Strategic Change

Participatory evaluation: a missing component in the sustainable social change equation for public services

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- *This article draws on a case study of organizational change with the Queensland public sector to showcase the contribution participatory approaches to evaluation make to sustained change.*
- *Key points outlined in the paper include: changes in human service organizations generally, and child welfare services in particular, have been proven to be difficult to achieve and sustain. Participatory processes including participatory evaluation are presented as key strategies to enhance the uptake of social and organizational change initiatives.*
- *Parallels to continuous change models are found within policy formulation and evaluation theories. In particular, participative evaluation models share similarities to continuous change models through their reliance on self-evaluation and self-determination as means of promoting change.*
- *A theoretical contribution to organizational change theories is made through the development of a change model that includes a participatory evaluation component as part of the equation for sustainable change. It is proposed that this model has a wider practical application.*

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Introduction

A series of social, economic and political forces has highlighted inadequacies in many current welfare practices and arrangements, leading to a growing consensus that the welfare system needs to be reformed. However, changes in human service organizations generally, and child welfare services in particular, have proven to be difficult to

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achieve and sustain (Hasenfeld, 1983, 1992). This lower-level uptake of reform initiatives by human service agencies has been attributed to an over-reliance on top-down, mandated change initiatives coupled with a largely introspective professional ideology (Cohen and Austin, 1994). Expanding the participation basis in the planning and implementation of reforms has been presented as a key strategy to overcome these issues and achieve mutually satisfying service outcomes.

This paper argues that participative evaluation models that deliberately and genuinely engage personnel and external agencies in understanding and assessing the reform

process can contribute to the enhanced uptake of social change initiatives. Drawing on the experiences of a current child welfare reform initiative, underpinned by a strong participatory evaluation component, the paper provides some preliminary evidence of a shift in service practice and orientation in both local community and departmental operational levels. The paper concludes with some insights into the implications of the change process for both community and government actors. It argues that the inclusion of a participatory evaluation component serves to improve change and change outcomes through providing a mechanism for sustaining change. A change model that includes a participatory evaluation component as part of the equation for sustainable change is presented.

Participative evaluation models can contribute to social change initiatives

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Reshaping the sector: forces for change

Over the past century and especially since the 1970s, most western democracies have established extensive human services sectors to meet the basic welfare and wellbeing of their citizens (Esping-Andersen, 1997). Although providing improved social circumstances and life conditions for many citizens (Quiggin, 1999), in recent times a consensus has emerged that the traditional mode of service delivery is no longer adequate or appropriate and should be reshaped (Saunders, 1998; Keating, 2001). Specifically, a reliance on categorical or programme-based funding arrangements, specialized departmental delivery modes and the associated service fragmentation challenge government's ability to effectively and efficiently deliver the comprehensive service packages necessary for vulnerable citizens (Agranoff, 1991; Queensland

Government, 2002) and in particular children and families (Schorr, 1997; Evans *et al.*, 1998).

There has also been a realization that many of the important issues confronting the public sector are highly complex and crosscutting or interrelated. They defy traditional linear-based problem-solving processes and cannot be tackled by any one agency working alone (Clarke and Stewart, 1997; Huxham, 2000). Instead they require more holistic, innovative approaches and the establishment of closer interaction and relationships between departments and increasingly other sectors (OECD, 1996; Huxham, 2000; Osborne and Brown, 2005).

Many of the important issues confronting the public sector are highly complex

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As well as these service-oriented issues, the need to reshape public service provision has been influenced by a number of broader social and economic forces. These include fiscal restraints (Beresford, 2000; Osborne and Brown, 2005) and the demands for better quality and localized services by a more diverse, sophisticated and better informed citizenry requiring a greater voice in decision-making processes (Keating, 2000; Head, 1999). The active participation of citizens and community groups in problem resolution is argued to contribute to enhanced and sustained outcomes, as well as greater ease in implementation (Adams and Hess, 2001; Queensland Government, 2003). Additionally, the emergence of new, cost-efficient ways of meeting client needs and delivering targeted public services has been brought about by continuing advances in information and communication technology (Bellamy and Taylor, 1998; Bekkers and Zouridis, 1999; Vincent, 1999).

