility here. The Boundary

crossing Workshop shares much of the Change Laboratory methods but is a shorter process consisting of only 1–3 meeting sessions making them more feasible politically and logistically (see Fig. 8.3D). Being a shorter process, with no experimental phase included (see Fig. 8.1G), these can serve as a "taster" to motivate practitioners for larger-scale developmental efforts at a later stage (Seppänen & Toiviainen, 2017).

## Dimension 3: Managing the Affective or Relational Aspects of the Innovation Space (Fig. 8.3C)

Codesign approaches emphasise the contextual aspects of social innovation, including relational aspects. Good relations within a safe innovation space are important in the high security and potentially volatile prison environment. This environment lends itself to power differentials between different professional groups as well as between officers and prisoners. It is the researchers' ethical responsibility to protect the wellbeing of all participants.

There are challenges to the development of a safe space. Negotiating interagency boundaries during an intervention may cause tensions and silo ways of working. Workshops can raise issues in the workplace that are emotionally difficult to confront and prison norms and rules can threaten the safety of the space. Formal prison rules limit the freedom of inmates to participate in workshops re-enforcing their lower status. Informal rules imposed by fellow prisoners demand that prisoners keep a distance from officers (the us and them) that limits their ability to participate. External work and peer-pressure amongst employees can do the same. These challenges may lead to strong resistance amongst participants to the intervention sessions and the innovation process (Engeström, 2000; Kerosuo, 2006).

Codesign approaches are particularly focussed on providing the structures for a safe innovation space through building explicitly levels of trust and confidence between participants in a process of social infra structuring (Fig. 8.3C) (Aakjær & Brandt, 2012). This is achieved by:

- creating a "relational safety net that opens up for curiosity and inquiry in an inclusive and encompassing community" (Darsø, 2012, p. 118).
- allowing for dialogue, co-creation and learning opportunities, with the aim of improving and innovating practice (Aakjær & Darsø, 2014).
- managing power differentials: power differentials are managed through including professionals from all relevant agencies in similar numbers, recruiting larger numbers of prisoners than officers and making participation voluntary (Aakjær & Brandt, 2012).
- protecting participant anonymity and confidentiality of issues raised during the workshops or the research that preceded these. Although this may be easily controlled externally (what is said in the group remains in the group), internal anonymity during the intervention itself is less easily secured. Prisoners may present feedback to the sessions of their experience of the service. This can leave both workers and prisoners feeling exposed. Getting prisoners, professionals and researchers to cocreate and agree ground rules for interaction during sessions helps minimise this (Aakjær & Brandt, 2012).
- building respect, trust and positive, constructive relations both between participants and between the participants and the researcher. Trust promotes understanding of the individual expertise of each participant. This may be easier to establish during interviews used in Activity Clinics where only one or two people in the interview are involved (Fig. 8.3D).
- maintaining the group's confidence in the process and that solutions will be forthcoming.
- Using reflective theoretical tools, such as the cultural-historical activity systems theory (see Chapters 2, 3, 5 and 6 for further explanation of these models), is believed to help participants distance themselves from the emotion of the situation and to reflect on the situation intellectually (Virkkunen & Newnham, 2013; Schulz et al., 2015).

The development of appropriate social infrastructures to generate innovation in a prison context can only be built slowly over time and should be an ongoing process, dependent on the competence of the researcher-facilitator. Researchers need to be skilled in managing the social infrastructuring process, protecting the workers from potential

harm whilst still allowing the participants to guide the direction of discussion. This reflects the concept of relational agency defined as a participant´s "capacity to align one's thoughts and actions with those of others to interpret aspects of one's world and to act on and respond to those interpretations" (Edwards, 2009, p. 4). This is managed by encouraging participants to reflect on what they have in common or shared aims in their activity. It is often the client that is this shared focus, but there may be other common needs or shared problems (Seppänen et al., 2015).

