

### 3 FACILITATING CHANGE IN EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICE DELIVERY

The previous chapter provided the context of early intervention service delivery, as well as current trends in South Australia. It argued for services to continually reflect on the appropriateness of current service delivery models and consequently to consider relevant changes to practice. It concluded with a framework against which services can consider changes to their service delivery models. This chapter focuses on the process of facilitating effective change in service delivery. Its purpose is twofold: to understand the process of change that is occurring in early intervention services and to underpin this research project, which utilised a program aimed at facilitating change in services.

A considerable body of literature exists regarding organisational change, and the first part of this chapter is devoted to a description of these principles. Having laid the foundation for change in organisations, the discussion then argues for the use of principles of a participatory action research approach when implementing a program aimed at facilitating change. This is followed by a discussion of the principles of adult learning, which is an important component of such a program. The other elements of the program are then discussed, namely focus groups and, in the case of this study, online computer conferencing. The chapter concludes with a discussion regarding the content and measurement of such a program.

#### 3.1 PRINCIPLES OF ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE

Organisational change is often a complex and difficult process. Various authors provide guidelines to understand this process and how to best facilitate change. “Organisational Change” and “Change Management” are literature categories with a vast amount of documented material. Health care literature provides documentation related to Organisational Change, such as Marzaleck-Gaucher and Coffey (1991), Cook (1995), and

Cope (1981). This part of the chapter explores the process of change and the elements of organisational change.

### 3.1.1 The Process of Change

According to Winton and McCollum (1997), the process of change is ongoing in today's organisations, due to the continual changes in organisations' environments. Lewin (1946) provides the first description of the process of change, which includes the phases of unfreezing (identifying the problem); moving (implementation of new strategies); and refreezing, which is the end result of the process of change, and results in stability. The unfreezing phase is often a difficult process, since it involves moving away from the old comfortable way of doing things to a new, unfamiliar way (Peters & Tseng, 1983; Cope, 1981).

The foundation for change is an internal personal process of change, according to Burkey (1993) and Schurink (1998). This personal development involves the acquisition and internalisation of knowledge and information. The process of change therefore needs to include as a foundation the process of personal change, which is achieved by means of educational opportunities for individuals in order to acquire and internalise information. Wright (1989) supports this view by stating that the process of change starts with the gathering of information.

Change is a problem-solving process, according to Bair and Gray (1992), and the following steps can be identified in the problem-solving process: firstly, the identification of the problem (Marzalek-Gaucher & Coffey, 1991; Wright, 1989; Berger, Elhart, Firshich, Jordan and Stone, 1980; Vestal, 1995); a clear investigation of the problem; the generation of possible strategies to solve the problem; the selection of a particular strategy; the implementation of the strategy; the evaluation of the effectiveness of the adopted strategy; and corrective action, if required. The recognition of the need for change may be added to the

initial steps in this process (Marzalek-Gaucher & Coffey, 1991). A vast number of examples of projects that support these processes of change are available in the literature. Examples include Cook (1995), The Australian Early Intervention Network for Mental Health in Young People (2000), and Peters and Tseng (1983).

### 3.1.2 Elements of Change

Various authors provide information on the critical elements that need to be considered when facilitating change within an organisation. These elements may be consolidated into categories related to the organisation, its management and its personnel.

Marzalek-Gaucher and Coffey (1991) describe the organisational factors that impact on change as the role of management; an external focus that includes the evaluation and scanning of the environment; a well-understood mission and goals; strategic planning and responsiveness to customers' requirements, and the fostering of relationships with suppliers. Vestal's (1995) organisational forces that impact on the choice of service delivery, provide more organisational elements for consideration, namely the mission and goal of the organisation, the desired level of service quality, and the resources available.

Several authors have focused on the critical role that management and leaders play in facilitating organisational change (Peters & Tseng, 1983; Bailey, Schermerhorn, Hunt & Osborn, 1991; Bair & Gray, 1991; Marzalek-Gaucher & Coffey, 1991). Bair and Gray (1991) state that part of a manager's job is to act as a problem solver and change agent. A change agent may be defined as a person or group that takes responsibility for changing an existing pattern of behaviour. This author emphasises the need for managers to be open to new ideas, to be able to identify situations that require change, and to support the implementation of new ideas. Marzalek-Gaucher and Coffey (1991) name the following characteristics of successful managers acting as change agents: the identification of the need for change; a pro-active approach; planning; clear vision and goals; innovation; creativity; the ability to involve and

empower employees; and adaptability. They add the following to this list: being a visionary; being socially responsible; being flexible; having self-knowledge; and being commitment to continual professional training. Jacobs (1999) emphasises the importance of managers considering different points of view and continually analysing situations critically.