The combined effect of these ideological, economic, technological and social factors has been a widespread demand for organizational change in terms of service delivery practices and models within the human services arena. Change in this context goes beyond alteration of internal structures and processes to include a fundamental alteration of mechanisms of decision-making, policy development and service provision. Such change has been described and studied as transformational change involving not just components of the organization but total structures, management processes and corporate cultures (Dunphy and Stace, 1988).

Transformative change strategies

Numerous models of transformational change strategies exist. An increasingly used theoretical framework to differentiate such strategies is the distinction between episodic and continuous change (Weick and Quinn, 1999). The punctuated equilibrium model of change makes this distinction by suggesting that organizations experience long periods of relative stability punctuated by periods of radical transformational change (Weick and Quinn, 1999). Dunphy and Stace (1988) distinguished these two forms of change as incremental and transformative change strategies and proposed that the difference between incremental and transformative change is not 'slow' as opposed to 'rapid' or 'normal' as opposed to 'exceptional', but rather whether change is on a continuous or discontinuous basis. Both strategies have been argued to deliver transformational change.

Discontinuous change is periodic and usually associated with being transformative. It implies sporadic learning mainly in the upper echelons of the organization. Dunphy and Stace (1988) have argued, however, that in reaction to rapidly changing environments, organizations often opt for more coercive strategies where transformative change is dictated from the top of an organization and enacted swiftly. Continuous change, on the other hand, is incremental and involves continuous learning at all levels of the organization. The incremental changes achieved through such methods have the ability to accrue over time, resulting in large-scale, transformational-type change (Weick and Quinn, 1999). This is the view adopted particularly by organization development proponents and is central to the notion of the learning organization (Argyris and Schon, 1978; Senge, 1990).

More and more researchers are discovering that organizations '*Spontaneously know how to reorganize in the face of a challenge, if the obstacles hindering [their] capacity to self-organize are removed*' (Goldstein, 1994: 9). From this perspective, the challenge of organizational change becomes that of unleashing the self-organizing potential of the system rather than changing a system through coercion. Self-organizing systems are consistent with continuous change models that advocate incrementalism and involve continuous learning at all levels of the organization.

Participatory evaluation: a new way forward for transformational change

Parallels to continuous change models are found within policy formulation and evaluation theories. Rather than adopting a distant independent stance, participator evaluation involves evaluators working in a collaborative partnership way to facilitate and support participants in owning and understanding evaluation. The dual objective of participatory evaluation is to promote programme enhancement/improvement and encourage self-evaluation and self-determination (Patton, 2002). Such a process facilitates stakeholder 'buy-in' because they have a sense of ownership of the evaluation process and are more likely to implement change. Participatory evaluation does not preclude the involvement of external experts. However, the expert plays a facilitating role in partnership with the community or programme staff, rather than being the 'expert supreme' who decides in isolation how the evaluation will be conducted. In this way par-

ticipatory evaluation can contribute to the building of local capacity for decision-making (Narayan, 1993; Patton, 2002).

Narayan (1993), in discussing the application of participatory evaluation models, stressed that methods used to gather data and insights necessarily have to be flexible, simple and eclectic in order to reflect the operating environment. Other participatory evaluation proponents have been more prescriptive, identifying methods and processes such as action learning teams, focus groups, story telling, personal interview and visual techniques as key vehicles for data-gathering (Patton, 1997; Burke, 2002).

However, although evaluations that are both participatory and outcome-based are perceived as more successful than other types of evaluation, in general evaluations do not follow this model and those that do tend only to employ aspects of the model.

Methodology and case study

Drawing on the preliminary results of a recent Queensland reform initiative, this paper tests the proposition that participatory evaluation can contribute positively to implementing transformational change. A range of qualitative techniques of data-gathering, including case studies and stories, semi-structured interviews, focus groups and documentation, has been used to build a picture of the reform process, the participants' experiences and its initial impacts. These methodologies allow for rich, detailed insights into the new service models (Yin, 2004), as well as uncovering the emergent relationships between provider groups. To tap into the experiences, reflections and insights of evaluation personnel with respect to the evaluation process, the paper also draws on information generated from reflective practice sessions. In this way the personal or 'lived experiences' of all reform participants, their understanding and interpretation of these experiences, and the context in which they occurred provided the primary focus for this research project (Marshall and Rossman, 1989; Yin, 2004).

