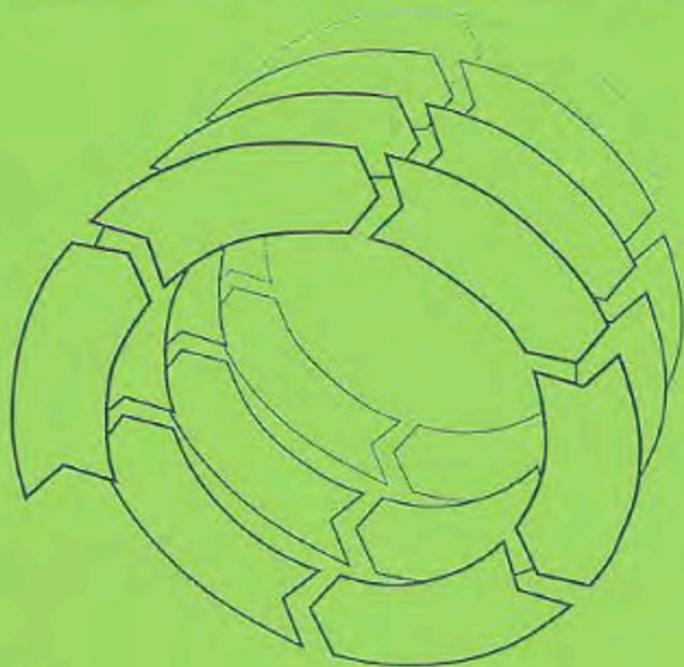


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1

Vikki Uhlmann

Consulting on a consultation
protocol

ACTION RESEARCH CASE STUDY SERIES
MONOGRAPH No 1

CONSULTING ON A CONSULTATION PROTOCOL

A project where the means were
as important as the end

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May 1994

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Arcs is jointly published by the Action Learning Action Research and Process Management Association (ALARPM) Inc., Prosperity Press, and Interchange.

Subscription inquiries should be addressed to ALARPM Assn Inc, PO Box 6576 Upper Mount Gravatt, 4122, Brisbane, Qld, Australia.

Editorial inquiries should be addressed to the editor, ARCS, 37 Burbong Street, Chapel Hill 4069 Qld Australia.

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Published by:
ARCS
37 Burbong St,
Chapel Hill 4069
Queensland, Australia

Distributed by:
ALARPM Assn Inc,
PO Box 6576,
Upper Mount Gravatt 4122
Brisbane, Qld, Australia



ARCS, Brisbane

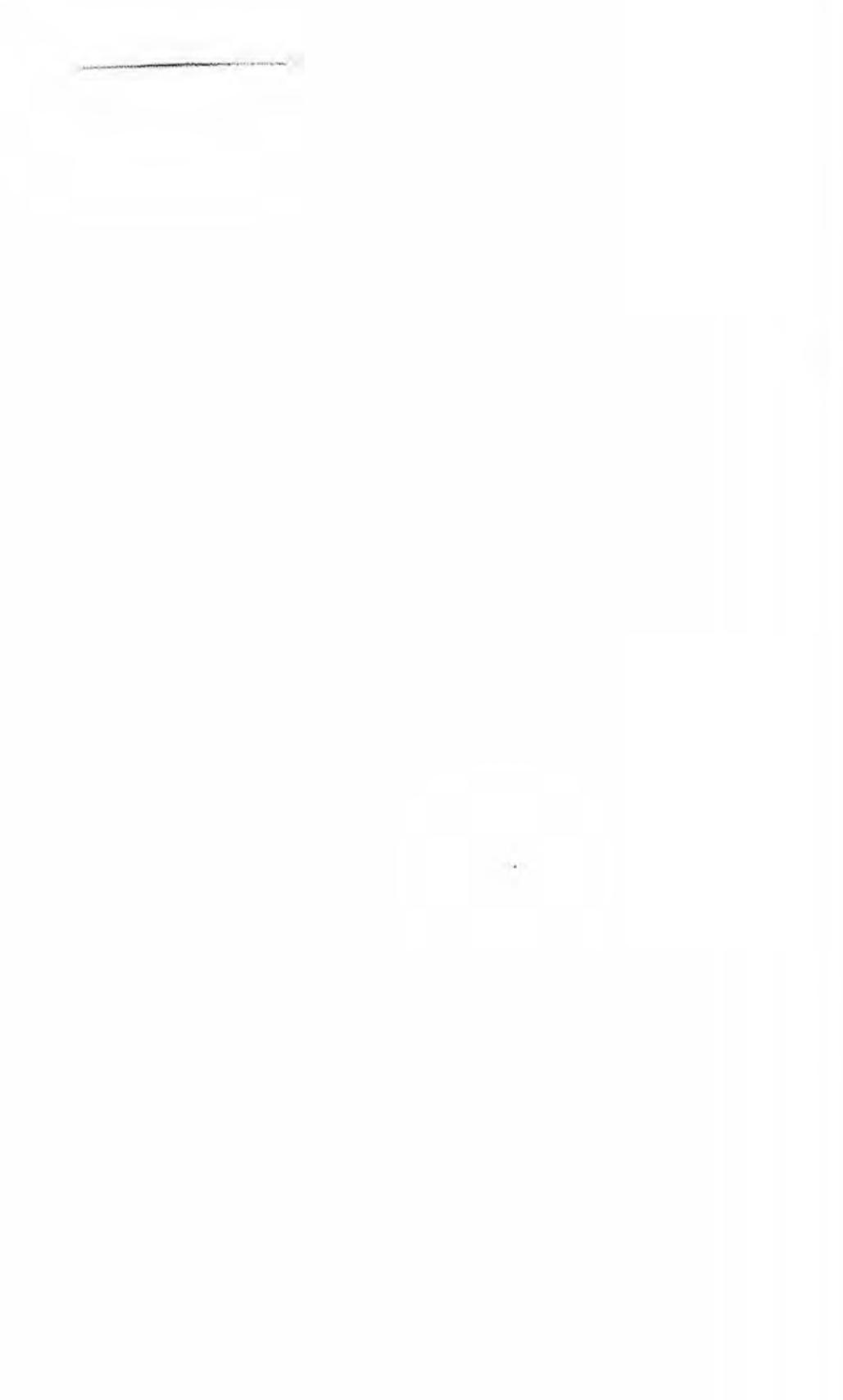
ISBN 0 646 19022 9

ISSN 1322-1914

First published June 1994

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Not a lot has been written about the "how" of designing effective stakeholder involvement in decision-making.

In 1991 I had an excellent opportunity to live some of my values about stakeholder involvement and experiment with an action research approach when I worked on the Consultation Protocol Project. This project was being conducted by the Social Policy Unit of the Office of Cabinet in Queensland, Australia, and aimed to produce guidelines (protocol) for consulting with stakeholders which could be used by all state government departments.

I became involved in the project because I believed in the usefulness of democratic participation for all sorts of reasons but particularly because I believed it was an empowering experience for community participants. I saw myself as working alongside participants as a participant-observer.

From February until September 1991, I functioned as a consultant to the project working with staff from the Office of Cabinet to develop the protocol. We decided that we would consult about the consultation protocol, and for me the means, or process, of consultation about the content was just as important as the end, or protocol document.

I chose action research as the methodology because it is congruent with my values about striving for real social change, and because it is collaborative. It seemed to me to be an excellent path for practicing congruence in this project i.e. making sure there was a match between what I said I was doing, and what I did. It was my first attempt at using an action research approach.

The project officer (office of Cabinet - Old State Government) and I began talking with a few policy people in the state government about our perception that consultation was important, but wasn't being done well and our idea of putting together a document which would help guide future consultations. They agreed with our perceptions, indicated their willingness to be involved and at our request, suggested others who they thought might want to be involved.

And so the process snowballed, until we had over 100 participants from government, the community and community consultants. Four action research cycles formed, each around important events in the project, and each informing the next. Throughout the project, my colleague and I continued to read about consultation, what was included into the first draft of the protocol and was published between our first and second cycles. Participants not only inputted into the content (two refinements of the draft documents), they also contributed to the development of the process (the consultation they experienced).

However, perhaps because I was a novice at using action research I was unable to engender much interest in the approach, and was consequently unable to create much of a climate of critical reflection on our collective experiences in the project.

Final evaluations, however, indicated that if pressed participants were aware that there were outcomes other than the visible protocol document - networking relationships, some individual learning, and a realization that these intangible benefits of consultation need to be outlined in submissions for funding for consultative processes.

My personal learning was that I applied action research in a rather simplistic way, earning myself some negative feedback about my lack of focus on basic relationship-building. I also learned that it was arrogant of me to expect to empower others, and that I was really using more of a teaching model than a collaborative one.

The final Consultation Protocol was released by the Office of Cabinet in January 1994 after years of refinements.

The challenge for me now and in the future is to work at being aware of my personal framework when working with others, in order to avoid the danger of incongruency.

CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background to the study

Welcome to this study. I wrote it for people, whether they be in government or the community, who are interested in ways in which the community can meaningfully participate in government decision-making, and possibly have more control over their own lives.

In many countries, there are movements of people striving to have their say about, and improve, the conditions which affect their lives. It is an exciting time in our history, presenting opportunities for people to take more control of their lives. Our Australian history also reveals an increasing expectation by the community of their involvement in government decision-making.

Few people disagree with the idea of stakeholders rights i.e. that it is every person's right to have a say in decisions which affect their lives. However, how this is achieved is very much open to question. History is littered with failed consultative processes, illustrating the complexity of the issues underlying stakeholder involvement in government decision-making. Over time a small body of literature has developed around the issue of stakeholder involvement as a process in its own right.

However, while writers have focussed on the theory of stakeholder involvement or on specific designs to achieve their involvement, little has been written about how to go about designing it.

1.2. About the project

I was able to examine more about the "how" of participation when, in 1991, I was employed as consultant to the "Consultation Protocol Project". This project was being conducted by the Social Policy Unit in the Office of Cabinet in the Queensland Government. The principle objective of the project was the development of a Consultation Protocol document which would guide the consultations of government departments with their respective stakeholders. From February until the end of September 1991 I worked part-time with Tim Reddel, Policy Officer in the Unit, and with over 100 participants from 3 sectors - government, the community and community consultants.

1.3. My perspective on the project

There is a school of thought which suggests that researchers should not only be aware of the particular worldview that they bring to their studies, they should also make them public (Galt and Smith, 1976; Morgan, 1983). I agree with this view as I believe that it offers more openness and honesty than attempts at value-neutral or "objective" research in the more traditional experimental approaches. Accordingly, there are couple of points I want to make public about why I became involved in the project.

It was my vision of interest as being empowering for the community which prompted my interest in the project.

I also fully supported the notion of participative democracy. I believed

in the advantages of consultation and believed that the disadvantages, if indeed they were a problem, could be overcome.

I also strongly believed in the importance of congruency i.e. the match between what you say you believe in (your espoused values) and what you actually do (your values in action). See Argyris and Schon (1978) for more information about congruency. In this case, it was important to me that not only my personal behaviour be internally congruent, but that there would also be a reasonable degree of matching between the theory and the project's practice of stakeholder involvement.

One reviewer of this paper made the comment that the use of past tense in this Section was confusing and that her immediate response was to ask "what is my vision now?".

My response is that the use of past tense accurately describes "where I was at" at that time. Values and attitudes can and do change, and I will describe the impact that my project experiences had on mine in the final Chapter.

So I invite you, the reader, to regard this as a journey not only through a project, but also a journey of joint personal discovery.

1.4. My choice of methodology for the project

The project appeared to be providing me with a delightful opportunity to live out, or work in a more congruent way, my values. For instance, since we were developing a document on consultation, we decided that we would do it consultatively, not only consult about what went into the protocol document, but also about how the project itself would be run. Information gained about the content of the document or the process of the project was able to be used to inform the other.

Because the way I went about the project was just as important to me as the end product, I chose to use an action research approach rather than the more traditional experimental methodology. I believed that the underlying values of action research of achieving real change through collaboration (Lewin, 1946) were more congruent with mine, and also those of the project. I believed action research should not only help me achieve greater personal congruency, it should also be able to help us consult better in the project.

It has been argued that action research forms a new scientific paradigm i.e. a different way of looking at the world (Freire, 1972; Habermas, 1974; Ketterer et al, 1980; Parlee, 1983; Carr and Kemmis, 1986). Frequently, two research paradigms only are discussed - those called soft and descriptive, and those called hard and analytical. According to the writers mentioned above it is the concern with empowerment or emancipation which creates the new paradigm shift which is action research.

It is the objective of real change, rather than generating knowledge for its own sake, which I find attractive in action research. Kurt Lewin (1946) is usually credited with originating action research. He is reported to have stressed action research as a way to solve both practical social problems and at the same time discover general laws of

group life (Peters and Robinson, 1984). The action research cycle is composed of the activities of planning, acting, observing and reflecting (see Figure 1 below).

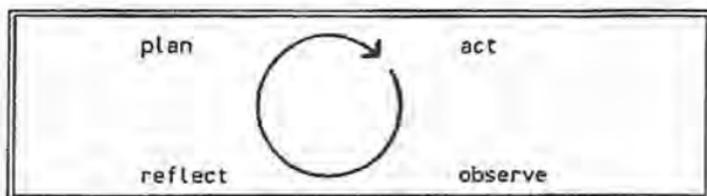


Figure 1. The action research spiral.

(Source: Kemmis & McTaggart (Eds) (1988))

The underlying values and characteristics of action research will be discussed in some depth in Chapter Four.

This project was the focus of my Masters of Administration dissertation for the School of Commerce and Administration at Griffith University in Queensland. (Uhlmann, 1991).

The next Chapter will examine reasons why stakeholders should and should not be involved in the decision-making process.

CHAPTER TWO - THE CASE FOR STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

Over the decades, there has been much discussion about the virtues of participative democracy, much of it in the public policy literature. This brief chapter aims to give a public policy context in which to judge consultative processes generally, and our project in particular.

