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An Action Research Study of Strategy Implementation in a Not-For-Profit Community Organisation

by

Beverly Catherine Walker

Master of Management (Organisational Systems) (Monash University)
Master of Nursing Studies (La Trobe University)
Bachelor of Applied Science (Advanced Nursing) (Lincoln Institute of Health Sciences)
Diploma of Nursing Education (College of Nursing, Australia)

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Abstract

This research examines the process of structural change and the transition of a not-for-profit, membership based, community organisation to a professional organisation.

There were two significant motivators for undertaking this research. One was to study strategy management and specifically strategy implementation within organisations. This was the practical problem to be addressed. A lack of research focus on strategy implementation in general and in particular within the not-for-profit sector led to the focus in the not-for-profit sector. The second interest was in the application of ideas and concepts from systems thinking and the use of action research as a research strategy in business organisations. The effectiveness of action research as a research methodology represented the methodological research problem to be addressed.

While strategic management in "for-profit" organisations is well researched, within the not-for-profit sector organisations, research into strategic management, and the change processes associated with it, is uncommon. In this context, this research had to take into account the membership and the altruistic purpose of the organisation and its formal governance structures and processes. This focus led to three key research questions: What formal structures maintain the cooperation of the membership during a strategic change process? How does a not for profit organisation develop managerial structures that deal with the evolving relationship between the membership community base and the professional staff? How does a not for profit organisation resolve the dilemmas that arise during strategic change? These questions provided the general direction to the research.

The setting was a community based psychiatric disability not-for-profit organisation that had been established for 21 years. The organisations mission was to

provide support, advocacy and services for people with a mental illness and their family and friends. The organisation had experienced five years of substantial growth in provision of contracted services. As a consequence, the organisation had become accountable to external funding bodies as well as to its accountability to its members. An external review of the organisation led to the development of a strategic plan which formed the starting point of this action research.

The research structure for the action research project was based on Checkland's (1991) general FMA framework for any research and his process for undertaking action research. The structure for the research-in-action incorporated the cyclic process of critical questioning, planning for action, taking action and reflection. As the research progressed through cycles of action complementary research methods were employed. These included Strategic Assumption Surfacing and Testing (SAST) and Social Network Analysis (SNA).

The research participants were the senior executive and staff managers whose experience with the organisation ranged from new appointees to managers with 18 years experience with the organisation. Of the 22 participants, 20 had formal qualifications in their clinical professions and most had limited management experience. The research participant group went through three major expansions during the research which was a reflection of the structural changes that occurred in the organisation.

The duration of the research in action was 35 months. A number of mini cycles of action led to the identification of themed mega cycles. The themes reflected the issues of concern to the researcher and the research participants. They were related to strategy and the evolution of working structures, the dilemma between managers and membership; the process gap between clarifying issues and taking action, and communication.

As a result of the action research process and the use of complementary research interventions, these issues of concern were clarified and this resulted in the evolution of strategy and structures that were acceptable to the management group, the Board and to the membership. Additionally, the action research process provided the opportunity to achieve a synthesis of purpose within the organisation.

Statement of Authorship

To the best of my knowledge, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis. Except where reference is made to the publications arising from this research, the thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part by me for the award of any degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

[redacted]

Beverly C Walker

23/4/2004

Publications Arising From This Research

In an endeavour to achieve objectivity, research methods and findings were made available for public debate on the premise that the exposure would encourage the researcher to examine biases (Metcalfe, 1996). This was achieved through presentation of papers at national and international conferences. Papers were blind refereed and subsequently published in conference proceedings and special journal edition of SPAR. Publishing also provided a means of action research recoverability (Checkland & Holwell, 1998).

Refereed Journal Publications

Walker B. C., Haslett T. (2004). 'The importance of social networks in the exchange of information.' Pending publication in *Journal of Knowledge, Culture and Change Management.*

Haslett, T., Barton, J., Molineux, J., Olsen, J., Sarah, R., Stephens, J., Tepe, S. & **Walker, B.** (2004). 'Creating actionable knowledge: An action research perspective.' Pending publication in *Journal of Knowledge, Culture and Change Management.*

Walker Beverly., Haslett Tim. (2002) 'Action Research in Management – Ethical Dilemmas.' *Systemic Practice and Action Research* (SPAR) 15(6):523-533. (Special edition)

Sarah Rod, Haslett Tim, Molineux John, Olsen Jane, Stephens John, Tepe Susanne & **Walker Beverly** (2002) 'Business Action Research in Practice – A Strategic Conversation about Conducting Action Research in Business Organisations.' *Systemic Practice and Action Research* (SPAR) 15(6):535-546. (Special edition)

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Walker B. C., Haslett T. (2004). 'The importance of social networks in the exchange of information.' Management Conference 2004, Knowledge & Culture: Organisational Intangibles. London, August 2-6.

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Walker, B.C., Haslett, T. (2001). 'Action Research and Systemic Thinking.' Systems in Management 7th Annual ANZSYS Conference Proceedings. Perth.

Other: Research Reports

Walker, B.C., Crowther, E.M. (2000). *Consultation with SFV and Linked Support Groups*. SFV Inc. June.

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Some components of the thesis were presented at national and international conferences and published in proceedings and journals following peer review. I thank the reviewers for their constructive feedback and helpful suggestions many of which were incorporated into my thinking and revision.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Purpose of this Action Research

This action research is concerned with the process of strategy implementation that facilitates the structural change of an organisation from a not-for-profit voluntary membership based organisation to a professional organisation.

There were two significant motivators for undertaking this research. One is a general interest in strategy management within organisations and specifically strategy implementation. This was the practical problem to be addressed. A lack of research focus on strategy implementation in general and within the not-for-profit sector in particular, led to the focus on the not-for-profit sector. The second motivator is an interest in the applicability of ideas from systems thinking and the concepts of action research as a research strategy in business organisations. The effectiveness of action research as a research methodology represented the research problem. As such, this research addresses both a practical problem and a research problem.

The research starts from the assumptions and analysis of the study organisation (henceforth called The Study Organisation) as set out in the report by the Fairhaven Consultants (1998). This report outlined the need for change to the financial and structural base of The Study Organisation while maintaining a commitment by and to its Membership. This research examines the processes by which this is achieved. The process was deemed successful because a structure was established to enhance the value of Membership and their participation in the services of The Study

Organisation. The financial base of The Study Organisation was also positively influenced by the changed structure.

This introductory chapter provides the context in which this research occurred. It first focuses on the background issues to the practical problem, those being the nature of not-for-profit organisations and strategic management in not-for-profits. It then introduces the research framework, assumptions and delimitations of the research, ethical considerations and provides a list of key terms.

Contextual Background to the Practical Problem

The Not-For-Profit Context

This section profiles the not-for-profit sector in Australia and provides some contextual information about the organisation in which the study was undertaken. In addition, a brief history of The Study Organisation provides the local context for examining the process of strategy implementation in a not-for-profit organisation. From an action research point of view, this is the context for the area of action and identifies the practical problem situation to be addressed.

The not-for-profit sector

There are a number of terms used to describe the not-for-profit sector. These include civil society, non-government organisations (NGO), non-profit institution (NPI) or nonprofit organisations (NPO), non-profit and not-for-profit, membership or voluntary organisations (Bryson, 1999). They have also been referred to as independent and charitable organisation (J. Alexander, 1999). It is the sector that is defined by Lyons (2001) as the Third Sector. This is the term most commonly used by the international research community as it is all-encompassing and has neutral connotations.

The Third Sector according to Lyons (2001, p. 5) consists of private organisations:

> "1. that are formed and sustained by groups of people (members) acting voluntarily and without seeking personal profit to provide benefits for themselves or for others,
>
> 2. that are democratically controlled, and
>
> 3. where any material benefit gained by a member is proportionate to their use of the organization."

In this thesis, the term not-for-profit will be used.

In Australia, the not-for-profit sector has been classified into major groupings to enable financial and behavioural comparisons to be made within the not-for-profit sector and for comparisons to be made between the not-for-profit and the for-profit and government or public sectors. The Study Organisation falls into the health and community services classification. This classification, includes hospitals, aged care services, mental health and social services (Lyons, 2001).

Characteristics of not-for-profit organisations

Smith (1999) examined internal factors that make voluntary not-for-profit organisations effective in helping or otherwise affecting their membership. Smith (1999) also considered the organisational structures and processes that contribute to the impact on the volunteer membership. It is possible to identify a number of aspects that foster internal impact in self-help not-for-profit organisations. Two of the most important aspects include the size and membership of the group. Usually, the not-for-profit organisation is composed of a small group of members who include those directly affected by the same problem with which the organisation is associated. As a result, members have the ability to be involved in sharing experiences and offering peer support. The membership is usually simply structured with an agreed and well-developed ideology and advocacy for social change.

Within Australia, most of the third sector organisations are between 20-30 years old. Most are small (having less than 100 members) and provide services that are directly aligned with their core values or reason for existing. These organisations are heavily reliant on members and volunteers. However, when there are paid staff the employee / volunteer mix varies according to size, which may run from small community based organisations to large national organisations that employ thousands. The number of organisations that are incorporated is limited. Governance is highly democratic where members elect a governing body reporting to the members and with all or some of these elected board members standing for re-election on an annual basis. The generation of revenue ranges from local community fundraising to the more complex acquisition of funding from Government grants and philanthropic donations. Management structures vary from the simple to the complex (Lyons, 2001).

Drawing on previous research, Billis (1993) summarised the problems of the voluntary sector as belonging to the three broad groupings of constitutional, governance, and work organisation. Constitutional problems included those related to the dilemmas of organisational character and survival. Problems of governance revolved around those of survival and identity and in particular the relationship between paid staff, elected management committees and volunteers. Work organisation problems related to issues of organising the operational work of the organisation.

Billis (1993) noted that tensions arose where there were overlaps between the status of the players involved in the operational work of the organisation. Tensions also arose between the bureaucratic or professional structures and the democratic structures of the organisation that are associated with volunteers. An additional pressure between these elements was noted to occur when there had been rapid growth in funding and diversity of services. This finding was supported by Lyons

(2001) who believed that it was difficult to determine how not-for-profits performed when they had different accountabilities.

There is also the view that membership based service organisations are fighting for survival and relevance in the climate of competition and rationalisation of health services (Ryan, 1999). The climate has led to new challenges including increased accountability to funding bodies (J. Alexander, 1999, 2000; J. A. Alexander & Weiner, 1998; Bryson, 1999). In turn, this has led to not-for-profit organisations adopting a business orientation, including strategic planning, from the "for-profit' sector. Success has been limited because of the capacity of these organisations to adopt this business orientation due to lack of financial and human resources (J. A. Alexander & Weiner, 1998).

All these issues were apparent in The Study Organisation. Organisational growth had come about as a result of changes in government policy and outsourcing of health and community services. Although successful in winning tenders, changes in Government policy led to increased competitive tendering. To retain existing contracts and participate in future tenders, The Study Organisation had to improve its management and financial effectiveness and efficiency.

Area of Action and the Problem Situation

Organisation profile

The practical research context for this study is a member-serving community psychiatric disability services organisation. It is one of ten statewide and or multi-region members of the Psychiatric Disability Services of Victoria (Roberts, 2000). It is a health related community service as "there is an element of medically supervised care … but where (this) is not dominant" (Lyons, 2001, p. 33). It is an organisation that provides:

> "support, care, encouragement and advice for people in a way that is primarily determined by them, involves some enduring pattern of interaction and is designed to remove the need for support or enable people to achieve maximum feasible independence or autonomy in their home or community, or a setting that as closely resembles this as possible" (Lyons, 2001, p. 33).

In 2000, the exact number of Members and volunteers was not known. In 2003, The Study Organisation had a Membership of 1135 and had 480 active volunteers providing a range of Membership Service activities. Paid clinical professional and administrative personnel provide administration and Contract Services.

The organisation in which this research was undertaken began, as did many other organisations in the sector, as a grassroots, self-help and mutual support group (Salamon & Anheier, 1998; Smith, 1999). It was a locally based group of families who had a family member diagnosed with a mental illness. The group was established in response to a perceived failure by government mental health services to meet the needs of the person with a mental illness and their families, for information, education or support following in-patient treatment (Waterhouse, 1999).

An informal meeting of families in 1977 was followed by a public meeting in early 1978. The group was formalised and held its first annual meeting in July of that year. The establishment of support groups followed. The major purpose of support groups was to provide Members with information about the mental illness and to provide support to each other. Meetings were informal and held in the homes of members. Members subsequently became politically involved in advocating to state and federal governments and to the community for improved services for the 'sufferers'.

In 1981, the group received a state government grant to enable them to provide administration and staffing for member services. A secretary / receptionist and an administrator were appointed to manage the development of Member services. Meetings between the coordinator of these services and the Administrator were informal and ad hoc corridor conversations[1]. The organisation was incorporated in 1983 and continued to expand its capital and initiate services to Members.

The appointment of a professional Chief Executive in 1995 coincided with a change in Government policy and the opportunity to contract for community services for people with a mental disorder. This represented a change in activity that resulted in a gradual but inevitable adjustment to the goals of the organisation. There were similar gradual changes in organisational structures that incorporated the establishment of government funded contract services. Each of these contracted programs was set up as an independently funded service with its own staff. As the number of these contract services grew, there was a requirement from external funding agencies to account for expenditure of funds and as a result an Administration and Finance Manager was appointed in 1997.

The process of obtaining additional funds and the segmentation of the programs led to further fragmentation of the organisation. The employment of professional staff to provide contract services led to a conflict between Member and staff goals. External consultants were employed by the Committee of Management (COM) to undertake an organisation review in 1997, with the key objective of recommending how the organisation could best organise itself in the new environment. This review raised Member concerns that there were now two cultures within the organisation relating to the split in activities: one the family based self help aspect of the organisation and the other the government funded employee delivered services (Fairhaven Associates Pty Ltd 1998).

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[1] Interview notes (#007) 05/03/03

The next phase of change came following the organisation review and involved the establishment of an organisation structure. The revised structure was based on a number of assumptions and in particular that:

> "the ongoing direction and overall leadership of the organisation will continue to come from the unpaid voluntary work of the elected body ... and that the task of the employed staff is to assist the COM with policy development and to implement the directions and the policies of the COM" (Fairhaven Associates Pty Ltd 1998, p. 31).

The major goals in the revised strategic direction of the organisation reflected the ideals of the Members that were documented as its vision, mission and values. The goals related to Membership; Policy and Advocacy; Development; Contract Services and Finance. The management of progress towards achieving these goals was the responsibility of subcommittees, consisting of Members who appointed professional managers to do the work of the committees. This structure is not unusual in not-for-profit community-based organisations (Bryson, 1999).

The organisational structure also allowed for subcommittees and their chairs to direct the operational management of the organisation. This meant that the Board was involved in both setting the policy directions of the organisation and determining how the policy directions should be met. This arrangement is also not unusual in the not-for-profit sector. Bryson (1999) suggested that this type of structure potentially results in two sets of managers and no policy makers.

Subcommittee chairpersons exercised their authority over professional managers and judged performance according to their own subjective views. One significant problem was that performance measures had not been clearly developed by the Committee of Management therefore any performance criteria were open to individual interpretation.[2] As a result the Committee of Management was not seen by the Chief Executive, to be acting or speaking with one voice on behalf of the Membership of the organisation (Carver & Carver, 2001).

The Chief Executive was concerned about the dysfunctional relationships between subcommittees, the Committee of Management and the senior managers and about the lack of clarity around the strategic direction of the organisation.[3] The provision of contracted services by the organisation, which was providing in excess of 90% of its funding to the organisation, was not seen as a primary activity by Members. The relationship between Members, professional staff, board members and other stakeholders was clearly ambiguous and inadequate.

The significant structural changes 1978 to 1999 are summarised in Figure 1. The figure is a representation of the parallel structures of Membership Services and Contract Services that developed in the organisation following the appointment of a professional chief executive.

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[2] AR Sessions 2/10/00, 16/10/00

[3] Verbal communication between the Chief Executive and the researcher March 2000

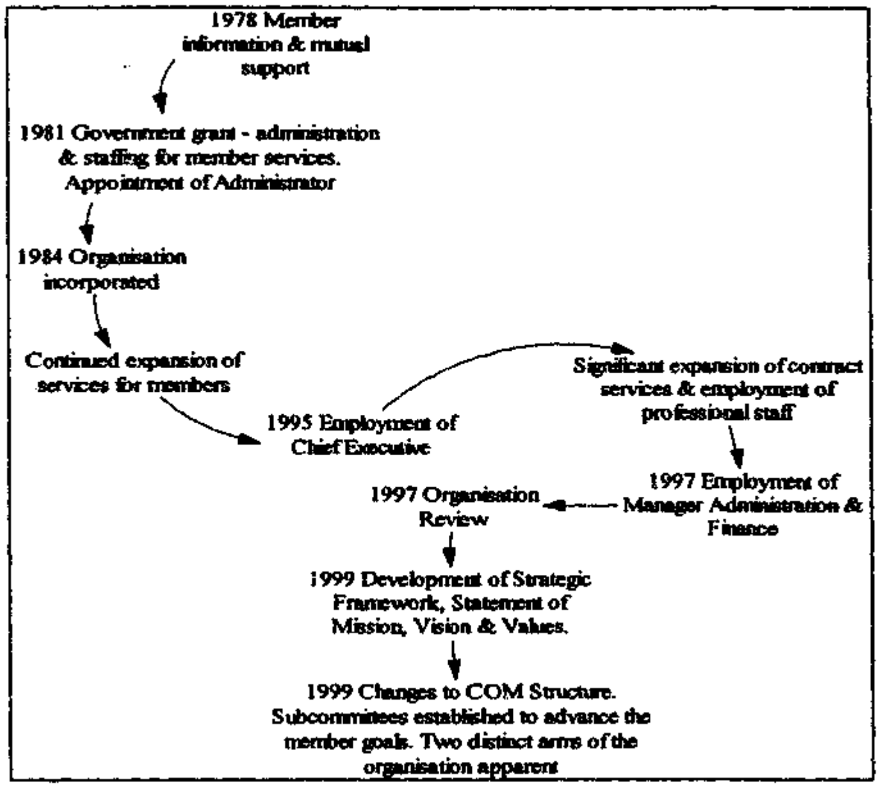

Figure 1: The significant structural changes in the study organisation 1978 - 1999

The Study Organisation was historically reliant on donations, fundraising and group membership fees to fund its principal voluntary activities. From inception, these activities focused on providing information, support, education of the wider community and advocacy for improved services and support (Waterhouse, 1999). As the organisation developed, informal fundraising activities became more formalised and Government grants had been obtained to provide a range of health, housing and welfare services. As a result of the increase in Government grants, The Study Organisation grew financially at a rate of one million dollars per year. In 2002, The Study Organisation had an income of $6.5m in revenue from ordinary activities plus total assets to the value of $9.5m. Commonwealth and State Governments now provide 71 percent of the income, fundraising 11 percent and the remaining 18 percent from other revenue such as client fees and investments. In 2002, Membership dues provided less than one percent of the income (Mental Illness Fellowship Victoria, 2002).

The proportion of income from government and fundraising sources is quite different when compared to the Third Sector as a whole (Figure 2) where generally, Government income provides proportionally less funding and fundraising proportionally more of the income (Lyons, 2001).

Based on the level of income, The Study Organisation could be classed as a small to medium sized voluntary organisation particularly when compared to other community disability services such as SCOPE, a community based, membership, and not-for-profit organisation with total revenue in 2002/2003 of $48.4 million derived from similar income sources (SCOPE(Vic)Ltd., 2003).

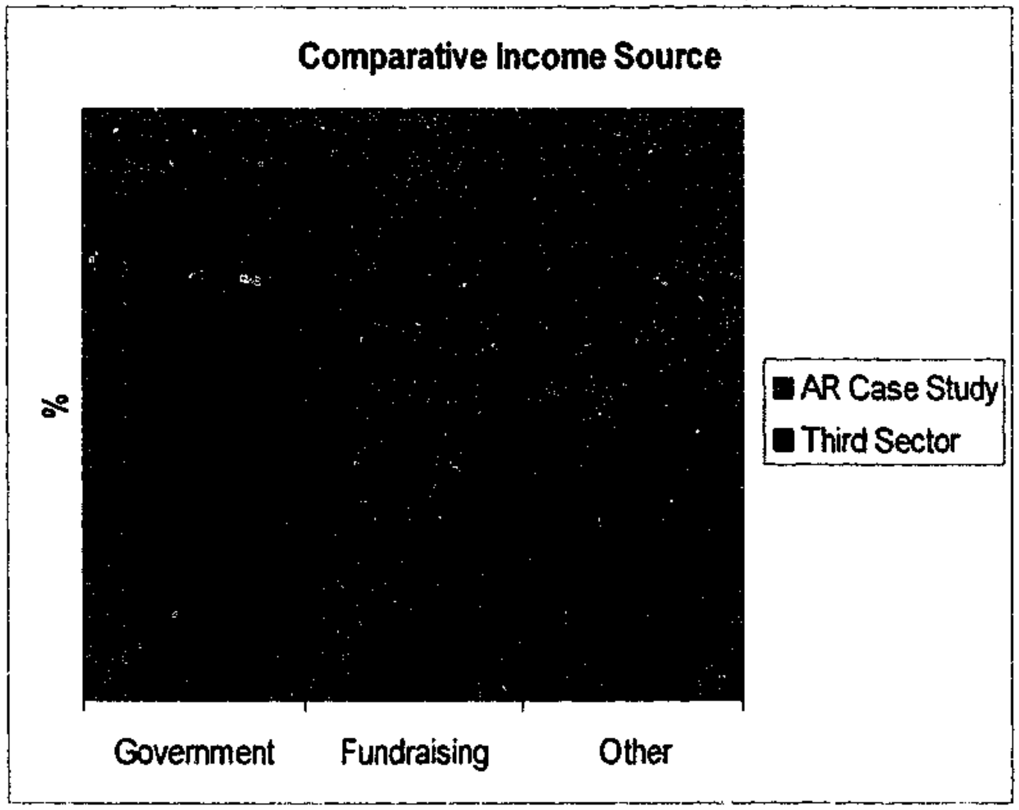

Figure 2: Comparison of income sources

As The Study Organisation became more involved in providing contracted services, the increase in funding led to a corresponding increase in reporting to the funding agencies concerning the utilisation of funds and accountability for the quality of services. As a consequence of the increase in contracted services there was also significant growth in the number of professional staff. This increased the need for delegation and coordination of activities.

In 1997, the then Committee of Management engaged consultants to undertake an organisational review in response to the rapid growth of contracted services. Although the increased services was seen as positive, the corresponding increase in professional staff led to some conflict about the core values of the organisation (Fairhaven Associates Pty Ltd 1998).

> "The rapid influx of new staff has produced some conflict about core <u>values</u>. Some see ... as "professionalizing" in a way that is uncomfortable to them. Others see this as being overdue. Without a coherent value set, internal conflict will be a major drain on energy" (Fairhaven Associates Pty Ltd 1998, p 10).

The findings of the organisation review led to the development of a strategic plan and revised organisational structures to respond to the realities of contract service delivery and its Membership based mutual support and self-help culture. The senior management had the challenge of implementation of the Strategic Framework document (Appendix 1-1). In particular, the senior management had the potentially conflicting roles of introducing strategic change within the interdependent organisational structures while at the same time maintaining the commitment of an active voluntary Membership.

Hill and Jones (2001) suggested that organisational structure and control systems are instrumental in the effective implementation of strategy. In The Study

Organisation there were considerable issues with the organisational structures and control systems that would act as barriers to efficiency and effectiveness within this organisation. First, the Committee of Management[4] acted in keeping with seeing its role as being operational in addition to exercising policy-making power. Operational management was executed by the President through the Chief Executive. This was a natural development given the way in which the organisation began. Second, this confusing structure was replicated at subcommittee level, where various committee chairs were allowed to make their own interpretation of the Strategic Framework which was conveyed directly to employed management staff. This resulted in employed staff not being held accountable to the Chief Executive as they pointed to acting according to instruction of the subcommittee.

Strategic Management and the Not-For-Profit Sector

Strategic management is an ongoing process that involves the formulation of strategy, implementation of that strategy and its reformation (Calaveri & Obloj, 1993). This section reviews the literature on strategy implementation and particularly focuses on problems associated with strategy implementation in the not-for-profit sector.

The evolution of business strategy has resulted in the use of many metaphors and definitions of strategy. As a metaphor, strategy has been considered as war, as machine, as network and as biology (Oliver, 2001). As a definition, strategy has been defined by Wilson (1996, p. 81) as:

> "... a concerted effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions to shape the nature and direction of organisational activities within legal bounds. It is the long-term goals and the short-term decisions required to achieve the goals."

[4] As the governing body changed titles twice throughout the research the governing body is also referred to as the Board in subsequent Chapters

Strategy according to Argyris (1989, p. 9) is a tool used by executives "to make their world more manageable." It contains goals, objectives and strategies that define the direction of the organisation and the measures of success.

This formulation of strategy requires executives to think in ways that anticipates a future that is holistic, not the short term and operational nature of tactical thinking (Lyneis & Weil, 1994). A problem for executives in envisioning the future is that it is assumed "... that future states will be based on the same dynamics that are operating in the present" (Guastello, 1995, p. 395). Not all executives necessarily have the same perspective on the current or future dynamic of the organisation.

A key to organisational survival is how executives respond strategically to the instability that exists within the chaotic and turbulent environment of the organisation during the implementation of strategy (Guastello, 1995). Adjustments and reformation of strategy need to occur as feedback is obtained and as the hypothesis on which strategy was based is tested (Kaplan & Norton, 1996). This reformation can be in conflict with the mission statements contained within the strategy as the mission serves the purpose of keeping the status quo and therefore limits questioning of purposes. What is not clear, is whether it is the adjustment of structure and activities or the replacement of old organisational forms with new ones that brings about change in organisations (Haveman, 1992).

The problem of strategy implementation

There is a general lack of research focus on the not-for-profit sector in general and in strategic management in the not-for-profit sector in particular. Alexander (2000) suggested this is due to the wide spectrum of the types and structures of these organisations and therefore the inability to make generalisations. Crittenden and Crittenden (2000) cited two comprehensive reviews of strategic planning in nonprofit organisations and identified the process of strategic planning in not-for-profits and strategy implementation and a focus on context, as gaps in the literature.

The literature on strategy in the nonprofit sector is largely focused on strategy development (Bryson, 1999; Inglis & Minahan, 2001; Maranville, 1999; Steiner, Gross, Ruffolo, & Murray, 1994) and strategic performance measurement (Kaplan, 2001). Much of the writing and advising on strategy in the sector has been decidedly dysfunctional due to a narrow view of the strategy process taken while "managers have no choice but to cope with the entire beast" (Mintzberg & Lampel, 1999, p. 21).

The literature is also deficient in discussing how strategy is implemented to achieve the adjustments that lead to the reformation of strategy needed for organisational survival (Haveman, 1992; Kaplan & Norton, 1996). Mulhare (1999), on the other hand, questioned why non profit organisations should adopt strategic planning as a management technique as experts such as Mintzberg (1993; 1994a; 1994b) have raised doubts about its effectiveness. Instead it has been argued that an emergent approach which encourages organisation and management structures and systems that not only supports but also respects the core values of the organisation may be more appropriate for not-for-profit Boards and Managers (Lyons, 2001). However, Schlegel (1999, p. 75) suggested that if associations are to be successful they should be more strategically focused and considered as serious businesses because "the days of measuring success primarily by assessing member participation" are gone.

The capacity of not-for-profit organisations to implement strategy can also be limited by the availability of management resources in organisations that are heavily reliant on volunteers. In addition, strategy implementation can be limited by the nature and roles of the professional staff that tend to be hired for their specialized skills rather than their management abilities. There is limited literature on best practice to guide the involvement and participation of members and volunteers in strategy implementation. Other challenges noted by (Lyons, 2001) are the complex processes of revenue generation and the potential for conflict that may arise when funding agencies are seen to have different priorities than the members.

Traditionally, not-for-profit organisations have had to be innovative and flexible in what and how services are provided to its members. According to Wilson (1996), this flexibility is likely to be stifled by strategic planning if it requires provision of defined services based on competitive tendering. However, as previously noted, funding bodies are more comfortable with established corporate models for accountability.

How not-or-profit organisations strategically address the issues that confront them is lacking in the literature. More specifically, how volunteer not-for-profit organisations manage the transition to a professional organisation and at the same time maintain the involvement of members and volunteers is also lacking. The literature does highlight some of the challenges and barriers that confront the not-for-profit organisations that do embark on a strategic transformation.

Substantive Issues and Practical Research Questions

The Study Organisation is an amalgam of the issues identified in the literature and is representative of many not-for-profit organisations. The issues identified from the history of the organisation might be summarised as tensions arising from: (1) the growth of the contract services and the perceived differences in the commitment to the founding cause self help and mutual support, (2) the professionalisation of staff necessary to provide the services of the organisation and the volunteer philosophy of the organisation and (3) a new focus on goal orientated strategy with the commitment to formal structures and systems and the informal adhocracy that existed. It is the tensions that arise from the strategic change, the moving from a network of volunteers to an organisation with visible structures, paid staff and clear accountabilities that are the concern of this research.

The substantive questions that provide direction to the research are:

1. What formal structures and processes maintain the cooperation of the Membership during a strategic change process?
2. How does a not-for-profit organisation develop managerial structures that deal with the evolving relationship between the Membership community base and the professional staff?
3. How does a not-for-profit organisation resolve the dilemmas that arise during strategic change?

Justification for the Study

The not-for-profit or Third Sector (Lyons 2001) is an important component of the Australian economy in that it contributes 3.3% to Australia's GDP. Excluding volunteer services, which would add an additional 3%, the sector also contributes 6.8% to Australia's employment (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2002; Philanthropy Australia, 2003). Funding of not-for-profit organisations, like the one in which the research was undertaken, has been the emergent model for government for the delivery of community services outside the public sector. To date, little attention has been paid to researching the strategic development of the Third Sector. The specific conclusions of this in-depth exploratory action research case study will be of value to the organisation in which the research is undertaken and will be of general use to other voluntary not-for-profit organisations.

Research Framework

In this research, Action Research is used as a meta-methodology (Dick, 2002; Flood & Jackson, 1991) with Checkland's FMA approach (Checkland, 1981, 1991; Checkland & Holwell, 1998; Checkland & Scholes, 1990) providing the general intellectual framework. The approach involves the researcher declaring in advance their framework of ideas (F), the methodology (M) for the use of those ideas in an area of application (A). Reflection on the FMA follows the application of the methodology so that new ideas about the framework of ideas, the methodology and area of application are generated. This approach is depicted in Figure 3.

Checkland and Holwell (1998) use the general FMA model as the foundation of Action Research. In this model, the researcher enters the real world problem situation (A) having declared their framework (F) and methodology (M) in advance. Having entered the area of action, the researcher participates in the action within the situation, which enables reflection on the experience and recording of the learning. The reflection based on the declared framework and methodology leads to research findings and new research themes.

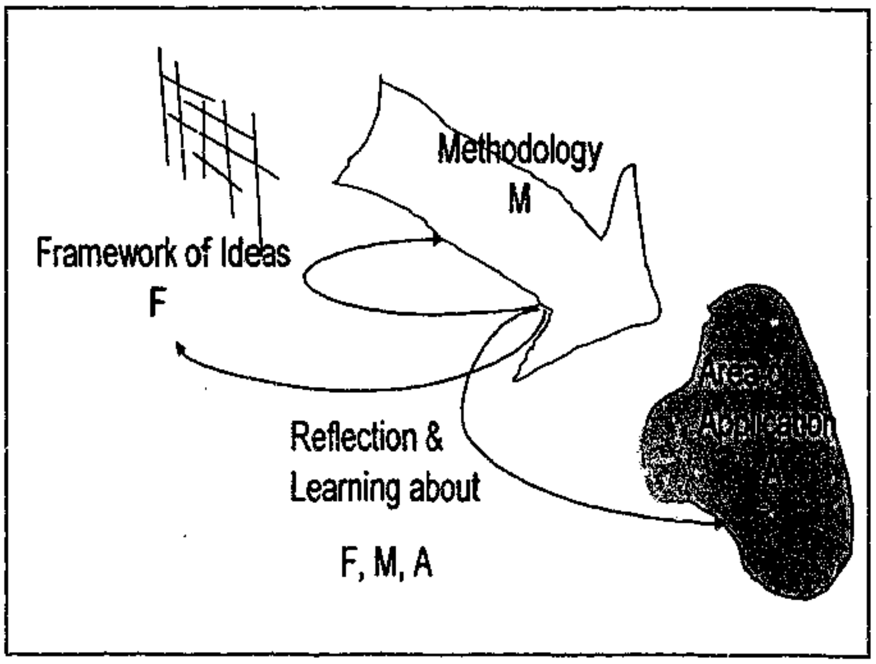

Figure 3: FMA Research framework after Checkland

This action research began with a framework of ideas (F) that characterise applied systems thinking and makes the assumption that the world consists of complex, interacting feedback systems (Flood & Jackson, 1991; Mingers, 2001, 2003). The ideas from systems thinking are developed further in Chapter 2.

The application area (A) in The Study Organisation is characterised by complex interactions and feedback between sub-systems, such as Board systems, management systems and Membership systems. Issues arose in The Study Organisation where it was necessary for the researcher to enter the system in order to take action.

Action Research was the primary methodology (M) that began with the problem identification in the area of application. It was necessary to use additional research methods to complement the action research process. Total Systems Intervention was the framework that was used in conjunction with the Action Research method. These are presented and discussed in Chapters 2 and 3.

The challenge was to define the most efficient means to achieve results with a predefined end to the research. Often, systems models were constructed with the aim of envisioning the consequences of intended actions. The process of reflecting in and on the FMA of the research was a significant aspect of the research and is discussed in Chapter 3.

Methodological Research Questions and Propositions

While researching The Study Organisation and the systems and action research literature, the researcher developed questions of method at the same time as the substantive practical research questions were being developed. These were shared with the research participants at the time when the researcher was negotiating entry to the organisation and determining the conditions for undertaking the research. The methodological research questions were:

1. How effective as a research methodology, is the process of action research (eg the cycles of questions-plans-actions-reflections)?
2. How useful is Total Systems Intervention (TSI) to understanding the organisation and for facilitating strategic change?

Propositions Supporting the Research Questions

The following propositions were developed to support the practical and the methodological research questions:

a. The involvement of all stakeholders in decision making over core issues will result in an alignment with the requirement for efficiency and accountability to funding bodies.

b. The ability of the management group to balance central and local decision making processes is more likely to result in flexible formal governance structures that reflect the interests of all stakeholders than reliance on central decision making alone.

c. The use of targeted dialogue by the managerial group will result in cooperation of members in the implementation of strategic change.

d. The use of the cyclic and reflective processes of action research will facilitate the ability of the management group to articulate important concepts such as the role of community support within the organisation.

e. The use of the processes of action research and systems thinking will facilitate the development of a shared vision of the organisation.

f. The strength of cultural rules and practices in organisational decision-making will influence the degree of success in the implementation of strategy.

g. The use of action research will enable the practical concerns of the people of the organisation to be identified.

h. Systems methodologies and underlying metaphors will provide theoretical guidance to implementing strategic change.

Assumptions and Delimitations

Assumptions

The researcher began the action research with a number of assumptions in respect to the action research, her role as an action researcher, the research participants and the organisation. These assumptions include:

- Action research is about dealing with the real world (Checkland, 1991) and is data-driven research in that the research process is flexible and responsive to what occurs in the area of action (Dick, 2002). As a result, issues that arise in the action research will not be known in advance but as the issues arise they will drive the next phase of the research.
- The researcher brings previous knowledge, skills and attitudes to the research situation and the research decisions will be influenced by the values of the researcher.
- Ethical issues could arise from the various roles of researcher. The researcher as an 'outsider' to The Study Organisation and as a researcher participating as an 'insider' in the change process, and as a researcher and as a candidate pursuing a higher degree. The assumptions are that potential issues would be brought forward and considered through dialogue and reflection and that the researcher would need to be cognizant of the potential conflict in her role. In addition the ability of the researcher to remain neutral to issues outside the boundary of the action research arena over an extended period of time may also be difficult and need to be acknowledged.
- The manager participants in the research would be experienced in management.

- Intervention employed as an action researcher would be beneficial to the research participants and the organisation. It is assumed that by participating in the action research that a well functioning learning organisation would evolve.
- Reflections on the area of action and the methodology by the researcher would make a contribution to the literature on strategy implementation in the not-for-profit sector and action research.

Delimitations

This research is an in-depth study of one membership based voluntary not-for-profit community service organisation and involves participation in management processes employed for the implementation and monitoring of an organisational strategy within one organisation. As such, the specific outcomes are based within the context of that specific organisation therefore the ability to generalise to other organisations maybe limited. None the less, the aim of this research is to identify those generalisable outcomes of the learning from the study that will be applicable to similar membership organisations.

Another delimitation of this research related to limiting the primary participant to the staff management executive. Therefore, the opportunity to validate the perceptions of the manager participants that arise during discussion and reflection that are related to Members and other staff are not be readily available.

Ethical Considerations

Guiding Ethical Principles

Because this research involves people in management participating in the action research, the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans provides the ethical principles and guidelines applicable to this research. The statement, or code of conduct, has its origins in the Helsinki Declaration of 1964 (Commonwealth of Australia, 1999). In addition to the integrity of the researcher, there are three basic ethical principles that are highly valued when considering and undertaking human research. These are respect for persons and their autonomy, beneficence and justice (Commonwealth of Australia, 1999; Sieber, 1992). These principles provide direction as to the norms and codes of behaviour that govern the design and conduct of research (Delbridge & Kirkpatrick, 1994; Sieber, 1992).

However, when examining action research, Lincoln (2001) suggested that such protocols and principles are inadequate and do not meet the ethical needs of either the researcher or participants who are involved in the face-to-face, close, democratic work of action research. She further suggested that a given study's codes of behavior are revised on a daily basis by action researchers and the participants in order to meet the issues that arise. She contends that this is done with little ethical guidance and is based on trust and caring. This was the experience in this action research.

Churchman (1982, p. 6) provides guidance to the action researcher in that he considers ethics to be universal and applicable in all times and places. It takes the form of a conversation on the meaning of right and wrong conduct, policies, management and planning. Ethical issues arise due to the dynamic and emergent nature of action research and need to be addressed regularly. Importantly, the decisions about ethical behaviour are constantly negotiated rather than contracted at the beginning of the research, in contrast with more traditional research.