The literature provides evidence of the essential component of active involvement of all members (that is, all personnel) involved in the process of change, in order for change to be successful and lasting (Cope, 1981). This author, amongst various others, emphasises the importance of facilitation of ownership of change by means of the involvement of participants. French and Bell (in Cope, 1981) agree by stating that people tend to support what they have helped to create. Having explored the process of change and its elements, these principles are now applied to a program aimed at facilitating change in organisations.

## 3.2 FACILITATING CHANGE IN ORGANISATIONS

### 3.2.1 Participatory Action Research Approach

It is against this background that it becomes logical to use elements of the participatory action research approach when facilitating change in service delivery. Participatory action research refers to a design in which participation forms the core of the research process and in which the project leads to action (Rahman in Schurink, 1998). This design is particularly appropriate in cases where problem solving and improvement are on the agenda (Hart & Bond, 1995). This design may result in the initiation of change at the levels of both individual professional practice and organisational structures and processes.

Its core principle is that those who experience a phenomenon are best qualified to investigate it (DePoy & Gitlin, 1998). Kurt Lewin (1946) first introduced the concept of action research. Its main focus was for use in community work and to improve social conditions. Two important principles, namely group decision making and commitment to improvement, emerged from Lewin's work and still form the core of action research today.

Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) further developed on the ideas of Lewin. These authors emphasised the nature of action research as a collective enquiry tool to improve on social and educational practices. They emphasised the value of action research in understanding one's own practices and the situations in which they are carried out.

Bowling (1997) adds to the rationale for the use of the participatory action research design: it is undertaken to improve practices and the understanding of them and it was designed to study social systems with the aim of changing them. This method has been used in local working environments in order to define needs and problems and to devise methods of dealing with the problems and improve services. By using this method, a researcher empowers participants to act on their own behalf as active participants in making changes (Hart & Bond, 1995).

This design proves to be appropriate especially when considering the nature of the process of change, which requires a process of problem identification; critical reflection; exploration of different options; a period for implementation of change, and eventually an assessment of such change. The participatory action research design matches this cyclic pattern well, since it involves a similar cyclic process in which research, action and evaluation are interlinked. Furthermore, the participatory action research design facilitates the active involvement of participants, which is essential for the process of change.

Various authors support this design when organisational change is on the agenda, and examples exist of successful participatory action research projects aimed at facilitating change in organisations, including those of Hart and Bond (1995), Barton Cunningham (1993), East and Robinson (1994), Cope (1981), and Bair and Gray (1991). The participatory action research design is therefore a suitable approach to facilitate change in service delivery, since it matches the criteria of participation, collaboration and empowerment.

Within the participatory action research design, one needs to consider how best to facilitate change. In the application of the principles of change, the following essential components can be identified, namely: the involvement of managers of services as participants due to their central role in facilitating change; the utilisation of a training program in order to acquire and internalise information; the facilitation of opportunities for the recognition of the need for change; the identification of the problem; a clear investigation of the problem; the generation of possible strategies to solve the problem; the selection of a particular strategy; the implementation of the strategy; and the evaluation of the effectiveness of the adopted strategy and corrective action, if necessary.

This program needs to be implemented within the context of each organisation's management, organisational and personnel elements that impact on the process of change. Furthermore, the program needs to centre on sound adult learning principles, and the active participation and involvement of participants in order to facilitate effective change. In addition to the principles of organisational change, the principles of adult learning must also be considered, since they form an essential part of the basis for change.

### 3.2.2 Principles of Adult Learning (Androgogy)

Androgogy attempts to explain the phenomenon of adult learning while acknowledging its richness and complexity (Merriam in Knowles, 1998). Knowles mentions the direction of "perspective transformation", which has been documented by Mezirow (1981). This field of adult learning focuses on critical reflectivity, which forms the basis for change. Mezirow defines transformative learning as a critical reflection of current beliefs, norms and views that lead to reinterpretations of current and past behaviour into a new perspective. Gravett and Peterson (2000) also describe transformative learning as a process that occurs when a person is faced with a dilemma and that leads to the modification of old views and the development of new ones. According to these authors, critical reflection includes a deeper awareness of current views and an assessment of alternative views. It

includes a decision to negate old views or to make a synthesis between old and new views.