Governments cannot govern alone

Defining stakeholders as those "who affect and are affected by the decision-making of a particular organization", Edward Freeman (1984) writes that decision-makers need to recognize there are times when stakeholders should participate.

Freeman presents a multi-faceted case for what he terms the "stakeholder approach". He argues that new ways of thinking and new mechanisms are needed with the increasing pace of change. He says stakeholder thinking forces an organization to be outwardly focussed and therefore more responsive to its environment (1984).

In opening up the organization to the outside, its "sacred cows" (organizational values that are outside the awareness of its members but powerful nevertheless) are exposed and challenged. Freeman believes that in this way stakeholder involvement leads to a sharing of values with outsiders and results in more workable policies. Even if a particular issue is not resolved at the time by the stakeholder approach, Freeman believes its use helps create a more positive tone in relationships which will be beneficial in future consultations (1984).

Various aspects of Freeman's argument are supported by public policy writers (Allison 1971; Dallymar 1976; Lewin and Shakun 1976; Finsterbusch and Bender-Motz 1980; Hjern and Hull 1982; Hogwood and Peters 1985; MacRae 1986; Quinn Mintzberg and James 1988; Pakulski 1991).

Consultation is also intuitively believed to be a good thing

Almond and Verba (1965) claim that "nation states or communities in which people participate are regarded as better, more informed, more just by social scientists and politicians".

In contrast to the view painted earlier of the disinterested community, several writers claim that there is a global movement by stakeholders toward greater participation in government decision-making (Hogwood and Peters, 1985). Perhaps this trend is occurring because citizens are now better informed on current affairs and are therefore more interested and able to participate in them (Graycar, 1977). Perhaps also it is due to the dissatisfaction by the public with policies which address the problem only in part, whose cost in public monies may be enormous and whose policy indicators may not be based on their criteria. While there may be many reasons why people choose to become involved in government decision-making, that there is an increasing expectation by the community to become involved is undeniable.

The advantages and disadvantages of stakeholder involvement

The advantages are considered to be that it:

- a. leads to more informed, flexible and responsive decision-making

- (Social Impact Unit (W.A.) 1990; Cotton et al, 1988; Smith, 1986; Clark, 1986; Freeman, 1984; Sandercock, 1978; Porteus, 1977; Dunphy, 1976; Wengert, 1976);
- b. revitalizes and improves the honesty and openness, and humanity and accountability of government (Kathlene and Martin, 1991; O'Tarpey, 1990; Clark, 1986; Smith, 1986; Ventriss, 1985; Ireeman, 1984; Sandercock, 1978; Porteus, 1977);
 - c. improves communication (Guest and Knight, 1978; Dunphy, 1976);
 - d. educates the public, increases understanding and tolerance, reduces opposition, and builds commitment to decisions (Kathlene and Martin, 1991; Social Impact Unit (W.A.) 1990; Smith, 1986; Engert, 1976; Dunphy, 1976; Lindblom, 1968);
 - e. promotes initiative and enhances self-esteem (Zimmerman and Rappaport, 1988; Porteus, 1977);
 - f. functions as a problem-solving mechanism in times of rapid change (Sarkissian, 1986; Freeman, 1984; Wengert, 1976);
 - g. leads to enhanced social justice, and the redistribution of power or empowerment for participants (Dept of Finance, Prime Minister and Cabinet, 1989; Howe, 1989; Cotton et al, 1988; Warren, 1973; Arnstein, 1969).

The disadvantages of stakeholder involvement are said to be that it:

- a. challenges the expert role of policy-makers and aims to take away their power (Clark, 1986);
- b. can create an information overload (Clark, 1986; Fein, 1976);
- c. is difficult to ensure the representativeness of participants (Cox, 1990; Clark, 1986; Bryson, 1981; Graycar and Davis, 1979; Sandercock, 1978; Porteus, 1977; Arnstein, 1969);
- d. that it may create unrealistic expectations of real influence in the decision-making process (Cox, 1990; Cotton et al, 1988; Moughtin and Gibson, 1986);
- e. that it is easily done badly (Dick, 1991; Cox, 1990; Fulop, 1988; Wade, 1988; Abell, 1982; Arnstein, 1969);
- f. that it can serve only to heighten tensions in an already polarized community (Wengert, 1976).

Conclusions

You may choose to disagree with some of the advantages and disadvantages. It probably depends on your personal values and where you are on the consultation continuum, from consultant to consult-ee. For instance, as a community consultant I personally don't see anything wrong with challenging the expert role of policy-makers. But then I might feel different if I was an expert policy-maker.

As I made clear in Chapter One, it was my personal belief that the advantages of stakeholder involvement outweigh the disadvantages which led to my involvement in the project. I hope that the brief argument I have outlined has helped convince you too.

I have tried to paint a value-contextual picture of stakeholder involvement in this Chapter, without bothering too much about defining my terms. I will deal with definitions in the next chapter on the nature of stakeholder involvement in decision making.

CHAPTER THREE - WHAT IS STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT?

3.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter a case was made for stakeholder involvement in government policy-making. However, an understanding of these issues alone is insufficient for the purposes of this project. In order to be able to competently assess the processes and outcomes of this project, the reader needs to also have some understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of stakeholder involvement. I propose to develop this understanding via an historical examination of the outcomes of stakeholder involvement.

According to Graycar and Davis (1979) there are 4 types of writings about stakeholder involvement. They group them according to their focus - the philosophical, the political, the theoretical and the practical (1979:93). Chapter Two introduced something of the philosophy and politics of stakeholder involvement. In this Chapter I will focus more on the theory and practice of stakeholder involvement.

I will firstly look at definitions of stakeholder involvement for the purposes of this project. Then I will outline a brief history to illustrate the part played by stakeholder involvement in government processes over time and to draw out the underlying theories or operating paradigms. Finally, I will combine the learnings from these and other sources into a practical checklist for effective stakeholder involvement in government processes. The reader should be able, at the end of this Chapter, to have some understanding of what makes stakeholder involvement useful and what does not. This learning, together with information from Chapter Two can then become the basis, or performance indicators if you like, against which the process and outcomes of this project can be measured in the final Chapter.

3.2. A definition

Stakeholder involvement is both an event and a process and it has many names. Writers refer to it variously as:

- a. citizen participation
- b. consultation
- c. community involvement
- d. public participation
- e. community participation
- f. community consultation
- g. participation
- g. democratic participation
- h. consumer consultation

For readers interested in the different names, I have provided a separate Bibliography under the heading "Stakeholder involvement" after the reference list.

Stakeholder involvement also has many meanings (Kathlene and Martin, 1991; May, 1989; Moughtin and Gibson, 1986; Connor, 1984; Graycar and Davis, 1979; Dennis, 1972; Arnstein, 1969). That it has different meanings presents less of a problem than the potentially conflicting expectations which are created in the minds of those participating. Such differing expectations lead to enormous difficulties for the processes

of participation - difficulties which will be demonstrated later in this Chapter.

Sandercock (1978) defines participation as "a form of behaviour which involves people in influencing decisions about programs and policies which affect their lives". "Stakeholder involvement" is similarly defined in this project. It is used generically to refer to any process designed for the involvement of people or organizations who may have a stake in the decisions being made.

3.3. How has stakeholder involvement been used?

The participation movement appears to have been gaining momentum since the post-war 1950's. It is still apparently the flavour of the nineties with numerous examples of participation projects currently being conducted in Brisbane alone (see Table 1).

TABLE 1. CURRENT PARTICIPATIVE PROJECTS

ORGANIZATION	PARTICIPATION PROJECT
Brisbane City Council	Inner Suburbs Action Study (1989-1990)
Brisbane City Council	Strategy Plan (1990)
Brisbane City Council (Loder and Bayly)	Norman Creek Action Plan (1990)
Queensland Department of Transport	South East Queensland Passenger Transport Study (SEPTS) (1990)
Queensland Department of Transport	Route 20 & Cavendish Rd Consultations (1990)
Commonwealth Department of Community Services & Health (Colin Kent & Associates)	Consultation on Public Housing Appeals Mechanisms (1990)
Queensland Department of Housing and Local Government	Development Approval Systems Review (1989-1990)
Queensland Department of Housing and Local Government and Commonwealth Department of Community Services & Health	Commonwealth State Housing Agreements (CSHA) (1989-1990)
Queensland Department of Housing and Local Government and Queensland Premiers Department	South East Queensland 2001- Managing Growth (SEQ 2001) (1990-1994)
Commonwealth Department of Community Services & Health	National Housing Strategy (1991)
Office of the Cabinet, Queensland	This Project: The Consultation Protocol Project (1991)

Famous and infamous examples of stakeholder involvement

More well-known examples which have served to highlight the issues in participation include the American "War on Poverty" programs such as the Community Action Program, and the Model Cities Program, the Community Development Program in the United Kingdom and the Australian Assistance Plan in Australia. I will use some of these as examples of processes for stakeholder involvement to highlight its different meanings and to draw out some principles.

Mass movements and protest action in the United States in the 1960's had a major influence on the development of a range of urban renewal programs and the establishment of Offices of Economic Opportunity (O.E.O.). These programs signalled a growing awareness within central government of the problems associated with urban poverty and the lack of public participation in addressing them. The Community Action Program, as one of the major initiatives of this period, professed the aim of "maximum feasible participation" (Advisory Committee on Intergovernmental Relations, 1966). The urban poor would be employed by the program but would not have a say in the decision-making.

The Model Cities Program (date) also focussed on urban renewal with some very limited attempts at neighbourhood government. Participation was strictly limited to the institutions of local government.

The American War on Poverty (date) has generated a tremendous amount of literature attacking the concept of "maximum feasible participation". Moynihan (1969) in his classic Maximum Feasible Misunderstanding examines how the concept found its way into law without much deliberation as to its meaning (Wengert, 1976).

The above programs are well-known examples of the misunderstandings which arose in attempts by government to supposedly give more control in decision-making back to the citizen. Why did these misunderstandings come about? To explain this, a model put forward in 1969 by Sherry Arnstein will be examined.

The "ladder of participation"

Sherry Arnstein was among the strident critics of the above mentioned programs. In analyzing the programs in her much acclaimed article "A ladder of citizen participation" (1969), Arnstein devised her theory of differing levels of power-sharing in participation (see Figure 2).

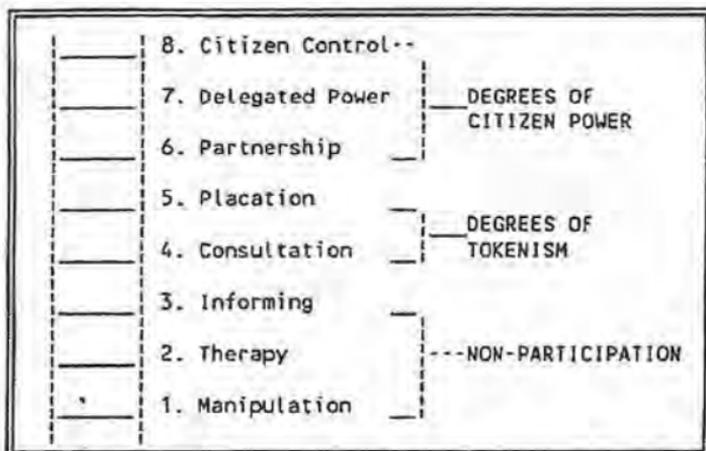


Figure 2. Eight rungs on the ladder of participation.

(Source: Arnstein, S.R. (1969)).

Arnstein places the component structures and their differing implementation in the 150 Model Cities Programs on various rungs of her ladder of participation. In all there are 8 rungs on Arnstein's ladder, starting at the bottom with "manipulation" and moving up through "therapy", "informing", "consultation", "placation", "partnership", "delegated power", and "citizen control". The ladder is a typology of power and its increasing redistribution as one progresses up the ladder.

Arnstein does not necessarily recommend that one end of the ladder is more useful than the other, instead she suggests that in some instances there is a case for legitimate uses of lower rungs. However, Arnstein argues that all are offered, sometimes without a clear understanding (and sometimes, I would suggest, with deliberate aforethought!), as forms of citizen participation.

She writes of manipulation and therapy in the 1,000 Community Action Programs conducted:

In the name of citizen participation, people are placed on rubberstamp advisory committees or advisory boards for the express purpose of "educating" them or engineering their support (co-optation). Instead of genuine citizen participation, the bottom rung of the ladder (manipulation) signifies the distortion of participation into a public relations vehicle by powerholders (1969:218).

Arnstein's scathing attack on these programs signalled the need for governments to make clear what it is they are offering the community by way of participation in their decision-making processes. Involvement in the above programs was generally viewed by a Government as being "therapeutic" in helping the poor and dispossessed feel good about

themselves. However, according to Graycar and Davis (1979) people did not want a cure, they wanted power to make their own decisions.

Arnstein believes that several rungs such as "informing" and "consultation" which do not offer a great deal of power to participants, do nevertheless play a legitimate role in policy-making. These types of participation assist by informing citizens of their rights, responsibilities and options. But "informing" leaves no room for feedback - it is simply one-way communication.

According to Arnstein, "consultation" is at least a form of participation as opposed to the lower rungs of non-participation, and there is some prospect of influence on policy making. Consultation is a term which is in wide usage in various levels of government in Australia. Its effectiveness though, is limited. The Inquiry into Processes of Consultation in Victoria in 1980 defined consultation as:

A process whereby an authority or body invites views, opinions or reactions from the community as individuals or groups, while giving no guarantees that opinions expressed will be accommodated. Consultation is one form of participation and its effect is through the exercise of influence rather than of power (V.C.O.S.S. 1981:42).

The Bailey Task Force on Consultative Arrangements (1978) takes a more optimistic view of consultation. It cautions against disregarding it, believing that consultation is not simply an inferior part of Arnstein's ladder, but a legitimate activity in its own right.

"Placation", according to Arnstein, offers some degree of influence, but the tokenism is still there. Citizen's advice is used but its legitimacy is still judged by the powerholders. "Partnership", on the other hand, involves some power sharing. According to Susskind et al (1983), the groundrules for sharing responsibilities and decision-making in a partnership are negotiated between those initiating and those participating. Arnstein considers that a handful of the 150 Model Cities Programs achieved this level or better (delegated power and citizen control).