In this research, the process for the resolution of ethical issues was aligned with what Churchman (1982) called conversation. The process is a Meta conversation, a serious dialogue where the conversation is part of the cyclic process of the action research.

The awareness of the ethical challenges for the researcher in social and community research are identified in the literature by Reason and Bradbury (2001). How these challenges are addressed in practice in applied social research is usually communicated implicitly (Payne, 2000). Ethical issues in business and management research appear to have been neglected (Churchman, 1982; Flood, 1999; Plane, 2000; Wells, 1994). The suggestion is that this neglect may be twofold, partly due to the difficulty managers have with reconciling the ethical or moral imperatives of research with the practical reality of management (Wells, 1994) and partly due to the concentration of business research on making decisions concerning concrete issues (Plane, 2000).

The ethics of the current research were guided by the espoused values of the organisation and by Singer's five ethical rules for behaviour. Singer (1995) emphasised cooperation, simplicity, forgiveness, lack of envy and reciprocity of good and bad. Additionally, the use of the questions 'Who will be affected?' and 'How will they be affected?' (Stringer, 1996), provided direction for the application of the ethical principles and for ethical behaviour. These frameworks are important because it is not known how a given participant decisions will impact on the subsystems of organisations, particularly because the true impact of the decisions may be mediated though or by other factors or may be delayed; these are referred to as second order effects (Fox-Wolfgramm, Boal, & Hunt, 1998; Stringer, 1996).

The ethical values and principles of the researcher also influence the conduct of research. The researcher has views about the research problem to be investigated and is responsible to ensure that the participants are treated ethically within the general standards of conduct. The researcher and the action research participants bring to the research their own ethical values and principles that have evolved from previous experiences. Not only must the researcher act ethically but the participants themselves must also act ethically towards the researcher and other participants. As Singer (1995, p. 204) stated:

> "To act ethically is to act in a way that one can recommend and justify to others."

Ethical issues appear during the critical questioning, when taking decisions to act particularly when the actions could impact on non-participants, and ethics must be designed into the reflection cycle of the action research process.

How the ethical principles were applied in practice is expanded in Chapter 3 and incorporated into the cycles of action research reported in Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7.

Ethics approval

Approval of the research proposal by the University Ethics Committee is a requirement before students commence their research study. In the current research, the problem to be examined is a real life management problem, a partnership between the organisation and the researcher was established well in advance of the ethics approval process. Some possible ethical dilemmas were raised and discussed early in the process of obtaining entry into the organisation.

The Ethics Committee questioned the role of the participants and the researcher in action research. The Committee required further consideration of (1) how the research project and student-as-researcher were to be separated from the change project and student-as-change agent, and (2) how the research project and staff-as-research-participants were to be separated from the change project and staff-as-change-agents. These questions are valid and reflect a traditional scientific approach to objectivity and distance of the researcher. However, they are inappropriate when applied to action research.

There is no simple or single answer. In action research, the researcher has the role of creating the context and conditions for the conduct of the study and influences the plans for action. Participant input is essential to the quality of the research inquiry. Participants assist the researcher by providing local knowledge, defining the problem context, implementing change and reflecting on the outcome of the action. An expected outcome of the action research inquiry is change and the nature of the change depends on the quality of the iterative action reflection cycles of the research process. Hence there is no distinction between the researcher and the change agent or the participant and the action taker.

Permission to conduct this research was granted by the Standing Committee on Ethics in Research on Humans at Monash University and by the organisation in which the study was undertaken. As detailed in Appendix 1-2, the conditions recommended by the Standing Committee on Ethics in Research on Humans and the organisation were adhered to throughout the study.

Definitions of Key Terms

The definitions identified below are those that relate to the organisational context for the research and provide operational meaning to this project and the organisation in which the research takes place. Other definitions are incorporated into relevant chapters.

Governance: Governance, according to Senge, Kliener, Roberts, Ross, Roth and Smith (1999) has two meanings based on Greek and Roman derivatives. While the Roman derivation focuses on the structures that are in place which allows one group to control another, the Greek derivation is linked to the "process of continually orientating and adjusting" (p. 366). Both the structures and the processes of governance have significance in this study.

The concept of governance is also described as the core functions of a Board which includes policy making and monitoring, setting the mission and strategic direction and ensuring organisational survival (Jackson & Donovan, 1999).

Grassroots association: is a locally based, significantly autonomous, volunteer run, formal nonprofit group that manifests significant voluntary altruism as a group. The associational form of organisation is used and they have an official membership of volunteers who perform all or nearly all of the work done in and by the group (Smith, 1999).

Professional Organisation: based on the concept of managerial professionalism put forward by Bergman (1999), a professional organisation is one that concerns aspirations, standards, and knowledge management that an organisation ought to have. In other words, the professional organisation should have a mission, vision and objectives, and should provide and manage services according to discipline of management and statutory standards. It should be dynamic and have a focus on continual learning and development.

Not-for-profit organisation: in this context refers to not-for-profit in that there are no shareholders but the organisation is still expected to break even or make an operational surplus (Jackson & Donovan, 1999). Other terms are in use in the literature and include nonprofit, third sector, non-government organisations, nonprofit organisations, grass roots, civil society and voluntary organisations.

Membership Organisation: similar to not-for-profit organisation in that a Committee of Management (or Board) is elected from the membership and the organisation often has their beginnings as a self-help group and relies on volunteers for the provision of services (Jackson & Donovan, 1999).

Member / Membership: is used when referring to those persons who have paid a subscription to belong to the membership of the organisation. In the context of this research, the capital 'M' is used to distinguish this group from members of other groups such as committees. The definition as it applies to The Study Organisation is referred to in more detail in Chapter 5.

Stakeholder: is any group, person or organisation that can "place a claim on an organisation's attention, resources, or output, or is affected by that output" (Bryson, 1995; 1999, p. 27). The definition as is applies to the study organisation is referred to in more detail in Chapter 5.

Volunteers/Volunteering: as applied to not-for-profit and membership based organisation refers to those who participate in the volunteering process for no financial gain and of their own free will (Jackson & Donovan, 1999).

Managers: are those appointed or elected and have a major role in carrying out the management task of involving other people for whose work they are responsible (Jackson & Donovan, 1999). When managers are in a *Management Team* the shared purpose of the group is providing direction towards the over all organisational goals (Horton & Reid, 1991).

Effectiveness / Efficiency: the relationship between achieving the purpose of the service and meeting the needs of the user of those services and the effort required to achieve the purpose (Jackson & Donovan, 1999).

Partnership: is a relationship that involves close co-operation between two parties, each of whom has specific rights and responsibilities. The relationship is based on mutual trust and a belief by each party that the other will abide by the commitments it makes (Horton & Reid, 1991).

Structure of the Thesis

This chapter concludes by outlining the remaining structure for the thesis. This thesis is written after action research in the field, which means that it is a reflection on what has happened and represents a concentrated recollection of what occurred and what made an impression at the time (Flood, 1999). The thesis is an account of the issues that surfaced in the action research and is based on the experiences of manager participants and the researcher. It is impossible to truly represent the past as it was experienced at the time by the researcher and the participant managers during the research. This is because the issues that were addressed spanned three years of concurrent action research and ongoing operational management within the organisation. Figure 4 provides a snapshot of the sequence of events and major issues addressed in this action research.

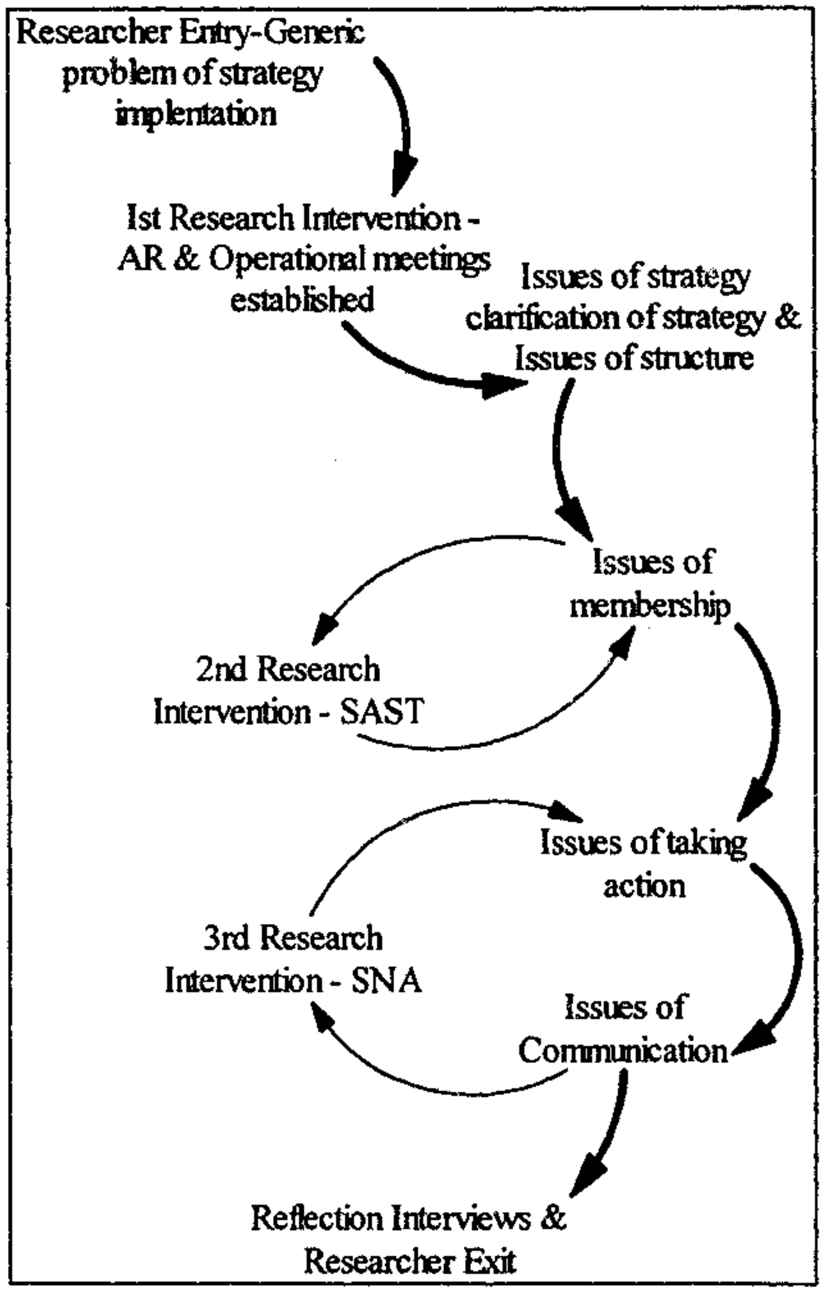

Figure 4: A snapshot of the sequence of events and major issues

While the experience of the research was non-linear and fragmented, the sequencing of the chapters is a strategy by the researcher to make sense of the story. For the purpose of presenting a thesis, the researcher has imposed a structure in an attempt to provide coherence to the story and meet the requirements of academic presentation. However, "there are always feelings and lived experience not fully encompassed by the dominant story" (Bruner, 2001, p. 141). Therefore, this thesis is the outcome of interpretation of events and experiences from the researcher perspective, which will undoubtedly be incomplete.

While following the general principles and structure for writing a conventional thesis, the chapters also follow the dominant themes of the research.

Chapter 2: Background Literature: Ideas from the Systems Thinking and Systems Theory Literature and the Role of Action Research

The chapter explores ideas from systems thinking and systems theory that influence the approach that the researcher took in this action research.

Chapter 3: Action Research: The Primary Research Method

This chapter details the action research methodology and its application.

The cycles of action are discussed in 4, 5, 6 and 7.

Chapter 4: The Evolution of Working Structures

The focus of this chapter is on the organisational structure that originated from The Study Organisation's Strategic Framework. It addresses the issues of coordination and control of operational activities and the structural changes that occurred as a consequence of the action research. The cultural shifts observed by the researcher during the research process are also presented.

Chapter 5: Managers and Membership

Maintaining the role of Members in the operational functioning of The Study Organisation was identified by the researcher and the participants as a key element in achieving an effective transition to a professional organisation. The chapter discusses the use of Strategic Assumption Surfacing and Testing (SAST) with a group of manager participants to facilitate understanding of organisational Members and Membership. Also included in this chapter is a discussion on Member involvement in the organisation and reflection on why it took so long for managers to clarify their understanding of organisational Membership.

Chapter 6: The Process Gap between Clarifying the Issues and Taking Action

Reflection on whether actions had been taken or not taken, as a result of the action research process, led the researcher to consider a number of questions. These questions prompted the researcher to intervene in the process of the action research with strategies to encourage the manager participants to take action. This chapter reflects on the progress of action that led to the perception of inaction. It discusses the possible structural influences on the ability of the manager participants to take action and examines research interventions which were taken to raise the awareness of the potential gap between clarifying the issue, planning and taking action.

Chapter 7: Issues of Communication

Communication was a recurring theme that was raised by the research participants over the duration of the action research process. Chapter 7 is structured around researcher reflections on the communication issues raised throughout the research and the actions taken to address the perceived communication problems. The action research intervention used is social network mapping and analysis.

Chapter 8: Summative Reflections: Organisational Outcomes and Metaphorical Explanation of the Action Research

This chapter evaluates the research outcomes of the action research based on the reflections of participants about organisational and personal changes. The metaphors used by the participants to explain the action research process are also presented.

Chapter 9: Summative Reflections: Researcher Role and Effectiveness

This chapter discusses perceptions on the researcher role and effectiveness from both the participant and researcher perspectives.

Chapter 10: Summary, Implications and Conclusions

The final chapter provides a summary of the research, conclusions and recommendations for ongoing research.

Chapter Summary

This chapter introduced the purpose of the research and the research questions in the context of the not-for-profit sector and problem situation. An introduction to the research framework was presented. In addition the research was justified; the assumptions and delimitations, ethical considerations and definitions of key words were presented. The chapter concluded by outlining the thesis structure.

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Chapter 2

Background Literature: Systems Thinking, Systems Theory and Action Inquiry

Introduction

> " ... if we are going to plunge into the flux of events and ideas in a real situation, and hope to be able to extract lessons from the experience ... then we must make explicit an intellectual framework ..." (Checkland, 1991, p. 4).

This chapter provides background literature on systems thinking and theory and how systems practice links to action inquiry methodologies. Ideas from the systems literature provided the initial framework for this action research. The systems and action research literature is the framework of ideas shared with the research participants along with the research proposal at time of gaining entry into the organisation. Throughout the course of this action research, different issues emerged that led the researcher to source literature from other subject areas.

The action research/action inquiry methods literature, as applied to this action research, is presented in Chapter 3. Emergent literature is embedded in subsequent chapters.

Systems Thinking and Systems Theory

Interdisciplinary studies in the experimental sciences led to the development cybernetics and general systems theory. This in turn developed into a number of systems approaches. Scholars, for example, Checkland (1981), Wardman (1994), Flood and Jackson (1991) have provided reviews of this evolution. This section provides a summary of the evolution of systems thinking and theory.

Definition of System

There have been many attempts to define a system (Beer, 1967; Flood & Carson, 1993; Wardman, 1994) and the definition continues to be reinterpreted according to the discipline in which it is being applied. Systems are a complex assembly of two or more parts, elements, groups, objects, a set of ideas, or collectives of people that interact to form a connected whole. The properties that define the system are not the properties of its parts but those of the whole. The behaviour of the whole is affected by the parts but the system is more than the sum of its parts, it is the product of their interactions (Checkland, 1981; Wardman, 1994). Flood and Jackson (1991) considered the concept of system as a means of organising thoughts about the world.

Beer (1967, p. 7) stated that a system is "any collection of items that are dynamically related ... connected by a network of relationships." The system can be classified according to how complicated it is and whether the network of connections is fixed or variable. Each system has a purpose and to achieve that purpose a degree of control or connectedness is required based on the principle of feedback.

Beer (1967) classified systems arbitrarily according to two distinct criteria. The first relates the degree of complexity of the system, described as simple but dynamic, complex but describable or exceedingly complex. The second concerns the difference between whether the system is deterministic and acts in a predictable way and whether it is probabilistic where no precise detailed prediction of how it acts can be given. These distinctions provide a set of perspectives which form six categories that "groups systems according to the kinds of control, and hence the scientific methods, to which they are susceptible" (Beer, 1967, p.16). The company and the brain are two examples of Beer's exceedingly complex probabilistic systems.

The Development of Systems Ideas

Appreciation of the systems approach is only possible through the exploration of the different pathways of its development (Checkland, 1981). Management and management research have traditionally reflected elements of various worldviews held at the time. Based on an interview with Ackoff, Wardman (1975) provided an historical account of the world views from the Renaissance to the systems era.

The industrial revolution and the machine age resulted in the mechanisation of work where work was reduced to its basic elements and undertaken by machines or people behaving as if they were machines. Dissatisfaction with the machine worldview led to two different strands of thinking about systems. The first has its origins in the design of engineering systems and its application to operations research and the scientific model of management. The second strand has its origins in biology and application of general systems theory and sociology (Checkland, 1981; Emery, 1969). The work of Weiner in 1948 on cybernetics theory and that of von Bertalanffy on general systems theory in 1968 and open systems theory in 1969 (von Bertalanffy, 1969), are attributed as the beginning of the age of contemporary systems theory (Checkland, 1981; Flood & Carson, 1993; Wardman, 1994).

Weiner's cybernetics is the science of communication and control as applied to animals and machines (Lane & Jackson, 1995). Ashby, (1969) introduced the concepts of regulation, with its application to most disciplines and life, and the law of requisite variety as a measure of the outcome of regulation. The law of requisite variety states that, in a changing environment, effective control requires a regulator or controller with a variety of responses that can match the variety of the environmental information or circumstances (Ashby, 1969).

Beer (1967) developed the language of cybernetics in the context of systems and applied the concepts to management. Beer put forward the view that, as each system has a purpose control is the strategy to accomplish that purpose. Control is aligned to the notion of self-regulation where performance is coordinated within upper and lower limits according to the feedback received within the system on the variation within the set limits. Within a closed system the variation is deterministic whereas a system that is open to the external environment has more elements and the variation will be probabilistic due to the variety of information feedback to the system. Beer introduced the concept of the black box to control the variety of information input and responses within the levels or subsystems of a larger system.

To address the different levels of complexity, Boulding (1956) proposed a hierarchy of nine different levels of system concepts. His hierarchy progressed from simple static systems to the more complex social systems. This classification can also be viewed according to whether the system is open or closed to its environments and provides a basis of knowledge in the different disciplines of physical, biological and social systems (Kast & Rosenzweig, 1981).

The different ways of considering the hierarchical approaches to systems is depicted in Table 1. Using Boulding's (1956) nine levels, levels one to three could also be classified as closed physical or mechanical systems. Levels four and five could be classified as open biological systems and levels six to eight classified as social systemic systems with level nine going beyond the known systems to those that is complex and chaotic.

Table 1 : Hierarchical approaches to systems

Physical / Mechanical systems	1. Frameworks -Static structure, analytical relationships. 2. Clockworks, simple dynamic systems, predetermined motions. 3. Thermostats -cybernetic system, self regulating in maintaining equilibrium	Closed systems
Biological systems	4. Open systems - the self maintaining level of the cell 5. Genetic System-societal level - plants - growth systems	Open systems
Social systems	6. Awareness system - animals, Teleological, mobility 7. Human System - self awareness, language, symbolism 8. Symbolic Systems- communication, value system, systems of meaning	Systemic systems
	9. Transcendental systems	Chaotic systems

The characteristics of general systems are that the whole is constituted by sets of components that are related to each other and open to the environment. The system has the ability to import and export information or material that is necessary to achieve and maintain a steady state. A steady state is "a time-independent state where the system remains constant as a whole and in its phases - it needs a continuous flow of the component materials" (von Bertalanffy, 1969, p.84). The continuous flow of materials is necessary for the whole to continue to work to its capacity. During the steady state, the composition of the system remains constant and is not dependent upon the environmental conditions. However, the stimulus outside the system increases the rate of activity to achieve the constant state that leads to the steady state. This idea of a steady state differs from that of a state of equilibrium that is associated with a system that is closed to its environment and dependent upon the interdependency of its components.

Checkland (1981) explained this development of the systems movement as being influenced by the study of systems ideas per se and by the application of the ideas in other disciplines. The study of systems ideas has been influenced by theoretical developments and by the application of systems ideas to solving real world problems and by developments in problem solving itself. The latter was achieved through the work in 'hard' systems with its use of information and control theory and in 'soft' systems, which aid decision making through organisational development and systems analysis. Checkland (1985b) suggested that although there are advantages and disadvantages to both traditions, they are also complementary. A comparison of the advantages and disadvantages between the traditions of hard and soft systems paradigms are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 :'Hard' and 'soft' systems thinking - a comparison

The 'hard systems thinking of the 1950's and 1960's	**The 'soft' systems thinking for the 1980's and 1990's**
Orientated to goal seeking	Orientated to learning
Assume the world contains systems that can be 'engineered.'	Assumes that the world is problematical but can be explored by using system models.
Assumes systems models to be models of the world (ontologies).	Assumes system models to be intellectual constructs (epistemologies).
Talks the language of 'problems' and 'solutions.'	Talks the language of 'issues' and 'accommodations'
ADVANTAGES	ADVANTAGES
Allows the use of powerful techniques.	Is available to both problem owners and professional practitioners; keeps in touch with the human content of problem situations.
DISADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
May need professional practitioners. May loose touch with aspects beyond the logic of the problem situation.	Does not produce final answers. Accepts that inquiry is never ending.

Source: Checkland (1985b, p. 765)

According to Flood and Carson (1993) the development of the systems discipline occurs through four cycles. Cycle one, is the use of systems thinking as "a framework of thought that helps us to deal with complex things in a holistic way" (p. 4) which, when formalised leads to systems theory. Cycle two is the contribution that arises from the application and development of systems thinking and theory to other disciplines. Cycle three is the use of systems thinking in the real world in order to promote management effectiveness in other disciplines. The fourth cycle involves the use of systems thinking to improve the effectiveness of problem management by promoting systems thinking.

According to Drucker (1994), effective management of the organisation requires knowledge of how the people and functions inter-relate. Systems thinking and theory provide a framework in which complex organisations might be understood and studied in a holistic way. An examination of the evolution of systems thinking reveals a number of approaches and application of these to many fields of practice that has resulted in a fragmented understanding of the discipline (Flood & Carson, 1993; Flood & Jackson, 1991; Lane & Jackson, 1995).

Flood and Jackson (1991) examined a range of systems methodologies that can be used in the different problem contexts faced in organisations. Included in the approaches were:

- System Dynamics (SD) (Forrester, 1994; Richardson & Anderson, 1995; Senge, 1992),
- Viable Systems Diagnosis (VSD)(Beer, 1979, 1981, 1985),
- Strategic Assumption Surfacing and Testing (SAST) (Mason, 1969; Mason & Mitroff, 1981) and

- Soft Systems Methodology (SSM) (Checkland, 1999a, 1999b; Checkland & Scholes, 1990).

On the basis that one systems approach is not sufficient to address human concerns, Flood (Flood, 1999, 2001a; 2001b; Flood & Jackson, 1991) proposed that systems methods be used complementarily to solve the problems of organisations.

Mingers (2001; 2003), also argued for the use of multiple research methods in order to achieve research results that provide for a better understanding of the real world situation than would be achieved by the use of a single research paradigm or research method. He argued on the basis that the real world is multidimensional and is comprised of material, social and personal dimensions and that these aspects of a situation being studied are better understood by the use of deferent methods and techniques. In addition, research is usually a process of different stages or phases and as each phase poses different tasks and problems, different research methods or techniques are required.

Total systems intervention

Total Systems Intervention (TSI) (Flood & Jackson, 1991) or Local Systemic Intervention (LSI) (Flood, 1995) or Local Systemic Action Research (LSAR) (Flood, 2001a, 2001b; Flood & Romm, 1996), is one approach to combining systems methods. Total Systems Intervention promotes the principle of complementarity by putting in place "a system of thought for action" (Flood, 2001a, p. 245). It is a meta-methodology that involves choosing and using appropriate methodologies that are suited to taking action to resolve local issues.

The method offers an approach to deal with four key dimensions of organisational life:

- "Organisational processes – flows, and controls over flows.
- Organisational design – functions, their organisation, coordination, and control.
- Organisational culture – mediation of behaviour and the decision making process in terms of people's relationship to social rules and practices.
- Organisational politics – power and potency to influence the tide of events" (Flood & Romm, 1996, p. 99).

The Total Systems Intervention methodology is underpinned by the philosophy of critical systems thinking of Churchman and the critical systems theory of Habermas (Flood, 1999, p. 5; Flood & Jackson, 1991, p. 49). Critical systems thinking encompasses the view that different theoretical positions and methodologies can be used in partnership to deal with the complexities of management. In addition, this complementarity of method can be used to achieve the maximum development of the potential of all individuals while being aware of the social and organisational pressures.

According to Flood and Jackson (1991) dealing with the complexities of management can be achieved by using the three phases of Total Systems Intervention. The phases include creativity, choice and implementation. The creativity phase of TSI involves the use of systems metaphors as organising structures to assist managers to think creatively about the issues and dilemmas within their organisations. Flood and Jackson (1991, p. 7) detail five systems metaphors to assist managers which are:

- "machine metaphor, or "closed system' view

- organic metaphor, or open system view;
- neurocybernetic metaphor, or viable system view;
- cultural metaphor; and
- political metaphor."

The metaphors provide insights into the functioning and behaviour of the organisational system within and between the internal units of the organisation, and between the organisation boundaries and the wider environment. Following a process of critical questioning the metaphor that best describes the behaviour of the organisation forms the basis for the choice of systems methodology.

The choice phase of TSI is based on the assumptions held about the context in which the issues and dilemmas are located and their metaphoric characteristics. The problem contexts are based on the unitary, pluralistic or coercive nature of the relationships between the people within the situation and the simple or complex nature of the problem context (Flood & Jackson, 1991, p. 42). When the choice is made the task involves the translation of the dominant metaphoric vision of the organisation to bring about change through the use of the systems methodology (Flood & Jackson, 1991, p. 51).

The use of metaphor can provide a way of developing an understanding of the structures and functions of an organisation. A metaphor can assist in the communication of ideas between individuals and can be particularly useful in assisting staff to grasp the complexities of organisational life. Metaphors according to Marshak (1996, p. 151) are:

> "... schemata that play a crucial role in structuring organisational reality and response ... metaphors are unifying ... through their ability to serve as the communications bridge between the literal and the symbolic as well as the conscious and the unconscious ..."

However, Clancy (1989) argues that the use of metaphor can be limiting in that they may conceal the total picture of the organisation. Morgan (1997, p. 348) also cautions the manager on the partial insights provided by metaphors:

> "... they also distort ... have strengths ... limitations. In creating ways of seeing they tend to create ways of *not* seeing."

Nonetheless many authors and researchers confirm the value of using metaphor (Burrell, 1996; Cleary & Packard, 1992; Grant & Oswick, 1996; Lennon & Wollin, 2001; MacKechnie & Donnelly-Cox, 1996; Marshak, 1996; McCourt, 1997; Mento, Jones, & Dirndorfer, 2002; Morgan, 1980, 1983, 1997; Oswick & Grant, 1996; Perren & Atkin, 2000; Vaara, Tienari, & Santii, 2003).

Flood and Jackson (1991) identified a range of metaphors linked to different systems methodologies that enable the complexity of an organisation to be addressed. The use of metaphor provides the opportunity to consider problems through familiar analogies. Where likeness exists, it brings into focus difficulties or issues that could be faced by the organisation. Discussing the differences between the organisation and a metaphor can assist in clarifying the defining features of the organisation. Once the metaphor with the best fit has been found the nature of the problems can be identified using the systems methodology best aligned with that metaphor.

Flood and Jackson (1999) also proposed a four windows metaphor as a means of categorising and locating issues and dilemmas that might be encountered in organizational life. These categories of systems include the systems of processes, of structure, or meaning and of knowledge-power. As well as providing the framework, these systems also enable a boundary to be placed around the action area to better understand the organisation. Focusing on the action area through each window provides a different perspective and appreciation of the issues encountered.

The implementation phase of TSI involves using the systems methodologies identified as most applicable to solving the practical problem.

The approaches used to complement the process of this action research are discussed in Chapters 4 to 7.

Action Inquiry Methodology and Models

Systems practice has extended its scope to include action research. There is a corresponding relationship between the development of systems practice and the resolution of organisational problems. Action inquiry methods provide frameworks for the interactive process by which systems theory and the messy problems of organisations can be addressed because they focus on the rational process of change and not the logical process of hypothesis testing (Checkland, 1985a, 1985b).

Action Research Methodology

Lewin (1946; 1947) is recognised for inventing the term 'action research' but the origins of action research have been traced to Dewey (Passmore, 2001). Action inquiry now includes a number of methodologies including those described as action research, action science, action learning and participatory action research. The names are often used interchangeably and the methodologies are closely linked. These inquiry strategies, their purpose, theoretical domain and philosophy as summarised by Ellis and Kiely (2000) are reproduced in Table 3.

Table 3: Summary of purpose, theoretical domain and philosophy of inquiry strategies

Inquiry Strategies	Purpose	Theoretical Domain	Philosophy
Action Science	Articulation of reasoning process which cause action	Scientific rationalism and experiential learning theory	Double loop learning
Action Learning	Rising to the challenge of business opportunities/threats	Reflective and experiential learning theory	Emanates from Learning set
Action Research	Creating context to learn to solve situational problems	Social psychology /organisational development	Efficiency, effectiveness
Participatory Action Research	Enhanced self development to preferred future	Critical theory	Liberation, empowerment

Source: adapted from Ellis and Kiely (2000)

Flood (1999) in a reference to Checkland and Holwell (1998) and the words of Argyris (1995), defined action research as a collaborative process of critical inquiry between the researcher and the people in the situation. This process involves the diagnosis of a problem, issue or intention for change, proposing then implementing action and evaluating the results of that action. Reflection on the outcomes of evaluation provides useful insights into the problem and generates further action.

The aim of action research according to Rapoport (1970, p. 499) is to:

> "... contribute both to the practical concerns of the people and the goals of social science by joint collaboration within a mutually acceptable ethical framework."

Action research is an inquiry process in which ideas and practice are explored concurrently (Marshall & Reason, 1997) where conditions are created for solving practical problems in a cyclical manner and where the researcher guides data collection and analysis (Ellis & Kiely, 2000).

Action Science

For Argyris (1995), action science embraces both scientific rationalism and experiential learning. It has a focus on errors associated with previous action. It requires a methodology that "provides propositions that are generalisable, disconfirmable, and actionable" and is therefore "descriptive, normative and prescriptive" (p.25). The process seeks to uncover theories-in-use and compare these with assumptions embedded in dialogue (Ellis & Kiely, 2000).

Action science is an epistemology of practice that is based on knowledge for action within every day activity. Putman (1999, p. 178) attributes Schon and Argyris with ascribing this theory of action with being "concerned with causality, meaning and practical reasoning" and being "concerned with choices about what to do, in the context of ethical and political life in a human community."

Theories of action come in two forms: espoused theories and theories-in-use. Espoused theories are those that a person states and believe that they follow. However, there is frequently a difference between espoused theories and those theories as they are observed in practice. Theories-in-use are seldom articulated but are inferred by the way people behave in a social situation and influence how people change their behaviour. Changing behaviour without making changes to the underlying values that provide the framework for the behaviour will result in only short term or single-loop learning. Sustained behaviour change only occurs when the underlying structure or theory-in-use for the behaviour is changed; this change is described as double-loop learning (Argyris, 1992, 1995; Argyris, Putman, & McLain Smith, 1985). Action science examines both single and double loop learning and their impact on behaviour.

Friedman (2001, p. 59), drew on the work of Argyris, Schon and others, and defined action science as:

> "… a form of social practice which integrates both the production and use of knowledge for the purpose of providing learning with and among individuals and systems whose work is characterized by uniqueness, uncertainty and instability."

There are, according to Friedman (2001), four key features of action science. The first involves the creation of communities of inquiry within communities of practice. The goal is to produce research *in* practice where there is no distinction between those who develop the knowledge and those who use it. The researcher creates the conditions for the practitioners to build upon and test theories *of* practice for the purpose of learning. This is achieved though the use of a common language of practice where the researcher and practitioners refine a common set of values, norms, terminology and procedures.

The second feature of action science according to Friedman (2001) is the building of theories *in* practice where the researcher is the explicit theoretician and the practitioners the tacit theoreticians. The basic building blocks of theories of action - the conditions in the situation (x), the implementing of strategy (z) to achieve the goal (y), can be used to analyse and represent the rules underlying observed behaviour. Theories of action are inferred from observed behaviour so they can be critically examined and changed (Friedman, 2001).

Combining interpretation with 'rigorous' testing is the third key feature of action science as espoused by Friedman (2001). This involves the integration of the descriptive context-rich interpretative approach with the rigorous testing of validity demanded of traditional researchers. For Friedman (2001, p. 61), this facet of action science:

> "… addresses the problem of multiple interpretations by requiring both practitioners and researchers to make their own interpretative processes

explicit and open to public (intersubjective) testing. Theories in practice are empirically tested in the action context."

This testing of espoused theories, theories of action and the use of the ladder of inference metaphor and the use of an approach is consistent with Popper's idea of falsifiability (Friedman, 2001).

The final feature of action science according to Friedman (2001, p. 162) is the creation of alternatives "in the status quo and informing change in light of values freely chosen by social actors." Freidman (2001, p. 163) described the meaning of change as "more closely associated with a never ending process of learning." and noted that experience and the resolution of doubt will lead to achievement of gaols.

Action Learning

The focus of action learning is on learning done by individuals. Action learning is problem based and the solution is not known. Questions are posed from the position of ignorance when it is not clear what to do next and learning occurs by taking risks and taking action. Learning and change occurs as a result of engaging in reflection (Ellis & Kiely, 2000; Enderby & Phelan, 1994; Revans, 1982).

Marsick and O'Neil (1999) identified three schools of action learning practice. These included the scientific, the experiential and the critical reflection schools. When compared they identified common factors as well as differences between the schools. From all three schools of thought, the consistent elements of action learning identified were the focus on real problems without clear solutions, the equality of participants, the value of reflection on the problem and the focus on individual progress. The schools differ in their focus on individual versus core common group problems and in the role of group processes.

The scientific school of action learning is aligned with Revans (1982) and while it shares many features in common with action research (Morgan & Kocklea, 1997) its emphasis is on individual learning. Its key features include programmed knowledge and questioning insight. Program knowledge is obtained from experts, books knowledge and from past experiences. Questioning insight occurs from finding the right questions to ask and by questioning direct experiences(Marsick & O'Neil, 1999). The learning theory espoused by Revans is formulated as an equation for learning: Learning = Programmed knowledge from the past + Questioning insight (L= P + Q) (Marsick & O'Neil, 1999, p. 162; Zuber-Skerritt, 2002, p. 115).

Experiential learning has its theoretical base in the experiential learning cycle of Kolb (1984) and is "the process whereby knowledge is created through transformation of experience" (p. 38). Learning takes place through action, reflection, theory and practice (Marsick & O'Neil, 1999). The model portrays two dialectically related modes of grasping experience and two dialectically opposed modes of transforming experience. This learning is based on reflection. Experience is obtained through apprehension (concrete experience) and comprehension (abstract generalisation) and is transformed through intension (reflective observation) and extension (active experimentation) (Baker, Jensen, & Kolb, 2002, p. 52). This cycle is illustrated in Figure 4.

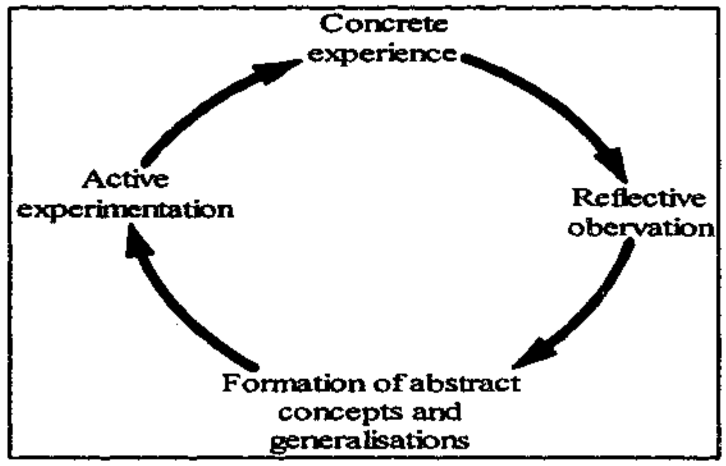

Figure 5: Kolb's experiential learning cycle

The critical reflection school includes the necessity to reflect on assumptions and beliefs that shape practice (Marsick & O'Neil, 1999). Marsick and O'Neil (Marsick & O'Neil, 1999) content that because critical reflection is focused on the root of the problem it takes place less frequently and can be more powerful than the type of reflection employed in the other schools.

Participatory Action Research

Borda (2001, p. 28) credits the development of participatory action research to the confluence between world events and the 1970 book by Feyerabend, *Against Method.* The views of Feyerabend supported a radical rethink of social theory and practice which confronted 'normal' science resulted from the destructive impact of capitalism and universalistic modernisation on the cultural and biophysical texture of social structures. From these practical concerns arose three challenges: the relationships between science, knowledge and reason, the dialects of theory and practice, and the tension between subject and object.

Participatory action research (PAR) can be used as a methodology for increasing knowledge through the reduction of power bases (Gaventa & Cornwall, 2000) and for bringing about change by improving the material circumstances of affected people (Park, 2001; P Reason, 2001; Wardman, 1994). As such, the people involved in the research engage in different kinds of activity. They inquire into the nature of the problem to be solved by understanding its causes and meanings. They organise into community units to strengthen community ties and mobilise for action by raising aware ness of what should be done on moral and political grounds.

The objectives that emerge from these activities require different forms of knowledge: representational which can be functional and interpretive, rational knowledge or reflective knowledge. Park (2001) emphasised the power of the three forms of knowledge. Representational knowledge provides the cognitive basis for building the competence needed for control of our environment; relational knowledge provides the solidarity of purpose and reflective knowledge builds up the normative foundation of values and confidence to engage in social change activities.