Reform in the Queensland human services arena

In Queensland, the Department of Communities (formerly Department of Families) has lead agency responsibility for the provision of services and programmes to assist the more vulnerable citizens of the state — families, children and senior citizens (Queensland Government, 2002). Since its inception during the 1950s, the department's approach to family welfare services has been described as piecemeal and marginalized, particularly in terms of its funding allocation and policy development (Walsh, 1993; Marston *et al.*, 2000). The Queensland system was a late adopter of human service reforms undertaken in other jurisdictions (Walsh, 1993). However, while general factors evident in multiple jurisdictions provided the broad context for a reform of the Queensland public service model, the change agenda has been strongly influenced by a number of localized events, reviews and reports that have highlighted ongoing and current limitations hindering the optimal provision of public services in this state (Walsh, 1993; Marston *et al.*, 2000; Forde Report, 1999).

Despite a range of reforms introduced during the 1990s, the child welfare system in Queensland has continued to require significant change to bring it to an equivalent status with many other jurisdictions nationally and internationally. In responding to these issues, on 20 June 2002 the Queensland government launched *Queensland Families: Future Directions* as its central policy statement to guide programme development and service delivery to the state's most vulnerable citizens — those that are at risk of not meeting their full potential (Department of Families, 2003a). *Future Directions* is a 5-year change agenda designed to address critical and long-standing deficits and gaps in child and family service delivery in Queensland. A stronger focus on and investment in prevention and early intervention, enhanced service delivery practices and techniques, and a renewed emphasis on building stronger working relationships with commu-

nity agencies and service recipients were central principles for the reform process and its ongoing sustainability (Queensland Government, 2002). *Future Directions* therefore signalled a new direction, a new focus and a new emphasis for service delivery (Department of Families, 2003a).

In this way, the *Future Directions* initiative can be described as a deliberative and strategic attempt to shift the department's service delivery model from a largely functional welfare-oriented, 'people processing' approach to a model in which departmental services and personnel link with internal and external networks of service providers to supply a more comprehensive, prevention-oriented, better integrated and more client-responsive suite of services. Such a model is consistent with the '*new public service model*' articulated by Denhardt and Denhardt (2000), which is more inclusive, engaged and based on the establishment of shared patterns of service development and delivery, including partnerships and networked forms. Further, it met the growing awareness articulated by community representatives, academics and government policy-makers of the need to more actively involve citizens and community groups in the problem-setting and resolution process.

The *Future Directions* strategy consists of 27 initiatives located within five broad areas of service delivery (Queensland Government, 2002). Reflecting the range of issues being addressed and the complexity and diversity of the client populations affected, these initiatives have been implemented both internal and external to the department, at a number of levels of operation and at various sites across the state. The size and complexity of the reform agenda associated with *Future Directions* presented as a high risk of unaligned action, which could have resulted in duplication of effort, resource wastage and goal confusion. In view of this, a change management process was put in place to guide the reform agenda and keep it on track. In addition to providing structured processes and mechanisms to enhance reform implementation, a major component of this change management prescription was an emphasis on continuous learning and evaluation. Indeed, it was considered that with *Future Directions* there was an opportunity for the mutual dialogue, relationship building and learning that has been absent from prior service models (Department of Families, 2003a). The change model and its underpinning evaluation process was informed by organizational learning theories and practices that sought to assist participants to examine, reflect and review the application of theory to practice (Senge, 1990) through the use of participatory practices and processes. In this way, evaluation, rather than being an additional consideration or requirement, was used as a central plank of the reform process to monitor, inform and guide action.

Clearly, since the *Future Directions* reform had a strong top-down implementation orientation and was subject to a powerful political imperative to succeed, it cannot be described as a 'pure participatory' process. Nevertheless, the adoption of many of the participatory evaluation strategies locates it within a broad participatory framework that provides opportunity for exploration and insights.