Sherry Arnstein's work remains a landmark in the history of participation. It highlights the need for an awareness of the differing values which underlie the activities of government and its relationship with the community. How you and I, as policy-makers, community members and consultants, perceive the respective roles of government and the community will influence very much how stakeholder involvement is used.

Overview of other typologies and models of participation

Although the field of participative research is still in its infancy (Stuart 1981; Wengert 1976), several models and typologies have been developed which deserve mention. They can be compared to some extent with Arnstein's model.

Norman Wengert (1976) believes there are five different perceptions of participation:

- . as policy (a "good" idea but short on procedures),
- . as strategy (for support-building for policies),
- . as communication (extra informational input from the public for more informed decision-making),
- . as a tool for conflict resolution (to correct misinformation and develop understanding and tolerance) and,
- . as therapy (to "cure" the social disease of alienation).

Except for the first, they can be equated with Arnstein's rungs of manipulation, informing, placating and therapy. Although Wengert does not see these perspectives in terms of increasing or decreasing power, he mirrors Arnstein's claim that the use which is made of participative processes is dependent upon the individual perspectives of those involved (1976:25).

Dennis (1972) proposes a similar model, this time with 4 categories of usage - market research, decision-making, co-optation and social therapy. The market research model uses surveys and questionnaires to provide reliable feedback (similar to Arnstein's "consultation" rung). Dennis' second category, the decision-making model of participation is a much more optimistic view of "partnership" and equates with Susskind's (1983) "co-production" model where decisions are made through face-to-face negotiations between decision-makers and participants (Ventriss, 1985:435). Dennis' remaining categories equate with the lower rungs with co-optation-participation being used to constrain or "manipulate" participants and to avoid making decisions.

That co-optation and manipulation are recognized by community groups as very real dangers of stakeholder involvement can be demonstrated in the call by direct action groups (Perlman, 1976) not to participate or "play ball" with government bureaucracies (Ventriss and Pecorella, 1984). Wade (1988) considers that participation and particularly associated funding, can weaken the independence and autonomy of participants. This sceptical view of participation as "agenda-izing" is a real one for those groups not in power and needs to be understood by those initiating consultation.

The above selection of models have as a common theme, issues of power between those initiating the process of stakeholder involvement and those participating in it. The design of processes for dealing with power more effectively will be discussed in Part 3.5: The Principles of Effective Stakeholder Involvement.

The Australian experience

It is worthwhile examining some Australian perspectives on participation. In earlier years in Australia, participation meant only surveys, public meetings, and submissions in response to Green Papers issued by government departments. These 3 forms of participation reveal the government attitude toward the communities role in decision-making - at best, that of commenting from a distance on expert deliberations of a centralized government (reaching the consultation level, half way up Arnstein's ladder).

The Legislation Manual issued in 1986 by the Bjelke-Petersen-led

Queensland government is an example of this attitude. The Manual recommends Green Paper procedures be adopted for significant regulatory proposals (p.5), and that a minimum of 10 days be used as the consultation deadline (p.11). It assumes that participation is written feedback on pre-determined government policy and that the stakeholders will be other departments and major organizations (p.10). It does not assume any decision-making ability on the part of the respondents. My research indicates that, in the three and half years following the publication of the Legislation Manual, some 54 Green Papers were lodged with the Queensland Parliamentary Library.

Prior to the issue of the Legislation Manual, there were few Green Papers or indeed any participatory processes initiated by the government in Queensland. However, one example is the draft Family and Community Development Bill which was released for comment in 1984 by the then Department of Children's Services. It was an ambitious project to completely revamp the legislation. After 6 months and the distribution for comment of over 5000 copies of the Bill, only 20 submissions out of 300 were useful and those came mainly from organized groups. Most responses were highly critical of the department. The result? After years of careful preparation the Bill was shelved.

In contrast, another consultation conducted by the same department a few years later regarding the Child Care Centre Regulations, went more smoothly. The draft regulations were distributed to only the direct stakeholders and the feedback received was considered to be much more informed. It was considered by those involved in the department that the success of the process was due to the issue under consideration being both local and tangible, with the involvement of a small number of direct stakeholders only.

So, it may be said that the more broad-ranging and complex the issues, the greater potential there is for consultation to go awry.

One notable Australian example of an attempt at more than involvement from a distance is the Australian Assistance Plan (AAP). Instituted by Lionel Murphy in 1973, the AAP was to be "a strategy to give all the people in Australia a better opportunity to take part in the planning, developing and controlling their own community services" (Social Welfare Commission, 1974:7). An Australia-wide consultative network of Regional Councils for Social Development (RCSD) was set up, each comprised of representatives of stakeholder groups who were to make decisions which would restructure the planning of social welfare (Graycar and Davis, 1979:1). The AAP lasted 4 years.

Why did Murphy's vision fail? In their evaluation of the AAP, Graycar and Davis 1979 claim that Murphy's vision of improving social justice in Australian society had several shortcomings. The first, and the one it shared with another of Murphy's initiatives, the Australian Legal Aid Office (ALAO), was that its goals were not clear (Bryson, 1981; Hanks, 1986) - it was difficult for the RCSD's to translate them into specific local objectives. Secondly, there were other existing welfare networks already in place. Where did the RCSD's fit? Why was a special structure necessary for increased participation? Fourthly, at \$2 per participant, it was also under-resourced, as are many participation

projects in my opinion. Lastly, it appears that the only people who participated were the professionals already working in the welfare sector. For all of these reasons, the AAP had a legitimacy problem.

Graycar and Davis 1979 concluded that, although targeted in the right direction, the AAP suffered from being a Paradigm II program being implemented within the constraints of the existing non-participatory Paradigm I environment (I will explain these terms shortly). The existing inflexible Westminster and bureaucratic mechanisms constrained AAP as they did to the ALAO. The ALAO continues today, but in a form much different from Murphy's original vision (Maher, 1987).

Was power shared or redistributed in the decision-making processes of the above examples? This is an important issue to me as it was my vision to empower participants through participation in this project. Part III focuses on these questions.

3.4 Stakeholder involvement as a road towards empowerment and social justice?

The paradigms mentioned by Graycar and Davis (1979) refer to Roland Warren's (1973) Diagnostic Paradigms for intervention. Warren posits 2 types of paradigm which underlie social welfare interventions. Paradigm I assumes a person's poverty, for instance, is her own fault. If only she were made to 'feel better', she would be able to fix her situation and gain control of her life. Thus the fault is seen to lie within the individual; and "therapeutics" such as those in the lower rungs of Arnstein's ladder, or participation a la social welfare model are seen to be the answer. Paradigm II, on the other hand, recognizes that one of the outputs of modern society is poverty, and that intervention needs to be aimed at the system, and not at the individual, for effective change. This perspective removes the blame from the individual and places it on the system.

The process of taking control over one's life has been termed "empowerment" (Zimmerman and Rappaport, 1988; Rappaport, 1987; Katz, 1984; Rappaport, Swift and Hess, 1984; Rappaport, 1981; Berger and Neuhaus, 1977) and is conceived to be causally related to participation, though in what precise manner it is unknown (Zimmerman and Rappaport, 1988). I believe that empowerment is also related, again in an undefined way, to the concept of social justice.

The Department of Finance, the Prime Minister and Cabinet issued a publication in 1989 which states that participation is one of the four elements of social justice, and that the attainment of social justice can be measured through participation (1989:1). Their Towards a Fairer Australia program requires Commonwealth departments to develop performance indicators measuring the social justice impact of government programs through measuring the effectiveness and efficiency of participation in decision-making, as well as the other three elements of social justice - equality, equity, and access (1989:1).

Murphy (1974) believed that social justice could be achieved through focusing on the system rather than the individual; and he used participation to achieve the social justice he sought. However, Sandercock (1978), in describing participation as "one of the great

populist red herrings of the seventies in Australia" (p.7), claims that at the macro level participation is not an effective means of radical social change. She agrees that participation at the micro level in the planning and delivery of local services can be beneficial. However, she argues that larger issues such as housing and transportation, cannot be addressed adequately through participation. She lists 3 factors mitigating against the efficacy of participation:-

- (a) the tension in the relationship between expert administrators and an "uneducated" public on large policy issues,
- (b) the delays caused to the decision-making process, and
- (c) the difficulties in ensuring the representativeness of participation at this level (sandercock, 1978).

Perhaps this is why the stakeholder involvement in the previously mentioned wide-ranging Family and Community Development Bill was unproductive while the smaller more specific child care centre regulations with targeted consultation succeeded.

If Sandercock's' claims are to be accepted, then the AAP and other ambitious participative programs for social change have had, and will have, little chance of succeeding in their objectives from the outset. On those grounds, rather than participation leading to empowerment, perhaps it is empowerment which leads to participation. Is participation therefore, inappropriate as a road towards empowerment?

I do not believe that the above evidence presents a case for "throwing the (participation) baby out with the (empowerment) bath water", so to speak. In contrast to Sandercock's view of participation as a means to an end, I regard participation as having its own inherent value and intangible outcomes, one of which may be empowerment for participants. Surely, it is a matter more of attention to the design of stakeholder involvement, rather than an inherent fault with the concept of stakeholder involvement as a vehicle for helping people gain greater control of their lives.

3.5. The principles of effective stakeholder involvement

Participation is not without its failures and these, as you have seen, are often used against it (May 1989). It costs a great deal of public money (May, 1989; Clark, 1986), and can apparently cause more trouble than it's worth.

The theory of participation has not kept pace with its practice (Clark, 1986; Cole and Caputo, 1984; Wengert, 1976), with writers approaching it from the perspectives of differing disciplines and at different levels. This section focuses on producing a brief and by no means exhaustive list of action principles or broad mechanisms for the effective practice of stakeholder involvement. In doing so, I will be drawing on the Report of the Bailey Task Force on Consultative Arrangements (1978).

Principle 1. Participation needs to be balanced with leadership and expertise.

Adam Graycar (1977) cautions against the assumption that more is better with respect to participation. Referring to Gilbert and Specht's (1974) cyclical model, Graycar recommends a balance between the values of

participation, leadership and expertise. The above authors contend that instead of moving steadily forward on the continuum of community-government relationships (such as that put forward in Arnstein's ladder), rather history moves in cycles of leadership, participation and expertise. Gilbert and Specht believe that participation alone cannot deliver effectiveness and that it exists in a "trialectic" with the values of leadership and expertise. Stakeholder involvement is therefore made more effective by the addition of credible leaders and expert advice.

Principle 2. There should be a clear definition of goals or desired outcomes of stakeholder involvement.

As stated earlier, stakeholder involvement means many things. It is the lack of clarity about what is being offered in participative programs which is frequently the prime cause of many of the failures in participation. How stakeholder involvement is used is frequently dependent upon the values of its initiators, values which are frequently inaccessible to participants and even the initiator. The objectives of the participation therefore, are not clear, prohibiting meaningful involvement (Graycar, 1977). This causes massive misunderstandings, unrealistic expectations, and in the end, enduring cynicism about the honesty of government.

Principle 3. The design of processes for stakeholder involvement should match the needs of the situation.

Matching involves developing congruence of design with the objectives (Clark, 1986; Sinclair, 1986; Glass, 1979), and the needs of the community (Social Impact Unit (W.A.), 1990; Dick, 1991). Participation in decision-making should not end in the "capture" of the stakeholders. Care should be taken to maintain the integrity and autonomy of the region, the community organizations and the participants (Wade, 1988; Ventriss and Pecorella, 1984). Those initiating stakeholder involvement need to be prepared to adapt to the changing circumstances of the process.

Principle 4. Effective stakeholder involvement requires that a level of trust be developed.

Extra time needs to be budgeted in the decision-making process for relationships of trust to develop. Trust can be developed through using existing relationships and consultative structures (Sandercock, 1978), and through acknowledging that the government and participants are "co-learners", i.e. learning together (Korten, 1980). Trust can be fostered through generating and defining project parameters and roles together with participants.

Principle 5. There needs to be some prospect for participants to influence decision-making.

Consultation which promises token "involvement" only, and not the opportunity to influence decisions breeds cynicism in stakeholders regarding the credibility of government (Arnstein, 1969; Graycar, 1977).

3.6. Conclusions

As illustrated in this Chapter, designing stakeholder involvement is not an easy task. What is offered as stakeholder involvement can vary enormously. However, with the trend toward increasing participation in

government decision-making, it becomes clear that the gap between the theory and practice of participative processes needs to be narrowed. If meaningful involvement is to be offered then certain principles will need to be followed:

- . Balance participation with leadership and expert knowledge.
- . Develop clear agreements with participants about goals, respective roles and the desired outcomes of consultation.
- . Design the consultation with participants so as to match their needs.
- . Work towards developing relationships of trust with participants.
- . Acknowledge that participants must have some prospect of influence over decisions made for their participation to be worthwhile.

The process design then should look a little like that in Table 2 below. To highlight the nature of stakeholder involvement, a comparison has been made with a non-participative process of decision-making.

Table 2: A comparison of decision-making processes with and without participation

PARTICIPATIVE MODEL	NON-PARTICIPATIVE MODEL
Decision-makers advise	The project has not started at commencement of consultation this point
Define problem with stakeholders	Decision-makers define problem
Set objectives of decision-making with stakeholders	Decision-makers set objectives of decision
Decision-makers and stakeholders agree on parameters of decision	Decision-makers set parameters
Decision-makers outline or develop with stakeholders their respective roles	No roles outlines/developed
Decision-makers and stakeholders negotiate resources for meaningful participation	No relationships developed
Decision-makers and stakeholders gather information	Decision-makers gather information
Engage in two-way communication about possible solutions	Decision-makers devise options and evaluate
Collaborative solutions reached	Decision-makers select option
On-going relationship between decision-makers and stakeholders allows changes to be made to decision, and a more effective working relationship when the next problem arises.	No ongoing relationship is found

The question remains as to whether stakeholder involvement offers opportunity for empowerment. History reveals that one does not necessarily follow the other. However, there are those of us who still believe in participation as one road to empowerment. The project described in the following Chapters will attempt to elicit some answers.