Common Elements of Action Inquiry Strategies

Action inquiry approaches according to Morgan and Kocklea (1997, p. 297), are built:

> "... on ways of linking theory to practice so that knowledge can be action based and derived from practice in the real world as opposed to being generated in scientific laboratories or through abstract survey methods."

Many authors have identified elements or characteristics of the various action inquiry strategies. The common elements to all inquiry strategies according to Flood (2001b) and Checkland (1991) are the notion of collaboration between the researcher and the participants in the situation, a process of critical inquiry, a focus on social practice and a deliberate process of reflective learning. Reason and Bradbury (2001) identified the interdependent characteristics of action research as participation and democracy, knowledge in action, practical issues and human flourishing. These characteristics are similar to those listed by Levin and Greenwood (2001, p.105) as the five core elements in action research. These five core elements are:

"1. Action research is context bound and addresses real-life problems.

2. Action research is inquiry where participants and researchers co-generate knowledge through collaborative communicative processes in which all but the participants' contributions are taken seriously.

3. Action research treats the diversity of experience and capacities within the local group as an opportunity for the enrichment of the research action process.

4. The meanings constructed in the inquiry process lead to social action or these reflections on action lead to the construction of new meanings.

5. The credibility/validity of action research knowledge is measured according to whether actions that arise from it solve problems (workability) and increase participants control over their own situation."

Ellis and Kiely (2000) believed that there is an absence of agreement about the key features of action inquiry methods. To overcome this, they proposed four broad but differentiating features evident in most methods. These characteristics relate to: "the way in which social reality is constructed; how change is enabled; the collaboration of the researcher and participants in the inquiry; and the cyclical nature of the inquiry process" (p. 84).

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented systems thinking and action research ideas from a small selection of the literature. These ideas provide a background to the range of ideas that have informed the researcher in this project. Systems thinking and theory helps to locate the problems of management in the context of wholes and provides ways of addressing these problems through the use of different systems methodologies, systems metaphors and action research. Action research involves both action and research to address management problems. The process of problem solving includes collaboration between the researcher and those in the situation, a cyclic process of critical questioning, action and reflection. The reflection on the action and the assumptions underlying the action results in leaning about the situation and change. The identification of ongoing issues that require further action is part of the cyclic process of continued action and learning.

Chapter 3 details the methodology and the research method used in this action research.

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Chapter 3

Action Research - The Primary Research Method

Introduction

The methodological framework for the action research was introduced in Chapter 1. Chapter 2 examined the development of systems ideas and action research as the methodology that provide the framework for this action research. This chapter builds on these chapters and describes the action research method and the processes for data sources, collection, organisation and analysis. The research techniques that were used to complement the action research by addressing the different issues that arose during the research are incorporated into Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7.

Philosophical Approach to the Research

Susman and Everard (1978) identified a number of philosophical viewpoints that legitimise action research. These included the concepts of praxis, ethnography existentialism, pragmatism, process philosophies and the notion of change, hermeneutics and phenomenology. The concept of praxis involves acting on conditions in order to change them and in the process change oneself. Phenomenology has a focus on the subjective experience of individuals or groups of individuals as the basis of knowledge. Hermeneutics involves an understanding of the whole of social systems by focusing on its parts. Ethnography involves the study of the social world of the organisation from the subjective perspective of the participants (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999) and the overt and covert observation by the researcher (Bryman, 2001). These viewpoints influenced this action research.

The research applied ethnographic techniques in the conduct of the action research (Walcott, 2001). This involved the researcher and manager participants in the collection of formal and anecdotal data. It involved direct participation of the researcher and participants in action reflection sessions and staff management meetings. The researcher made observations of the activities and described and shared in that activity throughout the study. Evaluation involved individual reflection within a group setting and included all available evidence from records, observations, and interviews used for theoretical purpose (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell, & Alexander, 1990). These components of the research are discussed later in this chapter.

Justification for the Use of Action Research

The methodology used in research is a matter of choice between theory *or* practice or theory *and* practice. Comparisons and arguments abound on the strengths and weaknesses of traditional scientific research paradigms and the contemporary interpretive research paradigms (Argyris & Schon, 1989; Berger, 1983; Eisenhardt, 1989; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Gummesson, 2000). In particular, distinction is made between quantitative and qualitative paradigms.

Quantitative research is seen to be objective, located within the physical world of cause and effect with a focus on structures. Data is numerical, collected through observation and measurement and analysed using mathematical formulae. The interpretation of this data is through deductive reasoning, falsification of hypotheses directed towards finding the universal truth.

Qualitative research, as applied in action research, involves the researcher and the participants actively exploring the systemic nature of human activity and discovering the answers to the 'how and why' questions. Data consists of words or text collected by participation and observation. Data is analysed and interpreted through inductive reasoning and directed towards identifying multiple truths. These differences in the paradigms are the basis of the differences between scientific and interpretive researchers.

For this research, action research was considered appropriate, as the nature of the problem to be explored was a real management problem located in a real situation within a real organisation. It was also necessary to involve the people who were in the system and who were ultimately responsible to make it work. Organisations are socially constructed entities and as such required a research method that contributes to the understanding of the social system.

> "The research needed for social practice can best be characterised as research for social management or social engineering. It is a type of action-research, a comparative research on the conditions and effects of various forms of social action, and research leading to social action. Research that produces nothing but books will not suffice" (Lewin, 1946, p.35).

The use of action research also provided an opportunity for both the researcher and the participant managers to collaborate in the examination of the problem and to identify associated issues that arose from the cycles of action and research. As the research was to be undertaken over a period of time, the participants were able to raise issues of concern to them and the organisation and it allowed time to respond to the problem. The use of quantitative research methods alone would not have provided the same learning opportunity for the individuals in the situation.

This study used action research as a means "to contribute both to practical concerns of people and to the goals of social science, via joint collaboration within a mutually acceptable ethical framework" (Warmington, 1980, p. 25). The use of action research also fulfils Bacon's definition of research, which is for the:

"… improvement of man's lot on earth … achieved by collecting facts through organised observation and deriving theories from them" (In, Chalmers, 1982, p. xvii).

The Action Research Method Used in this Research

The structure for the research was Checkland's (1985; 1991; 1998) general framework (FMA) for any research as described in Chapter 1, and his process for undertaking action research provided the structure for the research. The researcher negotiated entry to the organisation in which the problems of strategy implementation existed. Research participants were identified, roles of the researcher and the participants were established and the researcher's frameworks of ideas were shared. A structure was put into place to facilitate collaboration between the researcher and the manager participants, which incorporated cyclic processes of critical questioning, planning for action, action, and reflection. Following a number of cycles of action and reflection the researcher exited the organisation and embarked on further reflection on the framework of ideas, the methodology and the action. This is depicted in Figure 6.

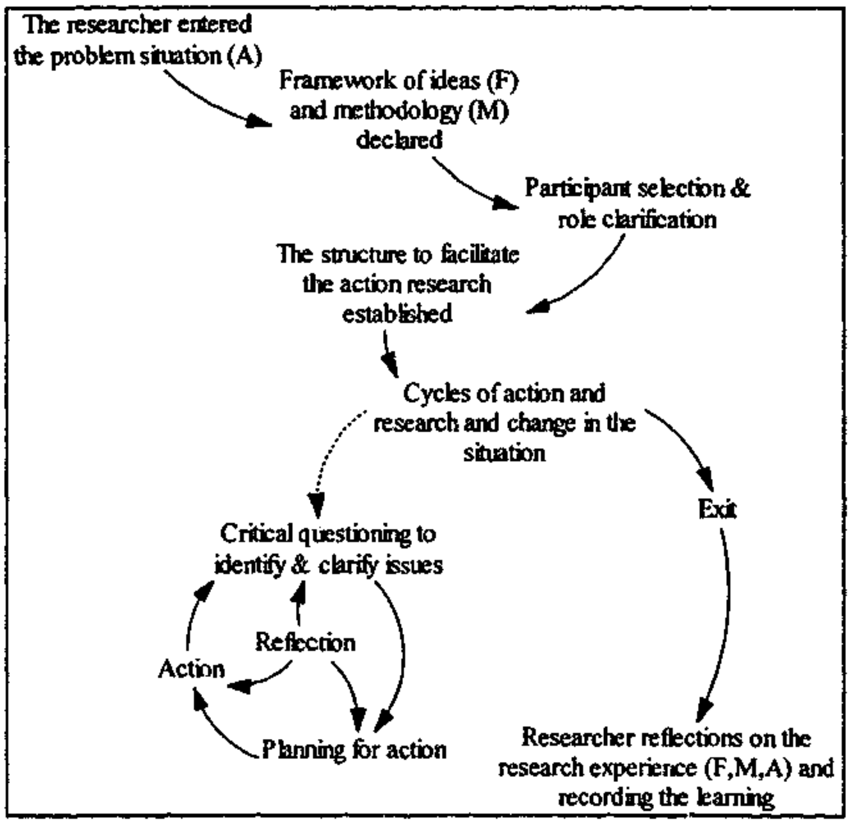

Figure 6 : Research structure and process

The Total Systems Intervention phases of creativity, choice and implementation were used to in conjunction with the cyclic process of action research. The result was a process of critical questioning, choices about how the problem or issues were to be resolved and a process of critical reflection. How these phases were aligned to the cycles of action research is depicted in Figure 7.

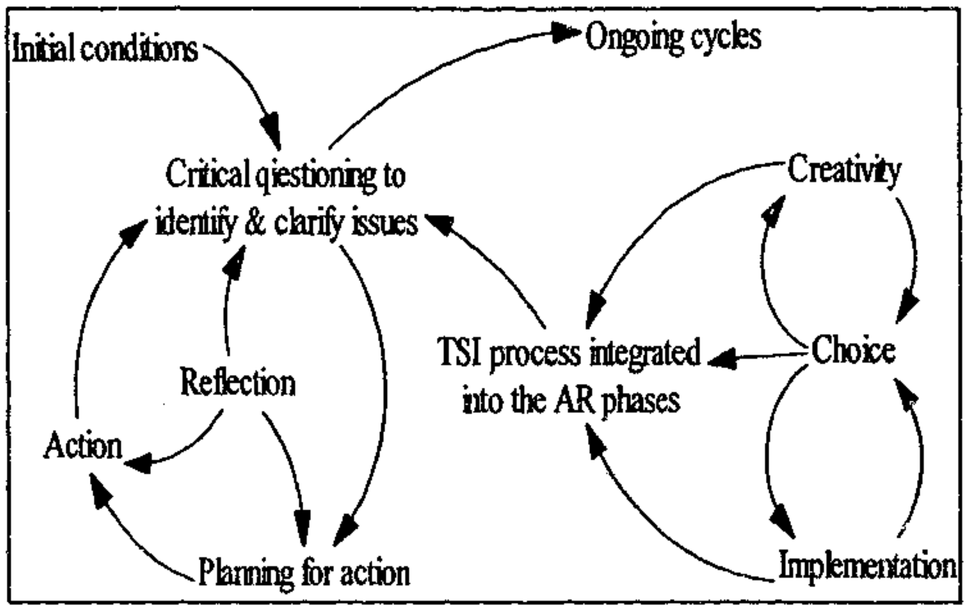

Figure 7 : AR & TSI relationship model

In this research, metaphor was used in the creativity phase of the TSI process to identify different systems methodologies which enabled the problematical issues identified to be considered (Flood & Jackson, 1991a). The likeness between the metaphor and the problem area brought into focus the issues that could be faced by the organisation. The nature of the problem was then identified and the systems methodology that had the best fit with the metaphor and the problem it represented was used to address the issues raised. In this study, Strategic Assumption Surfacing and Testing (SAST) and Social Network Mapping and Analysis were identified as useful interventions and are discussed in Chapter 5 and Chapter 7 respectively.

Metaphors can be a useful technique for interpreting organisational life (Cleary & Packard, 1992; Flood & Jackson, 1991a; McCourt, 1997) and "have a powerful role in challenging management assumptions ... and allow managers to visualize alternative realities" (Perren & Atkin, 2000, p. 281). Images of a machine, an organism, the brain and nervous system, and the cultural and political metaphors provide particular filters for understanding complex organisational systems and are particularly useful when used in conjunction with other methodologies to facilitate organisational change (Cleary & Packard, 1992; Flood & Jackson, 1991a; Morgan, 1997; Perren & Atkin, 2000).

The cultural and the political metaphors were identified by the researcher as being useful models for understanding The Study Organisation and to make sense of issues confronting the manager participants. These metaphors provided a framework for the selection of systems methodologies as interventions during the research and were particularly useful for developing an understanding of the complex and difficult events identified within the research (Clancy, 1989; Flood & Carson, 1993; Marshak, 1996).

During the research, a strong emphasis on 'family' within the organisation led the researcher to consider the metaphor of family as a means of explaining the events of the action research and this is discussed in Chapter 8.

Cultural metaphor

Within organisations, culture can be considered a driving force for innovation and expansion (Schein, 1992) or a conservative restraining force (Flood & Jackson, 1991a; Morgan, 1997). Culture is the combination of inherited ideas; beliefs, values and knowledge that constitute the shared basis of social action that are often unspoken but known ways of behaving (Flood & Jackson, 1991a). Through its history and experiences, each organization develops its own inherited culture and way of doing things and provides the context for the interpretation of organising behaviours in organisations (MacKechnie & Donnelly-Cox, 1996).

In The Study Organisation, these inherited ideas, beliefs, values and knowledge had been documented by the Board as the vision, mission and values of the organisation and are reproduced in part in Figure 8.[5] The ideas, beliefs and values reflected the culture of the organisation Membership but were not necessarily shared by managers new to the organisation. The strategic decisions of the Board and the change implicit in them were creating conflict between old and new staff relationships that resulted in loose coalitions or social units.

The social unit of an organisation is a group of people with a culture derived from its shared history that shapes a set of assumptions held by the social unit. Within the manager participant group there existed assumptions derived from different periods of time with the organisation, associations within informal and formal groups and different but similar professional disciplines. As a group deliberately established for the action research, the participant group had not yet established a pattern of shared assumptions that had been learned from solving problems. They had not developed valid means of problem solving as a group that worked well enough to be taught to managers new to the group (Schein, 1992). As a result there relationships were competitive and not directed to the common goals of the organisation.

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[5] Initially documented in the 1999 Strategic Framework and again in the Forward Plan 2002 - 2004

VISION		
Our vision is of a society in which mental illness will be understood and accepted. People with mental illnesses will be afforded the same regard, as those with physical illnesses and resources will be available to offer early interventions and state of the art treatment and support. These interventions will be so effective that long-term negative consequences of mental illness will have disappeared for the person and their family. People will no longer experience stigma and that society will treat them with the same respect and dignity as any other person, and welcome and fully include them as community members.		
VALUES		
We value the contributions of people with mental illness, their families and friends in our organisation, and the community and set out the following values that underpin all our activity:		
Honesty	Commitment	Equity
Acceptance	Flexibility	Participation

Source: Study Organisation Forward Plan 2002 - 2004

Figure 8 : Vision and values of The Study Organisation

Political metaphor

The political metaphor provides a framework for understanding the relationship between individuals and groups when these relationships can be seen as competitive and involving the pursuit of power (Flood & Jackson, 1991a; Gray & Ariss, 1985). The structures that the Board put in place were deliberate and focused on the protection of membership services and worked to control the communication systems and the behaviours of managers, in particular those in contact services. Power was observed by the researcher to be located in a few managers and Board members and this resulted in dominant coalitions between the president and the Chief Executive, Members and the Board and its subcommittees. Conflicts between coalitions became evident with the formation of new alignments within the staff management group and their challenge to the formal structures.

The differences in opinion held by manager participants in relation to the strategic decisions that needed to be made to facilitate the implementation of the Strategic

Framework developed by the Board, needed to be considered from a pluralist perspective to take account of the different interests of managers and other stakeholders (Denis, Lamothe, & Langley, 2001; Flood & Jackson, 1991b). The views and objectives held by the Board and of managers were divergent. The Board focus was on the development of Membership and the professional staff was focused on delivery of services funded by external sources. In these situations the difference of opinions were seen to be delaying or preventing decisive action to be taken.

Chronology of Action Research Activity

Entry to the organisation was negotiated over a period of four months. The first research intervention also occurred during this period. The intervention involved two aspects. One was to establish a forum to meet for the purpose of applying the research method of questioning, planning and decision making for action and reflection. The second was for facilitating action within the organisation. The second required a formal forum that was set up as a formal operational meeting of senior staff managers. Together, these two forums and the structures established for their conduct, produced micro cycles of action and reflection. These continued over the following thirty months. The sequence of events is detailed in Appendix 3-1.

Strategies to assist with problem solving were the second and third major interventions. Final reflective interviews were conducted over the final two months of active involvement of the researcher in the organisation. Additional transcription of tapes and notes, analysis of data and thesis write up followed withdrawal from the area of action.

The time frame of action research activity is summarised in Table 3 and detailed in the following sections.

Table 4 : Time frame of action research activity

MONTHS	1-4	5-10	11-16	17-22	23-28	29-34	35
ACTIVITY							
Negotiation of entry							
First Intervention: AR & Operational meetings established							
Micro cycles of action research activity							
Second Intervention SAST							
Third Intervention SNM&A							
Reflection Interviews							
Exit							

The Research Setting

Focus on a single organisation

This research was undertaken in a single voluntary not-for-profit organisation. The not-for-profit context and the organisation profile were detailed in Chapter 1. The use of a single organisation in the context of a case study was to facilitate the exploration, description and explanation of the phenomena under consideration (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 1994). In this way, it provided a holistic view of the sequence of events which according to Gummesson (2000) can be regarded as opposite to reductionism. The use of a single setting facilitated deeper understanding of the dynamics present when attempting to implement strategic change (Eisenhardt, 1989).

Using a single organisation provided the opportunity to study issues of concern and create a holistic view of the processes of strategic change (Gummesson, 2000). It also provided the opportunity to focus on the dynamics present when introducing strategy within the not-for-profit area by locating the research within a single voluntary organisation (Berger, 1983; Eisenhardt, 1989). The focus on a single organisation combined with the use of action research allowed the researcher and managers participating in the research, to focus on analysing a real problem in its relevant context. This process challenged assumptions and led to the development of learning and management strategies that may be applicable to solving future problems in this specific context.

The choice of a single voluntary, community based, health related not-for-profit organisation limits generalisations to other organisations that have similar contexts. However, general conclusions can be made from observation of a number of action research cycles over a long period of time that may be of interest to other not-for-profit organisations pursuing strategic change and are at a similar stage of evolution.

Choice of action research

The use of a single organisation facilitated the exploration, description and explanation of the action research experience (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 1994). The single organisation also provided the opportunity to study issues of concern and provide a holistic view of the sequence of events and the dynamics present (Berger, 1983; Eisenhardt, 1989; Gummesson, 2000) when attempting to implement strategic change within a not-for-profit organisation.

The choice of a single organisation and the use of action research allowed the researcher and the manager participants to focus on analysing a real problem and its associated issues and in the process challenge assumptions and capture the insights that led to the development of management structures and processes that could be applicable to solving future problems. Observation of a number of action research cycles over a long period of time allowed for general conclusions to be made that would be of interest to other not-for-profit organisations pursuing strategic change. Using reductionist methods from the quantitative paradigm would not have provided the same insights.

The choice of action research was based on the assumption that understanding how strategy is implemented required an understanding of the organisation as a human, social and political system. To understand the system required both an understanding of its structure, systems and the environment in which these existed. This required of the researcher and the manager participants an expansion of the system to understand both its structure and the interactions of the structures within and between the larger systems in which it is placed (Britton & McCallion, 1994).

The problem of strategy implementation within the specific environment of a not-for-profit organisation could not be explained simply on its own basis and was considered within the broader system perspective. Reducing the system to its parts to understand its structure through analysis would not provide an understanding or synthesis of the nature of the system or why it works the way it does (Churchman, 1979). Putman(1999) also agued that:

> "technical rationality does not account for how practitioners frame situations, how they improvise in unique cases, or how they deal with value conflict and disagreement about what ends are desirable" (p.178).

Entry to The Study Organisation and Permission to Undertake the Research

Entry to the organisation required the approval of the Board of Management for access to potential participants. The research proposal included senior managers as proposed participants, was made available to the Chief Executive for distribution to the Board of Management. The Board of Management agreed to the research being undertaken on condition that the managers proposed by them as the potential research participants were also in agreement.

Two meetings were scheduled with potential participants for the researcher to present the proposal. At these meetings the theoretical basis for the action research was presented and a proposed structure for the conduct of the research discussed. The role of the researcher, the collaborative role of the managers as participants, the mutuality of benefit, issues of confidentiality, support for each other and the idea of a learning set were also discussed. The meetings provided an opportunity to identify and discuss issues raised by the researcher and the potential participants. Questions that arose included:

- How did the research proposal fit into the organisational strategic plan?
- How will we know if change occurs as a result of a natural progress or intervention?
- Should other levels of management be included? Is there a danger of perceived exclusion?
- Should the researcher meet with others as well as this group?
- How will managers with dual roles impact on the group?

(Source: Researcher Field Notes May 2000)

Following discussion of the questions those present expressed an interest in participating in the research and became the initial cohort of research participants.

Participant Selection

In the process of negotiating entry to the organisation with the Chief Executive, it was proposed that the primary participant group to be involved in the action research would be the staff executive comprising the Chief Executive, General Manager and Financial Controller. The initial proposal to restrict the number had been influenced by the views of the Board of Management. This meant that these managers would be provided the opportunity and the benefit of reflection on decisions and subsequent actions but that this would not be available to managers who were not participating but who would be affected by outcomes from the process.

The question: 'Who should be involved as participants in the action research process?' had ethical implications as decisions about the 'should' (Churchman, 1982) then raised further questions about inclusion, exclusion and the degree of involvement of those excluded from the research. These questions then led to an initial increase in participants. However, the composition of the action research participant group was bounded to include the senior executive and representatives of the staff management group. Although there was an increase in representation during the research the group remained bounded. The experience of the boundary judgements made in this research has been described by Flood (1999, p. 93):

> "... a boundary judgement creates an action area that is both partial and temporary. There is nothing absolute or permanent about it. Yet, there remains scope for and value in deepening systemic appreciation of any action area."

Further discussion between the researcher and the Chief Executive resulted in the group being expanded to include managers with statewide responsibilities and a greater representation of, but not all of, the contract service program managers. With the inclusion of the additional participants, the size of the group was still considered to be manageable to allow for active participation in discussions. The composition of the research group remained a discussion point throughout the study.

Representative Managers had the responsibility of communicating the decisions for action that arose from the ongoing action-reflection process to the non-participating managers. This arrangement had the potential to intensify power relationships between the participant and non-participant manager through the creation of an 'in-group' and an 'out-group'. To address concerns within the organisation a range of communication strategies were implemented. These included a newsletter from the Chief Executive every second week and the opportunity to discuss proposals for change as an agenda item at the general meeting of all managers.

Representation was substituted to ensure that all programs within the contract services continued to be represented in the research when a manager had been reallocated to a different role for a period of time. This was not sufficient as it served to heighten resentment from the substituted managers about exclusion from the research and in particular the opportunity for the inclusion of reflection into their management role. The group subsequently expanded to include all contract services managers.

In summary, the group went through three major expansions. The initial composition was linked to entry to the organisation by the researcher and the political expectations of the Board of Management. Ethical considerations and the questing process influenced the second expansion. The third expansion was influenced by the readiness of the group to expand. All three compositions were reflected in changes to the organisation structure. The cycles of expansion are depicted in Figure 9.

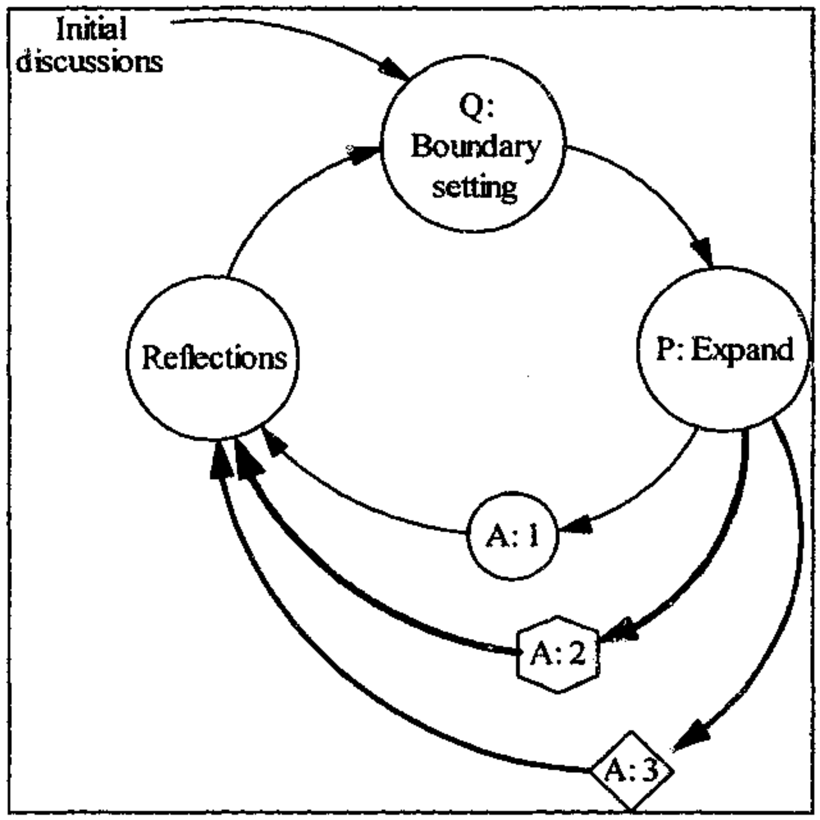

Figure 9: Cycles of AR group expansions

The exclusion of other stakeholders, particularly Members, from the research meetings reduced the opportunity for the researcher to validate perceptions that might relate to them and had the potential to alienate them. Members are those who pay an annual subscription and who have rights, privileges and responsibilities and when elected, form the governing body of the organisation. The process of involvement of stakeholders in the organisational transition was an ongoing component of the research.

Participant profile

Eight managers were involved as research participants at the commencement of the project. These included the Chief Executive, General Manager and Finance Manager, three managers responsible for statewide Membership functions and two program managers from the Contract Services. The gender of the group was evenly distributed. Accounting for staff turnover and casual replacement, a grand total of 22 managers made some contribution to the action research and reflection sessions throughout the study. Although all were managers in clinical programs or functional areas of the organisation, only three held management related qualifications and some managers held qualifications in more that one discipline. The higher number of social and health sciences were a reflection of the clinical nature of the functional areas for which managers were responsible. Qualification disciplines is summarised in Table 5.

Table 5: Qualification disciplines

Arts	2
Social Sciences	4
Health Sciences	5
Management/Business	3
Economics	1
Other (Experience)	1

The average duration of tenure with the organisation at the time of commencing as a participant in the research also varied and reflected in part the organisation growth cycles. This is summarised in Table 5. Four managers had been with the organisation less than six months at the time of commencing the research. One manager had been with the organisation for 18 years but was new to the management position. The mean period of time with the organisation was two years and eight months and the median less than two years.

The length of time the managers had been in their positions also ranged between newly appointed to 18 years. Ten managers had been in their positions less than one year with 15 of the managers in their management positions for three years or less. The mean period of appointment was two years and the median less than 12 months. The figures also take account of managers entering as research participants at different times in the research and who provided the information. On the whole, the participant group were clinically experienced and had limited or no professional management qualification or experience.

Table 6: Manager participant tenure with organisation and position at commencement in the research

[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
[illegible]	4	5
[illegible]	3	5
[illegible]	3	2
[illegible]	3	3
[illegible]	3	0
[illegible]	1	1
[illegible]	1	1
Total	18	17
Max	18.3	18 3
Min	0	0
Mean	2.71	2.19
Median	1.8	0.78

The Chief Executive had a different status within the group by virtue of the position in the organisation. The Chief Executive had direct access to the President who represented the Board. Additionally, the Chief Executive was the gatekeeper in relation to the research. In this role, the Chief Executive interpreted and reported on the progress of the research and issues of concern that were identified in the process of the research.

The Chief Executive and the researcher also had a previous history of working in the same organisation. As a consequence of these working relationships each held a professional respect for each other. The researcher also knew of the General Manager but had not had a working relationship. This previous working relationship was not widely known by other managers and if it was there were not comments made during the research. The relationship did mean that time to get to know the Executive was not a factor in gaining entry.

In summary, the action research participant group was heterogeneous. They had similar but different professional educational backgrounds in the health or social sciences. Many of participants were new to the organisation and new to their management positions. They were inexperienced as managers. This was a significant factor and influenced the roles assumed by the researcher during the research process.

The process of obtaining participant consent

An opportunity to discuss the research proposal was provided to the managers before final organisational approval was granted to the researcher. The research purpose, issues of participant selection and consent were thoroughly explored. The managers agreed that participation in the action research could provide mutual benefits between participants, such as breaking down barriers between programs, and offered managers the 'rare opportunity' to engage in reflection on managerial practice, individually and as a group.

The Chief Executive and the General Manager gave initial organisational consent and following discussion with the potential participants, a recommendation was made to the Board of Management for endorsement. Endorsement was a necessary condition to undertake the research and to ensure the compatibility of research purpose with the strategic intent of the organisation. In this case, support from the managers for the research contributed to endorsement by the Board. It is not known whether deferring the final decision to the Board had an impact on the degree of individual freedom to participate.

Individual signed consent was not obtained from participating managers, however it was obtained at the group level by way of verbal consent, which was considered to be sufficient (Cooper & Emory, 1995) by the group. The process of group consent could have posed a problem in that the managers were a captive population and could have agreed to participating in the research considering agreement was in line with doing the right thing (Sieber, 1992). Although the researcher noted some tension within the group at the first meeting, the open questioning and frank discussion did not indicate than any manager was agreeing without understanding the research proposal and its possible implications for them.

A limitation to consent in any action research is the provision of consent when the expected outcome of the research is stated, but as yet unknown and will emerge over time. One of the expected outcomes of the research was a structure to develop and enhance membership. What was not known at the beginning of the research was that individual assumptions about membership would be challenged. In the process of examining those assumptions it was not known in advance how individual managers would respond to such challenges to personal beliefs. In particular there was an issue of personal hurt arising from the challenge to assumptions.

The possibility of conflict and unexpected emotional responses in the participants was real because as Churchman (1982, p. 2) said "... once you dig for facts or coins, you change a lot of other things as well, and these changes may not be the ones you want." Without predictable outcomes and uncertainty over a dynamic and emergent process, the ultimate ethical burden remained the responsibility of the researcher

(Schein, 2001). The researcher had a responsibility to ensure that no participant was harmed as a result of the research process or failure to resolve issues of concern.

Consent was an integral component in the research and was evidenced by the ongoing behaviour of individuals within the group. The practice of reflection in and on action afforded the opportunity within a group context for open communication about issues of concern. The group context also provided a forum to renegotiate consent and the conditions of participation. This was necessary when changes to the composition of the research group occurred as a result of staff turnover or redeployment and appointment of new managers. Changes in the composition of the operational staff executive resulted in inclusion of new manages as research participants.

An explanatory statement (Appendix 3-2) was prepared by the researcher to address changes in the composition of the participant group. It was not initially required as all original participants had access to the full research proposal and had collaborated on the conditions for the conduct of the research. The explanatory statement included the agreed conditions of participation and was made available to each new manager. Discussion on the conditions then took place with the individual manager and where necessary with the participant group.

There was ongoing commitment to the research by those managers remaining with the organisation. There was no indication of 'invisible coercion' and one manager, who reduced from full time to part time, continued to attend the research sessions on a non-work day.

Anonymity and confidentiality

It was not possible to ensure anonymity of the manager participants when they were located within the problem context and that context was the implementation of the Strategic Framework of the organisation. The manager participants had to own the change that resulted from the action research deliberations. However, there was a degree of anonymity to individuals when the outcomes of the research group were communicated as proposals for action throughout the organisation.

The Structure that Facilitated the Research and the Action

The Meta structure

A structure was established that accommodated the supervisory requirements of the university, the scholarly requirements of the researcher and the practical requirements of the research participants and the study organisation. The structure was one that facilitated relationships between the researcher and the university, the researcher and a cohort of researchers undertaking action research, the researcher and participant managers. The participant managers were responsible for the dissemination of information and for taking action within the wider organisation in which the study was being undertaken. The structure and the relationships are depicted in Figure 10.

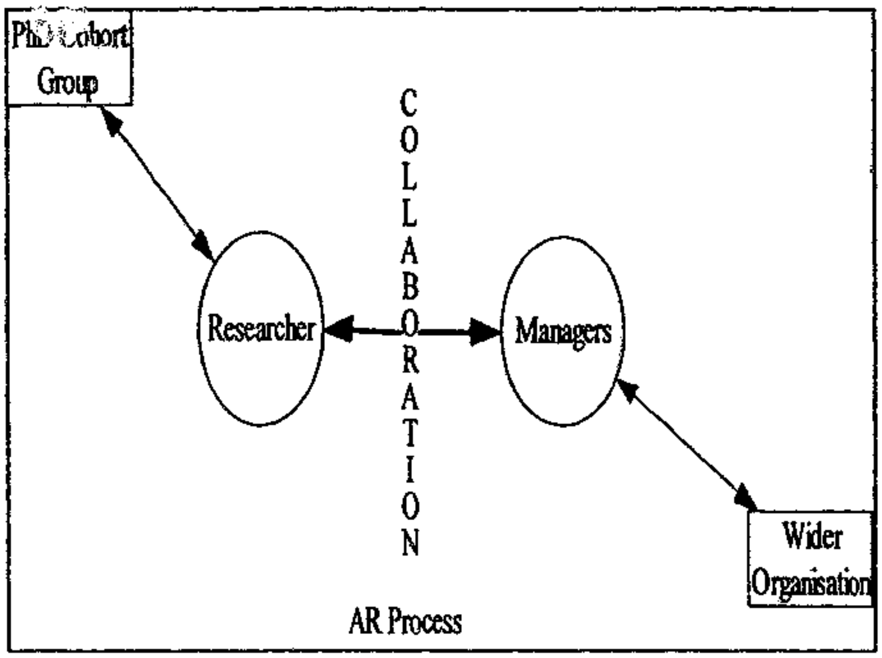

Figure 10: The Meta structure for the action research

The local structure

Two meetings were established, one to facilitate the action research and the other to operationalise the action proposed from the action research sessions. Initially, the agreement for the action research sessions was to meet for 90 minutes every second week for four weeks and then third weekly and then review. The sessions were scheduled in advance with the frequency, duration and the alignment of the action research sessions with the operational management meetings renegotiated as required. Twenty-six action research reflection sessions were conducted over thirty months. A total of 38 operational management meetings were s scheduled during the same period with the researcher observing at 30 of these. The spread of these meetings are depicted in Table 7.

The action research sessions became less frequent and more aligned with the regular operational management meetings during the latter months of the research to the point that they were considered analogous. As the research progressed, the action research sessions and the operational meetings often addressed the same issue, although from a different perspective. The reliance on the research sessions to monitor the operational progress of actions reduced. In addition the structure for problem solving initiated in the action research session became every day practice. The research sessions moved more to a forum to reflect on the processes employed and the outcomes of the operational meetings. This was an indication of the integration of the methodology into "normal" practice.

Table 7: Distribution of action research and operational management meetings

	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
AR Sessions	7	9	10	26
Operational Meetings	16	13	9	38

The action research session structure

The dynamic of collaboration between the researcher and the participants in the situation was central to this research. This dynamic involved a process of critical inquiry, a focus on the social practice of management and a deliberate process of reflective learning (Argyris, Putman, & McLain Smith, 1985; Checkland, 1991).

Critical questioning was structured into the process of the action research to enable all participants to share their thoughts and assumptions on an issue. Providing the manager participants with the opportunity to air their views highlighted the differences that existed between managers. Further questioning and debate generated insights into the problems being addressed so as to provide choice and a practical approach to taking action.

This process, often referred to as of dialogue, facilitates creative thinking and is an "...essential element of any model of organisational transformation" (Schein, 1994, p. 1). Dialogue occurs when individuals suspend their own views and listen attentively to the views of others. Common understanding develops when these views and assumptions are revealed and resolved. Through thinking and feeling as a group or a team, new assumptions are developed that have a shared meaning.

By allowing each participant to have a say while the others listened, differences of opinion were then debated until agreement was reached (Barge & Little, 2002). The agreements were tested at the next session by reflecting on the agreements. This would often result in further discussion and clarification of the issues. This structure later became integrated into operational conversation processes.

The role of reflection was formative (in-process) evaluation as it was "associated with the process of decision making, problem solving and strategic planning" (Flood, 1999, p. 19). In this study, the process of asking questions, testing ideas in practice and reflecting on the resulting behaviour from this process provided the information to inform the ongoing change and evolution of the strategy implementation. Reflection was a central element of the action research and had a significant role in the research.

Reflection as defined by Schwandt and Marquardt (2000, p. 117) is:

> "... the capacity to 'notice oneself noticing'; that is, to step back and see one's mind working in relation to its projects."

Schwandt and Marquardt (Schwandt & Marquardt, 2000, p. 118) also identified three different perspectives on reflection by an organisation:

> "(1) it reflects on the process used in their actions; that is the 'how' we do things;

(2) it reflects on the content or results of its actions; this requires the answering questions of cause-effect relations or the 'what' we do;

(3) the deepest perspective that organisations can reflect is the underlying premise of their actions; this requires answering questions about 'why' they do what they do (or did)."

The deeper reflection on actions will lead to the questioning of cultural foundations and purposes.

These perspectives formed the basis of the reflection process used in this research and are depicted in Figure 11. Researcher reflections on the problem situation led to the selection of literature about the problem, theoretical and the methodological framework and processes in any combination of cycles. Reflection occurred at any point in the cycle, both in and on the research process. Reading and reflection by the researcher often triggered further reading and subsequent action in the action reflection process that led to a change in shared understanding of the problem and decision to take action on the problem. It also led to action to refine the framework of the action research process.