Emotions are not always to be avoided in workshops. For Change Laboratories, Boundary Crossing Workshops and Activity Clinics, emotional reactions are also viewed as a trigger for learning rather than a relational factor that may close innovation down. Participants' motivation to take part in sessions and their emotional involvement holds significant power in enhancing organisational learning and change as long as it can be dealt with sensitively and reflected upon collectively (Virkkunen & Newnham, 2013).

## Dimension 4: Critically Analysing Current Practices in the Organisation(s) Through Uniting Multiple Perspectives (Fig. 8.1B)

The workshops bring together people from participating organisations who cross individual, social and organisational boundaries during their discussions. Researchers facilitate the examination of cultural and historical dimensions of work activity from these multiple perspectives (Engeström, 1987). This process destabilises each participant's perceptions of current practice (Aakjær, 2018). They encounter new, unfamiliar perspectives that disturb their view of hitherto unexamined organisational norms and "make the familiar strange" (Halse et al., 2010).

## Dimension 5: The Identification of Areas Where Organisational Change Is Required (Fig. 8.1C)

After a dialogue between participants has been established, participants explore discontinuities in their overlapping work activity and reach a

consensus as to where a transformation of practice is required (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011). The problematisation of the work activity is the responsibility of participants and not the researcher. The researcher may typically create the initial and tentative hypothesis of the current problem areas from the initial research data collected, but this is tested and reformed when presenting the mirror material to the participants. The researchers role is not to impose their hypotheses upon participants. They participate in the process but do not constrain this in any specific direction. Instead shared questions and interests emerge in the course of the intervention.

Traditional ethnographers collect data through empirical observations of the workplace, and perform a qualitative analysis of this material. In contrast, the analysis process in the COLAB model described here is instead conducted by participants themselves, although the researcher may participate in the process. This promotes ownership and credibility of the analysis but faces the traditional researcher critique of reduced dependability and transferability.

The nature of the problem is most carefully theorised in Change Laboratories and Boundary Crossing Workshops interventions. The Boundary Crossing Workshops and Change Laboratories interventions propose that disturbances and contradictions emerge within and between activity systems and drive innovation knowledge and learning (Virkkunen & Newnham, 2013; Kerosuo et al., 2010). In terms of where these lie, contradictions are found within and between activity systems (primary, secondary, tertiary and quaternary contradictions) (see detail Engeström, 1987). They manifest as tensions, disturbances, latent dilemmas, conflicts or "double binds" in local work activities (Engeström & Sannino, 2010).

In exploring contradictions, there is a danger in focusing on what does not work rather than what does. Workshop participants may focus on the contradictions in collaborative practices when there is evidence that workplace activity is already being conducted mutually with flexibility and feelings of autonomy. Professionals from different organisations, whilst working together in a hybrid configuration of actors, with different, potentially competing institutional logics, have often already engaged in learning processes leading to actors being able

to oscillate between the institutionalised logic of their own profession and a shared logic centred on the needs of the prisoner (see Chapter 4 of this volume). The problematisation process could therefore be balanced with an appreciative inquiry approach successful in other prison-related research, (e.g. the work by Liebling et al., 1999, 2010) (see Fig. 8.3E).

## Dimension 6: Making Collective Sense of Knowledge Presented by Other Relevant Actors of Current and Past Practices (Fig. 8.1D)

Meaning making happens through collaboration between actors and is key to generating innovation in all the interventions. The boundaries between participants from the different CJS and WS organisations are where collective sense making and interorganisational learning take place. Researchers employ a range of strategies to facilitate how CJS and WS workers collectively attempt to make sense of their own (and potentially shared) goals in their daily work. They together explore what each participant does when working with prisoners, why they do it or the benefit from doing this. Change laboratories focus on the historical dimension of these: how it was done in the past, why it is done like it is currently and then how it might best look like in future reconstructions. For codesign approaches, participants make sense of practice through some of re-enactment of their everyday practices (Aakjær, 2014). Boundary Crossing Workshop emphasises the potentially shared objects of activity of different groups, agencies or organisations participating. An Activity Clinic slant offers a careful examination of what was originally intended by service developers and how this compares with the reality of the service delivered. Work tasks are simultaneously something given (a real phenomenon), something participants project onto the other group participating in the intervention, and eventually something that becomes co constructed by the researchers and workers discussing together how this observed workplace activity takes place in the future.