Evaluating future directions

Responsibility for the development of an evaluation framework for the *Future Directions* initiative and its primary conduct was assigned to the Evaluation Unit located within the Review and Evaluation Branch. Although this branch reported directly to the Director-General and was therefore largely independent of the operational and policy directorates, as critical partners in the change process these areas have been actively involved in the development of the evaluation process as well as in the analysis of the emerging data. In forming an evaluation design and implementation strategy, the Evaluation Unit drew on many of the participatory evaluation principles outlined previously. Importantly, these elements are consistent with best practice principles articulated within the Commu-

nity Engagement Evaluation Guide developed by the Community Engagement Division, formerly within the Department of Premier and Cabinet (Queensland) and now located within the Department of Communities. This Evaluation Guide, which won the 2004 Australian Evaluation Society Development Award, was initiated to both assist the conduct of rigour evaluation as well as providing direction to further facilitate the involvement of citizens and community groups in problem resolution and evaluation (Department of Communities, 2004). This amalgamation of approaches to enhanced participation provided a strong foundation for the implementation of the evaluation as intended, thus contributing to programme integrity.

To begin the evaluation a programme logic process was used to provide a framework to assist the articulation of programme design elements, their outcomes and causal linkages (Project Management Solutions, 2000 — cited in Department of Families, 2003a). The programme logic model provided a mechanism to identify key stakeholders (in addition to departmental representatives) to bring their voice and perspective to the evaluation and reform process and to forecast potential unintended consequences of interventions (Department of Families, 2003a). Internal stakeholders were accommodated through the creation of an Evaluation Working Group (EWG) comprised of representatives of each directorate within the department. This group provided operational and policy advice to the Evaluation Unit and reported on the progress of the evaluation to the Future Directions Steering Committee. To ensure that the evaluation methodologies and practices were culturally appropriate and provided useful information for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients and services, a group of Aboriginal and Islander people was established to act as critical friends throughout the evaluation. Finally, the Evaluation Unit established ongoing linkages with other departments, research bodies and institutions to facilitate external input and peer review into the evaluation framework and implementation

process (Queensland Government, 2002; Department of Families, 2003b).

To facilitate increased participation of stakeholder groups in the operation and evaluation of services, a range of strategies was employed. A key tactic was the use of action learning teams, comprised of project personnel, management staff and external stakeholders. The purpose of the action learning teams was to encourage critical reflection of actions undertaken to generate understanding and knowledge to inform the development of plans for future action (Department of Families, 1999).

> *To facilitate increased participation of stakeholder groups a range of strategies was employed*

Evaluation Unit personnel also participated in the action learning processes, particularly with respect to the evaluation process. In this situation the role of evaluation personnel as critical friends is to assist action learning teams and projects to best meet their data collection requirements through the exploration of alternative methodologies, instruments and performance indicators as well as to facilitate and support reflective processes (Department of Families, 2003a). Modelled broadly on the original concept of critical friend developed by the education sector, the primary role of the critical friend within the *Future Directions* initiative was described as:

> *Providing expert advice, support and encouragement to Action Learning Teams . . . to enable them to fulfil service delivery and reporting obligations and achieve improved service delivery outcomes.* (2003a)

Also consistent with the emergent prescriptions for complex, comprehensive reform

processes (Sanderson, 2000) and participatory methodologies, a mixed method evaluation design using multiple data-gathering strategies and respondents was employed. Quantitative methods such as service outputs and surveys were used to ascertain the number and type of client-related activities undertaken by agencies. Coupled with this, qualitative processes such as case studies and self- and stakeholder reports, as well as culturally relevant processes including 'story telling', provided more detailed operational and performance insights into what worked (or what did not) and under what circumstances. Further, in order to keep evaluation partners informed of progress, the evaluation framework relied on a number of different information dissemination and reporting processes including monthly data reports, feedback sessions, meetings and reflective practice sessions (Department of Families, 2003a).

Findings and discussion

All trials were completed over an 18-month period. Preliminary results available from documentation and case reports provide some cautious evidence of the beginnings of a shift in service delivery orientation. Indeed, a subsequent inquiry by the Crime and Misconduct Commission (2004) acknowledged progress of *Future Directions* as a reform agenda.