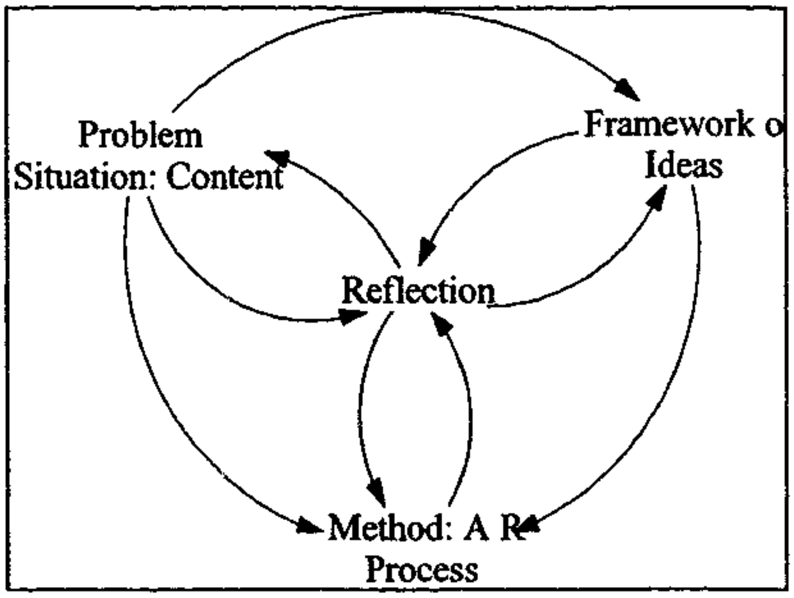

Figure 11: Reflection cycles

Reflection involved individual reflection by the researcher, the participant or as a collective activity. The cycles of reflective activity involved both the researcher and the participants in cycles of reflection in action and on the operationalisation of that action. This reflection 'in' action was formative and took place at commencement (on retrospective activity), during (on content) or at the end of the session (on process) and occurred within cycles. In other words the researcher and the participants thought about what they were doing (Schon, 1983).

The reflection cycles were often a recursive consideration of the same topic or a related topic. The return to a topic was often because the discussion had moved on to another issue without a resolution for the implementation of action. At this stage the researcher would use the cycles of reflective action identified in Figure 11 to identify a possible intervention that would enable the managers to gain insight or develop a different perspective on the issues being addressed. This strategy was to enable a move to action and resolution of part or the whole of the issue.

Reflection on all the components of this research led to the identification of a pattern of activity called cycles within Metacycles, which are diagrammatically depicted in Figure 12. When attempting to organise thinking on this, a pattern of researcher activity also emerged. The interventions employed by the researcher included systems and non-systems strategies.

At the Metacycle level, the reflection was undertaken by the researcher with presentation to the management group to confirm or disconfirm the researcher perception on the process. This was to avoid the problem of deception about the real purpose when "... participating in a situation and at the same time observing and recording (perhaps later) what has taken place" (Easterby-Smith & Thorpe, 1991, p. 65). It was a strategy that enabled both the researcher and manager participants "to correct distortions in our beliefs and errors in problem solving" (Mezirow, 1990, p. 1).

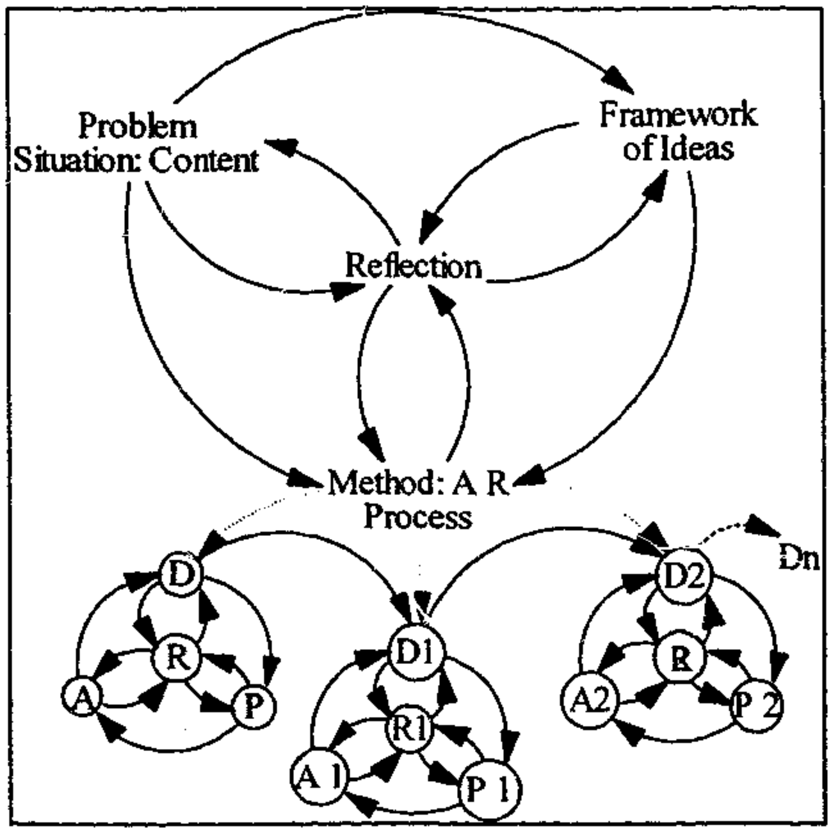

Figure 12: Metacycles of reflection

In summary, the researcher was an outsider to the organisation and created the context and the conditions in which the managers participated in the research. The researcher facilitated the questioning process used to clarify the issues identified in the process of interpreting the Strategic Framework of the organisation and collaborated on the choices for action in the situation in addition to the action research interventions. The manager participants, as co-inquirers were responsible for implementing actions in the situation. Both the researcher and manager participants reflected individually and collectively on the process of the research and the practical outcomes.

The Roles of the Action Researcher and the Research Participants

Researcher profile

The researcher was an experienced manager and had strong leadership and management skills developed over many years of senior management experience in the Public Health Sector. The researcher had held middle, senior and executive management, clinical and project manager positions. The researcher also had extensive experience in teaching and facilitating innovation and change. Through these experiences, the researcher had an appreciation of the interrelations between the public, private and not-for-profit health and community services sectors. The researcher also operated a consultancy business providing appropriate interventions that link strategic direction with the work that is being done in organisations.

The researcher has a preference to understand a context before experiencing it and to reflect before acting. The researcher is known for considering the big picture and grasping overall patterns. Decisions are made objectively and there is a preference to understand experiences rather than control them while being flexible and spontaneous. The researcher has a preference to lead by collaborating and enabling others to use their skills while focusing on an agreed agenda. The learning style of the researcher reflects these characteristics and a preference for applying ideas in a practical situation. How the research participants considered the researcher and the researcher role is discussed in Chapter 9.

Role of the action researcher

The role of the action researcher was centrally linked and interdependent in the underlying objective of the research, sequence of events and ethics of the research process (Marshak, 1993). The action researcher had a significant role in introducing theory and concepts into the action research process, facilitating the dialogue process and encouraging critical reflection on actions. The repetitive process of action and reflection within the group provided a deeper understanding of the complexities under consideration for both the researcher and the manager participants (Flood, 1999). Through this process, the researcher was in a position to contribute prior knowledge of systems methodologies and experience in organisational change in health service, to the desired outcomes for the organisation.

The researcher was both an observer and a participant in the research process. As an observer at the operational management meetings, the researcher had a "balcony" view of the interactions and behaviours of individual managers at these meetings. The researcher was not completely independent from the events or the content of the interactions as issues that were raised in the action research meetings were often considered at the operational meetings.

There were many examples of issues being raised and clarified in action research sessions and where the outcomes became operational management meeting agenda items. One example was the strategic requirement for active participation of Members in the operations of the organisation. Membership issues were being addressed in the action research as well as at operational meetings. The focus in the action research session was on clarifying Membership and other stakeholders of strategic importance. While the focus in the management meetings was on operationalising participation through the development of procedures and reporting on progress.

In addition, the researcher occasionally became engaged in the operational meetings to question why a decision was taken so that the reality of the situation could be understood by both the researcher and the managers and to get the managers to reflect on their behaviour (Riordan, 1995). The questioning assisted the managers to consider the reasoning that supported their decisions. Clarifying the process also assisted the researcher to gain a better knowledge of the operations of the organisation.

Role of manager participants

The participants all held functional management positions that they were required to fulfil in addition to participating in the action research. As research participants, they contributed to the identification of the issues of concern that were addressed in the research process. They actively participated in the action research reflective sessions and had the responsibility to act on the decisions or plans for action generated through the action research. By participating in the research process they were also co inquirers.

The relationship between the researcher and co-inquirers and the expected research outcomes

The action researcher established a partnership with the participant group to meet desired outcomes and was an active member of the group. The partnership in this research began with entry to the organisation. The researcher had a need to find and involve a sponsor for the research focus and the client had issues of management that became the focus of action that drove the action research. As a result, a set of common interests was developed where the researcher steered the research process to address the client driven issues. Schein (2001) described this process as a clinical approach.

The process of action research facilitated the sharing of different perspectives and assumptions on issues of concern that were being addressed. The researcher perspectives were derived from many years of management experience and academic pursuits. The researcher had limited detailed knowledge of the not-for-profit sector, the community disability sector as it related to mental illness.

As a group, the research participants had the local knowledge of the not-for-profit sector, the community disability sector as it related to mental illness. The depth of knowledge on these areas was variable within individual participants. The clinical professional background of the researcher and the participants was similar. Listening, attending and observation of interactions within the action research sessions and in attendance at operational management meetings provided opportunities for the researcher and the individual participants and to shape the outcome of debate.

Both the researcher and the research participants were collaborators in the action research process although their ultimate goals were different. The duality of the roles gave rise to dilemmas relating to the conflicting and different needs of research and action (Spradley, 1980). Where this potentiality or actuality occurred or were known they were raised for discussion and resolution.

For example, there was a need for managers to take part in a strategic change process as a manager and as a participant in an action research project. An allocation of time was required for each purpose and the researcher had to negotiate with the managers to allocate time for the action research sessions. An agreement was reached whereby alternate meetings would be designated to address operational management issues and to the action research process.

Agreement was also reached that would form the basis of the rules that would govern the functioning of the action research sessions and to guide subsequent inclusion of managers to the research group. The conditions and rules for the conduct of the meetings between the manager participants and the researcher covered frequency, note taking and participation. These were documented in the Explanatory Statement.

Throughout the action research process the questions 'Who will be affected?' and 'How will they be affected?' maintained a continued awareness of the ethical principles when making decisions (Stringer, 1996). These questions were useful tools for engaging the manager participants' focus on the responsibility they had to ensure that decisions and plans for action were taken ethically and possible consequence of their actions for non- participants. There were many examples of where this was put into practice throughout the research. In the context of participation in the action research, these questions were instrumental in the initial composition and subsequent expansions of the group of research participants.

Evaluation of the Research Process

At the completion of the researcher involvement in the area of action managers were asked to reflect on the research experience. A set of five open-ended questions was developed (Figure 13) as a guide for the managers to reflect on their experiences. The focus of the questions was on determining what structures had changed within the organisation as a result of the research, what individual changes to practice had occurred, why it took so long for the group to agree on the meaning of membership, what metaphor they would use to describe the process. Action research is a collaborative learning process and each participant was asked to describe the role that the researcher had in the transition of the organisation. These perceptions were to complement the reflections on the role undertaken by the researcher.

Face-to-face semi structured interviews and one telephone interview were conducted with 12 managers who had been involved in the action research process more than six months. Interviews lasted between 20 minutes to 75 minutes. Short field notes were taken to support the audiotape record of the interview. The tapes were transcribed by the researcher and key concepts and themes noted with the field notes. This represented the beginning of the final analysis process.

The transcripts were returned to the participant managers for clarification and confirmation of text. Only one manager returned corrected text and requested that the mannerisms of speech be removed to aid the flow of the responses. To retain the confidentiality of the participant managers, each manager was allocated a number.

1. What organisational and structural changes have occurred that you can trace back to the AR Sessions? (That is, things that people would notice being done differently.)

2. What has the action research meant to changes in your management practices?

3. Why do you think we took so long on the definition of membership?

4. If you had to think of a metaphor, what would you use to explain the events and processes of the last three years? (Have they developed over time?)

5. Describe (the researcher) role in the transition of the organisation and the relationship at the end of the process. (Was the relationship one of dependence or independence?)

Figure 13: Interview questions for reflective evaluation

Data Collection, Analysis and Interpretation

Data Collection

The process employed for the collection of data involved the researcher in describing, sharing and evaluating the cycles of action research activity. It involved the collection of formal and anecdotal data. Formal data comprised of agenda and minutes of organisational meetings, attachments and other organisational documents and reports. Formal notes and minutes of the operational meetings were combined with researcher observation notes to provide evidence of operational processing of the research proposals for action.

Notes and memos made by the researcher consisted of sequential but unsystematic descriptions of situations, observations of action research sessions and operational meetings, conversation bits, readings and ideas. Audiotape recordings provided a record of what was said in the action research sessions. These were also supported by observational data obtained from descriptions, notes and reflections on the process and outcomes of the sessions recorded by the researcher and individual participants.

The use of audiotape required the consent of the manager participants. This had to be negotiated and was not given until after the action research had commenced. When consent was provided, the initial conditions included restrictions to retaining the tapes for access by the researcher only and not beyond the note-making requirement of the researcher. As a result, detailed records of discussions from early sessions are not available. The conditions were modified as the manager participants developed trust in the researcher and the research process.

The activities and observations of 26 action reflection sessions were documented from transcribed audiotapes and researcher notes and memos. Thirty operational management meetings were documented in formal minutes and researcher observation notes. Fifteen interviews were audio taped and transcribed and metrics and maps were produced from the social network mapping and analysis. A detailed record of research activity and data collected is located in Appendix 3-3, with the data bites summarised in Table 8.

Table 8 : Research activity and data in summary

[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
[illegible]	26		Yes	Yes	
[illegible]	30	Yes		Yes	
[illegible]					
[illegible]	3		Yes	Yes	
[illegible]	12		Yes	Yes	
[illegible]					Yes

Data Bites

Morgan and Kocklea (1997) distinguish between three classes of data: objective facts, such as the number of employees; social constructions of reality, such as what is said about situations; and the data that represents how the researcher constructs the reality. Data bites in this study consisted of tape recordings of the action reflection sessions, researcher diaries, journaling and memos, audio taped exit interviews and final reflections. These data bites and the formal records and notes represented qualitative data bites. Other data bites consisted of demographic data, social network data and quantitative organisational reports.

The data bites were transcribed into text as raw data, which were then organised into chunks of manageable data. The chunks of data consisted of words, sentences, paragraphs and phrases. A summary of the qualitative data bites, other data bites and their method of analysis is depicted in Figure 14.

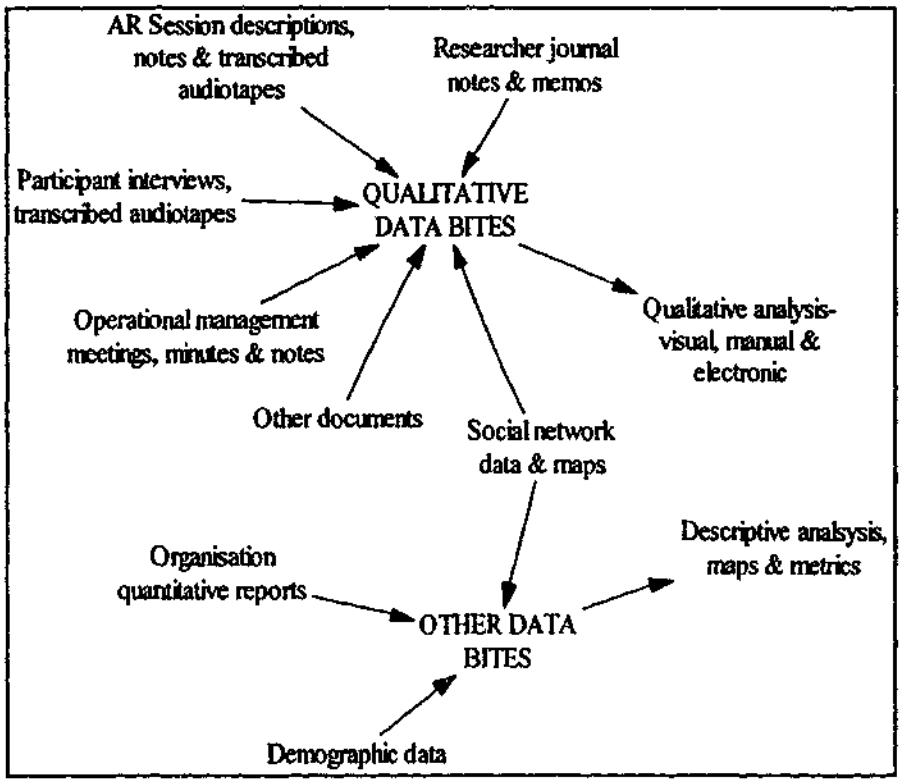

Figure 14: Data bites and method of analysis

The primary focus of the analysis was the action research participant management group representing the system responsible for the operationalisation of the Strategic Framework of the organisation. However, as the management group consisted of individual managers within a subset of the total organisational system, these also became units of analysis. Historical documents and reports provided the data to explain the existing context and culture of the organisation as the total system. Transcribed action research sessions, notes, memos and formal minutes provided the data by which the operational issues associated with strategy implementation within the local system could be explained and interpreted. Interview transcripts provided the personal views of the local and total organisation. The social network mapping and analysis, as described in Chapter 7, provided useful insights into individual social communication networks and by inference insights into the networking of the group.

Analysis of Qualitative Data

The three tasks of qualitative analysis of data according to Huberman & Miles (1998) are data reduction, which is the selection, coding and processing of the data; displaying the data through the use of extracts, vignettes, matrices and graphs; and the verification and drawing of conclusions about the data. Analysis and interpretation of the data occurred within the cycles of action research and at the completion of data collection. Analysis included in-the-field analysis and bottom up analysis. In-the-field analysis involved observing and inscribing, description and transcription of the data (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999).

Inscription involved the researcher making mental notes, about what was being observed and making links to past experiences or to the focus of the research purpose and questions. The inscriptions resulted in word jottings or pictures for further reference and follow up. Early diagrams of the cycles of reflection depicted in Figure 11 and Figure 12 and the following notation is an example of this.

> ... again, that cycle of reflection and moving forward repeatedly throughout the sessions.
>
> (Source: Researcher notes18/04/01)

Following the action research sessions, researcher jottings were expanded into richer descriptions and reflections of the observations. The descriptions were enhanced by the audio taped sessions and formal notes and minutes of operational meetings. The descriptions and audio taped sessions were transcribed into chunks and formatted as text data. The text represented the data as words, sentences and paragraphs within documents.

The data were inductively examined to identify the existence of themes and patterns, beginning with themes identified while in the action research process. Additional themes and ideas were generated as the documents were read as whole during the final analysis and write up phase. Themes and ideas were coded as nodes, examined for relationships and related nodes were then grouped. The conceptual process followed for analysis of qualitative data is depicted in Figure 15.

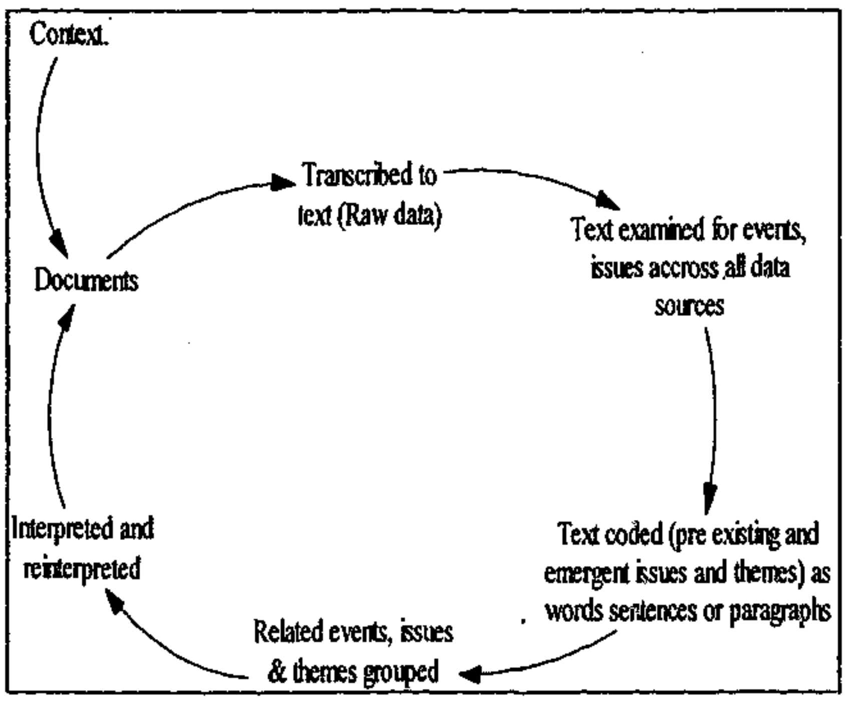

Figure 15: Analysis of qualitative data

Examination of the data included manual analysis of the transcripts in conjunction with the use of the qualitative data analysis software NVivo (L. Richards, 1999; T. J. Richards & Richards, 1998). The researcher was interested in retrieving data in a form that retained the context of the discussions. The use of the NVivo software was primarily to facilitate organisation and retrieval of text as thick descriptions. The search capability of the program provided added rigor in that it facilitated the retrieval of all instances of the issues being explored to be located from the multiple documents.

Data were analysed within the cycles of action research and on the withdrawal of the researcher from the organisation. Within analyses involved descriptions of the cycles of action research that resulted in the generation of insights about the action research method and process and the complementary strategies. The researcher then synthesised the insights. For example, insights into the ethical dilemmas that confront the action researcher in management research emerged in the early phases of the research.

The iterations between the experience, the data and the literature (Eisenhardt, 1989) led to the presentation of the ideas at a conference and subsequent publication of a paper titled 'Action research in management: ethical dilemmas' (Walker & Haslett, 2002). This pattern of activity ensued throughout the research and resulted in the publications listed at the front of the thesis.

Analysis of Other Data

Analysis of other data included descriptive analysis of the demographic data and use of numerical data in the field, when for example, comparing the increase in the numbers of organisational Membership over the period of the research. The social network data produced maps and data for metric analysis. This is described in Chapter 7.

Data Interpretation

Making sense of the patterns, themes and connections identified in the process of analysis of the text data occurred at two levels. The first level occurred concurrently with the cycles of the action research and both the researcher and the manager participants were involved. The researcher interpretations were presented to the participants were involved. The researcher interpretations were presented to the manager participants for verification. On most occasions, the reporting was verbal and at other times visual models aided the verbal report. Verification of interpretations became incorporated in to the structure of the action research sessions and led to further discussion, clarification and understanding. The process linked the micro and Meta cycles of reflection.

The researcher was not so much concerned about the data accuracy in relation to dialogue but rather the process of reflection and adjustment of mental models. Although joint involvement could be considered contamination of the data, it was a necessary form of validation as it ensured that there was sufficient knowledge of the problem to allow the best action to be taken to in the next cycles of action (Schein, 2001).

Following reflection on the cycles of action, ethical issues of data interpretation, writing and publication were addressed by the researcher in a series of papers (detailed in the front of the thesis) for presentation at conferences. This provided the opportunity for critique and feedback and a form of validating the research. However, maintaining confidentiality of the participants and the organisation had implications for the subjectivity and fluidity of interpretation (Nakkula & Ravitch, 1998).

The researcher undertook further interpretation of the whole data after exiting the organisation. Transcriptions of exit interviews were returned to participants for verification prior to incorporating them into the database. One manager had indicated he did not want the transcript returned. One manager returned their transcript with clarification. Communication with other managers indicated they were satisfied with the transcripts.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented and discussed the process of the action research using Checkland's frameworks. The detailed analysis and interpretation of the data as they related to the cycles of action is documented in Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7, using the model depicted in Figure 4, Chapter 1 as the template for presenting the Metacycles of activity.

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Chapter 4

The Evolution of Working Structures

Introduction

A history of the founding, growth and development of the organisation was provided in Chapter 1. The focus of this chapter is on the organisational structure that originated with the Strategic Framework, the issues of coordination and control of operational activities and the evolution of working structures that occurred as a consequence of the action research. In order to facilitate the action research process and associated activity, meeting structures had to be put in place. This chapter begins with those structural changes and then addresses the subsequent structural changes. The chapter concludes with the researcher considering the organisation changes and structural issues in the context of the metaphor of family.

Three Structural Changes in the Transition of the Organisation

The First Structural Change: The Creation of an Operational Management Group

An operational management group was established in conjunction with the creation of a structure to undertake the action research. As a consequence, the membership of each structure was the same. The group was heterogenous in that it consisted of management staff that had been employed for longer than one year and recently employed staff of less than six months. The managers had different education groundings and different management experiences. The managers had a practical focus in their own discipline and in their functional area of responsibility. In the early stages of the research the management group were not socially cohesive, a situation not helped by the formal reporting structure to the Board of Management and Subcommittees.

Establishing a group of managers to meet regularly to consider operational management issues represented the first structural change as a consequence of the action research. The meeting provided a structure for management staff to formally and regularly come together to discuss operational management issues. It was made clear however, that:

> "The role of the (management) meeting in the formal structure of the organisation was for communication and discussion of policy development at the direction of the Board of Management and subcommittees, not decision making." (#001)
>
> (Source: Meeting Notes 19/06/00)

When the terms of reference for the operational management meeting were developed four months later, the primary objectives were:

1. To advise the Chief Executive on:
    -Strategic development issues
    -Areas for priority development
    -Organisational policy and development progress
    -The quality management program; and
2. To facilitate communication and information exchange between programs.

(Source: Terms of reference for Staff Executive and Management Meeting dated 30/10/00)

The management meeting was initially scheduled on the alternate weeks to the action research sessions. This was in order to process the decisions that arose from the action research sessions. The management meeting provided a link between the action research and the formal operations of The Study Organisation.

The researcher attended the management meetings as an observer participant. The very fact of the managers meeting together provided a structure and it was inevitable that there would be an emergent and increasing influence of the group on the operations of the organisation. There was a positive response by most of the managers to the establishment of the action research and the operational meetings.

However, two managers considered the proposal for the action research and the establishment of the management meetings with a sense of mistrust and suspicion. The response was not unexpected from people in an organisation that had been reliant on donations to run services and where the allocation of time to manage was seen as a distraction from their important practical program work. With the progress of time however, these managers recognised the value of meeting with other managers and became valuable contributors to both the action research process and the systemic management of the organisation.

Reflecting on early misgivings one manager stated:

> "I was one of those ones who were really sort of … I was not against it but I was very wary about implementing this particular program while there were so many other things to do and I suppose that actually coloured my perception of what we were going to do for a little while. … I was looking at the effects on me personally in terms of 'Oh I am going to have to spend another two hours doing this and I can't fit it into my busy schedule and I can't sort of do that." (#016)
>
> (Source: Final interview Transcript).

The process of action research introduced a problem solving approach that had a strong emphasis on critical questioning and reflection. These principles were carried over from the action research sessions to the management meetings. The approach had a positive impact on those who were sceptical and they became valuable contributors to the discussion and debates. Two managers confirmed the change in how they viewed the allocation of time to both the action research and the management meetings at the time of the final interviews. One manager stated:

> "As we progressed … what I actually found was yes, I did have to find that time to do it, but there were some other benefits flowing out of it, in that you got to know the people that were sitting around the table, you got to know what their fears were and what their … concerns were. … I sort of learned those and subtly, you were actually able to address those concerns and try and get them to see your point of view with some of the projects that we had going. So in fact, the time was not

> two hours of wasted time, which is what I thought it was going to be, it was two hours of ground work, ... It was turned from something that I thought was going to be, 'oh god, another bloody waste of time in terms of management stuff' to something which is actually working towards changing the mind set of the organisation, the people in the organisation ... what we were doing was, we were reflecting on what we were doing, and you weren't coming up with ideas or looking at the initiatives that had to be done or what do we have to do, do it this way or whatever. We were actually reflecting on what it meant to be within the organisation. So I think it was a lot more open, in terms of the contributions that the people thought that they could make." (#016)
>
> (Source: Final Interview Transcript)

The other manager considered the transition as:

> "... an interesting transition for me was at the beginning thinking 'well I just can't justify the time (with) so much else to do'. So having missed ... two thirds and making that decision 'it sounds interesting but I can't be involved in this', sticking to that decision but always being conscious that I am missing those fortnightly meetings, because what I picked up was the enthusiasm for them. ... I think coming in (back) at the tail end made me realise that it was more the results ... It was at the tail end that I realised 'gosh I didn't see

> this happen' but there had been some huge, almost archaeological shift and changes to transform a fairly free fall organisation into a directed tangible shape." (#007)
>
> (Source: Final Interview Transcript)

The commitment to the success of the meetings by all participants reflected the level of trust that had developed in the group. Tyler and Degoey's (1996) research suggested that feelings about trust are social in nature. The behaviour of the manager participants in the action research would support this view. Relationships between managers and between managers and the researcher began to be established in the early phase of the research. A number of the managers were new to the organisation, their positions and to their role as managers. As such, they had not been in a situation of collaboration or involvement in decision making within The Study Organisation. Therefore, most of the managers did not have previous knowledge of the predictability of the behaviour of other managers and had not yet begun to work together with a shared purpose (Lewicki & Bunker, 1996).

As the research progressed, a pattern of regular communication was established (Tyler & Degoey, 1996) and the willingness of manager participants to engage in trust behaviour in situations that required collective action was demonstrated on many occasions (Kramer, Brewer, & Hanna, 1996). The behaviours were tied to the strength of their identification with the organisation and the people within the organisation (Kramer et al., 1996). The development of a climate of trust and the ability of manager participants to raise and debate issues was facilitated by a process where each manager had an opportunity to present their view, to listen to the perspective of other managers and to participate in debate and subsequent decision-making.

Interpreting and Translating the Strategic Framework and the Second Structural Change

Organisation design for strategy implementation

At the commencement of the research, the organisational design reflected a past necessity and a determination of the Board to retain control over the management of the organisation. Members were actively involved in the Board and Subcommittees. Subcommittees were aligned with the strategic objectives and in turn, gave direction to functional areas through involvement in the operational work of the organisation. Subcommittee chairpersons delegated to the program managers the responsibility for implementing strategies to achieve strategic objectives. This structure (Figure 16) is not unusual in the early transformation from the simple structures associated with not-for-profit, community-based organisations to the more complex professional structures. In not-for-profit organisations with a strong historical culture of family, membership and volunteerism, professional staff is employed to assist Boards of Management to fulfil their mission and coordinate day-to-day activities (Billis & Harris, 1996; Bryson, 1999).

Managers in The Study Organisation were appointed to coordinate strategic programs and communicated directly to aligned subcommittees. The Chief Executive reported to the Board of Management through the President who provided weekly supervision. The Chief Executive had day-to-day responsibility for the activities of the organisation. The structures that the Board put in place were deliberately focussed on Membership services to protect the interests of the Members. The structure provided for an internal system of control over the behaviour of staff managers (Gray & Ariss, 1985).

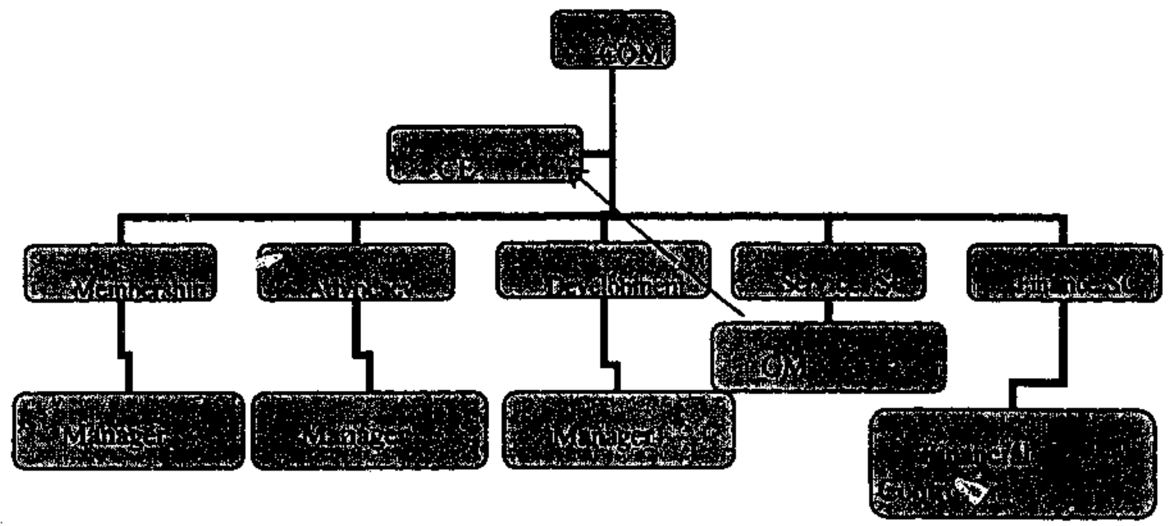

Figure 16: Organisation structure at commencement of study

Operational management was at the direction of the Board through the President and the subcommittee chairpersons. The senior staff executive was considered to be the Chief Executive, the General Manager-Operations (who was also responsible for Contract Services) and the Financial Controller. There were no formal internal structures to facilitate the operationalisation of the Strategic Framework objectives across functions.

The researcher would be facilitating a necessary, but difficult, structural evolution of the organisation.

Interpreting and translating the Strategic Framework

The next structural issue was associated with the interpreting and translating the Strategic Framework into operational strategies. Commitment to the Strategic Framework was perceived by the researcher to be lacking. Early in the process of interpreting the Strategic Framework at least one manager did not realise that the strategic document was current. The manager had been struggling with the ongoing reference to strategy and the need for activity.

> "I realise why (pause) I thought (pause) why I wasn't (pause) because (pause), I thought the process had stopped!" (#018)
>
> (Source: Researcher Notes AR Session 26/06/00)

Following clarification of the status of the Strategic Framework the manager participant raised the following questions:

> "How do we go the next step? How do we impact the strategic directions across the organisation?" (#018)
>
> (Source: Researcher Notes AR Session 26/06/00)

In response, managers concluded that to move forward there was a need to resolve the broader issue of their inability to set operational policy for the organisation. It was also noted that agreement about the interpretation of the Strategic Framework and the issues associated with its implementation would be required in order for the managers to communicate the strategic direction consistently to the local work areas.

Concern was also expressed that:

> "We are dealing with strategy and the future, but we have some serious resource issues at the moment that need to be addressed, otherwise people's ability to forward plan is severely limited." (#016)
>
> (Source: AR Session 26/06/00 Participant Manager Reflections)

This resource issue was particularly relevant to the Membership functions where the financial resources were not available to achieve the expected targets of the strategic goals. There were also issues identified that related to the overlap of functions and decision-making between Membership with Advocacy and Policy. The overlap of functions had an impact on the access and utilisation of available resources.

Informal discussion between the researcher and the General Manager Operations some months later, led the General Manager to express concern on the lack of clarity of the strategic goals and the applicability of them to all of the strategic programs. This led to the suggestion by the researcher that the Board of Management could be involved with managers to review the strategy document. There was some hesitancy to accept this suggestion but at the same time it was acknowledged that:

> "Some of the discussion around the table (meaning the action research sessions) needed to be shared or subcommittee members should be included in such discussions." (#002)
>
> (Source: Researcher notes on the discussion 2/10/00)

This represented a small but significant milestone in that it acknowledged the necessity for two-way communication and for managers to report the outcomes of deliberations with the Board.

The researcher facilitated the development of a management strategy to meet the objectives of the Strategic Framework. Three of the action research sessions were devoted to the task. The plan for the first session was for managers to develop an agreed understanding of the strategic objectives of the organisation in the context of the five strategic programs and the organisation as a whole. What was particularly interesting with the initial discussion was recognition that the intention for the strategic objectives to be applied across the organisation as a whole was not evident.

This prompted the Chief Executive to clarify the status of the Strategic Framework document that included the strategic objectives, goals and operational strategies:

> "These are the Board's strategies, these are not ours and the Board wants to know our implementation strategy

and we at this stage have been using this as our business plan, our implementation strategy is putting this into a business plan which we haven't done as yet. Now my anxiety is that we have got a heap of objectives, one we collapsed down, what do we report on? Or, are we just going to report on this across (pause) how are we going to do it? Now therein lays one of our difficulties." (#001)

(Source: AR Session Notes 16/10/00)

The significance of this and other statements on the strategy and the purpose of the operational management meetings were not fully understood by the researcher until much later. The statements highlighted the different roles and relationships between the Board and staff managers (Roberts & Stiles, 1999). They also demonstrated the major role that the Board and its subcommittees had in the operational management of the organisation at the time.

The strategic objectives did have implications across all programs; however managers were responding only in the context of their individual portfolios and did not demonstrate a whole of organisation perspective. When asked to consider the applicability of the strategic objectives across programs the request was followed by animated comment and discussion. The discussion led to one manager stating:

"I think that some of us have had time to consider our own bit of turf, but not across others. ..." (#017)

(Source: AR Session Transcript 27/11/00)

Individual managers were experiencing difficulties with interpreting the strategic objectives specific to their own functional area and had not begun considering the implications of them for the organisation as a whole. The discussion prompted the Chief Executive to say:

> "... That's the discussion that (researcher) wanted to stimulate from this and so I think that's the discussion I want you to have between yourselves. You are not going to resolve it next week. But we will have an opportunity to think about it. We could do it now but I don't think any of us have had time to consider it enough."
>
> (Source: AR Session Transcript 27/11/00)

Managers were new to their roles and at this time were not in a position to consider the impact of the strategic objectives across functions. As a result, there were intermittent discussions on organisational strategy throughout the research.

Issues of structure that arose out of the action research sessions to interpret the Strategic Framework

In the process of interpreting the Strategic Framework, the manager participants identified issues around operational structure but were unable to take corrective action without first referring to the subcommittees to whom they were accountable. This situation resulted in each manager and subcommittee addressing problems and issues from the narrow framework of their portfolios. The Chief Executive would also raise the issues identified in the action research sessions with the President at her weekly meetings. The decisions that resulted from these different forums would be reported back to all manager participants at subsequent action research sessions. At this time the issues were further considered and recommendations for action made. Subsequent issues would be taken back to the relevant bodies. The important conclusions that the group drew from this process was that these cycles resulted in delayed action and made the management group appear ineffective and not able to implement decisions. This insight represented another milestone.