CHAPTER FOUR - ACTION RESEARCH

In Chapter One I described why I chose action research as the methodology for this project. Its attractiveness for me lay in the prospect of achieving real change through collaboration with our stakeholders.

There are however, different schools of thought on what really constitutes action research. From my research, the essential characteristics of action research appear to be:

- a. a focus on the improvement of some existing social practice through iterative cycles of planning, acting, observing and reflecting, and collaboration (Peters and Robinson, 1984);
- b. data-gathering by participants themselves in a self-managing autonomous way, learning publicly and sharing power in a "critical community" (according to a group of participants at the First World Congress on Action Research, 1990);
- c. objectification of the participants' own experiences for reflection and analysis, genuine participation and dialogue rather than just involvement, "praxis" (critically informed, committed action), and a political process of emancipation (McTaggart, 1989).

Choosing action research as the methodology therefore had the potential to make an enormous impact on what we did in the project. We could work collaboratively as participants to gather our own information, share our learnings, develop some real outcomes with the protocol document, and reflect on our collective experiences in the project.

Table 3 summarizes the differences between the process which would have been used under the traditional "experimental method", with the process for effective stakeholder involvement as designed via an action research methodology.

Table 3: Comparison of Experimental Research Methods with Action Research

THE EXPERIMENTAL METHOD

Within specific community of enquiry e.g. psychologists, government, administrators, engineers

Experimenter sets problem according to her worldview which is dictated by the discipline

Experimenter states hypothesis as above

Experimenter chooses methodology e.g. instruments to be administered; experimental design

Experimenter chooses subjects using rigid selection procedures e.g. random/ matched subjects/ control groups

Experimenter administers instrument under strictly controlled lab conditions

Experimenter collects data according to rigidly set down design procedures

Experimenter analyzes data using computerized statistical programs

Experimenter evaluates findings only with specified community of enquiry in scientific publications

ACTION RESEARCH METHODS

Invite anyone to be member of community of enquiry
Limit to invitations set only by practicalities

Community of enquiry jointly sets the problem by consultation/ participation with members of non-fixed community of enquiry

Action research does not start by posing hypothesis for testing

Members of community of enquiry choose methods through sharing available info/ worldviews and "democratic processes"; through creating a learning environment

Involvement dictated by community of enquiry, practicality and accidents of history

Community of enquiry plan and act together

Data collected and reflected upon in each action cycle and actions revised

as above

Community of enquiry describes their actions in the project report added to communal knowledge for anyone to access

CHAPTER FIVE - THE CONSULTATION PROTOCOL PROJECT

5.1. Introduction

Our actions

My colleague, Tim Reddel, and I did not set out in this project to test an experimental hypothesis as would be expected in a more traditional experimental approach (See Table 3, Chapter 4). We realized the project would change over time (Bromley and Shupe, 1973) and decided that we would "learn by doing" (Revans, 1982) and try to live or model the processes of consultation. However, we were also aware that the process should be an informed one, so we continued to read extensively in the consultation literature.

My role

I set out in this project believing my role to be participant-observer i.e. I would be an active participant in the project, yet at the same time observe the process. You can choose to be more or less passive or active in this role (Adler and Adler, 1987). I decided that I would experience much less personal conflict, if I behaved as I normally did.

One Reviewer of this paper commented that my role should perhaps follow more from my perspective as outlined in Chapter One. In responding to this comment, I should add that in choosing to be myself I carried with me in my role as participant-observer a whole set of values and attitudes. This is not unusual in itself as every other participant would have brought theirs to the project too. What may have affected my role as participant-observer was my belief that participation would empower others. Upon reflection now, I think my role was much more controlling than that of participant-observer, though I was not aware of that at the time. This will be discussed later in the monograph.

Our lack of project structure

The objectives were not set until much later in the project, to allow it and our collective understanding to evolve. We went to people in the beginning with our general perception that: "Consultation with stakeholders in government decision-making is important, not enough of it is being done, not all is being done well, and we are not learning from one another. What could we do about it?"

People we spoke to seemed to agree with that perception.

Collective control of the project was also important to us. So, we were very careful from the outset, not to put limits on the process. We began by:

- a. asking a few people we knew what they were "up to" in consultation,
- b. telling them we would like to collaboratively develop a consultation protocol,
- c. asking them if they would like to be involved in this project, and
- d. how we could go about it, and finally,
- e. who else should be involved.

We did not identify a definitive list of stakeholders in our

consultation until much later.

These questions gave us some idea of the current status of consultation on the agenda, and accomplished several of the steps in Table 3 in the previous Chapter.

A Reviewer of this paper asked what I meant by "collective control" of the project (above), and how this led to the statement that we did not want to "put limits on the process". This is a very interesting and vexed question for me and one I don't find easy to answer. On reflection, I don't think control was ever discussed much, except in as far as participants wondered how much control the final protocol document would have on their own organizational activities. However, the lack of limits was raised by participants later in the project, at which point we developed parameters together.

From examining my behaviour in that project, I think that by collective control I meant that we would each have an equal say in the way we developed the protocol document and in what went into the content of the document. This meant that I personally did not want to put my limits on the project. If we developed the objectives too soon, we felt it would needlessly cut out certain possibilities. However, I think we ended up leaving the parameter-setting until possibly too late. The issue for me of how much control/limits to place at the outset remains a difficult question for me.

Who and how

As we went from one person to another, we added their comments to our perceptions and so the process began to inform itself, and us. Shaffir et al (1973) call this a "snowball" approach.

A Reviewer asked what criteria determined which people we would ask to become involved in the project?

My response is that both we and other participants determined who we would involve. However, since most of the early participants were government officers they, probably naturally, recommended other government officers. Later, I suggested that we involve "consultation consultants" from the private sector, and the early members of that group suggested other members. Finally, advertisements appeared in the Queensland Council of Social Services Newsletter inviting participation by community groups and individuals in developing the protocol. I believe this approach to be consistent with action research in that we, Tim and I, did not unilaterally identify and set up an elite body of enquiry. However, it may be said that because most participants were not randomly selected, but were in fact "recommended" it denied access to others who may have wanted to be involved, and it shut out other perhaps different points of view.

I also hoped that collaborative reflection on our experiences of consultation would contribute to the protocol document, and to individual insights about consultation. To that end, I attempted to explain to participants the nature of action research and the importance of reflection. However, I was new to the methodology at the time and this impacted on the way I imparted information.

Our actions in the project are listed in Appendix 1.

5.2. Action research cycles

Our snowball approach quite naturally formed itself into action research cycles. They operated at two levels - at the level of the overall project, and within each "event".

Overall, our cycle consisted of reading about consultation (planning), talking with people about it (acting), observing our and their responses, and then writing up and distributing our collective summaries/reflections to participants. See Figure 3 below.

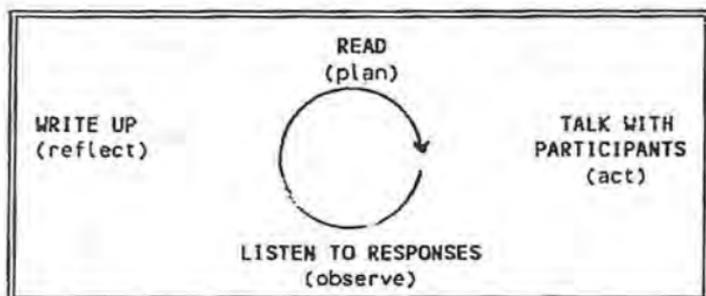


Figure 3: Action research cycle for the overall process of the project.

Each "event" held became the focus of an action research cycle. Together with participants we planned and held events, collected data, and analyzed outcomes. The outcomes of each cycle then became the plans for the next. Four such cycles evolved. See Figure 4.

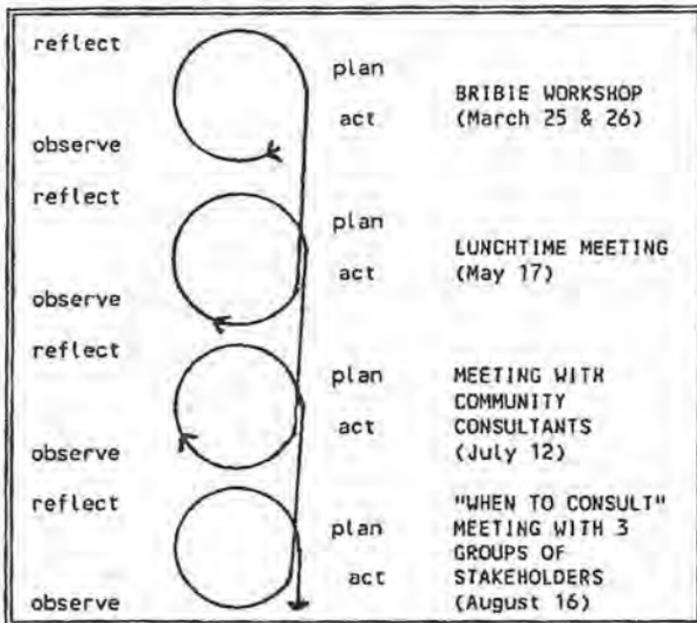


Figure 4: Iterative cycles of action research for the events which occurred during the period.

5.3. Collecting information

I treated this project as a case study on consultation, and in the use of action research. I agreed with the proposal by both Adelman et al (1983) and Yin (1984) that it is a most suitable method for "discovery" or "illumination", or learning by doing. We used a variety of methods for collecting information. The fieldwork literature calls this "triangulation" (Denzin, 1970), and recommends it as a way of trying to overcome the problems of ensuring you are actually measuring what you want to measure (validity), and that you are measuring it properly (reliability).

We conducted many mutually reflective interviews (Stenhouse, 1982) during which we worked on issues together with participants. This contrasts with the more "objective" type of interviewing where the researcher gives away little of herself, in the belief that this somehow ensures greater validity of results.

As participant-observer, I kept two types of records. The first was my diary containing my own and others' verbal observations and reflections on events. The second was what I called "the public record". It contained all the pieces of paper we either sent or received during the project, and it was made available to anyone I worked with during the project. You will see participants' quotes referenced "(pub.rec.)". This public record continues to be available for people who wish to check the veracity of my data. We also used a brief Survey on a few occasions.

5.4. Evaluating our findings

In an open seminar on Evaluation organized by the Social Policy Unit in the Office of Cabinet (Old Government) and held during this project, Diane Gibson, Senior Lecturer in Anthropology at the University of Queensland, said there was no one right way to evaluate. The important point, she said, was that it should be designed in collaboration with the project participants.

This view accords with that of action research. Kemmis and McTaggart (1983:2) described evaluation in action research as:

...the process of marshalling information and argument which enable interested individuals and groups to participate in critical debate about a specific program.

Interestingly, this view does not agree with Keppel's definition of evaluation in the "experimental method" (1973:11):

...evaluation, or statistical test as it is called, consists of the administration of a set of decision rules, which are formed before the start of the experiment.

This latter definition does not acknowledge that the project might change as it proceeds, that there are other realities from which to evaluate besides the researcher's, and that evaluation can occur both during research (formative evaluation), as well as after (summative) (Scriven, 1972). As action researchers, we evaluated together in the research cycles throughout the project, as well as at the end. (See Figure 4).

5.5. Our activities and their results

5.5.1. Action research cycle number one - a 2-day residential workshop
Tim and I attempted to create a process for this workshop which broadly followed those of a "model" consultation process. We put together several draft objectives and a draft agenda for our first event. In it we emphasized the action research approach, stressing the importance of collaborative discussion of consultation case studies in which participants had been involved. We also emphasized taking responsibility for our own learning. The draft agenda was then distributed within the Office of the Cabinet, and to those people in government we had met so far, for their comment and indication of attending.

Participants were informed in the program that:

...it is anticipated this workshop will serve as a model process for subsequent exercises. Critique of the process is therefore invited ...we are hoping that the means will be congruent with the end. (pub.rec, Feb 1991).

Both my own and participants' observations were collected - the former through diary notes, the latter collected by interview both during and

after the workshop. Participants were asked at the workshop "if this had been a real consultation conducted by a department, how do you think you would have felt about the process?" See Figure 5.

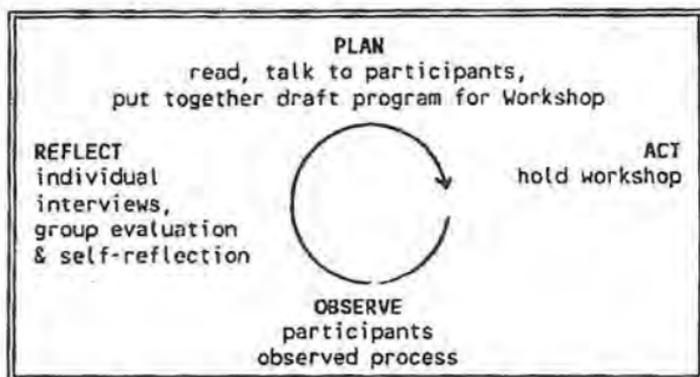


Figure 5: Action research cycle 1: The Bribie Workshop Cycle

How the workshop went.

I was disappointed with the low-energy of the workshop. There appeared to be little ownership of the workshop. A summary package of our discussions on consultation was distributed afterwards, but findings indicated that participants' and our expectations of the workshop had differed greatly.

We received very little feedback on our draft agenda prior to the meeting, and only around half of those invited, actually attended. We had placed great emphasis on not constraining the process, but they generally thought the workshop was too loose and unstructured, with no group feeling. I had been so preoccupied with trying to apply apparently poorly understood action research principles, that I had forgotten the basic requirements of people working together - relationship-building! Sounds silly, doesn't it!