A key strategy in sense making is the use of the concept of double stimulation (Vygotsky, 1978). This is employed explicitly in Change

Laboratories and Boundary Crossing Workshops and implicitly in Codesign and Activity Clinics. Participants are presented with a primary stimulus that triggers the examination of current and historical practices. This is described metaphorically as "a mirror" of the present problems. This mirror data is collected by researchers prior to the sessions, by using ethnographic methods, or may be cocreated in the workshops themselves (e.g. Aakjær, 2014). It is often a videotape made by the researcher during the ethnographic phase preceding the intervention and one they have identified as showing a possible disturbance in the participants' work activity (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). Seeking permissions to use video recordings may be problematic in some sensitive or secure environments such as prisons. The mirror material (Fig. 8.3G) could therefore also include audio or written clips of interviews, photographs or sketches of problematic situations, scenarios, drama, role playing, storytelling and story boards (Aakjær, 2014, 2018) (Fig. 8.3G).

A secondary stimulus is a conceptual model that helps participants make sense of the observed primary stimulus. Group discussions and analysis might be triggered, for example, by applying the activity system framework (Engeström, 1987) to describe what the participants are observing. Other theoretical models may also be appropriate. Clot (1999) for example, applies a framework in which the task set (or what is expected from the worker—the normative activity) and the realised activity (what really gets done) are compared. This helps participants examine the demands of the work tasks and the physical, psychological characteristic of the worker performing it. In the codesign approach this distinction is also described but in terms of the difference between canonical and non-canonical work (Brown & Duguid, 1991). Researchers from an Activity Clinic tradition, in their personal self and cross confrontational interviews, use targeted questions such as "*why do you act this way? Did you do it differently before? Do you do it differently in other conditions? Could I imagine doing things differently?*" to stimulate reflection and dialogue and codesign interventionists use reflective statements such as "*what if…?*" (Aakjær, 2018). The simplicity of these statements has an appeal for those participants for whom the activity systems framework is perceived as less accessible. Secondary

stimuli developed by the Change Laboratories/Boundary Crossing Workshops participants themselves may also be applied if more meaningful to some participants (see Virkkunen & Newnham, 2013; Sannino, 2015) (Fig. 8.3H).

## Dimension 7: Solution Formation, Examination, Experimentation and Evaluation in Situ (Fig. 8.1E, F, G, H)

The next step in the learning cycle involves modelling (Boundary Crossing Workshops, Change Laboratories, Activity Clinics) or prototyping (Codesign) (Fig. 8.1E). Hereby, participants construct an explicit model of a new idea that offers a solution for the identified problem. These could be new products, infrastructure, forms of interaction, constellations of people, services models or organisational practices (Aakjær, 2018; Slappendal, 1996). These are social innovations that are socially driven with an eye on added public value (Mulgan et al., 2007; Alford, 2009).

The solution created by participants is then carefully examined (Fig. 8.1F), before running, operating and experimenting on it in practice in order to fully grasp its dynamics, potentials and limitations in situ (Fig. 8.1G). The implementation experience is then reflected upon in future sessions and evaluated (Fig. 8.1H). From the codesign perspective, the involvement of prisoners (the service user) as evaluators of the new model of activity or innovation, is essential at this point. The group then enter a second cycle of this learning process if required. If the new model is deemed successful, participants consolidate its outcomes into a new stable form of practice (see Engeström, 1987).