Reflection by the action researcher and manager participants on the inability to take action led to a number of insights into the relationship between managers, managers and subcommittee chairs and between managers and the Chief Executive and the Board. There was also recognition of the link between strategy and structure. These insights were summarised by the action researcher and confirmed by the participants as:

1. Manager positions reported directly to designate subcommittees of the Board that were assigned responsibility for the strategic programs and therefore tended to work in silos.
2. Organisational structures impacted on communications and relationships between managers.
3. Managers appointed to manage the Membership functions of the strategic goals were recently appointed and had not developed an appreciation of the organisation as a whole, its broader vision, mission and values.
4. Managers of Membership programs were not familiar with the range or extent of the contract services provided organisation or how the functions were interrelated.
5. Managers of Contract Services programs were not familiar with the range or extent of Membership services or how the functions were interrelated.
6. The strategies and targets developed by the Board to achieve the strategic objectives were not clearly developed.

The second structural change

As a result of continued discussion and debate, an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the Strategic Framework developed. Two managers expressed particular concerns with the overlap of their functions. These managers prepared discussion papers and took their concerns to their respective subcommittees. A recommendation to realign functions at the subcommittee level and operational level was subsequently addressed by the Board. The outcome was a significant restructure with the merger of the two major Membership functions that were seen to over lap. The underlying strategic objectives did not change and were to be implemented within the new structure.

Revised Strategic Plan and Third Structural Change

The adequacy of the organisation structure to meet the needs of both Membership Services and Contract Services was regularly revisited in the duration of the action research. The linkage between strategy and structure became clearer to all participant managers as they challenged assumptions and practices. An agreed understanding of the whole organisation structure and the interrelation of functions developed.

Feedback by managers led to the Board initiating a collaborative strategic workshop to evaluate progress of the Strategic Framework. The collaborative approach to ongoing strategic development of the organisation represented a significant change by the Board. The workshop resulted in the development of a Forward Plan to meet gaps identified from the implementation of the Strategic Framework and to strengthen the professional development of the organisation. What was significant about the revised strategic objectives was that they included an objective on governance that was to provide direction for the Board restructure. The remaining objectives specified what was to be operationally achieved. The Chief Executive and the staff management group were to determine how the objectives were to be achieved. The revised objectives are located in Appendix 4-1.

The impact of the revised strategy was discussed at an action research session in April 2002. The discussion was quite different from the discussions that were held during 2000 on the implementation of the Strategic Framework. There was an expressed commitment to the new Forward Plan. The new strategy was seen as dynamic and providing direction to managers and the organisation. The following extracts sourced from the transcript of the action research session[6], demonstrate a significant change in the approach to strategy and to its implementation:

> "With this new Forward Plan we have just finalised, some of the long-term discussions about where we want to go and what we want to reach, I think that getting that up and running. That is where I think we should go with the organisation." (#003)

> "... The big thing is that you have a living document, every piece of behaviour, every strategy of thought; things that are done within the organisation can be fed back to that overall thing. The vision etc are living things, they are not pieces of paper that are pinned on the wall, or in your desk." (#004)

One manager continued to be concerned with what he saw as conflicting goals of fellowship and corporation:

> "I was going to say in response to it (manager), that I think that one of the key issues is that the (organisation) has many, um, potentially conflicted foci at the moment and I think it is a transitional thing and I think that, different parts of the (organisation), the different managers, probably focus on one particular area, so for example are we a small kind of grass roots family orientated organisation that is there just to kind of work with families and consumers in their homes. Are we a corporate organisation playing with the big boys and

[6] AR Session 17/04/2002

> politics to create a nation wide change, are we something in between. I suspect that most of us don't know where we are at ... and consequently it is probably our own background and experience that inform a bit of that on the continuum." (#006)

As demonstrated by the following discussion between the participant managers, there was reflection on the differences between the old and new plan:

> "One of the things that intrigue me is that we have a second generation of a new direction. And what do people see as the significant difference between this one and the previous one? Is there a difference?" (#002)
>
> "Half of us in the room wouldn't know because half of us are new ..." (#006)
>
> "I will tell you what I think it is. This one doesn't actually, doesn't deal within silos (Verbal and non verbal agreement from others). This one talks about key components, and it doesn't say this is the membership component, and this is the development, this is the service component. It is about; these are the key principles that fit across the organisation. ... Break down these silos and we have a long way to go. How much of the silos do we still have in place?" (#002)
>
> "Even if they are not there structurally, are they there, in more subtle ways?" (#006)

How was the new plan going to be communicated to other people in the organisation?

> "The Forward Plan has been out ... who has discussed it with their group? What are the issues that have been raised? The Forward Plan assists you to make your business plan, it gives you some direction." (#002)

At the same time it was recognised that the new strategic directions was recognition of the evolving nature of strategy and the need for ongoing change:

> "I think it is a matter of looking at some of the plans that we are working on and developing Forward Plan that has come out from the Board it is all evolutionary. It is all growing and from a program perspective, I look back at times and I can see a growth in my program when we first started, I think the emphasis was on support, over a period of time the emphasis has gone to psycho social rehabilitation. So there are a lot of evolutionary things happening, there have been a lot of changes in the organisation and I think that ... Forward Plan, we discuss it gently but because there has been so many changes, if you go too full on it, it can be very threatening to people and they can take it the wrong way which then gives you a lot of rebuilding processes. It is a living document, we refer back to it and we are starting to implement some of those things but in a very gradual, gentle no threatening basis." (#015)

Expanding the membership of the operational management meeting, to include all Contract Service Managers, was also a strategy to improve communication:

> "Talking about expansion of the staff executive, and to actually do it as encouraging the broader sort of discussion and reflective practice, but if you are a manager in a program and you are not engaged in this how do you get that thinking and how do you translate it, if (#008) was to go and talk about this to all the other managers in Day Programs and tries to bring back everybody else's ideas, well he may have picked the bits that are important to him but may have missed the parts that other people would have picked up. It is not to say that he is doing this, but we all pick up our own bits within that. ... Basically what we are saying is that we are going to expand out the executive to include all the managers who report to (#001) and my self, except (#010). ... I guess it is one of those growing things about we have actually looked at one of the issues we have discussed, the communication is the issue and how do we actually get out and change and make some impact upon the way in which the organisation operates and thinks." (#002)

The discussion began to focus on the structural systems of strategy implementation, measurement and evaluation that had not been present in initial strategy discussion during 2000.

> "One of the things we have talked about is how we need to formalise carer and consumer involvement in our programs, now, that is reasonably easy to find out because you are going to report on how you have done that." (#002)

> "So (pause), it then comes to a stage you know how many you have got and you want to increase it, what are the benefits to someone coming in as a member or a volunteer?" (#010)

> " ... in terms developing key factors that can be measured and reported across the organisation, related to knowledge managed / intellectual capital reports. It is not the triple bottom line, it is looking at the key factors across org the core where we can report whether they are good or bad. There will be five or six of them and everything will be driving towards those. Have an understanding about how we position the organisation externally to all its stakeholders. That is in terms of how we talk about mental illness, how we talk about our organisation, how we want to be seen in the outside world." (#004)

> "... Some forms of measurement as well. I was looking at, achieving some agreed measurement for measuring ... planning, especially at the local level. Everybody nods but how do you know whether you are achieving it? I don't think that that has been thought through. We need to be objective." (#008)

The revised strategic plan resulted in another major restructure of subcommittees and delegations to the Chief Executive to mange the operations of the organisation inclusive of Membership and Contract Service activities. This represented a significant change from Membership operations having direct access to the Board. The revised structure is depicted in Figure 17.

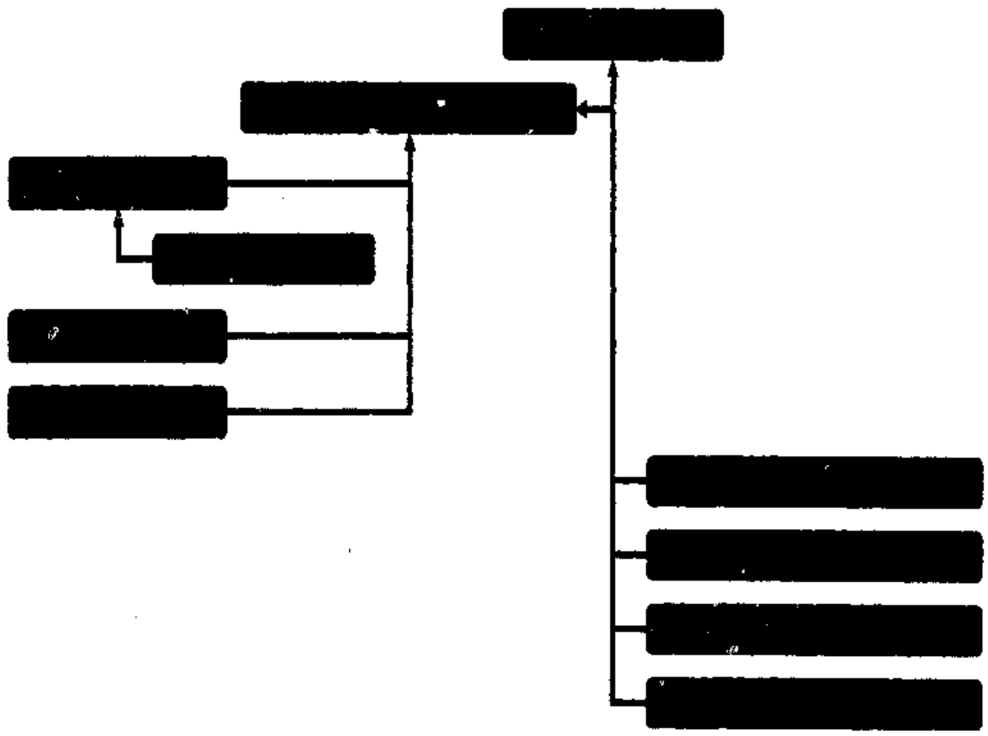

Figure 17: Organisation structure reflecting operational and governance functions

The Board assumed governance functions and the subcommittees were reconstituted to assist the Board in its governance role. The Chief Executive was delegated full operational responsibility. This change was a significant move by the Board and reflected growing confidence in their own governance role and their ability to delegate operational management. This confidence saw the development of a structure that aligned more closely with a professionally managed organisation.

The changed relationship between the Board and staff managers and the increased confidence of the Board in the managers was a direct result of the action research process.

Reflection and Discussion

The structures initially put in place by the then Committee of Management were deliberately focused on Membership services to protect the interests of Members. The power of the Committee of Management was located in the President. The President's role in relation to the Chief Executive could be identified as that of executive (Roberts & Stiles, 1999; Stewart, 1991) as the president provided instruction the Chief Executive on operational action to be taken. This structure was duplicated in the subcommittee structure and the relationship between the subcommittee chairpersons and aligned managers.

These structural relationships formed dominant coalitions that worked to control the behaviour of the organisation stakeholders, particularly the managers appointed to implement the Strategic Framework. The initial structure however, did not promote horizontal cooperation between the subcommittees or managers. As a consequence, the activities of the organisation as a whole were often duplicated and fragmented.

Hill and Jones (2001) suggested that organisation structure and control systems are instrumental in the effective implementation of strategy. There were considerable barriers within this organisation. First, the Committee of Management saw their role as being operational in that it held administrative decision-making power, which was executed by the President through the Chief Executive. Second, the subcommittee structure allowed for multiple interpretations of the Strategic Framework in both Membership Services and Contract Services. The structures shaped the behaviour of the managers and their meetings in that:

> "...they were for discussion of policy directions and communication, not decision making." (#001)
>
> (Source: AR Session Transcribed Notes 19/06/00).

The initial strategic plan was limiting in that it assumed that future state of the organisation would be based on the same dynamics that were operating at the time of its development (Guastello, 1995). Implementing strategy required managers to follow a process of interpretation, planning and taking action. As the initial plan was based on the altruistic values of the organisation and protecting the Membership functions, it was impossible to develop meaningful business plans or evaluate results in the form of numerical data or in the case of voluntary organisations, membership participation (Schlegel, 1999).

Action research sessions afforded the managers the opportunity to critically consider the strategic objectives and propose actions to modify organisational and operational structures. With the passage of time the issues of structure identified by individual managers were seen to be issues of the wider organisation system. An outcome of changes to strategy and structure was that managers assumed responsibility for their portfolios in the context of an integrated organisation. The organisation also became accepting of pluralist but focused goals to meet the requirements of both membership and contract services. This represented another milestone. The volunteers and professional staff began to work together in the provision of services.

The action research process influenced the interpretation and the implementation of the initial Strategic Framework. The process and the critical consideration of aspects of the Strategic Framework inevitably provided informed feedback to the Board, which resulted in adjustments and subsequent major changes to organisation structures. These changes in turn influenced changes to resource allocation and the separation of governance and management functions with delegation of operational management of the whole organisation to the Executive Director. The literature recognises the link between strategy and structure (Hill & Jones, 2001) but it is evident from this action research that the links take time to become established and are a result of processes such as those this research project set up.

Establishing a structure to facilitate the action research and operational management of the proposed actions led to modifications to the organisation structure. Following three iterations of structural change the Strategic Framework was modified, reviewed and revised into a new Forward Plan. The strategic objectives included one aimed at strengthening the strategic governance of the organisation. This began a significant restructure of the Board and its subcommittees towards a more professionally accountable governance structure.

As a result of subsequent changes to the organisational structure, the managers were in a position to be able to function more effectively to implement the strategic goals. The change to structure also improved reporting structures and the ability of managers to take action without the undue delays of waiting for the monthly subcommittee meetings to obtain permission to act. It also devolved authority.

Other issues were identified from the work on the strategic plan and organisation structures. They included problems of communication, integration, and collaboration and in the identification of Membership that are addressed in subsequent chapters. Ongoing reflection, by the researcher on the structural and other issues that arose in the research, led the researcher to extend the political and cultural metaphors that were used to guide the selection of complementary action research interventions, to include the metaphor of family. The organisational transitions are discussed in the next section from the perspective of the family and social identity systems.

The Metaphor of Family to Describe and Interpret the Structural Transition of the Organisation

The researcher identified the metaphor of family as being an important metaphor-in-use in the organisation. The researcher used the metaphor when reflecting on the structural issues that arose during the research. The conceptions of what constitutes a family and what are normal family processes are diverse and complex and have altered over a number of years (Walsh, 1993, 2003). Epstein, Ryan, Bishop, Miller and Keitner (2003, p. 581) conceptualised the family as:

> "a system of interacting individuals being acted upon and in turn acting on a number of other systems at obvious levels such as surrounding subculture, culture, economic domain and biological substrates of the individual concerned ..."

Models of family functioning are grounded on systems thinking (Epstein, Ryan, Bishop, Miller, & Keitner, 2003; Olson & Gorall, 2003). The family was conceptualised by Epstein et al. (2003), as a system comprised of a group of individuals who act as one, but at the same time is open to other systems and the environment in which the family is located. According to Epstein et al. (2003, p. 583), there are a number of systems assumptions that underpin normal family functioning. These included: interrelationships between different parts of the family; the parts cannot be understood in isolation from the rest of the system; the whole family functioning cannot be understood by individually understanding each of the parts; the structure and organisation of the family are important in determining the behaviour of the family; and transactional patterns of the family system are important in shaping the behaviour of the family.

Epstein et al. (2003, p. 584) also identified a number of key dimensions for understanding the effectiveness of family functioning that can also be applied to assessing the effectiveness of organisational functioning. The effectiveness of family functioning depends of the ability of the family to address tasks such as money management, the structured organisation of the family and the transactional patterns within the family. The key dimensions that they identified included: problem solving, communication, roles, effective responsiveness, affective involvement and behaviour control.

Speice, Hope, Kennedy and Engerman (1999) identified similarities in relationships, roles, structure and hierarchy between organisations and families in times of change in their research. These authors identified two kinds of family transitions and used them as a lens to understand the complex relationships and transitional experiences that they observed during the institution of a new model of patient care delivery that required the establishment of cross-functional teams. The analogies were the experience of a family immigrating to a new country/culture and the creation of a blended family.

In their research, Vaara, Tienari, and Santii (2003) examined cross-border mergers and conceptualized cultural identity building as a metaphoric process. They focused on two inherent processes, the construction of images of 'them and us' and construction of images of a common future. They maintained that these cultural conceptions play a major role in how organisations are integrated and how identity is reconstructed post merger.

The literature on social identity provides an added dimension for understanding the structural processes and organisational outcomes as a result of the action research. Hogg and Terry (2001, p. 2) defined the approach as "an integrated theoretical perspective on the relationship between self-concept and group behaviour." The subjective belief structure that is developed includes categorisation and self-enhancement. These lead to the development of subjective belief structures about how individuals define their position in different social environments and how others define their position. The belief structure that develops relates to being either in or out of a group or the relationships are constructed around the notion of them and us.

The literature on family and social identity theories and their application to organisational contexts were useful in that it provided insights for the researcher to interpret the transitions that arose in this research. In the case of The Study Organisation, there were two significant groups, the organisational Membership and the Contract Service professional staff. To the researcher, there was initially a clear identity difference between the groups that was emphasised by the organisational structure. It appeared to the researcher that the Members identified with the Board and the employed professional staff identified primarily with the Contract Services.

Professional staff also believed that they were accountable to external funding bodies, in particular State Government departments. Each group considered the other in the context of 'them' and 'us'. In order to progress the strategic change required to unify the organisation, the social boundaries between the two groups had to be extended to include the other. The action research process facilitated manager participants to recognise that staff, Members and other stakeholders all contributed to the organisation.

The researcher noted the strength of an existing family culture. The symbols that the organisation identified with were not those that would normally be associated with a corporate image. The organisation infrastructure was located in an inner suburb in an old two story Victorian mansion with large windows and balconies. A small inconspicuous sign among the standard rose bushes identified organisation. Executive business functions, membership functions and some contract services were housed in the premises. A number of other services were located in community housing within the suburbs and throughout rural Victoria. Managers generally worked independently in their own functional areas regardless of where they were located.

The researcher observed routines within the organisation as being associated with family practices. Volunteers held a regular monthly lunch meeting when a meal was cooked on the premises in the domestic kitchen. Staff located on the premises also took their tea and lunches at the kitchen table or the outdoor settings in the courtyard. Meetings were held in the lounge. The location was the 'home' of the 'family' involved in the business of the organisation that was focused on fellowship.

There was a strong emphasis on family and the establishing of a unified family to fulfil the purpose of the organisation. One manager early in the research acknowledged the existence of families and the need to develop a functional family:

> "The reality is that we have many families, none of whom are linked and all are friendly but (pause), so that is the position that we are in at the moment and what we are trying to do is actually have a family, we don't start from that position." (#001)
>
> (Source: Transcribed AR Session 14/11/01).

The emphasis on family reflected the origins and focus of the organisation. The origins had elements of *parentalism*, described by Koiranen (2003, p. 243) as a gender neutral anagram of *paternalism*. In the case of the origins of the study organisation, parentalism was encapsulated in its ongoing purpose, which was to provide advocacy on behalf of people with a mental illness. People with mental illness were not, or not considered to be, sufficiently competent to help themselves so those who were, usually family and friends provided the advocacy. Advocacy and support services were controlled by parents in order to protect and therefore did not give the people with the illness the responsibility or freedom to choose for themselves.

These values were retained even as the organisation developed and as evident in the Strategic framework document. As a not-for-profit organisation, whose governing body comprised of elected Members, who were on the whole, family and friends of people with mental illness, the values were perpetuated in the Strategic Framework. Control and retention of the Membership focus of the organisation within the family of Members was a very dominant objective.

The development of a shared vision of the organisation required the organisational Membership and the professional staff to develop a common understanding of the strategic direction of the organisation. Initial work of interpreting the Strategic Framework document was directed to clarifying the organisation structures and key roles within the organisation. Action research intervention led to changes to the organisation structures and an increased participation of professional staff in the operational management of the organisation. The evolution of working structures was discussed in Chapter 4.

Gaertner, Bachman, & Banker (2001) suggested that the more a new form of organisation is a continuation of the previous state, the more the basis for identification. Volunteers who had a strong affinity with the family origins of the organisation did not readily accept initial structural changes. The values associated with origins were according to some, being eroded, causing some disconnection and lack of commitment with the organisation.

> "… In my experience with volunteers their response to things like this is dependant on one key factor a sense of belonging to the 'family' … (if) they feel disconnected, they don't respond." (#006)
>
> (Source: Transcribed AR Session 14/11/01).

The directions for developing the vision remained a discussion point well into the research. It was a transition that required a blending of two quite different cultures, that of family and that of corporation. The success or otherwise of the strategic change to a more professional organisation depended on the ability of those involved to merge change with continuity so as to preserve an evolving identity (Trompenaars & Woolliams, 2003). It was important that that changes did not occur rapidly and that the elements of the family culture were retained.

The strong association with the symbols of the family were challenged with the relocation of the business to corporate premises. During the period of the action research the organisation relocated to a two story premises associated with a professional business, on a main road. This represented a transition from an older established suburb to a semi industrial suburb. The building design was based on an open plan with workspaces separated by dividers and some enclosed offices. One meeting room was glassed on two sides and labelled the 'fish bowl'.

The change represented a move from the 'family home' to a 'corporate building' more associated with business. Reflecting on the significance of the change of location one manager compared the organisation with other not-for-profit organisations:

> "You don't see the Salvation Army in a home. An old house, you don't see the Smith Family in an old house ... their services, but not their infrastructure. Their infrastructure is actually recognised as a business and is in a business location, as most of them are. I think that has probably been one of the most significant steps in the growth of the organisation, in the development of the organisation." (#016)
>
> (Source: Exit Interview 18/12/01)

The relocation to the new building resulted in changes to the way staff was grouped into functional units. As a result, there was change to the way managers and others related to each other. The changes led to discontent among some staff that was seen to be linked to staff being disaffected though the change in location of the organisation. Concerns of these staff were raised at an action research session[7] and were considered to be an issue that related to the internal functioning of the organisation and the informal communication processes.

Managers speculated as to the reason for the discontent. Changes within the organisation that was associated with the organisation going through the corporate change were identified. Some examples of the discussion included:

> "I think we have got a change in culture in the (organisation) at the moment. The move to (corporate building) although I view it as a positive one, a lot of people don't. The comment was made earlier about the Membership, the Membership think we are becoming too corporate ... I think some of the staff think that and I think we need to start from that ... I know we need to do a lot of work in terms of communicating to participants ... the first step is (to communicate with staff) ... I think there are so many organisations out there, and successful organisations ... they share the vision they do ... I think that is where we are lacking at the moment. I don't know whether it is contributed to the fact that we have just gone though this particular move, but I know the comments that I hear ..." (#011)
>
> (Source: AR Session Transcript 23/01/02)

[7] AR Session 23/02/02

Another perception was about the personal attributes of the additional staff being employed:

> "(New staff) don't fit the typical, you know, volunteer mother type that we used to have at ... House. You know, years ago ... am just saying what I have heard, and you know they don't fit people's individual moulds, you know what the fellowship used to be about when it first started 25 years ago." (#011)
>
> (Source: AR Session Transcript 23/01/2002)

The interactive discussion that followed acknowledged the loss of 'family' as a result of changes within the organisation and the need to develop a new sense of culture:

> "Maybe some of the things they (staff who voiced their discontent) aren't getting, (pause) are not to do with the organisation. Some of it maybe out in their personal life and what has happened, as we have tightened things that substitute life has ..." (#002)
>
> "Substitute family?" (#001)
>
> "... Yes, has been removed." (#002)
>
> (Sounds of agreement)
>
> "And that is what they perceive the (Organisation) to be." (#014)
>
> "Yes." (#002)
>
> "I think there was something lost a little earlier, and that was that (Organisation) was probably, for some

people, more important for staff in their sense of family and meeting their needs, and that that family has now been tightened up and has become, a different entity." (#001)

(Affirmations)

"It is uncaring; there is no more ..." (#002).

"I think when that sense of, of, of family, begins to be eroded it needs to be replaced by, what I guess, what I guess called corporate pride. One of the things I have reflected on often is that there are things that I don't know about the (Organisation). Now when I was at ... I used to know what the staffing levels were, what I had sense of the annual budget etc. But it is not, it doesn't have a sense of being (pause) (interjections) I am talking about a sense of pride in the organisation and what we do and things that you can hang sense of pride on. Irrespective of what the actual, whether the focus is corporate or whatever ... Well I think those points that you raise. I think people across the (Organisation) don't feel ownership of those things." (#006)

(Source: AR Session Transcript 23/01/2002)

This discussion highlighted the dilemmas faced by the managers in the transition from the old organisation to a professional corporate image of the organisation. Speice et al (1999, p. 77) suggested that transitions in a blended family can be more difficult for those "who have been part of another family for a long period of time than for those that are newer to the system." This appeared to the researcher to be the case in The Study Organisation.

The change in location led to naming the building. The shift was subtle, from 'House' to 'Place' but retained the concept of residence. However, for a number of staff, it meant a loss of identity and belonging as it changed the way in which staff related to each other. The transition represented a loss of family. The move was unsettling and interpreted as a loss of the caring and mutually supportive relationships that had been established in the family environment.[8]

Coinciding with the move of premises was a change in the name of the organisation. The mission and subsequent strategy documents identified the need to reduce the stigma of mental illness, the core business of the organisation, within the community. There was a perceived negative view of the diagnosis used in the organisations name within the community. As the organisation now provided services to people with a wide range of mental illnesses, management influenced a move to change the name of the organisation to be more generic. The re-branding was an example of a deliberate decision to shape cognitive interpretations of the core business of the organisation to people internal and external to the organisation and also a very corporate activity (Glynn & Abzug, 2002; Phillips & Brown, 1993). At the same time, fellowship had a strong historical and cultural meaning that was retained in the name. The retention reinforced to the Membership and staff that the focus of the organisation remained aligned with the mission.

Following the relocation, a strong informal network was identified and was perceived by the research participant managers to be overtaking the formal communication network. The failure to also recognise the value of informal networks was one of the factors that led to the social network mapping and analysis that is discussed in Chapter 7.

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[8] AR Session 23/10/02

Discussion and Summary

Employing the metaphor of family provided a means of understanding the structures and relationships that were in place or developed in the course of the research. The family oriented composition of the Board and the parental relationships within the organisation were an indication of the readiness to change or not to change. For example, because we are a family, relocations will be difficult. Whereas, considering the action research process as a journey implied readiness to change.

The Strategic Framework of the organisation required the alignment of two groups of people who had a history of identifying between Members and the voluntary Membership functions and Contract Services and paid professional functions that were bedded in social, psychology and health backgrounds. A culture of identity between the groups had developed that had its origins in the reasons for the organisation being established. For the Members, there were elements of *us*, being family advocates for the person with the mental illness and *them*, being the professional, seen as the person who thought they knew what was best, but were often seen as the barrier to getting the best for the person with the mental illness.

It was also necessary to employ the professional for the provision of specialised services for the person with the mental illness. As The Study Organisation expanded it became necessary to employ professional managers. In this organisation, clinical and management professions were often the same people. In addition, many staff became Members in order to influence the future of The Study Organisation, which only added to the complexity of identity.

The dimensions of family as identified by Epstein et al (2003), were evident in The Study Organisation. Those that were considered to be significant by the researcher and manager participants were the dimensions that related to structures, roles and communication. Other dimensions of organisational functioning that were identified by the researcher included: involvement of people in the organisation who had a vested interest in the implementation of the Strategic Framework; and the process used by managers to resolve the issues that emerged. The action research process and reflective sessions were instrumental in addressing the issues.

The family metaphor provided a way of considering existing structures, symbols and values that existed within the study organisation. The concepts identified in the models of family functioning were useful for appreciating the issues and dilemmas that surfaced in the process of interpreting and implementing a new organisation strategy. The metaphor was useful to understanding why the issues that surfaced were important to the managers.

The integration of the Membership and operational functions of the organisation involved both the Member and professional staff groups restructuring their own identity in relation to each other. A common identity for the organisation was achieved by using existing structures that were in place. The structures provided an avenue for the managers to influence the evolution of new structures. Addressing the interacting issues within the action research process facilitated this.

Chapter Summary

This chapter considered existing structures and the structures that emerged as a consequence of the action research intervention. The metaphor of family and the concept of social identity theory were introduced as a means for understanding the structures and relationships that developed over time. The action research process employed to address strategy and structure is depicted in Figure 18.

The first structural change was to establish a Senior Staff Management Group. The second change was to merge the operational functions of Membership and Advocacy. This was a direct outcome of the group examining the strategic direction of the organisation in the context of their own functional areas of responsibility that led to a presentation to the Board. Changes to the Board Sub Committee structure directed the change in operational structure. The researcher used the metaphor of family to describe and interpret the structural changes that occurred.

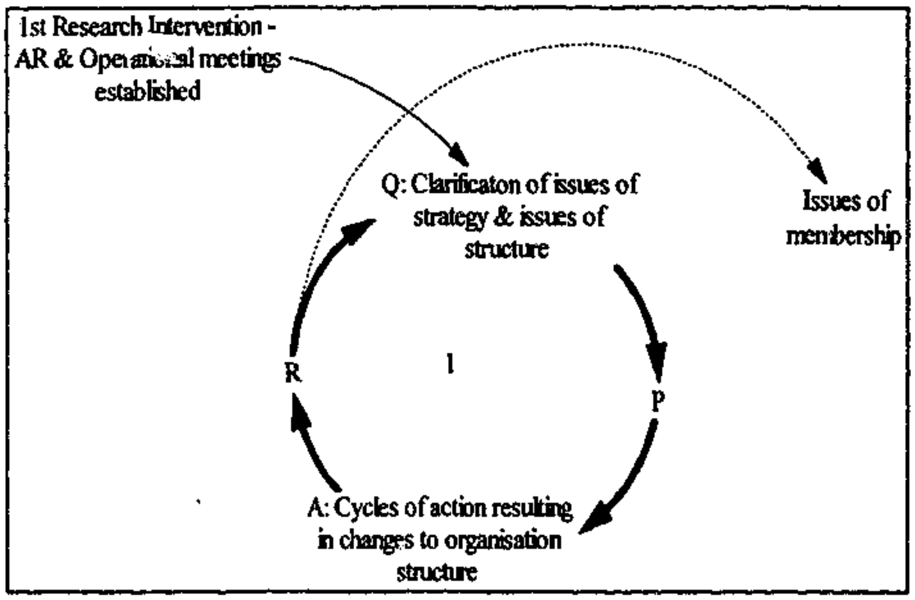

Figure 18: The process employed to address issues of strategy and structure

Membership was an issue that was raised on a regular basis during the examination of the organisation strategy. How it was addressed is the topic of the next chapter.

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Chapter 5

Managers and Membership

Introduction

Chapter 4 addressed the link between strategy and structure and the changes implemented as a result of the action research process. Maintaining the role of Members in the operational functioning of the organisation was identified as a key element in achieving an effective transition to a professional organisation. However, managers were unclear how this would be achieved, who the Members were, how many Members there were and how and where the Members were located or could be involved in the organisation. Deliberating on these issues within the action research was not sequential and at times all three questions were being addressed concurrently.

The issue of Membership was important to the managers because in order to implement the Strategic Framework and make the transition to a professional organisation, the Membership needed to be involved. The initial lack of clarity about Membership resulted in mini cycles of the action research process. The reiterative nature of the process was necessary to achieve clarity and consensus around the understanding of Membership.

This chapter presents the problem context, the research intervention employed to assist managers develop understanding of the Membership issues and concludes with reflections on why it took so long for the managers to clarify their understanding of organisational Membership.

Facilitating Member Involvement in the Organisation

How was Member involvement in the organisation to be maintained? This question was the topic for discussion at a number of action research sessions as Members were an important group of stakeholders for the operational success of the strategic transition of the organisation. Participant managers found the question difficult to address. One reason they defined was that they did not have a clear understanding of who Members were or what organisational Membership was. The second reason was the lack of distinction between Members, volunteers and other organisation stakeholders who were considered to be members of program activities. The third reason was they did not know how many Members there were, whether they were available for participation, how they could be involved in Contract Service programs or Membership service programs. The fourth was the separation of reporting structures: Members had direct access to the Board through their Branches; volunteers, who may or may not have been Members, were organised by the professional staff structure.

Strategic Direction for Member Involvement

The requirement to maintain an active involvement of Members within the organisation through participation was explicit in the Strategic Framework:

> "We encourage an active membership, which is designed to strengthen the mental health voice and influence mental health development and policy. It also means cooperation within the membership, volunteers, and staff and with a range of community agencies."[9]

How this was to be done was not made clear other than that the "structures must support grass roots participation ..."[10] The structures that were put in place, as a

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[9] (Organisation): Strategic Framework document undated circa January 2000
[10] ibid.

result of the Strategic Framework, to facilitate participation of Members and volunteers, were located within both the Membership Services and Contract Services.

Other structures remained significantly unchanged. Members and volunteers were active within Branches and reported directly to the Board of Management. The Manager Membership who reported to an aligned sub committee of the Board supported the activities of the Branches. In addition, there were Support Groups within a Statewide Contract Service program. The people involved in this program were predominately volunteers, although some were also Members. The Manager Mutual Support and Self Help, who reported to the General Manager Services, supported support Groups.

The Strategic Framework document also made reference to the significance of a Membership and volunteer base without making a distinction between these two groups of stakeholders. At the time of the development of the Strategic Framework, there was no real distinction: Members were frequently volunteers and volunteers also Members. The distinction became apparent with the incorporation of the organisation and the development of a company constitution that defined Membership and associated procedures.[11]

Branches[12] were established by the Board to operate at the local level. Branch rules provided for a local committee structure that mirrored the parent organisation. The Branch Committee had elected officers and was composed of those who were Members of the organisation that preserved "the unique family and consumer identity of the (organisation)."[13] The officers of the management committee were responsible for the business of the Branches and for establishing sub committees to provide

[11] Inaugural Constitution (Organisation) Ltd. June 192000.doc

[12] Branches were disbanded in 2003 and the voluntary functions integrated into the professional structure of the organisation.

[13] Starting a Branch (1297)

education, provide mutual support and advocate on behalf of people with mental illness at the local level.

Support meetings within the Branch framework provided loosely structured informal gatherings convened by a financial Member of the organisation. State and Commonwealth funding to support carers and families provided for the employment of Carer Resource Workers. These workers had a specific brief to develop support groups and to provide information on mental health. The funding saw the development of a number different support group models and associations between different providers. The organisation also developed support groups within this framework, within its Mutual Support and Self Help program.

Both the Branches and Support Groups provided similar services although the connection between the two was complex. To maintain relevance and to continue valuing both functions within the organisation, Membership and volunteer functions needed to be integrated, as neither was viable without the other. The relationship between Membership and volunteer functions was strengthened in early 2001 when the Board decided that convenors of Support Groups must be Members to ensure that the vision, values and aims of the organisation were seen in action at the support group level.

The problem could be summarised as the lack of direction in the Strategic Framework as to the status of members and volunteers in Branches and Support Groups. There was a lack of clarity for the structure for the provision of mutual support and self-help, Support Groups were coordinated through both Membership Services and Contract Services, and therefore there were different accountability structures that resulted in duplication and inefficient use of resources. The lack of direction also resulted in structures that existed prior to the strategic Framework being continued within Branches.

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Availability of Members for Active Participation in The Study Organisation

The Membership strategic objective was to increase the Membership base to 5000 by 2005. The operational goals were directed to establishing structures to achieve this target. Determining the base number of Members was confounded by confusion over what Membership meant, who were Members and anomalies around payments of Membership dues. Some Membership fees were paid to Branches and not to the organisation and others were paid to the organisation. However, a clear determination of the actual number of financial Members did not become clear until a database had been established to enable an accurate and coordinated approach to receipting Membership renewals. The lack of detail on Membership is symptomatic of the simple structures and procedures that are in place in small voluntary membership based organisations.

There was a history of volunteers participating in a number of Membership and Contract Service programs offered by the organisation. Some of the volunteers were

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[13] Starting a Branch (1297)

also financial Members. The number of volunteers was also unknown until the database had been established. In addition to the lack of formal accounting systems, another underlying problem in this case was the lack of definition and distinction between those people who were volunteers and the volunteering activities provided by financial Members of the organisation.

How Members Perceived Their Role

The role of Members in the organisation was based on an historical perception of self-help and advocacy for improvement in health and social well being of persons with a mental illness and their families. Support Groups developed over the years to incorporate a number of different models and associations with the organisation and with other organisations. The traditional model of the support group was to have a Member of the organisation convene the group. The groups established under this model were ongoing with a fluid membership. Groups also operated autonomously and many groups conducted fundraising and received funds through the Department of Human Services (DHS) self-help funding round. There had been no formal reporting to the organisation regarding funding, attendances or local activities of the groups.

Over the years, variations to these models had developed and groups had differed in their relationship with the organisation, the processes of the development of the group and the conduct of the group. The primary activity of the groups was described as mutual support and self help. That is to "listen, discuss the problems that effect people and offer them support in a climate of sharing of experiences." Members made contact with individuals or families between group meetings" to see how things are going" and often extended this support outside the group meetings. The benefit of the group was "realising that other people are going through the same things." (Quotes Source: Focus Group Transcriptions, Chief Executive Focus Group Meetings with Members, Support Groups and Branches 2000)

How support groups operated was summarised by one group in the following way and was representative of many other groups.

> "Members are sensitive to the needs of family/carers at different stages of the illness experience. For example, some people have had long and traumatic experiences of mental illness; accounts of these experiences may overwhelm new members who are struggling to understand their own experience. The diverse background of members contributes a wealth of knowledge, skills and experiences that facilitate the provision of a sensitive and understanding environment. It is important that people leave the group meetings feeling welcomed and supported."[14]

The support groups were the venue for communicating both local and statewide activities. Most support groups had an educational role that was promoted by inviting guest speakers, using educational resources such as videos and participating in programs offered by the organisation. Some groups indicated that they had active contact with other support groups for people with mental illness, their families and other consumer and carer advisory groups. Within some groups, members provided practical assistance to each other such as helping members develop a list of things that they would like to discuss with the doctor.

The strategic changes to the organisation resulted in a formal structure being introduced that placed an emphasis on both advocacy and provision of services.

Not only did Member involvement in services need to be defined, there was competition for Member participation between different Member and Service functional areas. During the early months of the research the Chief Executive undertook a series of focus groups with Branches and Support Groups obtain the views of Branches and Support Groups on the Mission, Vision and Values of the organisation. As a result of the researcher questioning the manager participants about Membership involvement and how Members saw their involvement in the organisation the Chief Executive sought the information from members and Volunteers at the focus groups.