Further, while they would have preferred the draft objectives and a discussion paper beforehand so that they had a common base to work from, we had hoped to create them out of their own thoughts at the workshop. But it was the feedback on the action research and action learning approach which was most devastating, examples are given below:

- . there has been a basic ambivalence between what you said about action learning and what you did
- . you can't just walk in here, tell people about action research and expect them to be able to run with it ... the process didn't follow
- . maybe action research is not appropriate to consultation
- . no, I disagree. Action research is very useful for social issues. It just wasn't done well here (reply from another participant) (pub.rec, March 1991)

To be described as incongruent when that very issue had been a prime motivator for me was an enormous blow. Perhaps, because of my

unfamiliarity with the principles of action research, I assumed that just by telling people about my chosen methodology, and their responsibility for their own learning, that they would pick it up and run with it.

That lack of understanding on my part, plus my omission of simple people-oriented processes actually led to the antithesis of action research!

With this learning in mind, follow-up reflective interviews were conducted to find out more, to build better relationships, and to attempt to remedy the situation for the next event. So the interviews were also partly planning for the next cycle.

Three issues were canvassed - what it was each participant had gained from the workshop, whether it was what they had expected to get and, if not, what we could have done to meet their expectations.

While participants agreed they had learned a great deal from one another, once again participants said they had been expecting us to give them information on consultation: "I was expecting more information than we got about consultation." (pub.rec, March 1991).

Participants gave a variety of suggestions as to what could have been done differently:

- . not do a process for your thesis
- . use a real live project as your focus
- . ensure people agree on the outcomes and process of the workshop from the beginning
- . don't introduce other material such as action research (pub.rec, March 1991).

I learned from this cycle of events that my behaviour had been too academic. I learned again (this time from doing) what I already knew cognitively that relationships, trust and openness were very important in consultation. Because of our over-concentration on not constraining the process of consultation, the process was too loosely structured and intangible. Had we shared our research framework and objectives prior to the workshop, and had we asked about peoples' needs of the workshop - we might have had a much more sound process.

I also learned something else about myself at the time; that despite my assertions that we were all learning together, I unconsciously had a strong desire to display a model of a perfect consultation process in this workshop. I was not learning, I was teaching!

I reflected that I had actually been seeing myself as a choreographer or director of a play. And I saw my play as a flop on the opening night. (p.158 diary, 8k2, March 1991).

Finally, my reflections on my poor attempts to use action research led me to decide not to concentrate so hard on its use. I also made a decision not to openly mention its use again, fully realizing it was a breach of research ethics and that it made real collaboration difficult.

Upon reflection as I write this, some 18 months later, I should have persevered. But I remain convinced, looking back on the overall project, that there was little interest not only in the methodological perspective, but also in analysis of the process as we were living it, and in self-reflection.

A Reviewer of this paper asked how I "sought and/or found support for (my) developing ideas" during the research journey. Apart from my thesis supervisor, the short answer is that I didn't.

5.5.2 Action research cycle number two - "The networking lunch"

In the interviews conducted in the previous cycle, participants were asked what the "next steps" should be. The following responses became the plans and basis for action in this cycle:

- develop a manual of consultation, for comment, including protocol, step-by-step case studies and cartoons
- make consultation more tangible - develop clear parameters around consultation
- use the draft protocol for discussion at a networking lunch (distribute beforehand)
- ask each department about the consultations they have done and compile a summary document for use by other departments
- create a resource centre

You can see how the needs expressed in this cycle follow on from the reflections of the previous one. Using information obtained from participants in the previous cycle and with the following objectives we wrote the first draft of the Protocol:

1. improving relationship-building
2. learning more about what others were doing with consultation
3. making consultation more tangible.

We then distributed the Protocol for comment, along with an invitation to attend a "networking lunch", and a summary of participants' suggested "next steps". We asked participants to comment on all these items either at the lunch, or in follow-up small group meetings held for reflection over the ensuing two months. (see Figure 6).

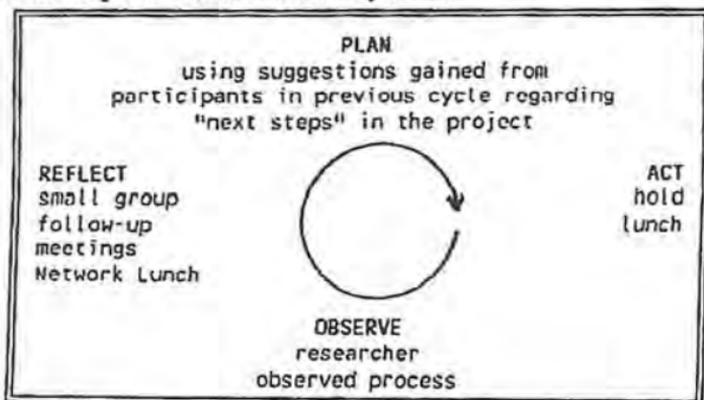


Figure 6: Action research cycle 2:
The Networking Lunch Cycle

The network lunch was very well attended with representatives from every state government department and some non-government agencies. Although I have no data for this assumption, I think that the improved attendance came about from our attempts to create relationships. Learning from the previous cycle, we invited participants to share their expectations of the meeting. This was very well received and developed into mutual introductions and a sharing of what each other was "up to" with consultation, culminating in a curious synergy. I say curious because the feeling was almost tangible but most unexpected, if the previous cycle was any judge. When asked to reflect, participants said:

- . it was the first time in two years that every department was represented
- . I realized that government and community were wrestling with the same things in consultation
- . we were able to share information
- . certainly put consultation on the agenda (diary BK2:25, June-July 1991).

Thinking back on the meeting now, I realize that I also behaved with more humility, the state of my ego has not so reliant on the outcome of the process. This probably helped the process along too.

With the process working better, we were able to get down to business. Participants were able to focus on the content of the project as well as the process and they commented:

- . we don't want prescriptive protocol, but more guidelines
- . what are the hidden agendas of government here?
- . what is wrong with the way we consult now (diary Bk2:25, 1991).

These are common and understandable reactions from people being consulted. I have felt that way too, when I have been on the receiving end of a consultative process. It has also been my professional experience that some consultation have been conducted in what way. In this project we responded by maintaining openness and honesty in our actions and eventually reviewed the decision to take the Protocol to Cabinet for prescriptive ratification. It is difficult to say what long-term effect this decision will have on consultation processes in Queensland.

The key issues in consultation generated by the participants at this meeting confirmed the initial focus of the project - that consultation was useful but not being done well as not much was known about it. Some examples of participants comments were:

- . consultation is used too much just to gather information
- . the public service culture "knowledge is power" is an impediment to consultation
- . we need consultation between levels of government - a whole of government approach (pub.rec., June 1991).

In terms of the process, feedback indicated that participants learned a great deal from one another, but there is no evidence to suggest that there was increased relationship-building as a result. However, overall results for this cycle were much more positive.

5.5.3 Action research cycle number three - Involving other stakeholders

In the small group follow-up meetings of the previous cycle, participants suggested several next steps. These included also consulting with the non-government sector in refining the draft Protocol, developing parameters for the Protocol, and developing a mechanism for co-ordinating consultation inter-departmentally. The number of actions in this cycle increased accordingly.

To date we had met almost exclusively with the government sector. However, feedback indicated that the community should have a say in how they should be consulted and should have been involved from the outset. Our snowball approach with its avoidance of limitations had in fact accidentally limited the involvement of some participants!

This problem also applied to the projects parameters. In our efforts to avoid placing limitations on the project, we had left definitions and parameters alone. This had the effect of creating confusion about the aims and direction of the project. Consequently, our actions in this cycle (five months after we began!) were concentrated on the involvement of other stakeholders (community and community consultants), and on the drafting of project parameters, and on refining the draft Protocol. We attempted to carry out these actions collaboratively with our current participants, with mixed results as I will shortly explain.

Working with a group of public servants and community representatives, we advertised for expressions of interest in participation by community groups, and developed a mailing list of community groups as a vehicle for their involvement in the project. At the same time, we began to develop a list of community consultants to invite. We also distributed a list of draft project parameters for comment and amendment (see Figure 7 for action research cycle Number Three).

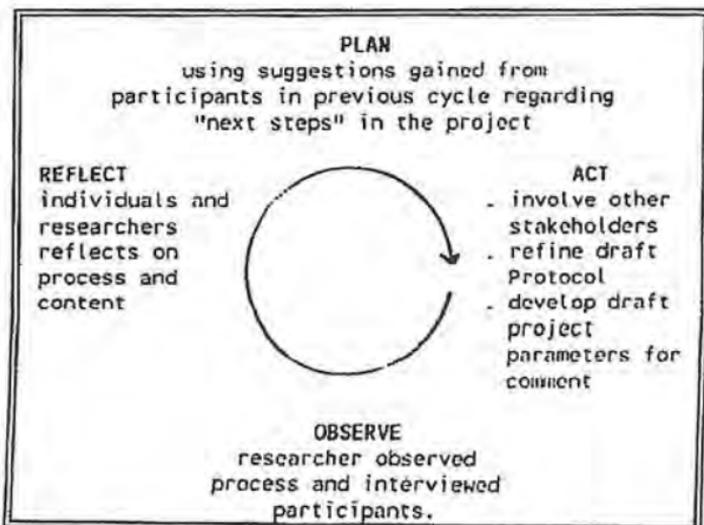


Figure 7: Action research cycle 3: Involving Other Stakeholders

As I remarked earlier, results were mixed. One community participant said:

I'm happy to listen - I haven't been to a meeting like this with government before (diary Bk1:123, June 1991).

While another commented:

...the process should have involved the community earlier ... it is not really a partnership ... at this stage the community is being asked to comment on things rather than participate in their development (diary Bk2:69, June 1991).

Our reflections regarding the parameters are also interesting. During the project, we learned again an important point we would have said we already knew about consultation - that it should have a clear definition of goals, expectations and desired outcomes. And yet, in our efforts to avoid constraining the project, Tim and I deliberately set out without them!

Also interesting is the lack of comment we received from participants on the draft objectives that we developed at their request. I have several theories about the response rate but no real answers. Perhaps we had developed enough trust in our relationships by then for people to allow us to proceed regardless of written objectives. Perhaps we had somehow already developed a common yet unspoken understanding about our objectives? Or maybe our written objectives were quite acceptable. Finally, perhaps by this stage, our participants were feeling "consulted to death" and couldn't be bothered replying. As I did not query the low response rate on the draft parameters at the time, I can only suggest that the answer is probably a combination of all of the above.

In recent reflection on these events, it was suggested to me by a member of my action learning group that in continuing on in the absence of feedback I was not really closing the feedback loop in the action research cycles. This is an excellent point, and one which I think is true.

Questions asked in the course of refining the draft protocol revealed that participants thought the content:

- . too sociological for Heads of departments
- . too long, too academic - not operational (diary Bk2:39, July 1991).

My reflections on the findings of this cycle are that, shortly after we began our snowball process, we could have developed a comprehensive, yet draft, list of stakeholders and parameters. This is as close as I can come to a solution for providing structure without constraining the input, and may have created a more practice-oriented Protocol earlier.

Further, with the increase in activities Tim and I realized we were not going to have the Protocol finished by the due date. This realization changed our perspective on the process. Instead of focussing on the Protocol as the product or outcome of the project, we began to see the

process for working on the Protocol as the longer-lasting outcome. Thus the Protocol became more of a vehicle for relationship- and trust-building between the people of the 3 sectors. The nature of the project had changed.

5.5.4 Action research cycle number four - The "when to consult" meeting

Consistent with the findings of the previous cycle, this final cycle concentrated on involving the consultant and community sectors and continuing relationship building. Conscious also that the project was drawing near the end, we were anxious to produce some tangible outcome of the project and to summatively evaluate the project.

Consequently our actions produced a second "draft" Protocol which, based on feedback in the previous cycle, was reformatted into a more practical "why, when, how and who to consult" style.

Feedback on the "next steps" questionnaire which was sent out after the networking lunch in Cycle Two had suggested that we set up a consultation resource centre. This centre would help public servants learn about consultation from journal articles and case studies supplied by project participants. So in this cycle, the centre, which would be housed in the Social Policy Unit, was to be created out of the journal articles we had read and any case studies supplied so far by participants.

Finally, as we believed consultation to be a two-way process of communication, we ensured in this cycle that all participants received an "Information Update".

Fourthly, we held a "when to consult" meeting with members of the three groups of stakeholders but concentrated on the involvement for the first time of community groups and consultants. It seemed to us that these groups would have valuable input as to the most appropriate reasons for consultation to occur.

Our final action of Cycle Four, our collaborative summative evaluation, turned out to be my final actions in the project. Collaboration in the design of the evaluation, and in the evaluation itself was achieved by distributing a draft survey form for amendment, and then answered by the participants. I will comment on our collaborative findings of the project in the final Chapter (see Figure 8 for the actions in Cycle Four).

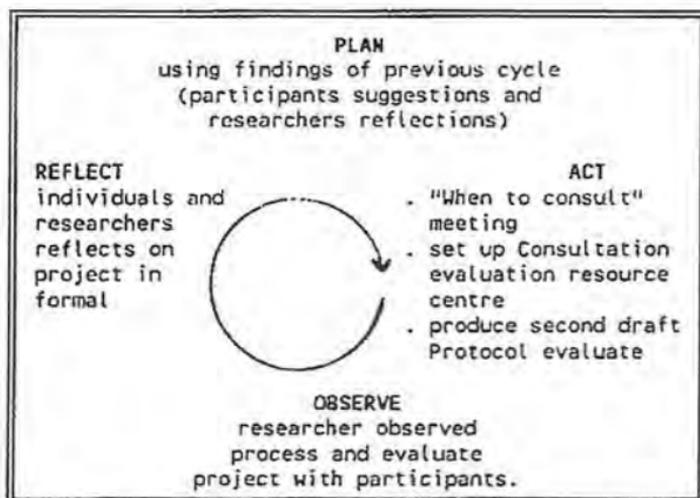


Figure 8: Action research cycle 4: The "when to consult" meeting.

Findings in Cycle 4

By this stage of the project, our mailing list had grown to 100.

At the time I left the project in September, only a small percentage had commented on our second draft Protocol and on our evaluation survey.