At the level of the organisation, learning within the intervention is manifest in its outcomes: the development and transformation of working practices. The object of workplace activity is reshaped by participants in the intervention leading to qualitative transformations of these objects or the activity model as a whole (Engeström, 1987; Engeström & Sannino, 2010). The transformation process is understood through Davydov's (1990) dialectical method of ascending from the abstract to

the concrete. The assumption is that all practices have internal contradictions and can undergo transformation. Participants strip away the surrounding detail from the key issue at hand (abstraction) to make sense of a particular element of practice. They then renegotiate and reorganise their practices and trial the alternative by introducing the new proposed way of working back into the complex in situ environment. The workshops, where this process is planned and managed, not only transform practice but also transform social relations between the participants and empower workers and their leaders to act and transform their own work activities now and in the future in a way that is bottom-up and user driven in nature (Clot, 2008).

The scale of transformation that takes place varies. The intervention may be a lengthy process involving multiple iterative cycles, negotiation and hybridisation of alternative perspectives (Virkkunen & Newnham, 2013). Change Laboratories often aim for these larger-scale transformations in activity systems, that may take several years to carry out. Boundary Crossing Workshops interventions are less ambitious, run over only a few weeks with the experimental phase often removed. These are a first light touch and explorative initiative that, if successful, may be taken forward later, resources allowing (Ruotsala, 2014). A balance, between experimentation with the new model of working and the time and energy resource of the organisation, must be found.

Because of the iterative and practice-driven nature of the solution development process, the new models of working practices are often unpredictable. Effective learning and service development is not always guaranteed and it should be accepted that, at times, some interventions only produce micro-cycles of expansive learning (Engeström, 1999) and do not necessarily lead to a cocreation process, profound, expansive learning or workplace transformation (Engeström et al., 2014).

## Dimension 8: Reporting (Fig. 8.1H)

Interventions have a political dimension, meaning reporting back to the participant organisations on the outcomes of the sessions, and especially to the leadership, is vital. Activity Clinics detail useful strategies

here. They describe an important phase of the intervention being where researchers and workers jointly select video clips of their activity and interviews featuring debates about important aspects and conflicts of their work. These videos are arranged in a final form, a film-based multi-voiced report. This is then presented and discussed with a group of directors, managers and experts. In doing so, the researchers articulate the controversies on the work activity so that they can be reflected upon in order to transform the work organisation. These may be presented as part of the work transformation process to engage leadership or policy makers in the transformational process or at the beginning of an upscaling process (Fig. 8.1I).

## Dimension 9: Sustainability and Long-Term Implementation of Agreed Service Changes

Attention should be paid to sustainability in interventions. This relates first to sustaining the network of participants created by the intervention. This is so that this network can go forward together with the concrete changes. Secondly, the method of the intervention can be sustained. Researchers could explore training organisations to run future interventions themselves and for there to be a hand over of the facilitation role to the organisations themselves when researchers withdraw. This could help sustain or adapt the outcomes of these interventions in the long term. This requires willingness on the behalf of researchers to relinquish their ownership of the method. The theoretical complexities of the methods may work against this. Alternatively researchers may consider longer involvement in the practice organisation so as to support the implementation of the new models of working in the long term (Kerrison et al., 2019).

Lastly, sustainability relates to the outcomes of the intervention. Organisational change can be a lengthy process, and efforts are required to anchor and diffuse innovations that arise from the interventions at all system levels. The significance and sustainability of new service prototypes (e.g. new routines, in codesign speak) or new systems of activity (in Change Laboratories and Boundary Crossing Workshops speak) is largely

determined by the subsequent commitment to nurturing these by the management and employees (Engeström et al., 2007; Kajamaa, 2011). Boundary Crossing Workshops talk of the importance of including HR departments in this process and Activity Clinics engage all organisational levels in decision-making to achieve the same.