The transcripts of the focus groups were analysed by the researcher in conjunction with the Chief Executive. A report was prepared for the Board and also provided the action research with a valuable account of the views of Members and volunteers (Walker & Crowther, 2000). There was evidence that Members did not recognise a role in Contract services and continued to see their role as providing advocacy and self-help. Where as, Support Group members, some of whom were Members, did not consider it was their role to undertake advocacy. The scope and role of a Member in the organisation was not clear.

How Managers Perceived Organisational Members and Membership

During the course of the action research sessions it became clear that the participant managers as a group did not have an understanding of who constituted a Member or the role of Membership within the organisation. At the commencement of the research, it was not known how many Members there were, whether they were active, or what there role was. The need to know these details and to identify other voluntary contributors to the organisation was important for the strategic directions of the organisation to be implemented.

An identified component for the transition of the organisation to a professional organisation was the continued and active participation of Members. This lack of manager understanding resulted in limited and uncoordinated action being taken to

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[14] Source: Focus Group Transcriptions, Chief Executive Focus Group Meetings with Members, Support Groups and Branches 2000

maintain an active membership in the functions of the organisation. The inability to take action had continued for approximately 12 months. As a result, the managers participating in the action research accepted the direction of the strategic plan and the values of the organization. However, they were experiencing difficulties in the implementation of the plan to meet these values.

Facilitating Manager Understanding of Organisational Membership

Significant differences in the understanding of Membership had been identified within the research group without resolution.[15] [16] [17] It was acknowledged that there was a lack of agreement of who were organisational Members. This lack of agreement led to the use of Strategic Assumption Surfacing and Testing (SAST) as a means of addressing the problem.

SAST Methodology

Mason (1969); and Mason and Mitroff (1981) operationalised the ideas of Churchman (1971) using Strategic Assumptions Surfacing and Testing (SAST) (Lane & Jackson, 1995). As a problem solving method, SAST has been used in situations where the policy-making is complex and where the problems and issues are inter-related and 'messy' (Flood & Jackson, 1991; Mason & Mitroff, 1981; Mitroff & Mason, 1981). The specific philosophy of SAST is based on four arguments about the nature and resolution of problems. These are that:

1. problems are strategic and are a result of organisational complexity in which the existing management strategies can only deal with simple problems;
2. organisations fail to challenge the accepted ways of doing things;

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[15] AR Sessions 6/06/00
[16] AR Session 26/06/00
[17] Routine Management Meeting 16/07/00

3. challenging the way it has always been done requires going beyond exiting theories and requires the generation of radically different policies and theories based on different interpretations of data; and
4. the advent of tensions is likely to result from these interpretations.

A qualitative method suggested by Churchman (1971) to assist in strategic planning where the problem situations are ill-structured was the Dialectic Inquiry System (DIS). It requires the development of a plan and a counter plan from different worldviews that are then debated. Cosier, Ruble and Aplin (1978) used a controlled study to examine the effects of DIS on performance and participant attitudes and found that DIS did not result in any significantly improved performance when compared to alternative planning approaches. These authors report two other case studies and highlight limitations relating to lack of performance data and active involvement of the participants leading to a 'Hawthorne Effect'. Additionally the lack of comparison treatments meant that there was no basis for judging the relative effectiveness of the method.

There are four principles inherent in the SAST problem solving methodology (Flood & Jackson, 1991; Mason & Mitroff, 1981). The first is adversarial, where solutions on ill-structured problems are to be found after considering opposite positions. The second promotes participation based on the belief that the knowledge relevant and necessary to solve problems and implement solutions is held by a number of participants in a variety of representative groups. The third, a synthesis of the differences identified through principles one and two, is a principle of integration, necessary for the development of an action plan. The fourth principle is that of managerial mind supporting which is based on the belief that exposure to a range of assumptions will result in managers developing an increased insight into the problems of the organisation.

These principles are supported by four behavioural stages, group formation, assumption surfacing, dialectic debate and synthesis (Flood & Jackson, 1991; Mason & Mitroff, 1981). The four stages are described below.

The *group formation stage* is based on within-group and between-group criteria using principles to minimise internal group conflict while maximising differences between groups. To minimise internal conflict within the group, groups are ideally formed with members who have the capacity to get along with each other. The number of people involved and the requirement to maximise the different perspectives on the problem will influence the number of groups formed. The perspectives of each individual are open to challenge by one or more of the managers within the group.

The *assumption surfacing stage* is facilitated through the use of three techniques, stakeholder analysis, assumption specification, and assumption rating. Stakeholder analysis involves a process of identifying the stakeholders with an interest in the problem who in a position to influence the implementation and outcome of the strategy. The assumptions the stakeholders hold about the strategy and how they believe it will succeed are then identified and rated against two criteria in terms of importance of its influence on the success or failure and on the degree of certainty that the strategy is justified.

The *assumption rating stage* includes a *dialectic debate and synthesis stage.* Dialectical debate is based on a principle of defence and attack. Each group presents their perspective and identified assumptions. These are then compared with each other. Assumptions where there is agreement are put aside and the debate focused on those that present the key differences. The desired outcome from the debate is a modification or synthesis of assumptions that will facilitate strategy implementation.

The proposal to us SAST as an intervention was put to the participants. The principles inherent in the method and the four behavioural stages were explained. It was emphasised that the focus of attention would be on the differing assumptions held by each manager. The manager participants recognised a similarity with the problem solving action research process already in place and agreed to the intervention.

Justification

The Strategic Framework document had a focus on improving outcomes for the Membership of the organisation. The researcher saw clarifying whom the Membership was as being a simple matter. This was not the case, as over a number of sessions with the participant managers the issue had not been resolved. Managers held different and often-conflicting assumptions on the defining characteristics of Members. The problem context was perceived by the researcher to be simple-pluralist in nature and was underpinned by the culture and political dynamics in the organisation (Flood & Jackson, 1991).

Application of the SAST Behavioural Stages

A session was conducted using the SAST process described above. The four behavioural stages were modified to suit the situation. As the action research participant group was already formed, the need to form two groups was discussed. The outcome was that the group remained as one group of 11 participants[18]. The group composition was representative of Membership and Contract Service managers. The manager participants, as stakeholders in the problem, were in a position to influence the implementation of the outcomes of the exercise.

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[18] AR Session 7/02/01

In the SAST session, each manager was given the opportunity to voice his or her assumptions about Membership. The researcher transcribed the assumptions to transparencies for projection for all to see. The assumptions held by managers around the nature of Membership were central to the strategic problem. On the topic of Membership, a range of divergent views about Members and Membership surfaced and are reproduced in Figure 19.

Managers were asked to suspend their own assumptions and refrain from judging the views and assumptions of others (Flood, 1999; Senge, Roberts, Ross, Smith, & Kleiner, 1994). Managers could clarify points of view but were restricted in their discussion and debate until all participants had expressed their views. Dialogue was achieved by encouraging managers to practice a deep internal listening to the points of view of others before confronting these and their own views and assumptions. With views and assumptions revealed, assumptions were challenged and debated until agreement was reached. As a result, new beliefs about Membership were developed that had a shared meaning and were documented as a glossary for inclusion in the Operational Policy Manual.

Membership: different types, active and inactive. Number requires expansion. What do they do? Who are they? - People who pay membership fees - Outside people who work in organisation (not excluded either) - Numbers of people who have an active role.

Limited understanding, confusion. Role not clear what can and can't do, important in terms of income and to increase community profile. Member – consumer group and others.

Used to think I understood it. Member – paid for right to receive benefits. Volunteer – interest, active role expanding. Move from support to advocacy. Used to think members / volunteers were all the same thing. View changing

Integrated (M & V) with support groups, help line, active in advocacy. Volunteers – variations active / passive becoming more integrated. Volunteer first then become member. Support groups are members first?

Not a literal view eg sells raffle ticket. Can be a passive member, anybody with any association with organisation. Membership – contributing to organisation, joining with others with activity. Volunteer member, donor member of organisation.

Similar to previous, membership – active, inactive and potential with strong voice, promotion of profile.

Paid membership to receive benefits, advocate for rights, and active group with membership. Supporters – eg sell raffles. Motivation for membership – what is it?

Points to a problem, confuse membership – member – volunteer. Member – pays dues and own organisation and participate through advocacy. Have a constitutional status – define what is, who is and role.

Different views – literal and philosophical definition of member and membership.

Members – pay subscriptions, value in numbers. Members become members for a variety of reasons. There are members who volunteer and those who don't. There are people who volunteer who are not members. There are supporters who are active.

Fundamental argument – constitutional definition or philosophical. Need a list of terminology. Issues around quantity and quality, cost of membership, liability of membership – a huge resource and how managed. Value of members to organisation as volunteers, as members, as individuals. Can have volunteers who are active and members who are passive. Ultimate objective is to achieve change (for the improvement of mental health for individuals and families).

Figure 19: Managers perceptions of 'Members' [19]

[19] AR Session 7/02/01

A mutual understanding was developed through effective communication where the differences in views were raised and assumptions were checked. This process of dialogue facilitated creative thinking that was important in the transformation of organisational thinking about members and stakeholders (Schein, 1994). Senge (1992) discussed the value of dialogue to team learning and the need to master discussion and dialogue as two distinct ways in which teams' converse. Schein (1994. p. 2) proposed in his road map of ways of thinking, issues that are deliberated through the process of discussion are resolved by "logic and beating down" of opposing views. Senge et al (1992, p. 237) on the other hand, refer to discussion as the process by which "different views are presented and defended and there is a search for the best view to support decisions that must be made at this time."

In the process of exploring the managers understanding of Member or Membership, it became apparent that there were a number of groups of people who contributed to the organisation in a voluntary capacity and who were loosely considered to be members of the organisation but were not formally recognised. The outcome of the session was an agreement that there were a number of stakeholders who contributed in a variety of ways to the benefit of the organisation. In this case, other stakeholders included volunteer, supporter, participant, donor and staff.

These other stakeholders in the organisation were subsequently defined and offered for further debate at a subsequent action research session. Descriptive definitions were developed and included as a glossary in the organisational manual (Appendix 5-1). These definitions were seen as dynamic and updated as categories became clearer with use and were subsequently placed on the organisation web site (Appendix 5-2).

There were further misunderstandings about the constituted status of Members and Membership. Not all managers were aware that there was a legal definition of Members and Membership within the organisation. This prompted one manager to say, "(this) points to a problem (if there is) confusion between Member and volunteer" and attempted to clarify for other managers that:

> "Members pays dues and own the organisation and participate (in the organisation) through advocacy. We have a constitutional status that defines what is, who is and the role." (#017)
>
> (Source: AR Session Notes 7/03/2001)

In addition to the different understandings managers held about Member and Membership, it was also apparent that there was a different understanding of the meanings associated with 'active' and 'passive' contribution of stakeholders to the organisation. While this was not debated directly in the sessions, it was addressed in the definitions.

The researcher also observed an improvement in the listening and attending behaviours of manager participant in subsequent action research reflection sessions. In turn there was improved collaboration between managers as a result.

How the SAST behavioural stages were applied is summarised: Each participant had the opportunity to express his or her understanding of what constituted a Member of the organisation. Managers were asked to listen and ask questions for clarification of meaning but to hold debate until all participants had expressed their understanding of the problem. Discussion and debate followed. The synthesis of the debate resulted in a number of stakeholders, including Member, being identified as contributing to the organisation in a voluntary way. An action plan was developed with key managers allocated the task to draft definitions of these stakeholders for discussion at subsequent meetings.

In addition to the SAST focused session, a further two action reflection sessions was conducted before agreement on who were Members and who constituted other stakeholders was achieved. The outcome was a formal document based on the definitions contained in Appendix 5-1 that identified and described the key stakeholders in the organisation.

SAST was used to focus attention on the differing assumptions between the managers involved in clarifying the definition of 'Membership'. The assumptions held by the participant managers also reflected their structural relationships within the organisation. SAST focused on these relationships rather than the structures or the framework in which the relationships occurred.

No progress could be made by the managers on their consideration of the issue of maintaining an active Membership until this was resolved. Managers found the SAST session a very useful process for raising and debating the different assumptions. The following quote captures the essence of the value of the session:

> "I found it very useful, surprised, I was surprised, especially that I myself had preconceived ideas about membership (pause), and what it could possibly mean. I never thought about it in the specific context of our organisation. So I found it insightful for myself and also hearing other people." (#011)
>
> (Source: AR Session Notes 7/02/01)

Why Did It Take So Long To Define Membership?

The researcher had asked this question on a number of occasions and put the question again to individual participant managers at the end of the research. Manager responses also provided an insight into changes in individual and group learning and the development of mental models. The history of the development of organisation was seen as a significant reason for managers taking time to come to an agreement about members, membership and other stakeholders of importance to the organisation. The following are a selection of the comments:

> "Because we were steeped in the history and mythology ... because the idea came to be membership of ... (for example) the clubhouse model talks to being members of the Club House. ... So membership became totally and utterly confused across the organisation. So membership was used inter changeably between membership of Club House and membership of the organisation. You do that for eight years it gets really confused. .... If you want to offer opportunities to people you have to truly consider their participation. Hence the next term, instead of it being member, member of the constitutional organisation, they were participants in their own health and welfare, wellbeing. So it was finding the language to describe something that was so set in our values and so drove our behaviour ... We thought because we were looking for something that was in front of us. We thought we knew what we were talking about basically! ... So I got really frustrated, what on earth are these people on about? Why can't they understand what I can understand? Then it wasn't until that meeting, and I don't know which one it was, ... (manager) said, that a member is defined by the constitution and (another manager) looked at him and said what are you on about we have lots of members. She wasn't coming from the clubhouse position; she was coming from a marketing position. So, and it seemed so bloody easy, I mean

(manager) and I agreed on it. But that was not a shared vision and then we had those other conversations about who are all these other people who are party to us, where do they fit in?" (#001)

(Source: Final Interview Transcript)

"Member was defined in so many ways and that was part of the conflict between the services that had programs that saw people as members of the day program, members of the Club House model, which was different from being a member. I think that we had to sort of say, there is only one formal recognition in the organisation of member. That is who can actually vote for the Board. I know that within some of the day programs I say, yes you are a member of the club; some people are members of the (organisation), as well as being members of the Club House." (#002)

(Source: Final Interview Transcript)

"I think that the word 'fellowship' is something that is very sacred to a lot of people and for the Members; they wanted to hang onto that that was something that ownership to them." (#007)

(Source: Final Interview Transcript).

There was a reluctance to admit that the managers did not know who Members were and had a fear of change. The reluctance to address the issue also had something to do with how individual managers identified with either Contract Services or Membership Services:

"…a reluctance to admit they (managers) didn't know, as there was a separation of Membership and Contract Services and so didn't think about it." (#001)

(Source: Final Interview Transcript)

"It was a challenge for the organisation to be clear …" (#021)

(Source: Final Interview Transcript)

"I think ... people knew we were a membership-based organisation, but actually didn't know what it meant. What was the value of membership? What is the linkage? I guess when we first started within the Board level there was the view of that membership and services couldn't actually coexist." (#002)

(Source: Final Interview Transcript).

"I think perhaps at times we were, we were at times a little bit too caught up in fearing change and not just recognising that there is some natural evolutionary processes that all organisations go through. Maybe some of that was that we were somewhat super sensitive. I think that from an organisational point of view, the way we went about it, it was at times better to take it slowly and at times painfully and make sure it was done the right way." (#007)

(Source: Final Interview Transcript)

Recognition that there was a lack of participation of managers in the discussions early in the action research was also seen to contribute to the delay in resolution of the Membership issue.

> "… lots of assumptions (we) did not initially have 'buy-in' and participation in the conversation … I don't think that there had been that kind of conversation about that before …
>
> … If you are looking for buy-in, you need people to participate in the conversation. If you have everybody participating in the conversation sometimes to a point where you say, no lets move on, lets, it took a long time to get to that and when people are actually saying that as a group it just means that people are with it and was, there is some buy-in and I think that buy-in was important. I don't think in the early days, people might have been nodding but not really grasping it or umm I know here we have a conversation and later people say I have to read my notes because I don't remember, I think by the time we moved on we didn't have to do that. People were pretty clear, not only am I on board, it is information I can recall." (#009)
>
> (Source: Final Interview Transcript)

The expansion of the research group was also seen to have an impact on the discussions. One of the reasons was because managers new to the group brought with them different views.

> There have been lots of assumptions. I think, I think in the time we had, … sometimes views change,

sometimes personnel change so you tend to, you have had the conversation and you come back and say lets get ourselves up to speed from last week and you end up having the same conversation for the whole time. Then that perpetuates because then the next fortnight again there seems that in about four meetings you might have moved a meeting and a half ahead. 'Cause a lot of revisiting and where somebody might have got into a place where they say I have got my head around that now and there was even the style of conversation was in my view often a led conversation with people having a bit of input and I believe that latter as it went on there was a lot more standing back by (#001) and (#002) and more dialogue with other people. So yea, I think that had something to do with it. But it seemed that we moved we inched forward because we stayed in the inquiry and then I guess. ... Also there were a number of different categories, it wasn't just membership, and it was stakeholders." (#009)

(Source: Final Interview Transcript)

The issue of buy-in suggested that managers were not initially interested and did not recognise Members as being of benefit to them or their functional units. It was only after much discussion and clarification of Members and other stakeholders of importance to the organisation that managers recognised the value and so engaged in the discussion. The failure of managers, other than those with direct interest in the Membership, to engage in the discussions was a possible indication of disinterest and a form of resistance (Trader-Leigh, 2002).

Reflection and Discussion

The issue of organisational Membership could be located within the systems of meaning (Flood, 2001) as it was concerned with manager's viewpoints. The initial range of views and the lack of agreement impeded the efficient implementation of the strategic goals to support grass roots participation in the organisation. Identifying organisation Members and facilitating their involvement in strategic change appeared to be a simple problem. However, the relationship between managers and Members was pluralist. Contract Services were not connected to Membership Services and managers had not appreciated that the staff was employed by the Board of Management to provide Contract Services for the consumers, who with family members, were technically also the Members who employed them. Nor did they appreciate that neither Membership functions nor Service functions were viable without the other. It was about valuing both functions.

Clarifying Membership was critical because for the organisation to maintain its relevance the two major purposes of the organisation, Member and Contract Services needed to be aligned to achieve the mission. The work on Membership established the complexity of the nature of the organisation and as a consequence, managers began to appreciate the complexity of the managers' roles in facilitating involvement of key stakeholders. The researcher was able to guide managers to begin to consider the organisation as being greater than their functional areas.

The process of identifying Member and Membership involved a number of cycles of action over along period of time. The cycles of action is represented in Figure 20. The process began during the cycle of making sense of the strategic plan and attempting to identify Member involvement in the organisation. Following the clarification of Member and other stakeholders, attention was redirected to involvement in the organisation but this was not achieved within the time frame of the action research. Progress of involvement of Members and other stakeholders was operationally incorporated into the revised strategy and incorporated into functional business plans.

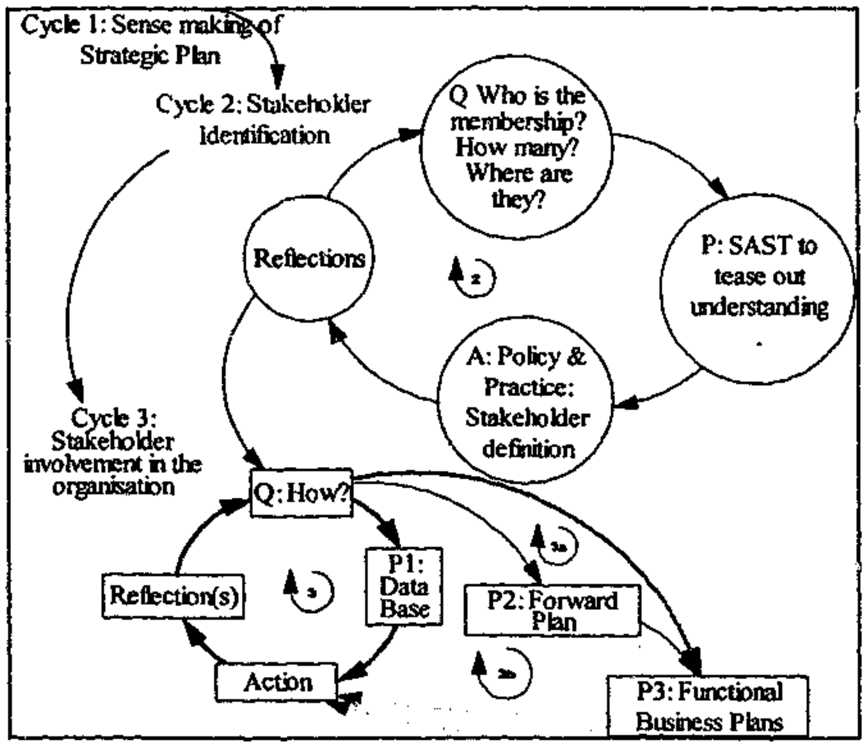

Figure 20: The three cycles of action and reflection on the issues of Member

Chapter Summary

The challenges confronting the managers in involving Members in the organisation as part of the strategic change were identified. Of significance was the identification of who were organisational Members. The SAST process used to tease out the meaning of Membership highlight the differing opinions held by the managers. The process was effective in that an understanding of Member and Membership was achieved. This included the formal definition of Membership as spelled out in the constitution of the organisation.

In addition, the recognition that there were many stakeholders that contributed to the viability of the organisation was significant. Agreement on who were the stakeholders, in addition to Members, was achieved and subsequently described.

This was a significant milestone for the managers as they were then in a position to move forward and address the strategic structures and processes necessary to ensure the stakeholders remained active contributors to the viability of the organisation. The process is depicted in Figure 21.

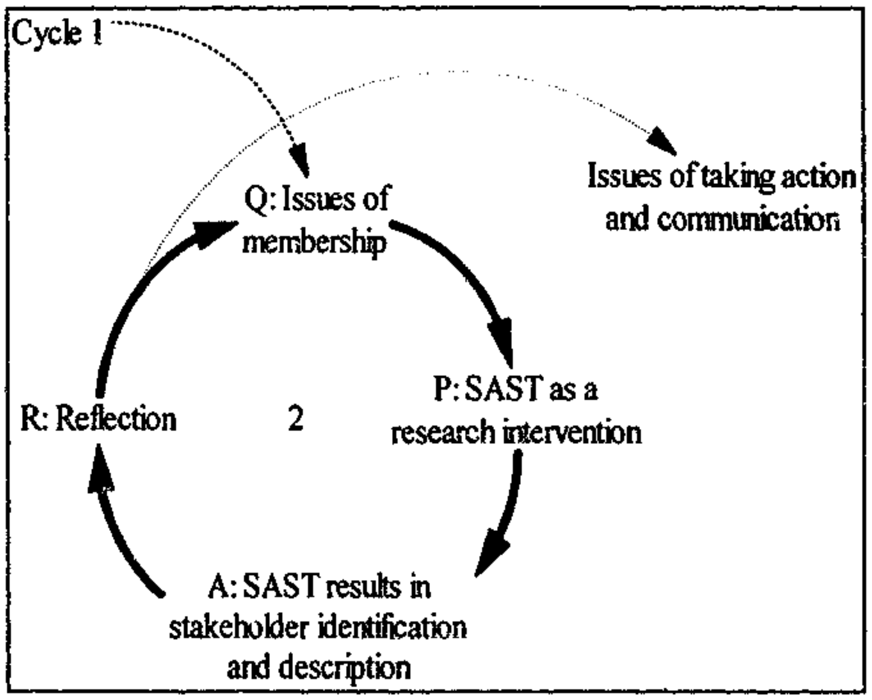

Figure 21: The action research process employed to address issues of Membership

Strategic Assumption Surfacing and Testing (SAST), led to the identification and definition of Member and other stakeholders. Other issues of concern to managers arose throughout the action research process and the implementation of the organisation's strategy. The next chapter addresses the process gap between clarifying issues and taking action.

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Chapter 6

The Process Gap between Clarifying the Issues and Taking Action

Introduction

The cycles of action that addressed issues of structure and Membership led to a number of decisions to take action. By reflecting on the progress and outcomes of the action, the researcher developed a view that participant managers were not acting on the decisions to act. Reflection on whether actions had been taken or not taken led the researcher to consider whether this was an accurate perception, if so, was inaction a result of an inability to act or because of a lack of motivation. Was the failure to act a problem for the participants or was the problem one for the researcher and research progress? These reflections prompted the researcher to intervene in the process of the action research with strategies to encourage the manager participants to take action.

This chapter begins with reflections on the progress of action that led the researcher to a perception of inaction by manager participants and the possible structural influences on the ability to take action are discussed. The research interventions that were taken to raise the awareness of the potential gap between clarifying the issue, planning and taking action and to consider the management competencies within the group are also discussed.

Researcher Reflections on the Progress of Action

> I need to consider how to manage progress on agreed action.
>
> (Source: Researcher Reflection 16/10/00)

This was noted early in the research in the process of interpreting the Strategic Framework of the organisation and developing action plans.

A major focus at the beginning of the research was on implementing strategic change while maintaining an active Membership. Researcher reflections during the process of clarifying, identifying and defining organisational Membership and stakeholders of importance to the organisation identified some inaction between the action research sessions leading the researcher to note:

> No action had been taken ... It does appear that unless someone is assigned the task of action it does not happen.
>
> (Source: Researcher Notes on AR Session 18/04/01)

The definitions had been documented and drafted for inclusion into the policy and procedure manual and were to be promulgated throughout the organisation. At subsequent action research sessions and operational meetings, it became clear that the documented glossary had not been incorporated into the manual and that recently appointed managers were not aware of the existence of the glossary of stakeholder definitions. Having come to a decision to act it was as if it was all the action required. The inexperience of the participants, as managers, was such that they did not make the connection between their responsibilities to take action without being directed specifically to do so.

On another occasion[20] one manager commented that issues were repeatedly raised but had remained unresolved, as there had not been any action. Another manager responded that the discussion in progress was the process of addressing the proposed actions and that taking a decision was in itself an action. This belief was evident at different times throughout the research and led the to the action research session discussed in this chapter.

Reflecting on the progress of the action research led to a researcher perception that participating managers were not always acting on the decisions for action that were agreed to in the action research sessions. Decisions represent an intention to act (Mintzberg & Waters, 1985). Patterns of decisions to act were identified within the cycles of action research. Frequently, there was a delay in acting on the decisions or the decisions did not appear to be acted upon at all.

A frequent saying of one manager was 'we need to have this conversation' which prompted the researcher to reflect and consider differences in communication concepts:

> Is this a habit and unconscious or does she behave as if the interactions are conversation? Will these conversations be sufficient to achieve the depth of understanding on issues that is, are they conversations or discussions or dialogue? What are the behaviours or rules of the interactions? Can I distinguish these and therefore provide feedback to (manager)?
>
> (Source: Researcher Notes 11/01/01)

[20] Action Research Session 26/06/2000

The researcher also reflected on the effectiveness of the structure and process of the action research sessions. A process had been implemented to facilitate democratic dialogue that Toulmin and Gustavsen (1996, p. 194) considered to be a "necessary and critical condition in an action research process, it is not a sufficient condition" and Schein (1994, p. 2) considered to be an "... essential element of any model of organisational transformation." The structure of the action research sessions aimed to facilitate communication whereby differences in views were raised, assumptions checked with the aim of developing mutual understanding of the issues being considered through a dialogic process.

Within the action research sessions there was a great deal of discussion about the issues that had been noted to be repetitive by the researcher and some of the participants. Senge (1992) discussed the need to master discussion and dialogue as two distinct ways in which teams converse. Discussion is the process by which "different views are presented and defended and there is a search for the best view to support decisions that must be made at this time" (Senge, 1992, p. 237). Schein (1994, p. 2) on the other hand, proposed that issues deliberated through the process of discussion lead to unproductive debate and are resolved by "logic and beating down" of opposing views.

Critical reflection on the process for the conduct of the sessions led the researcher to conclude that a lot of the talk within the sessions was at the level of conversation and, as a result, discussion was not concluded with an agreed plan for action. "It was as if talking made things real, that conversation, in and of itself, made things happen" (Pfeffer & Sutton, 2000, p. 33).

A more structured approach to the action research sessions was put in place using Schein's (1994) structure for facilitating dialogue. The plan included agreeing on the task to be addressed at the beginning of the session, allowing each manager to comment on their understanding of the issue while other managers listened.

Disagreement was to be followed by focused discussion and debate, closure and an action plan. Time for reflection was also to be incorporated into the session. A subsequent observation at an operational management meeting, the researcher noted a transfer of the process used in the action research sessions to the operational meeting.

> Today there were two incidents where an issue was raised – somewhat as a question, followed by discussion resulting in an action plan!
>
> (Source: Researcher Observation notes 13/06/01)

The researcher perception that there was inaction by managers was a source of frustration with the progress of the research. This was evident in the following reflective note:

> I can't see that I have achieved much in the way of action to enable evaluation of plans! (There are) achievements in *reflection* i.e. reframing the problem, but what about *research*? I think we are getting to the point of developing *action plans* for the involvement of stakeholders in the organisation. What we need is some *action* on implementation so that it can be evaluated. The progress so far (has been) discussion and reflection (iterative) on the issue of membership; and action (on the) definition of stakeholders for (the) policy manual, (are there any) individual actions?
>
> (Source: Researcher Reflection Notes 13/07/01).

There were times throughout the research when it was unclear, to the researcher and to participating managers, as to how decisions were made or when and where they were made.

> "...with no clear indication from anybody of what had happened and how they had arrived at those decisions ... I understand that decision have to be made on the run quite often, but it was hard to fit that in with the ethos that was being proclaimed." (# 019)
>
> (Source: Exit Interview 6/05/02)

This led the researcher to pose a number of questions: Was taking action considered explicit in the decisions for action made at the action research forums? Where are the written plans? Who is to take action? What is being implemented? The researcher concluded that the link between the decisions and actions were not always clear and were loosely coupled. Continuing reflections by the researcher led to a further question relating to organisation structure and the possible influence on decisions and taking action.

Researcher Reflection on Possible Factors Impeding Action

Was the organisational relationship of managers with the Board influencing manager ability to take action?

The strategic plan provided the structure for decision-making and action. The issues of structure and the existence of silos were discussed in Chapter 4. The reporting relationship of the Chief Executive and the strategic Program Managers' necessitated that plans for action were taken to the President and the Board for final approval. Ideas and action plans became intelligence for the Subcommittees and the Board. The proposed plans would be considered at this level and either approved or modified. The outcome of these deliberations would then be considered at an action research session.

The reflective questioning cycle would result in endorsement or further modification but not necessarily with full commitment of managers, resulting in delayed or no implementation. This cycle of decisions making was confirmed by the Chief Executive and is depicted in Figure 22. This process continued well into the research but was observed to change with the adjustments to the organisation structures and the devolution of operational accountability to the managers.

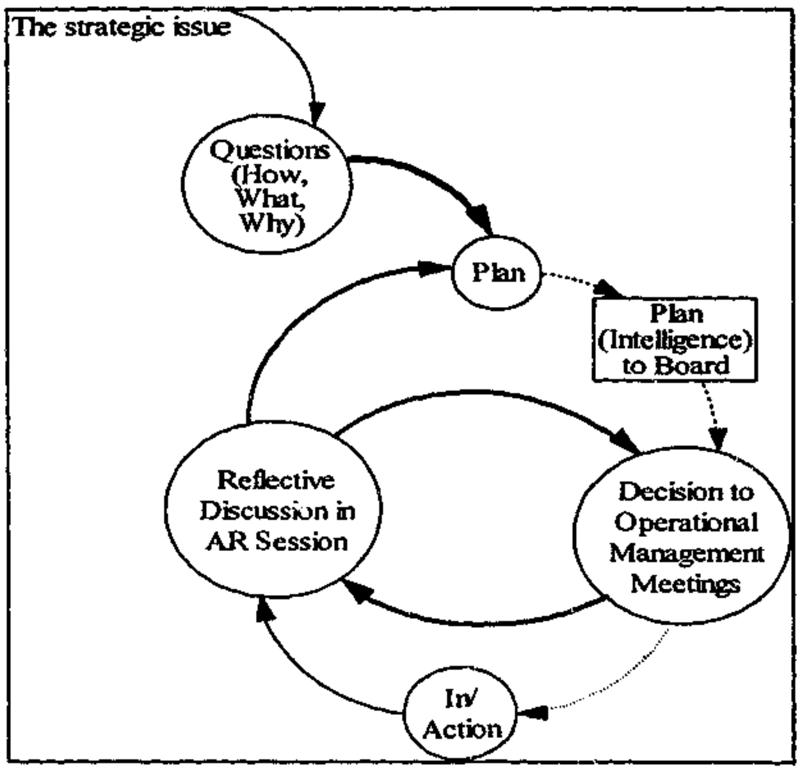

Figure 22: Formal decisions making process

The decision making behaviour of the managers was controlled by the formal structures and systems of communication that were in place (Gray & Ariss, 1985) in particular, the role of the Board in decision making. This included operational meetings. The role of the meeting of staff executive and senior managers was asserted early in the research.

> The (Chief Executive) clarified the meeting (of managers) was for discussion of policy directions and communication – not decision making.
>
> (Source: Researcher Notes of Operational Meeting 19/06/00).

The researcher was to struggle with this on a number of occasions throughout the research. Why was the meeting of senior staff not a decision making body? The answer was in the formal structure that reflected the management function of the Board. The managers interpreted the organisational strategies as belonging to the Board and therefore perceived that they were not able to take action to change structure or strategies to improve operational effectiveness. This assumption provided the framework for inaction (Senge et al., 1999). The conclusion reached by the researcher was that the ability of managers to take action was limited by the Board assuming a management role and the decision-making structures that were in place.

Over the course of three years this behaviour was seen to change. The Board took on directive governance responsibilities and allowed managers to manage the operations of the organisation. This was a result of the evolution of change that emerged from the participant manager group.

Was the composition and changes to the group influencing the ability of participating managers to act?

The profile of the research participants was described in Chapter 3. A number of the participating managers were new to the organisation and came from a professional clinical background. In addition, there were managers who were new to their management position. It is important to emphasise that the managers had not worked as a group until the research and operational meetings were established.

group progressed through stages of group effectiveness, the turnover of staff required the group to re-establish working relationships with each major change in composition.

Reflecting on another resignation of a contract service program manager from the organisation, the researcher noted:

> Of the original research participants only four remain. As the research has been in progress for nearly three years, is this an example of cyclic turnover (my idea of 3-5 year cycles) and renewal? What does this mean to the research and the sustainability of changes?
>
> (Source: Researcher Reflective Notes 17/04/02)

Changes to the composition of the research participant group occurred with the inclusion of additional members, turnover or redeployment. To facilitate the inclusion of managers, the group reflections on previous sessions prior to commencing on the topic for the current session became normal. This resulted in dislocations of progress and was seen to result in repetitive and disjointed discussions, as noted following one session:

> There was 'messy' disjointed discussion - what - how. As (named manager) said it was "unfocused". It was also apparent that the "focus" was disjointed due to the different entry points of the managers.
>
> (Source: Researcher Notes on AR Session 2/05/01)

Although there was agreement that the process of clarifying the issue and discussing the planned action was necessary to make sure that there was an understanding of the action to be taken. The process was a factor that contributed to a delay in actioning decisions.

A third major expansion of the group followed a discussion on the implications of changes to structure that arose from a change in strategy. The researcher raised concern that the inclusion into the action research group would increase numbers and possibly change the dynamic of the research group. This concern was based on previous reflections and discussions about change within the group and the possibility that the expansion would lead to less opportunity for full participation and dialogue between all managers. At the same time, it was acknowledged that the benefits of including all senior managers in the decision making process should positively influence action.

The researcher concluded that the changes to the composition of the participant group resulted in delays in action as managers new to the group required time to assimilate progress and develop understanding of the decisions to act. In addition managers new to the group often changed some of the thinking as they brought different ways of thinking about the issues being considered.

Did the inclusion of the Chief Executive in the action research group inhibit the ability to take action?

Reflecting on researcher notes and transcribed tapes, the researcher identified a number of occasions where the presence and behaviour of the Chief Executive both facilitated and may have impeded progress on actions.

One exchange during an action research session on the progress in strategy action it was noted by one manager that the ability to move forward was difficult. The manager indicated that this was because structural issues had been raised but not addressed following the development of the Strategic Framework. During the discussion the researcher suggested to the Chief Executive that:

> "...The issues might be addressed for you but not (manager) ... a common agreement about the issues may not have been reached."

Source: AR Session Transcript 26/10/00

The researcher then suggested to the manager who raised the issue and other participants that the issue could be explored then and there as it was relevant to the action research issue being considered. The Chief Executive responded:

"No! I haven't got time, time limitations today."

(Source: Researcher Journal Note 26/06/00)

This occurred early in the research and was interpreted by the researcher as being a defensive response to the failure by the manager in question to prepare for the action research session. The exchange was also considered to be an example of a process that inhibited communication and the ability of the manager to proceed with acting on the strategic plan.

Ongoing notations on the communication style of the Chief Executive by the researcher noted that the style was directive and led the researcher to reflect:

> Does the communication style of ... inhibit the learning and communication required for organisational change? Maybe I could pay attention to ... style when attending the meetings as observer.

(Source: Researcher Reflection 12/01/01)

As a result of this reflection the researcher observed the communication patterns between managers at their next operational meeting. A change was noted in the way in which the Chief Executive facilitated the process to achieve an outcome.

> The style ... today was (more?) reflective and participatory. Particularly on an aspect of (a topic that) had been discussed last Friday. To and fro additions clarified this issue. The new member commented it

> was interesting process to "get back to where we began" but with additional clarity.
>
> (Source: Researcher Notes 24/01/01)

The Chief Executive would often redirect the action research sessions. An example of this was a change in the topic under discussion within an action research session. The discussion diverted from a discussion on stakeholder participation in the organisation, to the naming of the new premises and the potential naming rights of the building by a sponsor. The researcher attempted to make sense of the discussion by asking the question: did it have to do with organisation identity? While the discussion on naming rights for the new premises was informative there was little participation in the discussion from two thirds of the group.