Mezirow (1981) states that this synthesis needs to be followed by action based on the newly developed view.

In addition to this, Gravett and Peterson (2000) emphasise the significance of opportunities to articulate and engage in dialogue regarding current practices. Barnes and Todd (in McConnell, 1994) also advocate the use of communication and cooperation in education. These authors state that social interaction in cooperative groups produces superior problem-solving skills. Talking about a topic increases one's understanding and learners are more actively involved in the topic. This latter view is also supported by Walkin (1990), who contributes by stating that adults respond better to methods that encourage active involvement in their learning. When considering the participative nature of such a learning context, it seems logical to consider the use of focus groups in a research project of this nature.

### 3.2.3 Focus Groups

Focus group discussions seem appropriate for a number of reasons. Group discussions allow for collaborative learning opportunities as well as active involvement in the process of change. Morgan (1998) states that focus group discussions create sharing and comparisons amongst participants. By means of focus groups, participants are exposed to a range of experiences and opinions. Krueger (1994) states that attitudes and perceptions regarding different aspects, including services, are developed in part by means of interaction amongst other people.

In addition to the use of focus groups in a program aimed at facilitating change, the South Australian context also needs to be considered. With vast distances between towns in which early intervention services are situated, attendances at regular face-to-face focus group discussions become a challenge for many prospective participants. A further complication is the time commitments of managers to attend face-to-face focus group discussions. Within

this context, online computer conferencing may be a consideration for overcoming such practical difficulties.

### 3.2.4 Online Computer Conferencing

Online computer conferencing is an option for focus group discussions. The advantage of using online discussions is that participants can participate in their own time and in a place that is convenient to them (McConnel, 1994; Lewis & Kaas, 1998; Ryan, Carlton & Ali, 1999). In addition to this rationale, the researcher and her supervisors have experience in the use of online discussion groups.

Online discussion forums provide a common meeting place on the Internet for participants to contribute information. Communication occurs by means of posted messages that appear in the form of a threaded discussion. Messages are grouped under the same topic heading to make it possible for focus group members to follow different topics within a discussion. Asynchronous discussion is one type of online discussion. This means that discussion does not occur simultaneously with other participants and that participants are not present online at the same time. The advantage here is that participants can participate at a time that is suitable to them. The conversation differs from a synchronous online chat, where the software allows for the rapid, simultaneous exchanging of messages amongst participants. Online computer conferencing again refers to the occurrence of the discussion within a set time frame to facilitate intensive discussion within a specified period.

McConnel (1994) supports the use of this medium for collaborative learning, critical analysis, and active involvement. In addition, it also has the advantage of the acquisition of multiple perspectives (Cartwright, 2000). Several studies have found that online discussion facilitates critical reflection, analysis, and in-depth exploration of a topic due to the time available between reading a message and composing one's own (McConnel, 1994; Cravener, 1999). Ryan, et al. (1999) comment on the increase in networking possibilities with

colleagues that online discussions provide. These authors, amongst others, also note the clear, organised and focused way in which online discussions can occur.

Being a relatively new field in both education and research, very limited research information is available regarding the practicalities of the use of online computer conferencing for research purposes. The literature centres on mainly two categories: the use of online discussion forums in education; and their use in support groups in health care. Information obtained from literature regarding education serves as a guide in the planning and development of an appropriate discussion forum. Several studies make recommendations for well-structured and user-friendly designs (Halstead, Reising and Billings, 1995; O'Brien and Renner, 1999; Scordo, 1997).

Research studies that have used online discussion as a medium have focused mainly on its use in support groups. The studies conducted by Dickerson, Flaig and Kennedy (2000), Klemm, Reppert and Vision (1998), Weinberg, Schmale, Uken and Wessel (1995), and Brennan, Moore and Smythe (1995) focused on the use of online discussions as a support structure for various terminally ill patients and their caregivers. It proved to be a valuable communication medium via which patients and caregivers could share information, concerns and ideas. Limited details were provided on the structure of these discussion forums or suggestions for their future use. Most reports analysed their effectiveness by analysing the online discussion themes and the number of messages posted.