Through the iterative design of the interventions, participants are able to explore and reconsider existing practices and simultaneously rehearse and experiment with the potential of new ways of doing things in practice. This ability to trial and test the developing innovations may contribute to the sustainability of these. Overall, the long-term success of interventions is seen to be dependent on the buy-in and commitment of the organisation itself and the manner in which the organisational leadership and researcher can support and grow this commitment. The processes of implementation, experimentation and transformation, are not well theorised in any of the interventions, perhaps because researchers tend to withdraw at this phase of the learning cycle (Kerrison et al., 2019).

## Including the Voice of the Service User in the Intervention (Fig. 8.3F)

The inclusion of frontline workers and service users voice in interventions is another means of assuring sustainability. Policies imposed upon services and workers "top-down" to affect organisational change often do not correspond to the specific client or work situation they encounter. In response, frontline workers develop coping mechanisms whereby they adapt or ignore the policy structures imposed upon them (Fuglsang, 2010). Service users, including prisoners, engage in a similar process, adapting or ignoring the interventions introduced to help them, if these do not fit with what extrinsically or intrinsically motivates them. The interventions, especially codesign, all focus on giving workers and service users voice. This improves the likelihood that innovations have a better chance of being implemented and sustained by workers and service users. Introducing the user perspective potentially reveals the strengths and weaknesses of the organisation more clearly (Junginger, 2007) acting as a

lever for participants to reflect, learn and develop their practices. (Meroni & Sangiorgi, 2011).

Interventions often lack service user engagement for a variety of reasons: in Change Laboratories terms, the object of the joined activity (e.g. the prisoner) may be viewed as passive recipient of the service, and hence do not actively get involved in service development. This may be because they are not actively invited to the intervention by researchers. In Activity Clinics, clients do not usually directly participate in the process of analysis and cocreation and hence their perspective cannot be explicitly elaborated. Engeström et al. (2014) suggest that this lack of service user involvement originates from Change Laboratories being so well applied to schools and similar education establishments, where students are not traditionally invited in as vehicles of organisational change, although the potential is there. Similarly, in the CJS environment, prisoners may be excluded politically either because they are not traditionally seen as service users and perhaps not deserving of citizenship and a role in the development of a service designed to control and punish them (see Chapter 12 for an elaboration of this topic). Resources may limit participation also, with not enough officers being available to retain the level of security that is needed to allow the attendance of the prisoner at the workshops (or in fact the researcher into the prison in the first place). Prisoners may also exclude themselves or be unable to participate directly. They may perceive services as something simply given to them in a readymade form rather than produced together between a service provider and client. The client may also feel disempowered in the company of professionals, especially in prisoner settings, and have concerns that they will be seen by other inmates as cooperating with the prison authorities. Other vulnerabilities prevalent in prisoners (e.g. a mental illness, learning disability) may further make them unable to participate in the cocreation process required. Finally, recruitment and continuity of service user engagement may be limited. For example, in Norway, on average, a prisoner stays imprisoned for 6 months. During this imprisonment, a prisoner may be moved to other units and prisons several times. In a lengthy innovative process, therefore, engaging a prisoner is unpredictable. Thought needs to be given on how to give voice to this type of client (Kajamaa & Hilli, 2014; Kajamaa & Lahtinen, 2016).

Prisoners might be involved only at certain phases of the intervention, for example, to manage resource limitations as well as the strain put upon them in the intervention process. They may act as evaluators, for example, of any new model of activity or innovation developed.

An exploration, of *experience prototyping* (Fig. 8.3F) offers further operational insight here. Experience prototyping is a method employed in codesign approaches to find ways in which intervention participants can capture what it personally feels like to experience everyday life in prison, either as a prisoner or employee/officer (Halse et al., 2010; Bate & Robert, 2007; Buchenau & Suri, 2000). By getting as close to the lived experience of the service user as possible, participants explore both where the needs for development lie and then the possible solutions to these service challenges. An experience prototype is a complex sensory exploration of a service or routine (Bate & Robert, 2007). It can be used to better understand how a goal can best be achieved (Meroni & Sangiorgi, 2011). It could involve physically acting out a scene or ways of performing a routine, as a means to explore and develop services through the embodiment of an existing service routine. In the prison system, for example, the enactment of an induction tour for new prisoners through storytelling provided a tangible way in which the prototype of this service change could be experienced by participants (Aakjær, 2014, 2018).