Observations on our Protocol included:

- . a good compromise between brevity and detail (pub.rec.folder, July 1991)
- . a beginners guide to consultation, but not useful for those in it and having trouble (diary Bk2:184, July 1991)
- . way too weighty and laden with conceptual jargon (pub.rec.folder, July 1991)
- . a passive document, didn't generate enthusiasm or pick up on the potential of consultation (diary Bk2:182)

My reflections on these findings were that it would be extremely difficult, given the part-time nature of the project and the lack of resources, to create a document on consultation which satisfied everyone.

Being the first major event for community sector participation, our "when to consult" meeting was held in a community building with the public record folder containing the history of the project, open for inspection.

Due to pressures of time as we were drawing near the end of my involvement, we had not asked the community sector to help organize this meeting. Once again this created difficulties as expectations were not shared beforehand. While Tim and I had thought we would all be learning from one another as previously, several new participants apparently expected that they would be taught consultation. However, another participant remarked: "it was good to hear people from government grappling with the same issues". (pub.rec.folder)

Once again face-to-face meetings where relationship-building could occur helped develop greater understanding of peoples motives.

However, I realized that I had been unconsciously operating with the assumption that the community groups would know what we had been doing in the project. However, they did not share our unwritten understandings and once again we found ourselves with differing expectations e.g. wanting to be taught consultation. We had forgotten the lesson we had learned in Cycle One.

CHAPTER SIX - EVALUATION AND REFLECTIONS

6.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter I described in some detail the activities in our project, how they were designed and the resultant feedback. I also included my progressive reflections. I hope that I have been able to show the degree of collaboration, and the effect of each cycles' findings on the next.

Now I want to turn to the summative evaluation (see Appendix 2). Through the evaluation, I was keen to discover whether participants' experiences in the project had added to their model of their world and how they themselves would have conducted the project in the light of those learnings.

It seems to me that people learn in a variety of ways. They can learn vicariously, such as by reading this case study or our Protocol. Another way is to actually experience it. We offered both these paths in this project, and I hoped that each would inform the other. But I was particularly interested in participants' learning from their own experience of being consulted in this project. I include myself here as well.

Kolb et al (1979) calls this type of learning "experiential learning" (see Figure 9).

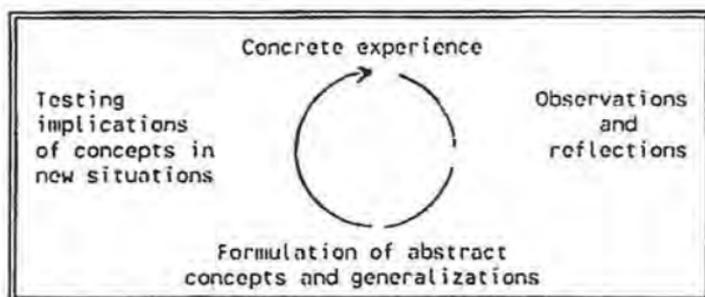


Figure 9: Kolb's Experiential Learning Model

(Source: Kolb, (1979))

Had people who wrote comments about consultation in the Protocol, followed their own words? I don't believe so. I have already given examples of how I did not act congruently.

Other participants also displayed a similar lack of congruency. For instance, relationship-building had, during the early part of the project, been seen as important by participants. But when we asked them in the evaluation what the outcomes of the project were for them, relationship-building was usually missing from their responses. They focused instead on the Protocol document as the outcome.

Asked whether the outcomes merited the seven months it took to develop the Protocol, the consensus appeared to be that the second draft of the

Protocol was not much better than what could have been achieved by an "armchair analysis" by Tim and I in two weeks.

However, this realization prompted some participants to reflect that perhaps there were other outcomes after all.

One pleased participant said:

Everyone's talking about consultation now .. (the project) also helped develop enduring relationships between departments, and between government and the community. It created a precedence of community involvement in policy development. (diary Bk2:19174, Sept 1991).

Some participants perceived, however, that if the concrete outcomes were all that were measured in a cost-benefit analysis, then consultation would not continue to be funded. They concluded that the other less tangible benefits mentioned above should be made explicit at the outset, when submitting for funding for consultation.

Looking back now, I realize we had actually come a long way. The first draft Protocol had set the scene for common understanding. In it, Tim and I had communicated our values and something of our intentions. The draft document had in fact become our draft parameters without our realizing it.

Along the way to the second draft, we had all improved our knowledge of consultation to the point where participants were able to refine their needs of the document. Hopefully, the process will continue in that way.

6.2. Our outcomes

There are several agreed outcomes of the project. There is a final Consultation Protocol Document (the second draft of which appears in Appendix 3) which summarizes most of our learnings about consultation and which was shared with over 100 people in key positions in Queensland. There is also now a Consultation Resource Centre in the Social Policy Unit of the Office of Cabinet which I hope continues to be maintained and accessible to anyone interested in furthering their knowledge. These are the concrete and immediate benefits.

The intangible, and perhaps more long-term benefits, include an extensive network of relationships. These now exist not only between all state government departments in Queensland, but between them and some of their major stakeholders - the key community groups and a small band of consultants genuinely interested in consultation.

We also raised consultation as an agenda item for discussion in the general public service. Through the project people were able to learn from one another and through their experiences.

Finally, and I think the most valuable achievement, we realized that if democratic participation is to continue in any form, those delegated to make decisions on its funding need to be made aware of its benefits, tangible and intangible, both short- and long-term.

6.3. What I learned about consultation

I learned that consultation even with the best of intentions is difficult. I learned about the importance of knowing your own agenda and being honest about it.

I have also realized through my experiences in this project that, in fact, I could be honest about my agenda without constraining others. One way would have been a draft process developed at the outset, including objectives and parameters, which I was genuinely willing to discuss and alter. In that way we all would have been much clearer about the motives of the consultants, the direction the project might take and the possible outcomes, tangible and intangible.

I still believe that the advantages of stakeholder involvement outweigh the disadvantages. However my experiences in this project have shown me that involving stakeholders in decision-making helps educate both stakeholder and decision-maker (not just the stakeholder in (d) of Advantages of Stakeholder Involvement in Chapter 2). And my experience since this project has led me to want to modify (f) in the Advantages list. Stakeholder involvement is a good way of making decisions in a fast changing world - but the process itself is slow. Is this what we want or need?

Using the criteria outlined in Chapters Two and Three as benchmarks, I believe that our consultation process was matched to the needs of the participants and it did create greater trust between consultant and consultee. It did lead to more informed decision-making, and more honest, open and humane government processes. It did improve communication, but instead of educating the community alone, I believe the government and community sector alike were educated as to the issues.

On the down side, Tim and I did suffer information overload from time to time and yes, we were concerned about the representativeness of participants. This continues to be an area of major concern in my consultations.

6.4. What I learned about action research and what I would do differently next time

I learned from this project that if you want personal and professional security in research, do not choose action research as your methodology. It has no set path. And as a methodology, it challenges you to examine your motives if you are genuinely interested in collaboration. For instance, I had dreamed of empowering others through consultation and collaborative action research. However, I had omitted to ask people whether empowerment was what they wanted. I thought that, through an adequate consultation Protocol, participants hoped to achieve more power for stakeholders generally, but they weren't asking for it themselves. Maybe the self-reflections I conducted throughout the project have helped me develop instead.

A Reviewer of this paper found the issue of action research as a challenge to professional security very interesting:

Isn't this model called action research challenging the very notion that research is an eminently secure scientific pursuit based on absolute rules for repeatable results regardless of broader environmental considerations? (Reviewer 1993).

I agree. I unconsciously relied on my status as an academic to give me security. However, in a more collaborative environment where power-sharing occurs, your personal and professional security needs to be based more on your belief in yourself as a person, and your continual reflection on and improvement of, your practice as a professional.

I applied action research in the way of a novice and an idealistic one at that! I informed participants of the tenets of action research and expected them to follow it - a sort of training role on which we had no agreement. In this way, I learned more about living my model of the world, rather than simply talking about it, as a way of real change. This was not action research according to the essential characteristics I laid out in Chapter 4. For instance, apart from Cycle One, I did not openly share my model of working and therefore real collaboration was not achievable, the iterative action cycles were mine alone, and the importance of reflection throughout the process was lost. However, within our group of participants decision-making power was shared and I believe that in this way the project did achieve real change in social justice in Queensland.

So, as a process I found action research too threatening at the time. I do not, however, disagree with its fundamental premises of research for real change, of collaboration, and of learning by doing. I continue to believe that it is the best methodology for me personally, and for times of rapid change such as we are experiencing, and I continue to use it.

6.5. What I learned about myself

Back in Chapter One I outlined my reasons for becoming involved in this project:

- . It was my vision of involvement as being empowering for the community.
- . I fully supported the notion of participative democracy. I believed in the advantages of consultation and believed that the disadvantages, if indeed they were a problem, could be overcome.
- . I also strongly believed in the importance of congruency i.e the match between what you say you believe in (your espoused values) and what you actually do (your values in action). See Argyris and Schon (1978) for more about congruency. In this case, it was important to me that not only my personal behaviour be as internally congruent as possible, but that there would also be a reasonable degree of matching between the theory and practice of stakeholder involvement.

While my views on the latter two have not changed, my vision of participation as being empowering for communities has changed. I learned two things about myself. I learned that to have this belief I must have been believing that they, "the community", somehow had less to offer than we the consult-ees and that the former would benefit from the

consultation where we did not need to.

In my experience, consultation is under-resourced. Any funding which is available is usually used to pay for the involvement of the consult-ers. Very rarely are consult-ees paid for their time, the notion being I guess, that they will benefit from the outcomes of the project. However, outcomes are not always forthcoming. Resourcing participants at least in the form of information, and assistance in communication and meeting places within their community seems only fair.

I also learned that in having this belief I was separating myself from others (the community) and giving myself power to make decisions about "their" need for empowerment. It was an arrogance.

I also learned that however idealist I am in my desire for real social change and in my work with people, I keep on reflecting and trying new ways of achieving my vision.

A Reviewer of this paper commented that they found the ending sad:

I felt as if you were burnt by the journey in some way, were glad to be finished with it and could see little hope for integrating the experience other than on a personal level (Reviewer, 1993).

Yes, the Reviewer is right in some respects! At the time I did not enjoy the project, although I did enjoy meeting and working with other participants, and the content of the project was most interesting. However, my role was never clearly defined, in addition the lack of interest in my research methodology caused me, at times, a great deal of pain. The reviewer's question has caused me to realize that I need to be more careful about defining my position and contribution in future.

6.6. Where to from here?

Since this project, the challenge for me has been to discover, before I start a consultation, what it is that I am really trying to achieve, and not just my espoused theories.

More specifically, how will I view those I will be working with? Will I fall into the trap of giving myself a teaching role again, without asking permission? What will I have to offer others in the group? Will we make specific contracts?

There is also the challenge for anyone trying to achieve real social change through some kind of measured process. It seems to me that the values underlying your chosen methodology need to be sufficiently congruent with your own so that there need not be slavish adherence to the superficial hardware of the methodology. The search for congruence between your words and your actions seems to me to be the primary guide, regardless of your world view or your methodology.

So the final challenge for me is to see myself working alongside others perhaps for our mutual empowerment!

POSTSCRIPT !!!

The final Consultation Protocol document was released in January 1994 and can be obtained from:

The Social Policy Unit
Office of Cabinet
PO Box 390
BRISBANE QLD 4002
Phone: (07) 224 4665

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APPENDIX 1

LIST OF ACTIONS IN THE CONSULTATION Protocol PROJECT

February 1991

- February Sensing in and with public servants. Forward Plan.
- February 14 Meeting with Director, Social Policy Unit (Jackie Byrne) and co-worker, Tim Reddel.
- Gathering and summarising some of the literature on consultation and participation generally.
- February 25 Beginnings of individual meetings with departmental participants to discuss the start of consultation in the individual departments and to invite their participation in the project.
- Researcher's reflections on her role - am I a consultant, a student or a co-worker in the project. Remuneration is an issue.

March 1991

- March 5 Memo outlining project to Director-General (Pub. rec. folder).
- March 5 Meeting with Dennis Wogan (District Engineer, Metro South, Transport Department (Diary 1:9).
- March 7 Meeting with Tim Gleeson (Policy and Grants Co-ordination, Family Services) (Diary 1:23).
- March 11 Meeting with Di Guthrie and Stewart Nicol (Principal Manager, Roads Policy Unit) (Diary 1:37).
- March 12 Meeting with Trevor Carlyon (Assistant Director, Community Corrections) (Diary 1:33).
- March 12 Meeting with Ian Pullar (Manager, Investigations and Development Division, Water Resources).
- Continuing to read on consultation and participation.
- March 18 Planning for Bribie:
 - . Draft program
 - . Workshop objectives
 - . Participants supplying case studies.
- March 25, 26 The Bribie Workshop. Small in-house meeting to develop the basis of an understanding of consultation:
 - . summary of findings
 - . some individual, group and self-evaluations of process (Diary 1:158).

- March 27 Evaluation Seminar Di Gibson, Di Berryman (Mgr Evaluation of Community Services, Victoria), Alana McLean (Treasury) (Diary 1:60).
- March 27 Researchers reflections on workshop (Diary 1:62) and April 3 (Diary 1:77).
- April 1991
- April 2 Interview with participant, Bob Reilly to evaluate Bribie (Diary 1:69).
- Write up of findings from the workshop into the first draft. Discussion Paper on Consultation Protocol (Diary 1:71).
- Write up of case studies presented at Bribie for distribution in Summary package to participants.
- April 16 Supervision session (Diary 1:100).
- April 18 Development of Bribie evaluation questions and next steps for discussion follow-up meetings (along with summary package) (Diary 1:101-103).
- April 22 & 30 Meetings with participants from the above workshop to evaluate workshop and develop next steps (Diary 1:104-106,116-118,120,139). Summary of evaluation and diagram of next steps (Diary 1:119,131 and pub. rec. folder).
- April 30 Researchers reflections on overall process (Diary 1:145).
- Further meetings with individual departmental representatives to discuss the state of consultation in the individual departments and to invite their participation in the project.
- May 1991
- May Distribute Draft Discussion Paper for comment.
- May 14 Progress Report to Director, Social Policy Unit (outlines objectives for Networking Lunch) (pub. rec. folder).
- May 14 Project evaluation/review with co-worker (Diary 1:150-152).
- Planning for inter-departmental meeting (Networking Lunch) to give participants more information about the project, and to draw out the issues currently important in consultation. Registration sheet. Key issues. (Diary 1:155-58, 1991).