Against this background, it seems appropriate to conduct focus group discussions by means of online computer conferencing, which would provide qualitative data and would be one of the first research studies to utilise this medium. Having established the approach and medium of delivering a program aimed at facilitating change, this chapter will now focus on the content and measurement of such a program.

### 3.2.5 Content of a Program aimed at facilitating Change

In order to provide the opportunities for the steps in the problem-solving process to occur, the content of a program aimed at facilitating change should be selected to make provisions for these steps. The content of the program should focus on identifying problems in current service delivery models and the need for change, and on investigating the nature of the problem and possible strategies to solve the problem. It should allow time for the implementation of strategies and the evaluation of such strategies. The content should be appropriate and participants should therefore be actively involved in selecting and assessing the content of such a program. A diagrammatic layout is provided in Figure 2. The proposed phases will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

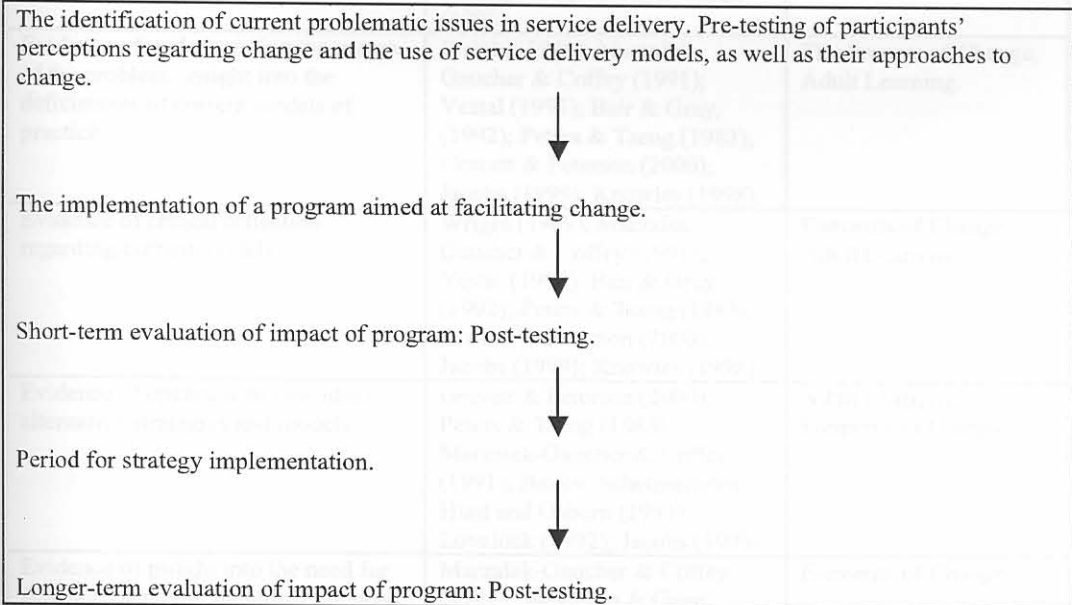
### 3.2.6 Measurement of a Program aimed at facilitating Change

Evaluation of the process of change is crucial to its success (The Australian Early Intervention Network for Mental Health in Young People, 2000). It is necessary to measure the impact of the program by means of both a pre-test and a subsequent post-test after the implementation of the program. In addition, change can be measured throughout the implementation of the program, and after a certain amount of time, once the program has been implemented.

Pre-set indicators for change in the perceptions of managers, as well as changes in practice, need to be developed from the start, as recommended by the Australian Early Intervention Network for Mental Health in Young People (2000). Table 4 provides a layout of the indicators for a program aimed at facilitating change. These indicators are underpinned by guidelines provided by authors of Change Management and Adult Education literature as discussed previously in this chapter. Perusal of literature occurred until a point of saturation in the literature was reached, where no new indicators were indicated. These indicators relate to the early stages of acquiring information, to problem solving, and to critically reflecting on

current practice and the newly acquired information. Indicators also relate to the identification of approaches to change, for example “openness to new ideas”. In addition, indicators refer to aspects of learning, such as interest and motivation, that may occur in the focus group discussions

**Figure 2 Graphical Representation of a Program aimed at facilitating Change**



In addition to these indicators, longer-term indicators for change in practice have been adopted from the New South Wales Department of Health (1998), which developed a strategic framework for capacity building in organisations. The study, executed by the Australian Early Intervention Network for Mental Health in Young People (2000), utilised this framework, which consists of three areas as indicators for the evaluation of changes in early intervention services. These include workforce development towards implementing change, organisational development towards implementing change, and allocation of resources to implement change. The Australian Early Intervention Network added a fourth indicator: the development of partnerships and networks in order to implement change. Together, these indicators provide a longer-term indication of change and seem to comprehensively cover the most significant factors in implementing change.