If prisoners cannot be included at all in the intervention, their experience may be at least partially represented in videos of the activities around them (Engeström, 2004; Hasu & Engeström, 2000). These edited videos of work practices (including work with the prisoner) are shown by the researcher to participants and should strongly represent the prisoner's voice and how they perceive the service provided. The challenge is to make video material in a secure environment, and ensuring the confidentiality of information represented within it.

## Concluding Comments

We have presented in this chapter the COLAB model of workplace transformation in the prison system. The model consists of an expansive learning cycle adapted for the prison environment describing the

learning process (Fig. 8.1) and then the structures that could be put in place to manage this (Fig. 8.3).

The COLAB model is predominantly driven by the theoretically sophisticated and well tested Change Laboratory model. The latter is not without critique and additions from other intervention approaches may address these. The Change Laboratories model does not preclude these new elements and can accommodate and be enriched by these additions (Sannino, 2015). For example, it is suggested that the Change Laboratory lacks attention to power differentials and the emotional labour of its participants (Hean et al., 2020a, 2020b). The prison is an already emotionally charged environment and participants may be less comfortable with an intervention that explicitly unpicks tensions and contradictions within services. So, for example, in the COLAB model, social infrastructuring, the development of a safe innovation space and the use of confrontational interviews used by codesign and activity clinics provides a useful addition. Further, interventions can be resource intensive and difficult to orchestrate so that all stakeholders meet in one physical location at one time. Offering an abbreviated Boundary Crossing Workshop or interviews as used in Activity Clinics may be useful alternatives. Alternatively piggy backing on already existing interagency meetings is a possibility. Lastly, the representation of the prisoners voice in the workshops and the presentation of mirror data that heavily rely on video or audio clips of interviews with prisoners in a secure environment may be problematic and be denied by the prison authorities. Novel and creative means of doing this, as used in codesign approaches, should be explored.

The COLAB model for the CJS context presented is by no means a finished product, and will not be without its challenges when implemented. What now required is the careful evaluation of the model in situ. Particular attention should be paid to expanding on the significance and sustainability dimensions. There is scope for greater theorisation of the implementation, experimentation, evaluation, upscaling and sustainability dimensions of the learning cycle and the ongoing role of the researcher in these processes.

This chapter had at its starting point the view that researchers have a responsibility to facilitate change as well as observe it. This raises issues

about researchers' competence and safety when taking this more active role as well as how they care for that of others when they are working in the practice field. Both may be compromised if researchers enter the potentially volatile prison environment with which they may not be familiar. We call for greater training for researchers to manage, facilitate these interventions and especially how they protect themselves and others in unfamiliar environments. There needs to be more in place than the standard risk assessment forms that can be paid lip service in university and national research committees assessing new research projects.

Choosing the Change Laboratory as baseline had held appeal because of the level and consistency of theorisation, international application, context specificity and bottom-up approach to social innovation that gave it a distinctive advantage. However, comparison of this with the other models showed these all to essentially share common values related to multi-voiced, bottom-up approaches to workplace transformation in which problems and solutions are driven by practice. The four models examined vary in their emphasis on one or other dimension and the practical means through which this is achieved. If considered together, however, these create a toolkit of strategies a researcher might mix and match to suit the organisational and national contexts in which they find themselves and its needs. There is little in the COLAB model presented here that will not be recognisable to experts in any of the four constituent models. Our contribution is the merger of strategies in an accessible format and as applied to the criminal justice context.

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