Development of contact list of participants.

- May 17 Networking Lunch (executive Building) attended by a representative of every department plus Local Government and some peak community bodies (Diary 1:159-163 and pub. rec. folder).
- May 22 Thesis supervision (Diary 1:166).
- May 24 Follow-up package to Networking Lunch containing networking list of those who attended, summary of key issues from Lunch-time meeting and list of options for next steps distributed for comment (pub. rec. folder).
- Late May Action research cycles representing project (Diary 1:166-169).
- June 1991**
- June Follow-up meetings in small groups of related departments with participants from the Networking Lunch to discuss the issues outlined in the follow-up package. Use of Next Steps sheet.
- June 5 Corrective Services, Justice, Police (Seb Caisalina gave us Community Support Group, Police Department - Aims and Objectives) (Diary 1:173-174).
- June 11 Felicity Young (Health), David Scott (Education), Learne (Family Services), Peter Mackay (Corrective Services), Pauline Peel (Housing and Local Government) and Anna Herriot (Local Government Association). Discussed involving the community - formed focus group to discuss "ways of involving the community" in this project.
- June 11 Interview with Bill Walker to evaluate process of May 17 (Diary 1:111).
- June 11 John Klemm (DPI), Bill Walker (DBIRD), Ross Raymond (Resource Industries) and Jan Bimrose (Econ. and Trade Development), Robyn Hesse (DE & H) (Diary 1: 112).
- June 11 Beginning to involve third and final sector of stakeholders - community consultants, Nev and John W. (Diary 1: 111).
- Feedback starting to come in on lunch-time meeting and Draft Paper.
- June 24 Meeting of focus group "Involving the Community" (Diary 1:125, 128). Doug Yuille (Wilderness Soc.) (123 blue), Eva Drew (QCOSS), Felicity Young (Health), Allison Hallahan (Family Services), Bill Walker (DBIRD) and Karen Robinson (H & LG). See 2 documents. Tim and I

to put together some ideas for them to critique. See also comments from Bob Alfred (OCCSS) (Diary 1:124).

- June 24 Project update and review (Diary 1:126).
- June 24 Contacting community consultants (Diary 1:127).
- June 25 Small group meeting - Stewart Nicol (Transport), Robyn Wilson (SEPTS), Graeme Masterman (Lands) and Glen Rhodes (DEVETIR) (Diary 1:123,129-131).
- Planning for meeting to inform community consultants about the project and to invite them to participate - focussing.
- July 1991**
- July 10 Planning Meeting with co-worker (Diary 2:19-23).
- July 10 Development of the draft Project Objectives and parameters. Drawing lines around the project/focussing.
- July 12 Progress report to Director, Social Policy Unit (pub. rec. folder).
- July 12 Final small group follow-up meeting with Mike Sarquis (Treasury), Fred Quine (Admin. Services), Ian Lawson (Tourism, Sport and Racing). (Agenda: pub. rec. folder and Diary 2:25,28).
- July 12 Meeting with community consultants. Out of this came the idea of holding a meeting focussing on When to Consult. (Agenda and feedback: pub. rec. folder and:Diary 2:29-31).
- July 12 Co-workers' reflection on consultation (Diary 2:31).
- July 15 Planning meeting with Tim re community involvement (Diary 2:32,34-35).
- July 15 Co-workers' reflection on planning and change (Diary 2:32).
- July 17 Meeting with group focussing on ways of involving the community. Project staff supplied ideas on "ways of involving the community" for critique. Discussed "When to Consult" meeting (Diary 2:35-37). Contacted Bill Walker re feedback on meeting process (Diary 2:40).
- July 17 Researchers' reflection on role (Diary 2:38,39).
- July 19 Phone contacts to obtain feedback from small-group meetings and other written comments regarding the Discussion Paper on Consultation Protocol issued in May

(Diary 2:39).

- July 19 Development of flier for distribution through QCOSS newsletter to peak social service bodies in Queensland.
- July 22 Information Update (including objectives and parameters, latest draft of paper etc.) distributed to around 70 participants (all three groups of stakeholders) for feedback (pub. rec. folder).
- July 29 Flier advertising Consultation Protocol Project sent to QCOSS for inclusion in quarterly newsletter (Diary 2:41).
- July 29 Karen Chapman (Justice) suggests involving Treasury in costing consultation (Diary 2:41).
- July 29 Meeting with David Scott regarding Management and Consultation in the Education Department (Diary 2:45).
- July 29 Continuing to summarise feedback coming in on first draft Discussion Paper (Diary 2:26,48,44,47,67) Planning for meeting "When to Consult" (Diary 2:55,65).
- August 1991**
- August Researchers' reflection (Diary 2:66).
- August 12 Progress Report to Director, Social Policy Unit (pub. rec. folder).
- August 13 Progress Report to Deputy Director-General, Office of Cabinet (pub. rec. folder).
- August 16 Comments about project from unknown sources in community sector (Diary 2:69).
- August 16 Meeting held with community, department and consultant representatives to discuss "When to Consult" - sharing perspectives in more depth.
- Continuing to pull together feedback received, including the findings from the above meeting.
- September 1991**
- September Using all comments received to date, putting together the Second Draft Paper on Consultation Protocol.
- September 10 Progress Report to Deputy Director-General, Office of Cabinet (pub. rec. folder).
- Drafting an Update for participants.
- September 20 Drawing up the Project Evaluation questions.

Distribution of the Draft Paper, the Update and the Evaluation to participants for their information and comment (pub. rec. folder).

- September 20
and October 3 Finalisation of Consultation Resource Centre.
- Several meetings with small groups of participants for updating and project evaluation
- September 26 Graham Masterman (Lands), Leanne (Family Services) and Eva Cox (QC055).
- September 26 Ian Plowman, Robyn Wilson and Robyn Hesse (DE & H).
- October 3 Pauline Peel (H & LG), David Scott (Education), Ros Ison (Justice) and Stewart Nicol (Transport).
- Near Future Re-grouping of government sector for Protocol and Project Review (Diary 2:111).

- have the substantial issues in consultation been addressed?

 - . to what extent have you been able to achieve real involvement in the project? What are the factors that have helped or hindered?

 - . do you believe the needs of participants have been catered for? For example, were you given honesty, shown respect, did you feel you were listened to, were you asked about how you wanted to be consulted, were you sufficiently resourced, were you given sufficient time to respond and sufficient access to the consultation?
5. Will this project, in your opinion, have any on-going effect?
6. Attached is an outline of the activities we have carried out so far in the project. How do you think we could have improved the process?
7. Given that this project is an attempt to model a consultative process, what implications do your comments have for the effectiveness of the second draft Protocol document?

8. Do you think that the Second Draft of the Protocol is better for having been developed through a consultative process rather than not?

Please return to:

Tim Reddel, Social Policy Unit, PO Box 390,
North Quay, Qld, 4002 by Friday, October 4th,
1991

APPENDIX 3

SECOND DRAFT OF THE CONSULTATION Protocol

20 September, 1991

OFFICE OF THE CABINET - SOCIAL POLICY UNIT - QUEENSLAND

CONSULTATION Protocol PROJECT

THE SECOND DRAFT OF THE CONSULTATION Protocol

The Aims of the Consultation Protocol:

The second draft of the Consultation Protocol is presently being developed. The first stage of this process has been to pull together the feedback to date on the first Paper. This second paper attempts to put the feedback into a framework which could form the basis of a Consultation Protocol.

The intention of this Protocol is to outline some principles, policies and processes for use by State Government Departments when conducting consultations with other government agencies and with community groups. It aims to provide departments with a degree of flexibility while providing some practical advice in the development, planning and implementation of consultation processes.

However, the effectiveness of any consultation Protocol will be dependent upon an attitude or state of mind which is open to change. Effective consultation requires a willingness by all participants to engage in a process which can proceed in a variety of ways but must, at a minimum, involve two way communication.

THE SECOND DRAFT OF THE CONSULTATION Protocol

1. Why Governments Consult?
 - 1.1 The System of Government
 - 1.2 Practical Considerations
 - 1.3 The Objectives of Consultation
 2. What is Consultation?
 - 2.1 Can Consultation be Defined?
 3. When to Consult
 - 3.1 A Guide to Deciding When to Consult
 - 3.2 When Not to Consult!
 - 3.3 If I Decide to Consult, When do I Start?
 4. How to Consult?
 - 4.1 Building Relationships
 - 4.2 Frameworks and Expectations in Consultation
 - 4.3 Resourcing
 - 4.4 Time
 - 4.5 Co-ordination
 - 4.6 Evaluation
 5. Who to Consult?
 - 5.1 Identifying the Stakeholders
 - 5.2 Access to the Consultation Process
 6. A Useful Checklist for Effective Consultation
 7. Case Studies of Consultation
- Other Issues

1. WHY GOVERNMENTS CONSULT?

There are many reasons why governments consult. However, they can be grouped into two categories:

1. The system of Government, and
2. Practical considerations.

1.1 The System of Government

Many believe that consultation is necessary because people have a right to control over their lives, and a right to participate in decisions which affect them. People's beliefs about the role of government in a democratic system form the structure or framework in which to place consultation in the possible relationships between government and community.

It is important to recognise that consultation process operates within the Westminster system of Government. The system has a number of inbuilt system constraints that must be recognised when planning consultative arrangements. The system which operates through a strong executive branch of government places a great deal of emphasis on the relevant Department, headed by a Minister who is responsible, both individually and collectively to Parliament.

The ramifications of this system are an executive branch of government which focuses on policy processes that are traditionally geared to the needs of authorities. The development of consultative arrangements in these circumstances requires a reassessment of our political culture and administrative practices. Consultation in the context of a Westminster system of government requires a willingness to share information, respond promptly to questions and requests from participants and a preparedness to treat other participants as credible actors.

1.2 Practical Considerations

Effective planning and decision-making requires participation by stakeholders for more directly observable and practical reasons as well. These include:

- (a) Governments require a great deal of information to correctly identify attitudes/opinions of consumers and interest groups in order to make effective decisions.
- (b) Opportunities to achieve Government policy objectives and goals can be described in terms of alternative strategies. Useful information on appropriate and feasible strategies can often be obtained in a mutually educative process from community groups who will be involved in their implementation.
- (c) A knowledge of the direct and indirect benefits and costs of each strategy are essential for effective decision-making. Consultation can assist in developing an understanding of these potential costs and benefits.

- (d) Government decision-makers need information to understand the relative worth of any program in comparison with alternative programs and to retain flexibility in their ability to respond to community needs.
- (e) Consultation with groups affected by the policy or program allows for any objections to implementation strategy to be voiced early enough to allow any necessary changes to be made in order to increase the likelihood that the policy will be more acceptable and therefore more effective.
- (f) Evaluation of policies, programs and services requires consultation with the groups affected in order to generate relevant information.

1.3 The Objectives of Consultation

Consultation processes can have a variety of objectives depending upon the values and needs of those consulting and those being consulted. An example of some consultation objectives could be:

1. To provide a forum or structure for people to have input into a decision which will affect their life situation.
2. To gather and disseminate relevant information which will assist in the development and implementation of a policy, program or service.
3. To develop useful relationships across government agencies and between government and the community.

2. WHAT IS CONSULTATION?

2.1 Can Consultation be Defined?

Consultation has been defined in a variety of ways reflecting particular values and experiences. Advisory committees, consultative councils, surveys, green papers and discussion papers, opinion polls and public meetings are amongst the common processes used in the name of consultation. The idea that governments ought to consult frequently and widely with individuals, local communities, and interest groups has been considered an important aspect of planning and decision-making within a democratic system of Government.

Consultation is only one form of participation by stakeholders in the decision-making process. In any participative process, the precise nature of the different participants' roles and responsibilities should be clearly and publicly stated and understood by all those involved in the process. Lack of clarity can lead to unrealistic expectations by participants and result in cynicism. This can dramatically affect participant involvement and lead to unclear outcomes.

Consequently, there is a need to define the respective roles of Government and the community in the consultation process. If effective consultation processes are used an ongoing government-community

relationship can develop which can have benefits for all participants. If consultation becomes two-way communication, it can then play a part in broader problem-solving or conflict-resolution processes.

One definition of consultation which is frequently referred to is that which came out of the Inquiry into Processes of Consultation in Victoria in 1981, which was prompted by the development of the Residential Tenancies Bill. This broadened into a document which has provided a valuable resource of literature, experiences and principles of consultation:

Consultation ... can be defined as a process whereby an authority or body invites views, opinion or reactions from the community as individuals or groups, while giving no guarantees that the views expressed will be accommodated. Consultation is one form of participation and its effect is through the exercise of influence rather than formal authority of power.

(from Carlyon Stuart "Experience in participation, community action and consultation" in Consultation and Government, Victorian Council of Social Services, 1981)

Stanbury and Fulton in their paper Consultation and Public Participation in Government Policy Making: A Conceptual Framework, University of Ottawa, 1986 define Consultation as:

... consultation connotes an activity by which an individual, group or organisation provides an opportunity for individuals or representatives of groups to make an input into the policy or decision-making process of the initiator.

This definition emphasises the role of the policy or decision-maker in initiating the process. Consultation can be both an invitation by Government or result from the initiation of individuals or groups outside Government.

Consultation may be generally defined as any process where individuals or groups have an opportunity to influence the outcomes of a policy or decision-making process.

3. WHEN TO CONSULT

Deciding when to consult requires that two important questions are answered:

1. Is consultation necessary? An understanding of the TIMING and COMPLEXITY of the decision-making process involved in the particular policy, program or service will be necessary. This understanding will assist in deciding when and if a consultative process will add anything to the outcomes. (See 3.1 and 3.2.)
2. Where in the decision-making process should we consult? After

deciding to proceed with consultation, considerable thought needs to be directed toward its correct timing and placement in the overall process (See 3.3).