New ways of working

Case study reports provided by trial participants showed some short-term evidence of a shift in service orientation from a previously 'siloed' or single agency approach to more collaborative, inter-agency models that had inherent benefits of integration and innovation. Evidence of these new ways of working was seen in the following statement by a participating agency:

A collaborative model of service delivery is a new way of working for the four organisations involved. Historically Indigenous agencies have worked, for the

most part, in isolation from the other services. The model not only gives the four services an opportunity to develop better working relationships, it also enables them to look at novel ways of working.

Respondent agencies recognized that building and maintaining relationships with other providers and departmental services agencies was an essential aspect of this shift in service delivery mode. This was exemplified in the following statement:

Hope, networks, relationships, trust and support came together with the change processes and provided the turning point within the intervention.

It was also acknowledged that where these relationships were not secure or were weak, the agencies struggled to deliver as they intended.

The importance of improved relationships between agencies and government as a conduit to 'working together' is also reflected in the broader literature (Edwards, 2000; Huxham, 2000; Keast *et al.*, 2004). While a better working relationship between agencies and between agencies and the department was consistently identified as an outcome of the reform process, for most respondents the time and effort required to build, facilitate and sustain those relationships presented as an additional task. The issue of time was reflected in the respondent statement:

Relationship building takes time. Indigenous agencies cannot be co-opted into collaboration unless they have already built a relationship.

The need for additional time and effort in building and maintaining relationships between agencies, and particularly those that have been 'bruised' as a result of prior competitive or controlling practices, is widely acknowledged in the academic literature (Edwards, 2000; Cigler, 2001). However, as Keast *et al.* (2004: 369) have found, although

relationship building is recognized as central to collaborative endeavours, the time and effort taken to establish and sustain these improved relations can be perceived as being at the expense of achieving outcomes and as a consequence, the results can be undermined. A challenge then for sustaining change outcomes is to maintain confidence in the change strategy employed (Lewis and Thompson, 2003). Nevertheless, as Keast *et al.* (2004) have identified, there are strategies that can be employed to 'ramp up' or 'turbo charge' relationships. Within the *Future Directions* initiative the use of action learning teams and critical friends has provided a way to 'fast track' relationships.

Action learning teams

Action learning teams were identified by a number of respondents (both internal and external) as a useful mechanism for relationship building within and between agencies. Indeed the provision of '. . . *Opportunities for professional development through the forming of working partnerships across disciplines and with the Department of Families in an action learning process*' was considered to be a key strength of the reform mechanism. Some participants expressed the view that this was the first time they had been able to discuss professional issues outside their own agency.

Action learning was also described as being an effective process for reflective practice because it enabled people with different expertise and perspectives to discuss practice issues and extend the capacity of all those involved towards best practice. A community agency representative reflected on the contribution of action learning to the expansion of practice knowledge:

> *The action learning team was a critical factor in the success of this trial. The action learning process provided a regular opportunity to examine practice and learn from shared experiences. Access to the academic critical friend was particularly valuable.*

The preliminary reports indicated that action learning worked best where there was a culture of reflective practice and where action learning was used as a tool to achieve continuous learning rather than as an operational management tool.

Consistent with the outcomes of other research efforts (Canadian Centre for Management Development, 1999), alternative communication mechanisms such as team meetings and inter-agency meetings were identified by respondents as '*useful ways to develop learning about the project*'. Effective communication mechanisms are vital to sustaining organizational change (Lewis and Thompson, 2003). The development of action learning teams created a new communication channel that was critical to both sustaining and continuing change. As well as contributing to practice reflections and alternative views of service delivery, the reflective processes offered by action learning teams, focus groups and reflective practitioner sessions also resulted in the development of new or alternative evaluation methods and tools/instruments that better met the practice, operational and cultural needs of services. This contribution is articulated as follows:

> *A focus group of Indigenous staff advised the evaluation on what they considered to be important features of the trials and what outcomes they would want to see to determine if the trial was effective. Workers were invited to present their work orally to Indigenous listeners rather than in writing with an emphasis on stories — rich case studies that showed the clients' needs, the intervention they applied and the results.*