The researcher commented on the lack of inclusiveness in the discussion and asked for views but none were forth coming. The researcher could only conclude that while the topic was of interest and was clearly important to the Chief Executive and it did have something to do with 'sponsors' and 'stakeholders' it was of little significance to the managers and their functional areas. After the meeting the researcher noted:

> I think this was an example of what is important to the Chief Executive at this time of name change. It was not linked to stakeholder participation per se by the managers present (all of them).
>
> (Source: Researcher notes 26/07/01)

It could also have been that the Chief Executive was making the connection between the naming rights, sponsorship and income for Membership Services that was not self-evident to the other managers.

The Chief Executive did not initiate the redirection of the issue to be addressed in the research sessions on every occasion. However, while the research process did not always follow the intended plan for formal reflection based on past action, followed by new plan; the process did follow this in an informal way. Often the discussion was around a topic or an issue of concern to the manager participants at that time. This was an example of an 'ordinary everyday' aspect of evaluating what managers do (Wadsworth, 1997). It was also an example of the managers examining their practices and finding solutions and actions.

Including the Chief Executive as a participant provided the researcher and the participants' access to the views of the President and the Board on some of the issues of concern. This did put the Chief Executive in a position of power. Participation in the action research also gave support to decisions for action. However, there was some suggestion that action was delayed by diverting the focus to day-to-day issues during the research process. Following personal communication with the Chief Executive on the researcher perceptions about inaction and the rate of change, the researcher was left with the impression that for change to be accepted by the Board and Members, the progress of change had to be slowed.

Research Action: Exploring the "Knowing Doing Gap"

Researcher concern about the apparent 'inability of managers to take action' led to the researcher locating an article and a book by Pfeffer and Sutton (1999; 2000). Their evidence indicated that managers often act as if talking about what should be done is as good as actually getting it done. Pfeffer and Sutton (1999; 2000) provided examples where talk, making decisions, preparing documents, using mission statements and planning were substituting for action. They also cited other instances where the quality of the talk also had an influence on the implementation of action, such as smart talk and saying a lot, the use of complex language and negative talk. They suggested that knowing what to do is not enough. They suggested that talk substituting for action is likely to be found when:

- "No follow-up is done to ensure that what was said is actually done
- People forget that merely making a decision doesn't change anything
- Planning, meetings, and report writing become defined as "action" that is valuable in its own right, even if it has no effect on what people actually do
- People believe that because they have said it and it is in the mission statement, it must be true and it must be happening in the firm
- People are evaluated on how smart they sound rather than on what they do
- Talking a lot is mistaken for doing a lot
- Complex language, ideas, processes, and structures are thought to be better than simple ones
- There is a belief that managers are people who talk, and others do
- Internal status comes from talking a lot, interrupting, and being critical of others' ideas" (Pfeffer & Sutton, 2000, p. 54).

Associations were made between these behaviours and the action research process. In particular, the questioning and clarification of the issue of concern and the perceived lag in progress of action within the study organisation and the ongoing reflection processes.

> Talking about strategy implementation and other decisions (including plans) is not enough. Not transferring the knowing into the organisation would equate to the perceived lack of penetration of decisions into the organisation. Examples include the use of stakeholder descriptors, using agreed to symbols of identity such as the naming of the business location, use of non-approved acronyms for the organisations name.
>
> (Source: Researcher Reflections 19/03/02)

While the action research process provided a mechanism to ensure that a common agreement was reach on what action to be taken, the same level of agreement for the action to occur was not apparent.

> Decisions made have made sense in terms of organisation / strategy, why have they not penetrated throughout the organisation? Is the lack of action a symptom of manages truly accepting the decisions? Is lack of action a symptom of who decided what ought to be done, the Board, or the Chief Executive or the researcher in the context of the research?
>
> (Source: Researcher Reflection notes19/03/02)

A set of questions based on the readings were used at an action research session to stimulate discussion and to raise the awareness of managers as to their decision making and action processes. The questions were:

- Is talk substituting for action?
- Is talking about the problems/issues and subsequent decisions being treated as equivalent to actually doing something about them?
- Is implementation considered implicit to the decisions for action made at AR sessions?
- What are the mechanisms to ensure that agreed upon action occurs?

There was general agreement that talking about problems or issues often-implied action and the agreed action was not always carried through.

> "We talk about things and then the doing part is clearly implied ... but we don't actually do it ..." (#011)
>
> (Source: Transcribed AR Session 20/03/02).

> "… There have been issues which have been raised and not all things have gone back and been dealt with without an appeal to people." (#002)
>
> (Source: Transcribed AR Session 20/03/02).

The value of the action research / reflective sessions as a forum in which managers could raise issues of concern and have an informed discussion as a prelude to change was acknowledged:

> "Our capacity to hold a space (meaning the AR Sessions) in which we can explore and talk about and indeed implement changes …" (#006)
>
> (Source: Transcribed AR Session 20/03/02).

At the same time it was recognised that change had occurred as a result of the action research process:

> "… I agree, over the last 18 months there has been a lot more concerted effort by everyone to not only talk about things but to actually action them and get things happening." (#015)
>
> (Source: Transcribed AR Session 20/03/02).

The discussion moved to consider some factors within the organisation that also had an impact on implementing decisions and why the issues resurfaced for further discussion.

> "I think that what we are really struggling with at this time is actually doing the implementation. … I was frustrated that we weren't able to get past the barriers and get the buy in. So, and I am really pleased to say

> that I think we have got joining around organisational penetration within the staffed component of the organisation. I think we struggle immensely, still, with the, buying in of volunteers, of buying in of members and Branches, (pause) and support groups. ... I see we have got a five-year journey in front of us, in terms of that. I think that change doesn't come easy. I think it comes slowly and I think it is about persistence. So therefore in terms of actions I think we try numbers of times to have a go at it and if is not successful, we bounce off and we come back at it again. And often, well, no, this really is the only thinking part in the organisation, where we can say well we didn't make a go at it this time, what's some other ways around it. So I think that at some level, this group here will see the thinking and not the action." (#001)
>
> (Source: Transcribed AR Session 20/03/02).

This led to further insights as to why there were communication barriers to implementing action.

> "Can I add just one more bit in? Obviously what we are talking about is, is that talking doesn't make it necessarily so. But I think that, what we struggle with is ... we can talk this up until the cows come home. I think the gaps or the issues are of a structural nature. So we know that communication between us, and support groups, is at time difficult, but what is the structure to facilitate that? That is where I think things

fall down and that's not anyone's fault, but it is simply, you know, that those are the things that we need to identify ..." (#006)

(Source: Transcribed AR Session 20/03/02).

Issues of communication are addressed in more detail in the next chapter. These quotations surface some of the reasons for the barriers to taking action that Pfeffer and Sutton (2000) described.

The outcome of the session was an agreement to provide a structured agenda including accountabilities for agenda items for operational meetings and to allocate responsibility for actions that were coupled with agreed targets and time lines. In addition the gaps identified became items on the agenda. The solution of a structured agenda, while simple, addresses a deep-seated organisational problem of management inaction. The process and proposed actions are depicted in Figure 23.

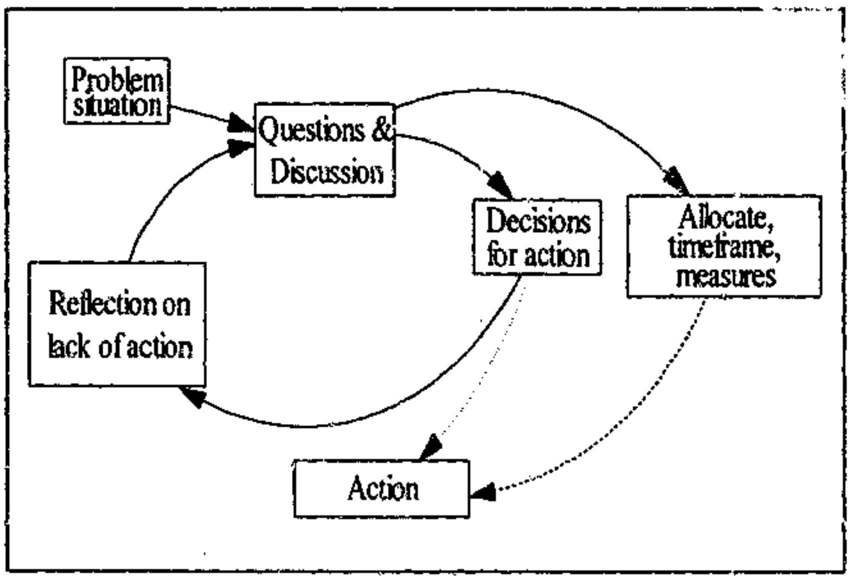

Figure 23: The gap between decisions for action and proposed actions

The proposals were implemented in both the action research sessions and the operational meetings. As a result, matters not resolved were brought forward and progress reported. This proved to be successful in identifying action and inaction. However, there were decisions that remained dormant or were delayed by interventions outside the research process. As one manager stated at the evaluation interview:

> "In terms of what I have been involved with, actually it hasn't progressed. The changes to meeting structures is something that we talked very clearly about and we even created a structure around that and devised how it would be and how it would look. We developed a working party and that never happened. I was on the working party to roll that stuff about the new meeting structure for the team leaders, coordinators and the rest of the staff. It was very exciting and we; there were four of us on that working party I think. Every single meeting we tried to have was aborted by ... now for one reason or another he is flat out, he doesn't need to come to the meetings. ... We did (set) some clear dates and so on and ... stymied that saying, no; no you can't do it that way. But we never progressed it further and each time we tried to meet ... wasn't available or wasn't (pause). So that was something that would have been quite simple to role out. So we get to the end of this year and ... we never actually rolled it out or achieved it, so that is something that would have been quite a concrete link to the AR." (#006)
>
> (Source: Final Interview Transcript).

This disclosure was aligned with the findings of the Social Network Analysis (discussed in Chapter 7) and the control that the Chief Executive and the General Manager had over what flowed in the organisation.

Continuing Researcher Reflections

Was Inaction Linked to the Capabilities of the Managers?

At the same time as reflecting on whether the structures that were in place were impacting on decision taking and action, the researcher also pondered the question of manager capability. A journal note stated:

> I now need to identify the knowledge gaps / barriers to be able to move the group on.
>
> (Source Researcher Notes 15/05/02)

Because manager capabilities such as the skills, aptitude and knowledge (Kaplan & Norton, 1996, 2004) are intangible (Hill & Jones, 2001), it was difficult to pinpoint what were areas of deficiency in either manager or organisation capabilities. Management roles, responsibilities and accountabilities need to be clearly articulated and aligned with strategy for effective action. The researcher reflected on a rich discussion on the possibilities of implementing a regional structure that occurred early in the research that identified a lack of direction to managers.

> The issue of regionalisation was an interesting discussion (or was it conversation?) but the interrelatedness of the component of the system was made linking possible consequences. The discussion also highlighted some lack of structures (definition of roles, procedures and structures for regionalisation). The managers have the responsibility to 'do' the role

> without clear guidelines – an example of going into implementation without a plan?
>
> (Source: Researcher Observation Notes 10/01/01)

On another occasion when transcribing tapes of an action research session, the researcher observed that the Chief Executive had been particularly directive and noted that:

> The direction may be inhibiting the ability of managers to manage, or is it that managers are not managing?
>
> (Source: Researcher Observation/Reflection Notes 31/01/02)

A participant expressed the possibility that managers may not be equipped with the management skills on reflecting on the difficulties associated with communicating the decisions of the action research sessions with non-participating managers. The participant stated:

> "That may be just because people don't have the skills to articulate what has come out of that (session)." (#019)
>
> (Source: Transcribed Exit Interview)

The researcher had assumed that by holding management positions, the managers had the pre requisite managerial knowledge and tools to be able to implement strategy and to action decisions taken within the action research sessions. This proved not to be the case as managers of contract services were clinical professionals and had been promoted to management positions as the services expanded. As with other clinically based organisations, this is not uncommon.

The inability to take action could be linked to the narrow technical focus of the managers and their service programs. In their local environment, each manager was able to have some control over the way in which decisions were operationalised. Actions are modified when the manager and their program are required to interact within the larger social context of the organisation in which they have limited control (Hill & Jones, 2001). The transition from locally autonomous service programs to an integrated organisation that required collaboration between managers to achieve the strategic direction of the organisation required a boarder organisational perspective. The manager participants began to realise this with the recognition that they function in 'silos', but had not collectively taken action to address the problem.

Further reflection at the time when there had been a total revision of the organisation strategy and a corresponding expansion of the participating managers the issue of internal capability was noted again.

> Hang on to the notion of 'internal capability' of these managers to implement the strategic plan. Initially, then with reflective practice, this group grew and were able to take some actions. Now with new members to the group, those operational managers, there is again an issue of internal capability as managers prepare strategies to implements the Forward Plan.
>
> (Source: Research Reflection Notes 30/04/02)

The researcher believed that there was an internal capability problem / readiness of managers to act and that there were probably many reasons for this. The possible reasons included clinical professional transition to manager role, a limited understanding of the management role and a deficiency in management skills. The researcher subsequently raised these observations with the Chief Executive at an informal meeting. The Chief Executive indicated that some managers were developing as a result of awareness, some from the action research reflection sessions and from one-on-one supervision.

As the Board and the senior management staff had recently completed an organisational analysis of the perceived strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats which had been discussed at a staff meeting the value of identifying gaps in management competencies was considered. This proposal was presented to the research participants as a means to facilitate examination of individual strengths and opportunities and to consider these in the context of developing the management group.

Research Action: Exploring Existing and Desired Manager Strengths

The researcher facilitated the session. Each manager was asked to identify their major strength and how this contributed to the strength of the management group. The desired strengths of individual and the group and the perceived barriers to achieving effective functioning are summarised in Figure 24. A number of barriers and desired strengths of the group had been recurrent issues throughout the research and continued to be of concern to the group. These were related to communication, relationships and knowing how to implement proposed action and the absence of evaluation and feedback. Discussion of the opportunities for action was deferred to another session, which did not eventuate.

Reflecting on this session the researcher became aware that she used words and concepts in a different way to the way they were interpreted. For example, management strength was not initially interpreted to include management skills such as leading, organising, controlling, monitoring, and budgeting and so on. This was an example of different language being used by an academic and a clinical manager within the practice setting.

[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
Developer of people Questioning/ critical ability Visionary / Experienced Focus – identification of issues Planning Expert implementer Leader Ability to balance discussion provide stability Adaptable Give direction / Clarity Analytical and questioning Sales, debater Project management Systematic	Structures to facilitate communication sharing Tensions between sharing and focus How to implement the proposed action Feedback, systematic evaluation	(For discussion)	Presentation skills Organisation Knowledge of management Project management skills Better at sharing Leadership Consistency of focus over time Time management/ breadth management Leader / developer Understanding of organisation	Team connectedness Commitment Team/connectedness Strong interconnectedness Seamless Drive action Evaluation Trust Different views Commitment to follow though External Communication

Figure 24: Examination of current and desired strengths

Discussion

The perception that the participating managers were not able to take action on the decisions to act was related to a number of factors. The first factor was the ability of managers to take action was initially limited by the management role of the Board and the structure in place. The second factor was the number of changes to the composition of the action research group (and the operational management group) and the need for the researcher and participants to revisit the progress of the action research. The third factor was the newness of the management role and the limited preparation that the incumbents had for the management role. Fourthly, it was possible that the 'collective inquiry' of the participant managers was internally threatening to the Chief Executive (Senge, 1992). The last possibility was not addressed during the research.

Throughout the action research issues of concern that were addressed related to the strategic readiness of the organisation. An organisation can only act if there is an alignment of its human, information and organisational capital with its strategy (Kaplan & Norton, 2004). Organisational structures were identified as inefficient (Chapter 4); the information systems, databases and communication networks were identified as issues of concern (Chapter 7); and the preparation of managers for their managerial positions was limited (Chapter 3).

The possibility that the gap between taking a decision to act and the action was an expression of resistance on behalf of the managers to change the status quo was considered. However, as decisions to act were taken following robust discussion and debate between managers and there was a commitment to act, resistance appeared to be at odds with the perceived inaction. Even so, if as a result of the decisions to act, individual managers perceived a loss of local control and way of working (Marci, Tagliaventi, & Bertolotti, 2002); this could have had an influence on the rate of action or failure to take action.

A manager in the evaluation interview articulated the possibility that that there was a cultural barrier to taking action that was linked to the origins of the organisation. The manager made the link between organisation values and the pace of change when reflecting on the time it took to clarify Membership:

> "I think that some of the things that we were getting bogged down in trying to hold onto all that is valuable from the past but afraid to go too quickly for fear that we might loose those values. Because we also spent a lot of time looking at, well what are our values? Honesty and all of those sorts of things; I would like to think that it was a slow and at times painful process but I would like to that it was done the right way because with a lot of change like that, particularly with a membership based organisation you have got incredible potential to loose people. If you move too fast they can fear change, and then you have lost them. ... It needed to go slowly, to make sure that it was done right so that a lot of people could see a lot of thought was going into it. It was not just change for the sake of change; it was change for improvement to the organisation while hanging on to what were its base values." (#007)
>
> (Source: Final Interview)

In summary, the internal capability analysis assisted the participants to appreciate the skills brought to the group by each manager. The exploration of the knowing doing gap brought the importance of completing the problem solving cycle to the attention of managers. The influence of the organisation culture on the research is explored further in Chapter 8.

Chapter Conclusion

This Chapter discussed the cycles of reflection on the researcher perception of inaction within the research process. Specifically, the chapter considered the possible influence of the organisational relationship of managers with the Board, composition of the research group and the research process, and the capabilities of managers to take action. The action taken to explore these perceptions was also addressed. A link was identified between communication and action. Figure 25 depicts the action research process employed to address the issues around taking or not taking action.

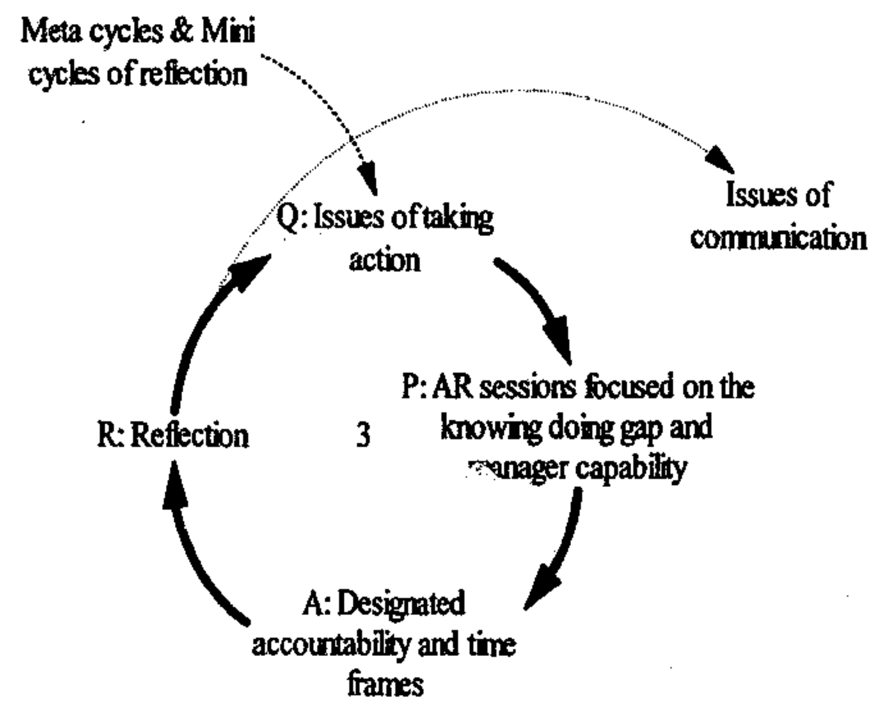

Figure 25: The action research process employed to address the issues around taking or not taking action.

Chapter 7 will address other issues of communication and research intervention.

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Chapter 7

Issues of Communication

Introduction

Chapter 6 discussed the process gap between clarifying the issues of concern raised by manager participants and taking action. One issue that remained unresolved was related to communication. Communication was a recurring theme that was raised by the research participants over the duration of the action research process. Although a number of practical actions had been taken, communication remained an issue of concern.

This chapter is structured around researcher reflections on the problem of communication, the practical actions taken to address them and the research interventions that led to the manager participants developing insights into the issue.

Issues of Communication and Information Exchange

The issues of communication were a topic of discussion within a range of contexts and action research sessions. To the researcher, the communication problem lacked definition. The concept was used in a way to be inclusive of the use of language as the medium of communication in social interactions and "the unity of information, message and understanding" (Leydesdorff, 2000, p. 276). There was ongoing speculation as to what could be done to address the communication problems.

Organisation structures, text and diagrams provide the structure for internal relations. How the structures are interpreted will influence communication patterns (Phillips & Brown, 1993). The documented mission, vision and strategic goals provided an explicit formal structure for The Study Organisation. The formal structures in place were directed towards functional task achievement. Initial and subsequent changes to the formal structure resulted in the creation of new positions and inclusion of new managers in the management group. These led to changes to the way in which managers related to each other and to other people within the organisation.

Structural relationships had an impact on the communication and decision-making processes within The Study Organisation. The manager participants first became aware of this during the cycles of action research discussions on the Strategic Framework and the applicability of the goals across programs. The awareness was present again during the action research discussion on the role of each program to increase Membership numbers and participation.

Formal structures within organisations prescribe accountability relationships. In this case the formal structures and appointment of managers was aligned with the strategic goals of The Study Organisation. This alignment did not encourage the communication across programs necessary to achieve the common goals of The Study Organisation. Early reflections by participants on formal communication flows were that:

> "... We only communicate directly to Subcommittees and the Board; we don't have horizontal communication between committee and committee." (#001)
>
> (Source: AR Session 16/10/00)

Although managers reported directly to subcommittee chairpersons, the communication route was informal, as noted by one manager:

> "...It is by personal communication rather than formal communication." (#002)
>
> (Source: AR Session 16/10/00)

It became clear that the hierarchical alignment of managers with the Board Subcommittees did not facilitate horizontal communication, or timely or accurate information transfer. It was also acknowledged that the personal communication, although along formal lines, did not encourage the communication necessary to achieve the cooperation between subcommittees that was necessary to implement the strategic goals.

The existence of functional silos was also identified as a barrier to the exchange of information between managers. This was considered to have an influence on the quality of information:

> "... If we are not connecting in terms of even knowing each other's roles, then how are people connecting in terms of information. In theory it should happen, you know, through the kind of trickle effect, information from managers and so on. But the reality is, by the time it is third or fourth or tenth, it looses a lot in the translation." (#006)
>
> (Source: AR Session Transcript 23/01/02)

Communicating The Study Organisation strategy and associated organisational and accountability structure changes to stakeholders, other than the managers, was identified as being problematic. A strategy to overcome this was to instigate a weekly communiqué generated from the administrative office.[21] It was distributed as

[21] AR Session 16/10/00

an e-mail and facsimile to meet the different circumstances of the receiver and allow for real time information that could be retrieved when required.

These bulletins were maintained and were being used by operational staff to communicate to program participants, volunteers and Members. There was however, some debate as to the effectiveness of the bulletins as the only means of communicating policy:

> "Actually, I am wondering if penetration is not occurring (through) the staff newsletter because there is always an update there on policy development ... but I don't think we follow through." (#006)
>
> "... but the newsletter is not necessarily read." (#002)
>
> (Source: AR Session Transcript 23/01/02)

The ongoing issue of communication arose again during discussion on Member involvement in functional programs. The dilemma, as expressed by one manager, was linked to structures, communicating locally and the requirement to communicate with Members and other programs.

> "I think the gaps or issues are of a structural nature ... communication between us and support groups, is at times difficult. But what is the structure to facilitate (communication)? ... I am reflecting on (the) question about how are we communicating, passing on information about key changes to Members out there and I am quite stumped by that question, because I am not, I actually don't. My focus since I have been here is trying to get communication with my program participants and I, my initial reaction was well hang on,

> 'do I have a role to communicate with Members?' and I thought well isn't that (#005)'s role, then I thought, 'is it'?" (#006)
>
> (Source: AR Session Transcript 20/03/02)

This reflection led to animated discussion about roles and responsibilities of all managers in communicating to Members.

Determining the composition of the action research participant group provided an early indication that communication challenges would arise within the organisation. Maximising the participation and consultation of those managers who were included in the group of participants and who also comprised the senior staff management group with those managers external to the group provided different but recurring challenges.

A manager, who was included in the research and management group from the beginning, reflected on the progress of the first six months. During this initial period, there was a focus on getting to know the other managers and their functional areas. There was also a beginning appreciation of The Study Organisation as a whole and the relationship of individual programs within the larger organisation.

> "I think increasing the scope of the meeting is very good in terms of involving all the other programs … one thing that we have lost is that at the start of the year … this was sort of a real forum to bring out individual issues, individual projects, things that were occurring within each persons particular area of interest. You could actually feed off that and everybody knew where individual projects were at and offer a bit of advice." (#016)

(Source: AR Session Transcript 18/12/00)

Another manager who became involved some months into the research expressed a different view. This manager recognised the problem of keeping those outside the group informed and the necessity to continually refresh research process and progress for those who became involved along the way.

> "I can't go back in time, I mean, I would like to have come into these particular meetings probably at the beginning of the year, it would have been easier. I don't know how you can go about recapping what was done and making it worthwhile for everybody else. I don't know, the terms of reference were helpful to a point, these documents and being able to come in now with certain things…the discussions in regard to, no I have no idea about the membership, the full group branches, you know issues, you pick up on it but you have really got to persevere with it and you have to come consistently and I think it needs to be stated that OK you are not going to understand everything but rather you have the opportunity to ask questions as stupid or…but you have to persevere with it and that is the only way that I can begin to get into the momentum." (#011)
>
> (Source: AR Session Transcript 18/12/00)

As the research progressed, there was an expansion of the research participant group. At the same time attention became more focused on the organisational issues to be addressed. For some of the participants this represented a loss of focus on individual programs. The change was acknowledged:

> "I think we have probably lost that, particularly in the last three months so that we have been doing a lot of reflection and a lot of, sort of, broader based work, but it hasn't sort of been a forum for looking at where individual projects are at and where individual areas, what they are actually doing." (#016)
>
> (Source: AR Session Transcript 18/12/00)

Inclusion of all managers in the research group was made difficult for a number of reasons. The Board had proposed the initial manager composition of the group, potential manager participants were located throughout the State, some managers had dual clinical and management roles and the meetings were to be held regularly. As all managers were not included, communicating the action decisions was left to representative managers. There was a perceived gap in the information that was received by the non-participating managers. The perception was highlighted in an exit interview by one of the managers:

> "There was a great gap (communicating the outcomes of the sessions to those not present). I personally have tried to transmit the information ... to the person that I was representing ... I would spend an hour on the phone and the person ... I don't think absorbed anything. Quite honestly, I don't think he was really listening. He didn't want to know and yet later would say 'oh well I was never told that'." (#019)
>
> (Source: Transcript Exit Interview)

This communication gap may also have contributed to a perceived failure to resolve or act on decisions that were raised in the action research sessions.

In order to transmit the information from the action research sessions, representative managers had the responsibility to participate in the action research sessions and at the same time as take notes in sufficient detail to communicate the outcome in a way that was meaningful to their peers. This was not an easy task:

> "Sometimes it is hard to fit what is said in those meetings and what goes on in the organisation … I am talking about how, how things are discussed and there seems to be some clarity within the group but it becomes very fuzzy when they are transmitted one stage further." (#019)
>
> (Source: Transcript Exit Interview)

The restructuring of The Study Organisation, the appointment of managers into new positions from inside and outside the organisation created tensions between those who had been with the organisation for some time and those new to the organisation and the directions of the organisation. Managers new to the organisation or to their position had to learn new roles and did not have a history of working together. New and strategic relationships had to be established in order to implement the strategic directions of the organisation and to get work done. Krackhardt (1996) referred to these issues and the lack of a clear understanding of the social relationships as problems that are associated with staff being new to organisations. The researcher considered the newness of the managers and associated issues as possible contributing factors to the issues that were being considered under the umbrella of 'communication issues'.

The need for social collaboration and the use of informal relationships to get the information necessary to get work done were not being acknowledged as important (Cross, Nohria, & Parker, 2002). Although informal groups of people play an important role in getting work done within an organisation, manager participants expressed concern that there was a strong informal communication network in place. Manager participants considered the informal communication network to be strong and a challenge to the formal network[22]. This concern appeared to the researcher to be at odds with the informal culture that prevailed early in the research.

Suggestions for the improvement of communication were focused on the intangible elements of social communication but also included formal approaches:

> "... Put a break in the informal communication and get some formal stuff. Then once you have got the formal you can begin to add the informal." (#001)
>
> (Source: AR Session Transcript 23/01/02)
>
> "More enhanced communication between programs, better work practices, cooperation between all programs, processes protocols etc. Implementation of some of those areas we have talked about that have been put into the Forward Plan[23], that we are starting to think about." (#015)
>
> (Source: AR Session Transcript 17/04/02)
>
> "... Improve the connectedness and communication between stakeholders in the organisation so that our guiding beliefs become our daily beliefs." (#005)
>
> (Source: AR Session Transcript 17/04/02)

Communication issues and possible solutions continued to be raised and discussed. One manager reflected that The Study Organisation was totally different and more

[22] AR Session 20/03/02
[23] The Forward Plan was the revised strategic plan that replaced the Strategic Framework.

professional from when he started and acknowledged that although they still had a long way to go he would:

> "...like to think that we were providing a better level of communication ... that we did five years ago." (#015)
>
> (Source: AR Session Transcript 20/03/02)

The researcher reflected on the ongoing and complex dilemma of communication. In the process the researcher also considered how well the manager participants understood the complementary nature and the potential value of both formal and informal communication networks within the organisation. According to Beer (1967) network connections within a dynamic system, such as the study organisation, are its lines of communications. The state of these communication links reflect the amount of information that is in the system. The amount of information flow to people within the system requires decision making as to whether the flow needs to be adjusted up or down, on or off.

> "The state of the information in the communication network defining the system ... will at any given moment determine whether ... (the system) fires or not" (Beer, 1967, p. 11).

Exploring the social networks that were in place within The Study Organisation was identified as a means of providing the manager participants with some insights into existing communication patterns within their organisation.

Social Network Mapping and Analysis

Theoretical framework

Social Network Analysis is a technique that illustrates how people in organisations relate to each other (Mead, 2001). Tichy (1979) traced the origins of the network approach within organisations to the early 1920's and three different disciplines. Sociology for example, "emphasised the patterns of interaction and communication as the key to understanding social life" (p. 508). Anthropology for example, "emphasised the content of the relationships joining individuals, (and) the conditions under which they would exist" (p. 508). Role theory for example, considered "organisations as 'fish nets' of interrelated offices" (p. 508). Researching social network concepts within organisations (Cross et al., 2002; Cross, Parker, Prusak, & Borgatti, 2001; Nelson, 1988; Tichy et al., 1979) has been extended to researching the strategic value of networks and the importance of collaboration between organisations (Van Laere & Heene, 2003) and knowledge networks (Contractor & Monge, 2002).

Social networks are sets of contacts linking individuals (Nelson, 1988). The relationships between individuals can be formal or informal, weak or strong according to the frequency of the contacts. The properties of the networks include those concerned with individual attributes and the content of the transaction in the relationships, the nature of the links and the structural characteristics of the network (Nelson, 1988; Tichy et al., 1979; Wasserman & Faust, 1994).

The structural properties can include the size of the group, connectedness of the individuals within the network, the isolation of individuals within the network, clustering or cliques, openness, reach, and network centrality. The elements of centrality are related to power, influence, decision-making and innovation (Sparrowe, Linden, Wayne, & Kraimer, 2001). Tichy, Tushman and Fombrun (1979) provided an explanation of these properties which are detailed in Table 9.

Table 9: Network properties

[illegible]	[illegible]
Content	Exchange of information
Nature of the links Intensity	The strength of relations between managers
Structural Characteristics Size	The number of individuals participating or identified as contacts in the network
Connectedness	The number of actual links in the network as a ratio of the number of possible links.
Cluster	A dense region within the network
Openness	The external links of the social unit
Reach	The average number of links between any two individuals in the network
Centrality	The degree to which relations are guided by the formal network
Star	An individual with the highest number of nominations
Isolate	An individual who has uncoupled from the network

Justification for the use of Social Network Analysis

Organisations are considered socially constructed systems, the meaning of which is communicated by structures and texts (Pfeffer & Sutton, 1999, 2000) such as organisation charts and policy statements and procedures. These formal structures, while easily accessible, offer little indication about the social structures that exist within organisations. Examination of communication networks are a means to provide an indication as to the social structures that exist and have the potential to influence the strategic implementation process (Rapert, Vellinquette, & Garretson, 2002).

Network analysis was a means to provide a practical simple intervention to enable the examination of the different communication structures of the organisation (Krackhardt, 1996; Nelson, 1988). The design was simple and the data could be easily collected. The generation of network maps or pictures would allow for visual and interactive interrogation and interpretation of multiple networks to be made by managers themselves (Tichy et al., 1979). This was a tool the researcher could use to stimulate change in the communication network between managers and other people outside the group.

Exploring the information exchange networks of the management group

Collection of network data

Social network data consists of structural and manager attributes (Wasserman & Faust, 1994). The data of interest to the action researcher and the manager participants was information exchange between managers. The nature of the links related to the strength or frequency of the contacts between managers and the degree to which managers were connected with each other. The structural characteristics were primarily concerned with the ways in which individual managers within the internal network of the senior staff management group was linked.

A set of questions were compiled that were based on those used by Cross (2002), Krebs (2002), Mead (2001), The Advisory Board Company (1996) and Krackhardt and Hanson (1993). The questions focused on the reasons for collaboration between people in organisations and the frequency of the interactions. A total of 16 demographic and communication questions were included in a simple questionnaire. The full set of questions is located in (Appendix 7-1).

Demographic questions were included to gather attributes of the managers. The data included formal reporting relationship, the time managers had been with The Study Organisation and in their current management position, the location from which they worked and their functional area of responsibility. The inclusion of these attributes was to allow for simultaneous analyses of these with structural attributes (Wasserman & Faust, 1994).

A question to identify the primary stakeholders associated with their functional area was included to get an indication of who *should* be consulted about stakeholder needs. Seven communication questions were included to identify the flow of information and the interdependency of tasks. Included were questions specific to the communication of the Strategic Framework for the organisation and were related to the mission, vision and strategy of the organisation; and knowledge on stakeholder needs. The remainder of the questions were directed to identifying interactions to get work done, expert advice to get work done and the informal grapevine. The questions and their focus are detailed in Table 10.

Table 10: Network communication questions and content focus

Formal	06. To whom do you report?
Strategic directions	11. With whom do you discuss (organisation) mission, vision & strategy?
Value importance	15. With whom do you discuss what is important and valued in the (organisation)?
Work interactions (Task)	12. With whom do you work to get your job done (exchange information, documents and other resources)?
Expertise	13. To whom do you go for expert advice in doing your work?
Gossip/Grapevine	14. With whom do you discuss what is going on at work and who is doing what in (organisation)?
Stakeholder knowledge	16. With whom do you discuss primary stakeholder needs and service demands?

The questions were administered at a regular action research session. The group had recently been expanded to 15 of whom only 14 responded to the questions. For questions 11 to 16, the participant managers were asked to list the person within the management group and external to the group with whom they had a contact. They were asked to limit the list to five contacts. Contacts outside this group were to be identified as either being external to the group but internal to the organisation or external to the group and external to the organisation. The options for the frequency of the contact included once or more daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, and other. Managers were also asked to identify the primary stakeholders within their functional area to facilitate comparison with whom they should consult with whom they were consulting. A list representing the stakeholders of importance to the organisation had previously been identified and described by the participant managers in an action research cycle.

Examination of the data

In the first instance, the data for the question, 'with whom do you work to get your job done?' and the question 'with whom do you discuss what is going on at work and who is doing what (within the organisation)?' were collapsed and manually drawn as a representation of the networks. The first iteration of the maps was presented to the manager participants for discussion. The visual appreciation of the networks provided valuable insights to the participants into the communication links within the management group and with people outside the group.

So that the 'what if' scenarios could be considered, a means of producing and analysing multiple maps was sought. The network analysis software used to explore the data was InFlow (Krebs, 2001). The survey data were entered into the InFlow program. Each manager and person or group to whom the manager was connected was depicted as a node. The nodes and descriptors are detailed in Table 11.

Table 11: Nodes and descriptors

Node	Descriptor
1-15	Manager Participants
16, 17	XI1, EI2, External to the group, internal to the organisation
18, 19	XE1, XE2, External to the group, external to the organisation
20	Board of Directors
21	Supporters
22	Donors
23	Members
24	Volunteers
25	Participants (service users)

The frequencies of contacts were entered numerically; daily or more became 5, weekly 4, monthly 3, quarterly 2 and other 1. The contacts became the ties linking the nodes within the networks. The program facilitated the production of multiple networks maps and allowed for metric analysis of these maps.

Network mapping and visual interpretation

Once the data had been entered into Inflow, maps were generated using different functional groups, changes to network membership, gender, and location of office and different frequencies of contact. The maps were reproduced to OHP and a static presentation made to the participants and discussed. The discussion included relationships between the network maps; the impact of organisational structures on communication between managers, Membership and other stakeholders was robust and healthy. This session transcript is included as Appendix 7-2. The maps also formed the basis of a computer based interactive session with the managers to consider "what if" scenarios. At this session a number of variations to the network maps were considered. Those presented and discussed below are representative of the range of maps produced.

Formal network: To whom do you report?

The formal network map, as shown in Figure 26, confirmed the flow of information and work as depicted by the structure of the organisation chart and position descriptions. The map confirmed that Managers belonged to one of two groups within the senior staff management group, those with a Membership focus and those with a Contract Services focus. Those reporting to Node 001 (Chief Executive) had an administrative and, or Membership focus and those reporting to Node 002 (General Manager) had a Contract Service focus.