3.1 A Guide to Deciding When to Consult

1. What are the implications of the particular proposal? Will it affect the programs of other departments (state, inter-state or commonwealth), and will it significantly affect the quality of life of the community?
2. Is the proposal politically or culturally sensitive?
3. Will the proposal incur significant public expenditure?
4. Is there sufficient time for the consultation process?
5. Are sufficient resources available for participants to engage in the consultation process?
6. Will the consultation process provide relevant information to decision-makers?

3.2 When Not to Consult!

- When the decision has already been made.
- When consultation might be used to avoid making decisions.

3.3 If I Decide to Consult, When Do I Start?

Consultation should be budgeted for as early as possible in an organisation's overall planning process. If this occurs, consultative process are more likely to be planned and to occur at an appropriate time in the decision-making and planning of the Department or agency.

To be effective, consultation should be planned for as soon as an issue arises. Initially, this may occur informally through contact with networks and other interest groups within government and the community sector. If this early planning for consultation does not occur, then disagreements might arise from the stakeholders regarding such basic questions as the definition of the problem under focus. Time and financial resources are then wasted in having to back-track over issues.

Consultation works best when it is part of an on-going relationship between individuals, groups and departments and not simply a reactive participation on the part of individuals or groups within the government or community sectors.

Just because the consulter is ready to begin, does not mean that the consultees are likewise prepared. Preliminary discussions with a number of participants would therefore be useful to determine their readiness to become involved in a Consultation process.

4. HOW TO CONSULT?

Consultation should be a planned activity. However, no one approach to consultation is best. Implementation of consultation will vary for each project and each group of participants. The process of consultation is as important as the outcomes.

There are a number of basic considerations when planning and implementing a consultation process:

- Building relationships with participants - 4.1
- Developing frameworks and expectations in consultation - 4.2
- Resourcing the consultation process - 4.3
- Allocating sufficient time for effective consultation - 4.4
- Co-ordinating consultation processes for effective policy - 4.5
- Evaluating the consultation process and outcomes - 4.6

4.1 Building Relationships

To enter into consultation is to be open to change, perhaps in not only the content of the policy but also in the relationship with those participating in the consultation process. If this is not the intention and there is no serious commitment to addressing the needs of the participants, then the consultation process may be seen to be manipulative. There is little point in raising expectations of participants that they can have real influence, if the decision has already been made.

Effective consultation requires honesty about why people are being consulted, how they will be consulted and how much influence they will have over the decisions made. Building trust with and between participants requires plenty of "early time" or warming-up of the communication channels to help break down the barriers. At this stage, it may be important that those initiating the consultation process are able to produce some initial outcomes or information which illustrates the potential benefits of the process.

Trained facilitators (or departmental staff trained in interpersonal skills) may enhance this process. Minimising jargon and maintaining a public record of all discussions is also useful, as is acceptance of the healthy scepticism that the public bring to the consultation process. Often there are also the entrenched negative attitudes both of and towards those in authority. It helps in developing credibility if those with the power to make the final decisions on the issues under focus can make themselves readily available for participants' enquiries (an "open door" policy).

4.2 Frameworks and Expectations in Consultation

The following issues should be addressed with the stakeholders as soon as consultation commences:

- Power. Issues of power and authority need to be addressed openly. Participants in consultation frequently have less access to resources and influence over decision-making than do policy-makers and are therefore not playing on a "level playing field". They need to be informed and resourced for meaningful participation.
- Control. Consultation processes can have an important outcome in assisting participants to take greater control of their own lives. To that end, those initiating consultation should ensure that consultations are conducted around issues over which those involved can have some degree of control and authority to make decisions.
- Readiness. Ensure people are "ready" to be consulted.
- Competency. To obtain positive outcomes from interactive consultation (two-way communication), it is important that participants (both consulters and consultees) view one another as competent.
- Clear definitions of:
 - the "problem" under focus,
 - the goals or desired outcomes of the consultation,
 - the parameters of the study,
 - what information is needed for decision-making,
 - who needs to be consulted,
 - the roles and expectations of the respective parties involved. Most participants will have an expectation that they will, at the least, be listened to. Many will have expectations that they will play a role in decision-making. Planners therefore need to be clear about who will make the final decisions (whether there will be any delegation of decision-making) and against whose criteria or values decisions will be measured,
 - how the consultation will be conducted,
 - the costing of the consultation process
- the need to balance the priorities, e.g. how much time can be spent on consultation compared to the overall decision-making process?

4.3 Resourcing

Many departments and community groups are not currently committed to or equipped for ongoing consultations. Effective communication costs time and money and therefore requires sufficient resources for both the

consulter and the consultees.

Frequently, those being consulted have far less access to resources (information, time, personnel, funding) than those initiating the consultation, and will require assistance to participate. Exactly what is required will depend on such factors as the nature of the topic, the duration, the geographic location and the directly communicated needs of those being consulted.

Resources required for the community may take many forms. However, the most common items are:

1. relevant, accessible and timely information in the form of statistics, reports, decisions and constant feedback;
2. assistance to attend consultation events organised (such as transportation costs, childcare and refreshments), and
3. possible reimbursement for communication costs incurred by participants.

4.4 Time

Time is another important resource for consultation. Trust between consulter and consultee cannot develop overnight. Meaningful dialogue requires time for a sufficient relationship to develop, and for information to be communicated, understood and evaluated both by the consulter and the consultee. Limiting the consultation to a few weeks (or months) can cut this important process short, and raise tensions in the community unnecessarily.

Within the exigencies of government policy/legislation program, realistic deadlines should be set within which consultation is to occur.

4.5 Co-ordination

Co-ordination between departments is important for two reasons:

1. Minimising gaps and overlap in policies and services, and
2. Ensuring that communities do not become over-consulted.

Co-ordination can be assisted by using the following methods:

- (a) using the existing structures (inter-departmental and advisory committees) and other networks of relationships (both those between the agency and the community, and within the community itself), and
- (b) by maintaining departmental registers of consultations and consultative structures (e.g. advisory committees) and effective contact points. This register can then be made available to people involved in other consultations both within and without the department.

4.6 Evaluation

Evaluation needs to be carried out not only of the participants' contributions as they arrive, but also of the outcomes of the consultation, and the processes and mechanisms used in obtaining those outcomes.

Evaluation of Contributions. Consultation processes have different phases, and they need to produce concrete outcomes. An evaluation should be made of all comments and submissions received during the consultation process before any final decision is made regarding the policy or program, with responses regularly being communicated back to those participating. To enhance openness and accountability, those with the authority for the final decisions should make themselves accessible to the participants.

Outcomes Evaluation. As part of demonstrating accountability, outcomes need to be evaluated to see whether the project achieved its desired outcomes. In that sense, evaluation is qualitative. However, outcome evaluation also needs to include efficiency measures. Is the outcome worth the effort put into achieving it?

Process Evaluation. Process evaluation aids in learning about the most effective way to consult. It helps in avoiding repetition of earlier mistakes and in enhancing further consultative processes. Participants should be asked how it felt to be a participant in the project and what would have made the process more effective for them.

Evaluation should be a joint effort between the consultants and the consultees. This is important in not only carrying out a thorough evaluation, but also in maintaining trust and ownership of the final outcomes.

5. WHO TO CONSULT

5.1 Identifying the Stakeholders

Consultation is not only meetings with interest or lobby groups. There is a need to identify the constellation of stakeholders in the decision-making process and to check with them as to who else needs to be involved. It is also important to ensure that the participants mirror, as far as possible, the demographics of the community being consulted and cover the various interests involved in any particular issue.

5.2 Access to the Consultation Process

Often it is only those individuals and groups used to participating with government which gain access to consultation processes. However, access should be open to all those interested in participating in the consultation process. Techniques may need to be developed to access all sectors. Involving local authorities, local community centres, peak bodies, local, regional or state networks is a useful method to gain access to a wide variety of stakeholders. Wide and varying forms of advertising should also be considered.

6. A USEFUL CHECKLIST FOR EFFECTIVE CONSULTATION

The following are the very least that is required for effective consultation:

- Effective consultation occurs EARLY in the decision-making process.
- Effective consultation requires HONESTY about why people are being consulted, how they will be consulted and how much influence they will have over decisions made.
- For meaningful participation, those consulted need to be adequately RESOURCED and comprehensive, balanced and accurate information provided.
- ACCESS should be open to all those interested in participating in the consultation process.
- All participants should be treated with DIGNITY AND RESPECT.
- Each consultation needs to be DESIGNED to meet the unique demands of the situation.

7. CASE STUDIES OF CONSULTATION PROCESSES

One of the most effective ways to illustrate the processes of consultation is through the use of case studies and examples. It is our intention that a section of the Protocol will provide a summary of case studies from Government Agencies.

OTHER ISSUES

Training

- This document may become the starting point for training and information dissemination regarding ideas and attitudes about consultation.

The Consultation Resource Centre

- The Office of the Cabinet has commenced compiling a CONSULTATION RESOURCE CENTRE on the 14th Floor of the Executive Building. Comprised of journal articles and contributions from various government departments on consultation (programs and case studies on consultation), it is available for use by all government departments and those in the community. Further material, particularly case studies, would be welcome.

ATTACHMENT

REVIEWER'S REPORT

Thank you for submitting your manuscript "CONSULTING ON A CONSULTATION Protocol - A project where the means were as important as the end", for publication with ACTION RESEARCH CASE STUDIES.

As a member of the editorial board I have been asked to review this case study and suggest comments in relation to its publication potential.

I have approached this task as a practitioner rather than as an academic. I have also attempted to read it from the naive perspective of someone unfamiliar with Action Research and any of the lingo that surrounds this model.

My comments address the general criteria of readability, flow of information, structure and then more specifically my reflections/responses/thoughts on the content.

I found this document friendly and welcoming to read. The personal approach is attractive and engenders a Zen sense of vulnerability and strength. I appreciate the change from scientific papers written in the third person.

The mixture of past and present tense early in the content felt a little confusing for me and I had to read the first few pages over again to grapple with it. When you say that something "was" your vision or belief at the beginning of this journey my immediate response is to ask you what it is now. Having already killed off your vision/notion/belief with past tense I was uncertain, as a reader, how to travel with you through the text.

Perhaps this is where an Executive Summary would help and I certainly did look for it first of all before wading through the whole document.

From the beginning of Chapter 5, I began asking questions and found no answers in the following text. I fully support your intention to "try to live or model the processes of consultation". When this powerful sentence is followed with "however" is this meant to diminish the earlier statement in any way?

What do you mean by "collective control of the project".

I have some difficulty with your statement about not putting limits on the process. I feel we all need to be aware of differentiating between process and the procedures which we may enact to achieve a chosen outcome.

In differentiating between these terms I would say that a procedure is a way of moving from one point or topic to another. At times this is movement from a starting point to a finishing point. Procedures then are repeatable and symbolically linear. A procedure could be measured statistically and energetically.

Process, to me, involves change rather than repetition. It is a continuity of movement with no particular route or direction and encompasses growth and decay along the way. It is symbolically formless and difficult to quantify both statistically and energetically.

We all have habitual procedures for navigating our way through life. This minimises the energy expenditure for daily function. When we are confronted by a new or different situation, or when some of the environmental information is missing we may chose to draw from our deeper process to change something (even if it is only one procedure), continue with habit and then deal with the consequences.

To me this is the difference between action research and traditional scientific research; the latter is about interchangeable procedures without the ability to respond to new information; the former is about change in response to new information.

And therein lies the challenge in action research - to proactively facilitate change which enhances the given situation for all concerned without superimposing our own habits/rules/procedures on the unlimited potential of the situation.

In order to do this we need to establish our own criteria for measuring change in a given situation for that moment in time. So the questions I want to ask in this section are:

- . What criteria were used to determine which people you would ask, and how was this different from what you would usually do?
- . How many people were asked?
- . Were they all practitioners, social friends, academics or a mixture?
- . How informed were they about the subject before you asked them, and after their involvement with your project?
- . How was this approach congruent with the principles of effective consultation mentioned earlier?

I was surprised that you set out on this journey without a clear set of objectives and it seems that this became a salient realisation as mentioned in later pages.

I found the ending sad. It felt as if you were burnt by the journey in some way, were glad to be finished with it and could see little hope for integrating the experience other than on a personal level.

In the section "where to from here" you return to the concept of congruence. It was important enough for you to state it so clearly in the beginning, during your record and at the end. Why?

I wonder if there isn't something special your insight has to contribute here as a challenge to the action research model? You seem to begin expressing this in the first sentence of the last paragraph. What is

the challenge? Is it really in the search for congruence, the integration of how we operate and how we think in changing situations or is it in the measuring of process?

Action research has become something of a "yeah-yeah" club. Mention the magic words 'action research' and the general response from upwardly mobile aspirants of the contemporary "Club Intelligencia" is ... "yeah yeah, been there, done it, know all about it..." and I wonder if this is really so.

In your earlier statement about wanting personal and professional security in research, I wonder if you haven't unknowingly touched on a very important point? Isn't this model called action research challenging the very notion that research is a eminently secure scientific pursuit based on absolute rules and procedures for repeatable results regardless of broader environmental considerations? What do you think?

What I looked for and didn't find in this document was a reference of how you sought and/or found support and nurturing for your developing ideas during the research journey.

One of the characteristics of this action research model is the scope allowed to develop supportive and enabling relationships, particularly in the reflective part of the cycle. Reflection in the presence of an active listener has often brought forward insights that I may have not considered otherwise. Perhaps it is more so for you in another mode like the planning or review. It seemed like a missing ingredient to me.

I hope these comments have been gentle enough to be helpful and strong enough to spark your thoughts. In brief I would like to see an executive summary, some rearranging of the inserts, some statistical rigor and a little more expansion in the areas mentioned.

Claire Holsinger, Brisbane
9/8/93

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