The evaluators' observations were generally that through participation in action learning teams and their role as critical friends, they were able to build trust and stronger relationships with respondent agencies. It was noted that as well as providing a constant contact within the department, the critical friend role was able to provide insights and assistance and

constant encouragement for actions and input. A side-effect of these perceived enhanced relationships was a greater commitment to data-gathering and evaluation. Reflecting on the critical friend role, a respondent noted:

> *Being almost embedded in the agency . . . helps build relationships, get better data and hopefully enhanced outcomes for agencies.*

On reflection, evaluation personnel agreed that there were some agencies and services that had not been fully engaged in either the reform process or the evaluation. This impacted on the level of 'buy-in' that could be secured from agencies and personnel.

Information drawn from reflective practice sessions also identified that a small number of agencies had failed to make the necessary service adjustments, preferring to continue with a traditional orientation of identifying needs and providing services.

The need to engage workers towards the new model was recognized as a key requirement to affect and sustain the changes sought, which was reflected in this comment:

> *To the point where workers really want (to be involved) where they have an investment in creating an evidence base for this new model of practice.*

It was also acknowledged by evaluators that they could have used the expertise of the external critical friends more strategically to ensure that important material was captured and insights were enhanced. It was reflected: '. . . *It's like the knowledge base of the critical friend versus the knowledge base of the evaluator*'.

Just as some practitioners found it difficult to 'let go' of their professional orientation, so too did evaluators. For some evaluation personnel the issue of creditability, or the quality control evaluation design, selection of appropriate methodology or data-gathering processes and the resulting quality of data generated, was a concern. Working within

existing social and professional networks has been identified as a means for sustaining change (Lewis and Thompson, 2003); however, in this case, the power imbalances created by these existing relationships presented as a barrier to the change goals. For example it was stated:

> *Lead agents were responsible for the quality of the data, but really they do not have the skills, the expertise. But still we wanted to be proactive.*

In this way there was a feeling of 'loss of control' of the evaluation through having to share decision-making. However, this concern was tempered by a realization that other sources and processes provided for confirmation of validity and reliability. Thus, similarly to Brown (1996), there was almost a '*Conflict between a legitimate need to be perceived as credible and their sense that taking on some roles traditionally considered outside of the evaluation enterprise may produce important and useful learning*'.

While many participant services and their clients saw benefit in the attempt to shift the service delivery model and embraced the opportunity to work collaboratively in the change process, there remained a number of agencies that continued to feel excluded from the reform. This was made evident at a feedback session where some respondents indicated that 'the use of "specialist" evaluation terminology and language served to exclude agencies from full participation'. Along a similar line, Huxham and Vangren (1996), in their review of collaborative endeavours, found that the '*Unthinking use of language can make collaborators angry and disempowered as well as disaffected and confused*'.

Similar to the practitioners' experience, evaluation staff found that taking on a more engaged role was more labour-intensive. Brown (1996) and other participatory evaluators (Patton, 2002), although stressing the value of inclusive evaluation strategies, have acknowledged the additional commitment of time and energy required by evaluation staff in

participatory models. The issue of time continued as a theme, for while it was noted that '*Interacting with (respondent) agencies helped to fine tune our own evaluation and data gathering strategies*', finding and taking time for internal evaluation capacity building was considered to be difficult. This was because evaluation timelines were frequently short and workloads high and often overtaken by shifting priorities.

Together these factors of time, level of engagement required, concerns about quality control and the sharing of decision-making and power, provide some insights into the failure of participatory evaluation to be fully implemented. They also forecast new roles for participants.