**Table 4 Indicators of Change for a Program aimed at facilitating Change**

Indicator	Literature Reference	Previous Reference in Chapter
Evidence of identification of problems related to current service delivery models.	Bair & Gray (1992); Marzalek-Gaucher & Coffey (1991); Wright (1989); Berger, Elhart, Firshich, Jordan & Stone (1980); Vestal (1995).	The Process of Change.
Evidence of identification of the need for change in current service delivery models.	Cook (1991); Marzalek-Gaucher & Coffey (1991); Berger et al. (1980); Wright (1989); Vestal (1995).	The Process of Change.
Evidence of understanding the nature of the problem: insight into the deficiencies of current models of practice.	Wright (1989); Marzalek-Gaucher & Coffey (1991); Vestal (1995); Bair & Gray, (1992); Peters & Tseng (1983); Gravett & Peterson (2000); Jacobs (1999); Knowles (1998).	The Process of Change, Adult Learning.
Evidence of critical reflection regarding current models.	Wright (1989); Marzalek-Gaucher & Coffey (1991); Vestal (1995); Bair & Gray (1992); Peters & Tseng (1983); Gravett & Peterson (2000); Jacobs (1999); Knowles (1998).	Elements of Change, Adult Learning.
Evidence of openness to new ideas / alternative strategies and models.	Gravett & Peterson (2000); Peters & Tseng (1983); Marzalek-Gaucher & Coffey (1991); Bailey, Schermerhorn, Hunt and Osborn (1991); Lovelock (1992); Jacobs (1999).	Adult Learning, Elements of Change.
Evidence of insight into the need for strategic planning, including the need to analyse external and internal environments of services.	Marzalek-Gaucher & Coffey (1991); Shakleton & Gage (1995).	Elements of Change.
Evidence of internalisation of information: indication of preferences (positive or negative) in terms of information presented.	Walkin (1990); Burkey (1993); Schurink (1998).	Principles of Organisational Change, Adult Learning.
Evidence of internalisation of information: indication of the application of information.	Walkin (1990); Burkey (1993); Schurink (1998).	Principles of Organisational Change, Adult Learning.
Evidence of internalisation of information: indication of the assessment of different views.	Gravett & Peterson (2000); Burkey (1993); Schurink (1998).	Principles of Organisational Change, Adult Learning.
Evidence of internalisation of information: identification of positive and / or negative aspects of the model.	Mezirow (1981); Burkey (1993); Schurink (1998).	Principles of Organisational Change, Adult Learning.
Evidence of a decision made to negate current views regarding service delivery models.	Gravett & Peterson (2000).	Adult Learning.
Evidence of a synthesis of old and new views.	Gravett & Peterson (2000).	Adult Learning.

**Table 4 Continued** DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Indicator	Literature Reference	Previous Reference in Chapter
Motivation to learn, interest in information, and attention given.	Walkin (1990).	Adult Learning.
Active participation in discussion.	Walkin (1990).	Adult Learning.

When evaluating the changes occurring in practice, it is essential to ensure that the program is implemented with the necessary measures in place to ensure the appropriateness of the program itself, as well as the validity and reliability of the information obtained from the program for research purposes. It is against this background that the following measures prove to be essential for consideration: the implementation of sound evaluation procedures at the beginning, during, and at the end of the program; consideration of the context of each organisation when interpreting findings; the implementation of strategies to reduce researcher bias; the use of scientifically sound measurement instruments; the use of scientifically sound data analysis procedures; the use of a combination of research methods, instruments and analysis techniques to acknowledge the complexity of the phenomenon. These measures are discussed in more detail in Chapter 4, since it relates to each phase of the study.

### 3.3 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER

Chapter 3 provides background information for understanding the processes that take place when facilitating change in organisations. It is within this framework that this research project focuses on the processes of change that occur in early intervention service delivery in South Australia, by implementing a program for this purpose. The discussion in Chapter 4 focuses on a detailed layout of the research design and methodology utilised in this research project and builds on the processes discussed within this chapter.