New evaluation roles

From the beginning the *Future Directions* evaluation process forecast a change of mode of operating and evaluating for participating agencies, personnel and evaluation staff. For many agencies and particularly those with capacity to participate at a higher level, this change was well accepted and responded to positively. However, it was generally identified that a shift to this style of working, where there is greater responsibility for both the programme and the evaluation, required a rethinking of practice, skills and capacity. For the evaluation staff in particular, there was a strong realization that these new evaluation processes shifted them from the centre of the evaluation process or 'owning it', to a new role in which they brought together the data and facilitated other stakeholders to interpret this within their operating frameworks. The shift in the role of evaluator in participatory approaches has been noted by a number of commentators. Shea *et al*. (1995) forecast a change in the role of evaluators from just facilitating evaluation to also facilitating programme and organizational development. Along a similar line, Brown (1996) described it as moving from '*outputs monitor to that of collaborator*'. Clearly, for all involved the participatory model of evaluation brought with it

the need to tap into a broader skill set around facilitation and engagement.

Conclusions: participatory evaluation as a component of the change equation

Human services have entered an era of high uncertainty in which the pressures for change will be ever present. The long-term survival, vitality and effectiveness of human service organizations depend on their capacity to change. Historically, however, human service organizations have not responded well to either the need or directive for change.

Human services have entered an era of high uncertainty

The policy statement *Queensland Families: Future Directions* acted as both guide and directive to how a participatory programme development and approach to service delivery should be adopted and developed. The case presented here therefore provides important insights into how a top-down, enforced change acted as a catalyst for the adoption of participatory evaluation. Participatory evaluation then provided the means by which incremental changes occurred. This part of the process is a continuous loop as each incremental change is subjected to participatory evaluation for effectiveness. Over time, as proposed by Weick and Quinn (1999), both these incremental changes and the relational processes involved in participatory evaluation accumulate to result in transformational change. In models of participatory evaluation, the anticipated result of this transformation would be a shift to self-evaluation where the formal role of evaluator is relinquished and ownership of the programme is shifted to the participant (Patton, 2002). The change in role for evaluation staff from evaluator to facilitator
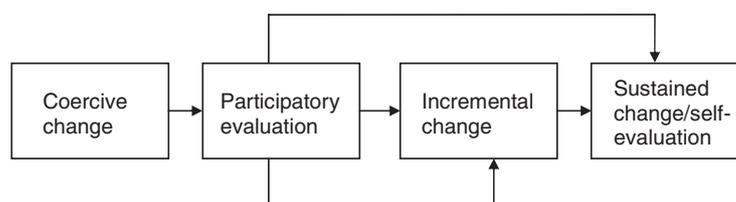
Figure 1. Locating participatory evaluation within the change equation.

of change is a significant factor in the success of this process. Further, the active involvement of citizens and community groups in the evaluation process has afforded enhanced programmatic outcomes as well as contributing to capacity building around evaluation and broader participation roles. The model that emerges is depicted in **Figure 1**.

This paper has provided some preliminary evidence to suggest that a participatory evaluation approach to reform has merit and can produce benefits. A critical issue in assessing whether transformational change has occurred, however, is the issue of timing. In models of transformational change that rely on incremental shifts for the achievement of their aims it is difficult to identify at what point evaluation is appropriate. Furthermore, participatory models of change have been acknowledged to take considerably more time than coercive models of change due to the need to establish relationships and trust sufficient to allow the effective sharing of decision-making and power. It is therefore acknowledged that the change agenda presented in this case study was in its early stages and it is not possible to definitively state its success or otherwise given that confidence in the process needs to be maintained over a lengthy period. There is, however, cause for optimism in two respects. First, reflective practices have been adopted that encourage continuous action learning. Reflective practices are evidenced in the acknowledgement that not all agencies are yet fully engaged and that there are ongoing issues in terms of shared decision-making. Second, and more importantly, the shift from evaluator to change facilitator as a means to entrench the changes appears, if not fully embedded, at least

acknowledged. The success of the change initiative overall, however, will rest on the extent to which self-reflection can continue to be converted to positive action and an ongoing commitment to the new change facilitator role.

A number of implications for providers, change agents and evaluation staff emerge when considering the adoption of participatory models. In particular, such an approach requires a greater investment in time and engagement for relationship building, a willingness to 'share power' and genuinely work together. Moving to a more participatory or inclusive model of service delivery and evaluation also requires a shift in the role and capabilities of practitioners and evaluators. For evaluation personnel the change in role from evaluation manager to facilitator is perhaps the most critical.

Acknowledgements

Biographical notes

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