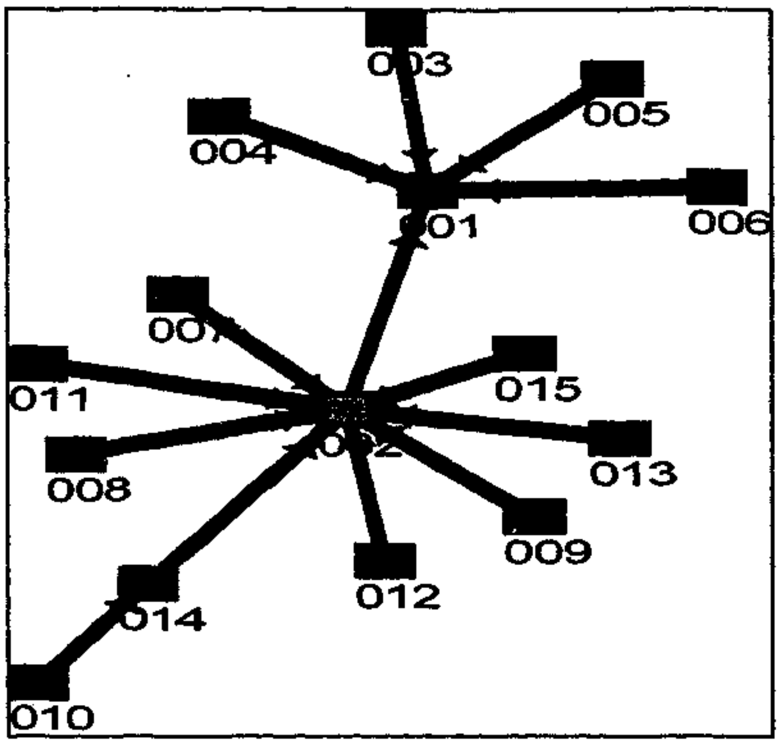

Figure 26: Formal networks

Although confirming the formal relationship of managers, the map stimulated much discussion. Node 006 for example, had Contract Service functions that were Membership focused. The following extract is an example of the discussion that was forthcoming on the reporting relationships of the managers:

> "It is interesting looking at where Node 006 sits. So he is sitting with the direct reports, as he is a direct report to me, um m ..." (#001)
>
> "I wonder if we could begin to look at part of the reason why. I mean, I don't know if you can ... there could be some sort of reflection on where people are accountable and therefore have common purpose." (#011)

(Source: AR Session Transcript 30/08/02

This insight was significant and led to the managers undertaking ongoing discussion on the formal operating relationships. The discussions were outside the action research process and represented a move away from a dependence on the researcher to facilitate action. The discussions led to a restructure of accountabilities and reporting relationships that commenced at the time of the researcher withdrawal from active research in the organisation.

Strategic directions network: With whom do you discuss (organisation) mission, vision and strategy?

Managers were responsible for the promulgation of the Strategic Framework, which included the revised mission, vision and strategy for the organisation, so there was an interest in with whom this was discussed. The communication pattern shown in Figure 27 indicated a pattern of discussion that was aligned to formal weekly meetings and confirmed the emphasis placed on interpreting the strategy. When the monthly and quarterly contacts were considered (Figure 28 and Figure 29), volunteers (Node 024), participants (Node 025), other people inside the organisation (Nodes 016 and 017) and other external contacts (Nodes 18 and 019) were included in the communication network.

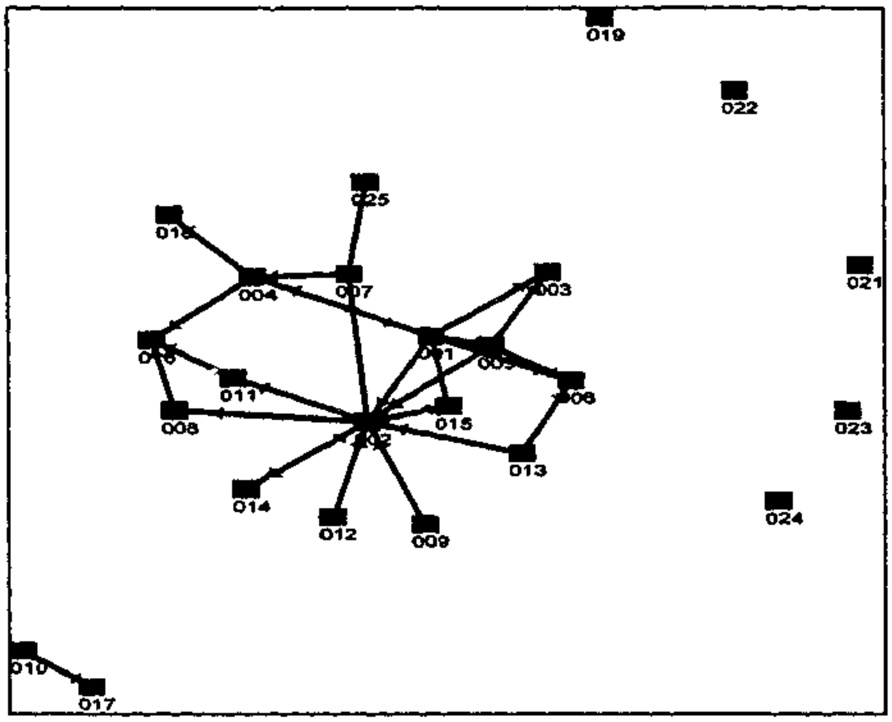

Figure 27: Discussion of mission, vision and strategy on a weekly basis

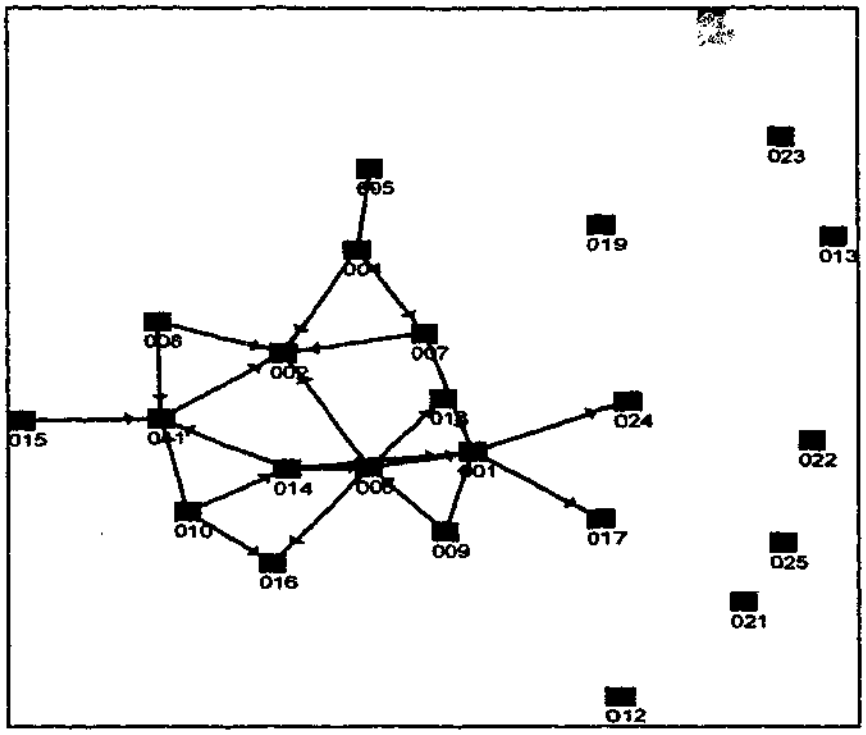

Figure 28: Discussion of mission, vision and strategy on a monthly basis

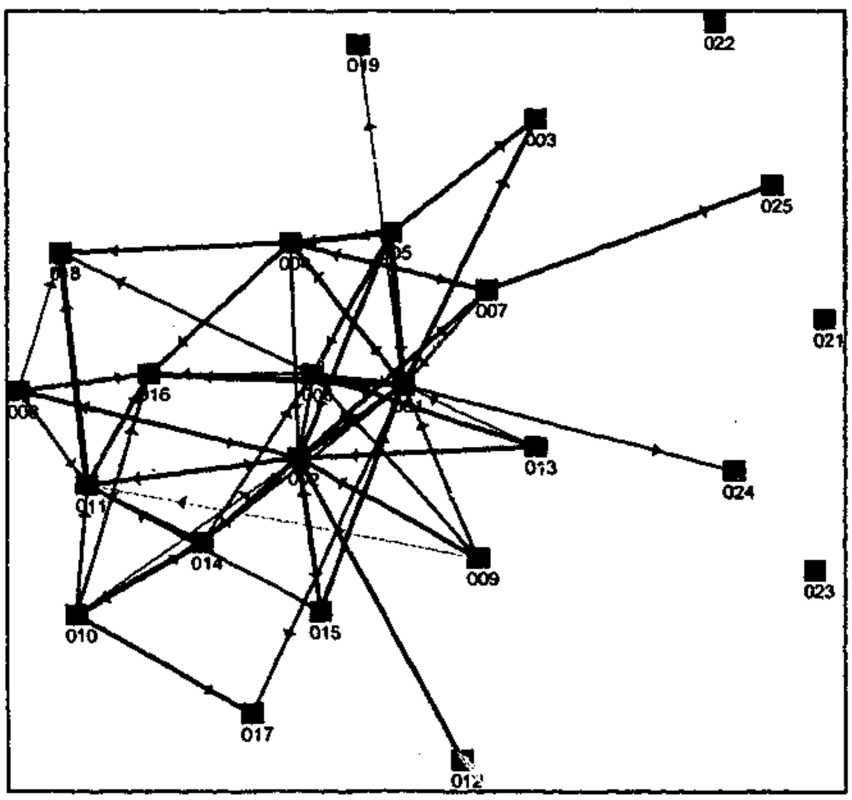

Figure 29: Discussion of mission, vision and strategy on for all contact frequencies

Work interactions (task) network: With whom do you work to get your job done?
In other words, with whom did the managers exchange information and documents in order to do their work? When the network was viewed for different frequencies of contact it was noted that on a daily basis five of the managers went to a person (Node 016) outside the management group but within the organisation. This was seen to be acceptable for managers to delegate to their local work groups and others within the organisation. However, four of the managers (Nodes 002, 004, 005, and 006) indicated that they went to the Chief Executive (Node 001) on a daily basis to get their jobs done. The daily communication networking of these managers followed the formal hierarchy. This observation led participants to question the delegation practice of the Chief Executive and the obvious dependency of the managers on the direction of the Chief Executive.

As one manager noted:

> "There is not much linkage between the managers; you would have expected that there would have been arrows between them." (#011)
>
> (Source: AR Session Transcript 30/08/02)

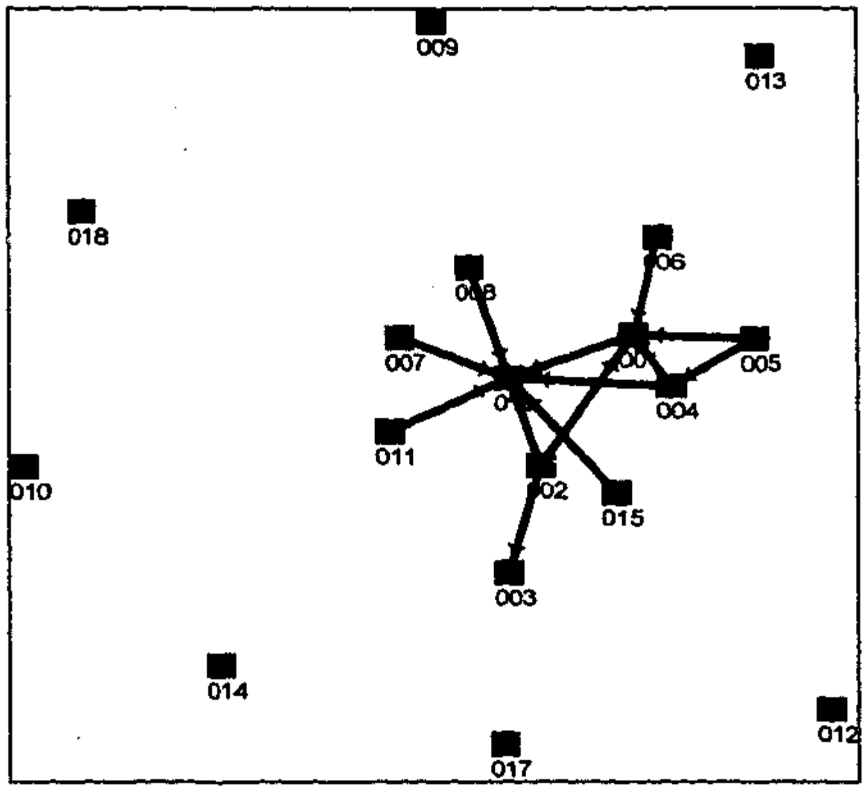

Figure 30: Getting the job done network for daily contacts

When the network map for weekly contacts to get the job done was considered it was noted that there was an increased interaction between managers and people outside the management group (Nodes 016, 017) and with people external to the organisation (Node 018). The General Manager (Node 002) held a weekly meeting with contact services managers and this is identified in the network. These managers also had weekly contact with the financial controller (Node 003). Nodes 10, 12, 13 and 14, were all geographically located in rural Victoria and through the examination of the map it was recognised that they did not have the same access to those managers within urban locations.

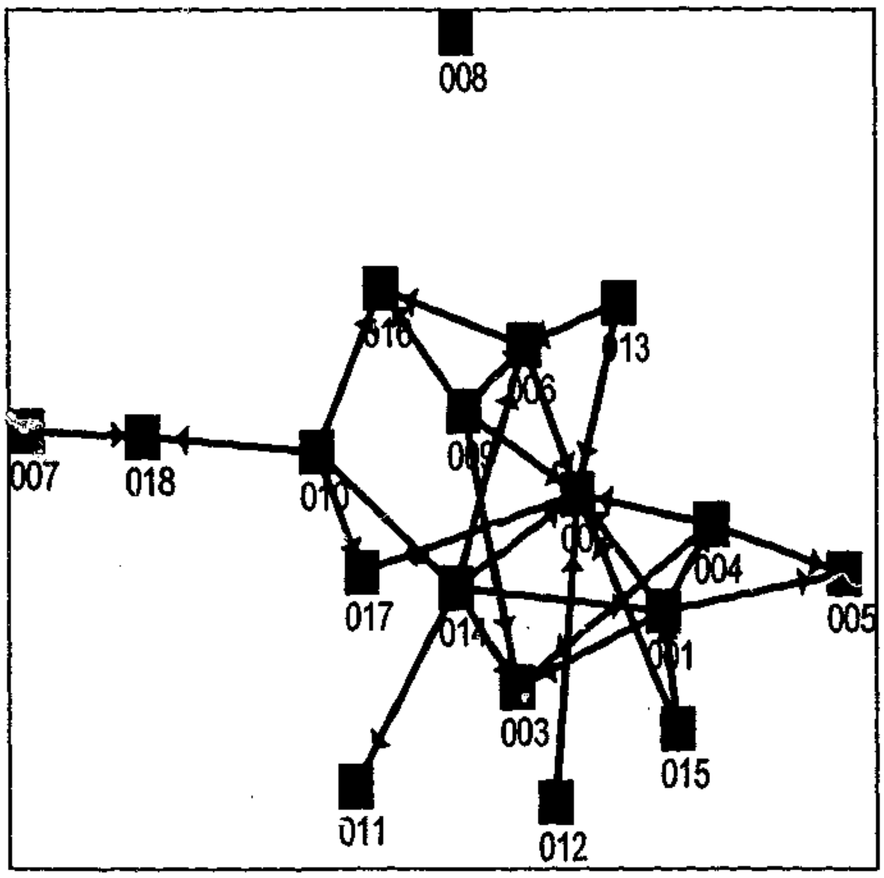

Figure 31: Getting the job done network for weekly contacts

When the contacts of daily, weekly and monthly are added together (Figure 32), observations included the lack of connections between Node 012 and others within the network. The lack of connection could be explained, as this person was new to the management position. Other observations were focused on the concentration of workflows into Node 002 (General Manager) and Node 016 (People outside the management group but within the organisation). Although Node 008 had a formal weekly meeting with the General Manager it was observed that this node did not rely on Node 002 to get the job done.

The concentration of what information flowed within the organisation with the General Manager was identified in a number of networks. This led to individual reflection by managers and was followed by group discussion on the reliance on the General Manager to get the job done. It was acknowledged that the reliance on the General Manager led to consequent delays in processes and completing work.

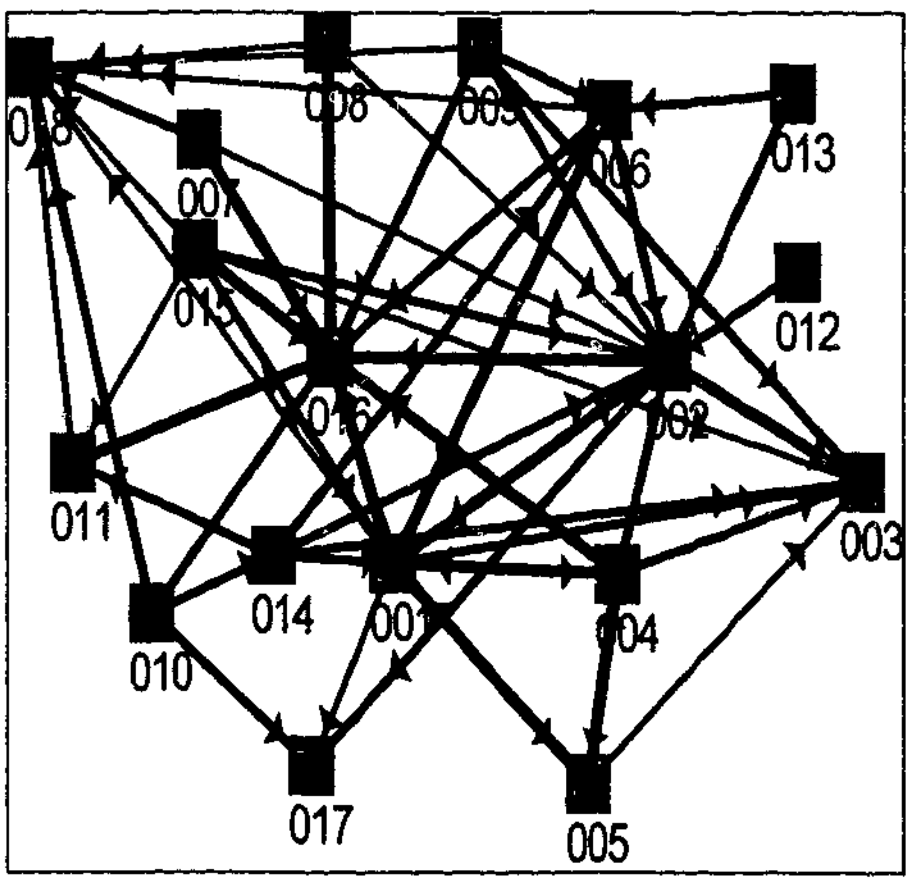

Figure 32: Getting the job done daily, weekly and monthly contacts

The task network was visually examined to consider if there were any gaps in connections. For example, Node 004 had the responsibility for development and membership functions and Node 005 had the responsibility for policy, advocacy and volunteers. These were functional areas with considerable overlap and were also of importance to all functional areas. It could be seen that there were reciprocal connections between these nodes. However, an observation was made in relation to the lack contacts between Node 005 and stakeholders who were of strategic value to the function area for which this node was responsible.

Expertise network: To whom dodo you go to for expert advice in doing your work?
This network (Figure 33), revealed who the managers considered to be sources with expertise. Again it was noted that there was a central concentration of flow to the Chief Executive (Node 001), the General Manager (Node 002) and also Node 003 (Finance Manager). An increase in contact with other people in the organisation (Node 016) and external to the organisation (Node 018) was observed.

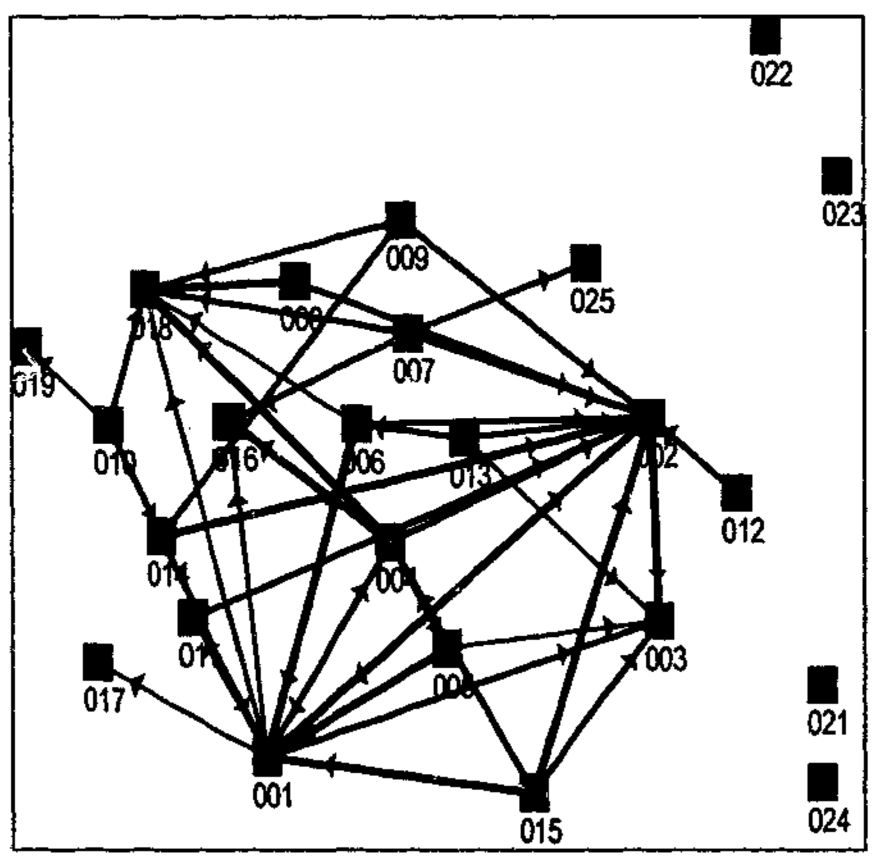

Figure 33: Expertise daily weekly, monthly contacts

This map led the managers to raise questions about the centralisation of expertise within the organisation. Was it an appropriate use of expertise? Was there a need for development of management and functional expertise with the management group? The insights and questions re enforced a move, initiated outside the action research, to establish a staff development program for managers.

Grapevine/gossip network: With whom do you discuss what is going on at work and who is doing what in the organisation?

This question and the maps, led to discussion on perceptions about influence and control. Managers were interested in their own networks. The following transcript extract is an example of the discussion about the perception about the influence one manager had on the information flow in the network:

> Researcher: "You came up as a manager to whom others go to."
>
> #011: "For what, the informal stuff?"
>
> Researcher: "You don't have as much of the control."
>
> #001: "I don't have any, but I will talk to anyone!" (Group laughter)
>
> Researcher: "But you are perceived to have."
>
> #001: "You are perceived to have influence."
>
> Researcher: "So you are perceived to have that influence or that information … if I want to find out what is going on in this organisation I will go to you."
>
> (Source: AR Session Transcript 30/08/02)

There were also links made between the formal network accountabilities and the informal networks and the power and control over information flows:

"I wonder if there was a comparison between (#009) and the likes of (#006) who is accountable to (#001), whether there is that sort of different pattern because of the nature of where you are accountable." (#011)

"It is very interesting to reflect on that internal network because this is one of the things that we were have been struggling with, that the organisational structure was very like that and we haven't built up work teams that were doing cross program work together that would strengthen some of those informal connections. That is really our task and that is really about regionalisation and some of that stuff about moving the power out." (#001)

(Source: AR Session Transcript 30/08/02)

Figure 34, shows the grapevine network within the management group. Observations of this network included the domination of the flow of gossip by Node 001 and the isolation of Nodes 005, 012 and 013.

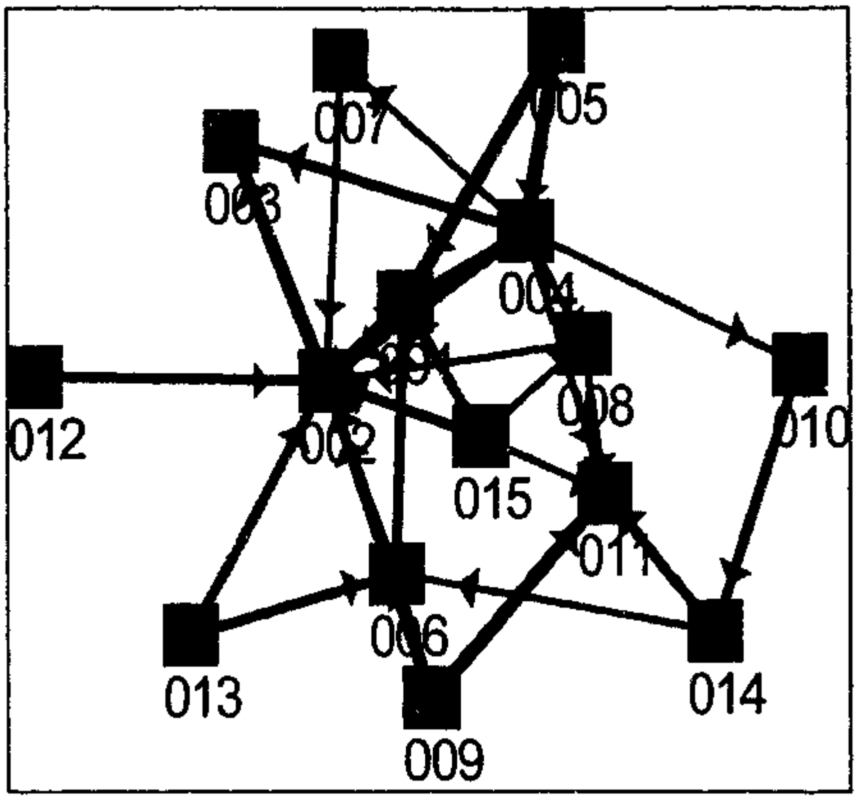

Figure 34: Informal (grapevine) network *within* the management group including daily, weekly and monthly contacts

The informal network map depicted in Figure 35, included grapevine activity with people inside and outside the organisation where managers sought information about what was going on within the organisation. Of particular note in this network was that Node 007 was isolated from regular contact within this the network. However, Node 007 became included when more regular contacts were added to the map (Figure 36). In that network, it was noted that Node 007 had a strong link with program participants to find out what was going on.

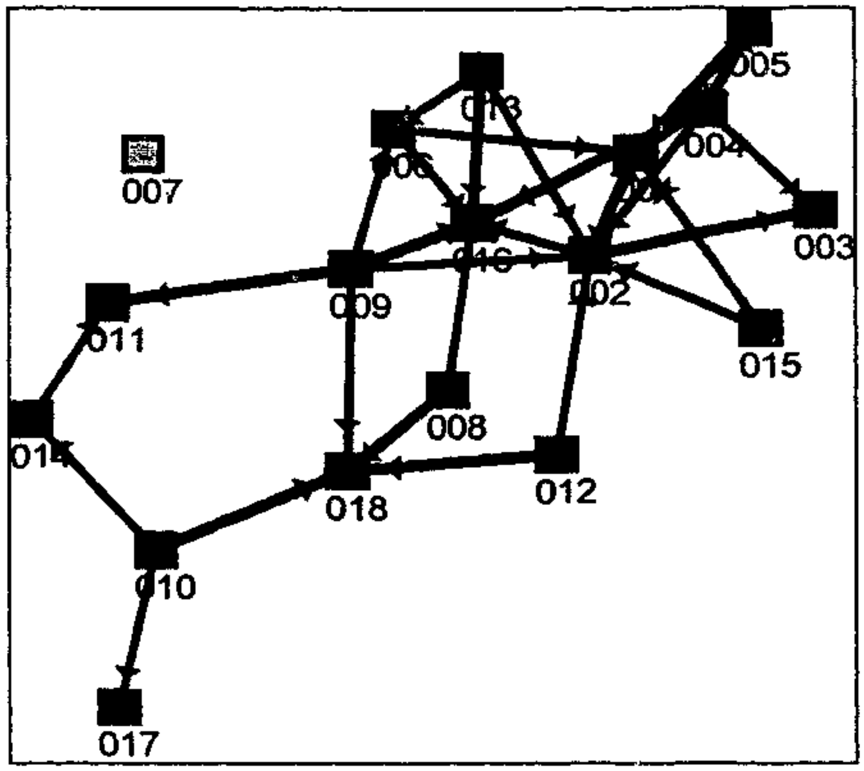

Figure 35: Grapevine network management group daily and weekly contacts with internal and external nodes

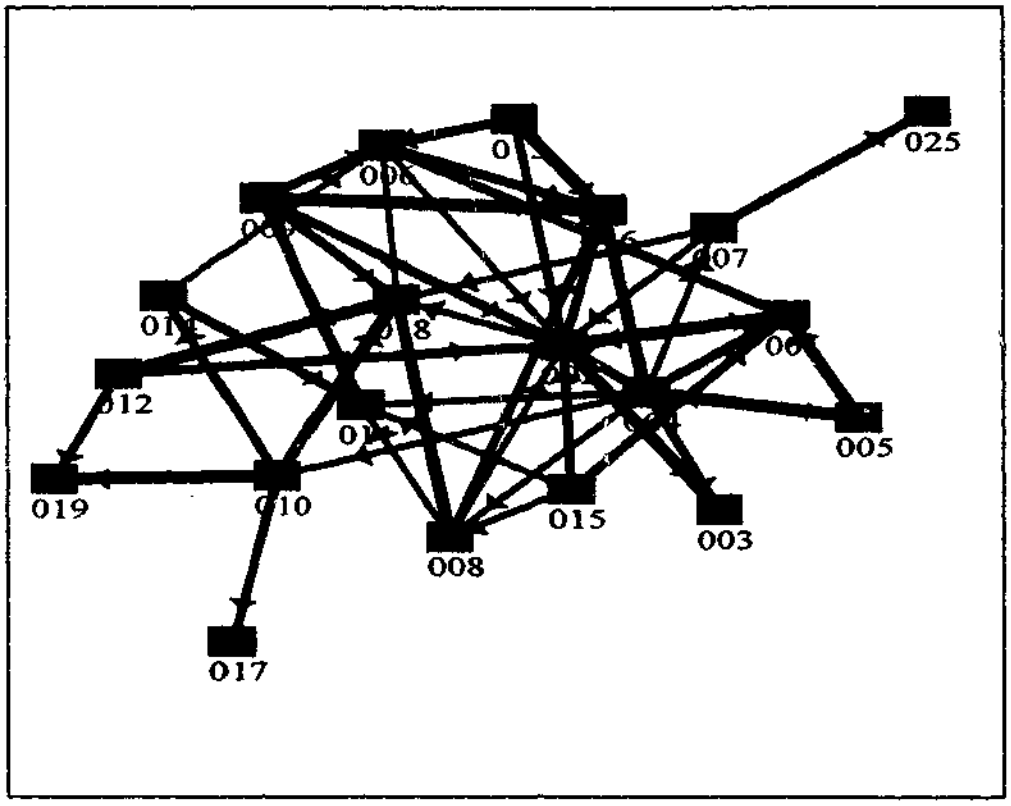

Figure 36: Grapevine network with all nodes for daily, weekly and monthly contacts

Value and importance network: With whom do you discuss what is important and valued?

Organisational ideals had been documented as the Mission, Vision and Values. However, the practice of these was being questioned. The response to the question is depicted in Figure 37. The network for all nodes showed that while there was networking between managers, communication with other stakeholders was also sought to determine what was important and valued.

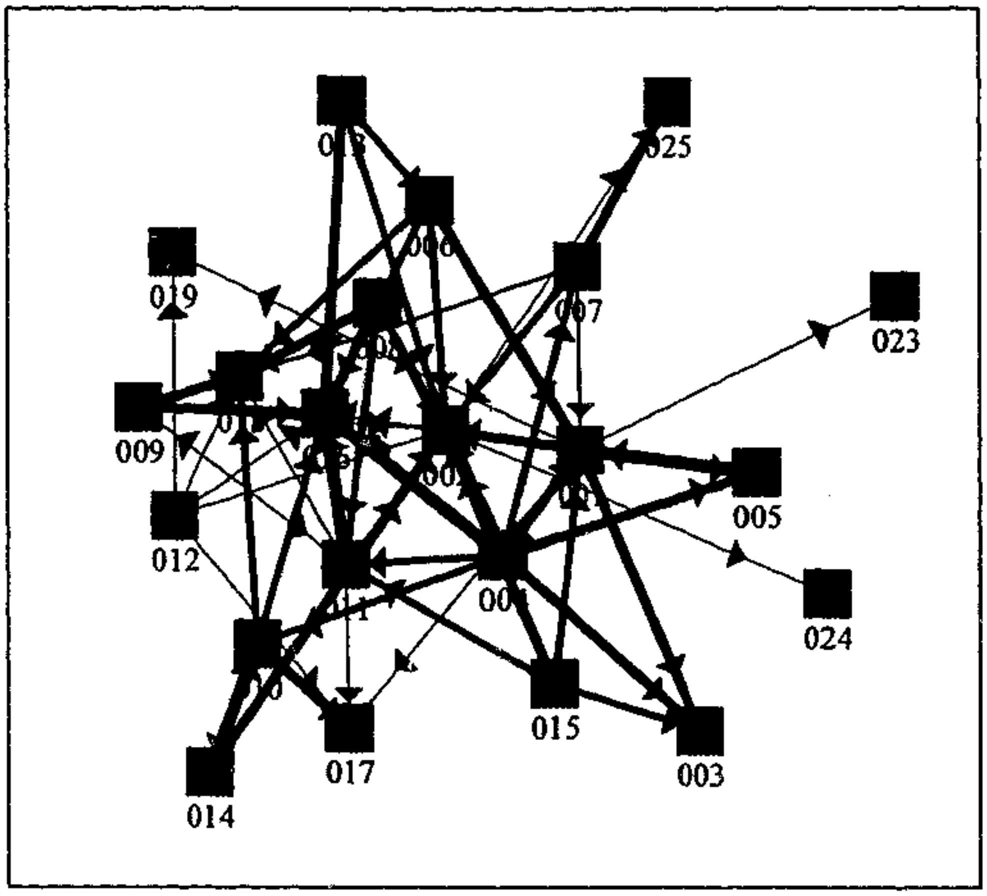

Figure 37: Important and valued network for all contacts

Stakeholder knowledge network: With whom do you discuss primary stakeholder needs and service demands?

Observation of the stakeholder needs network (Figure 38 and Figure 39) identified a low level of contact with stakeholders external to the organisation (Nodes 021, 022, 013, 014 and 016, 017, 018, 019). On a weekly basis, one manager (Node 009) (Figure 38) had regular contact with stakeholders internal and external to the organisation and was seen to be in a position to provide the General Manager with information about these stakeholders and their needs. In addition, this same manager

(Node 009) was in a position to obtain information about another external stakeholder from another manager (Node 010). Node 10 was also in a position to obtain information about the stakeholders with whom Node 009 had contact.

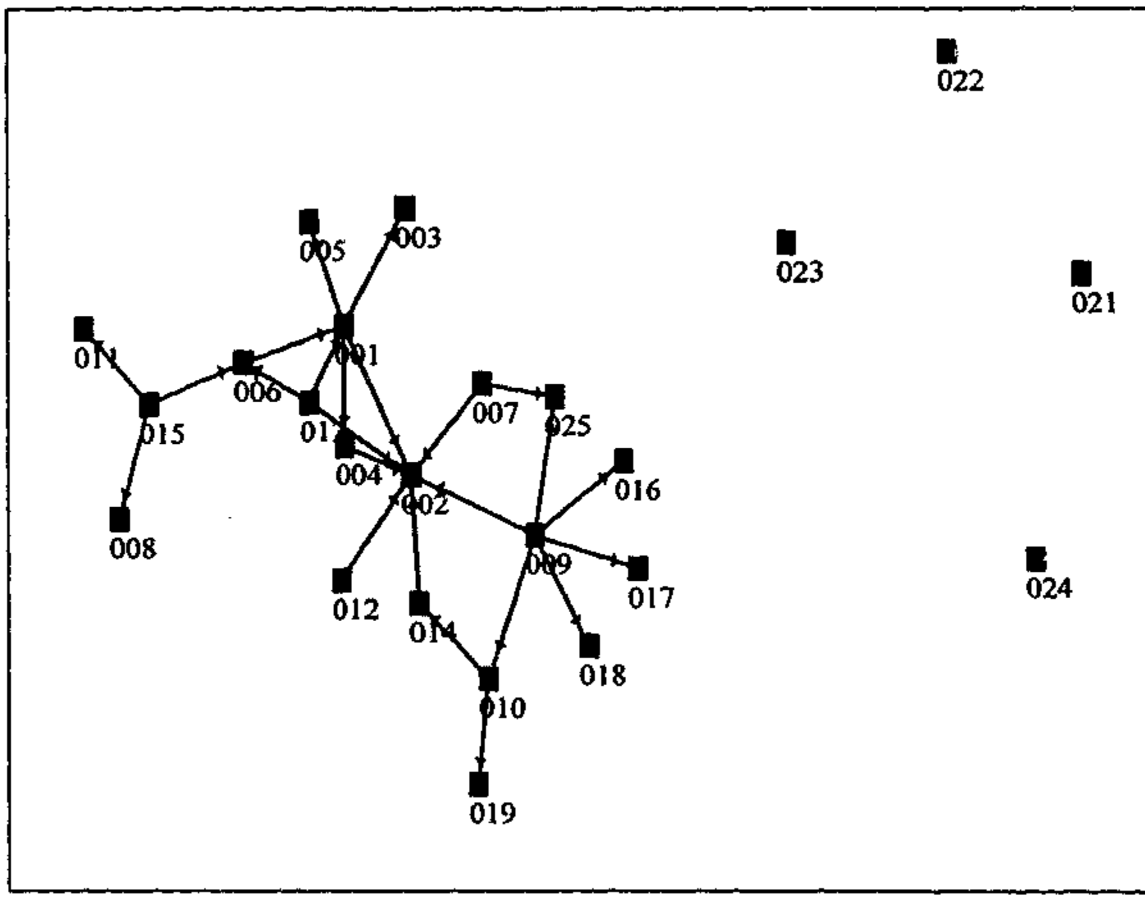

Figure 38: Managers contact with stakeholders on a weekly basis

Even when all contacts were included in the map, stakeholders identified as being of primary importance in functional areas were not being consulted. It was acknowledged by the manager participants that valuable information about the needs of primary stakeholders was not being sought directly from all stakeholders.

To the researcher, this reflected the paternalistic behaviour that is often observed in the provision of health services, where the professional 'knows best' and fails to consult the consumer or user of services.

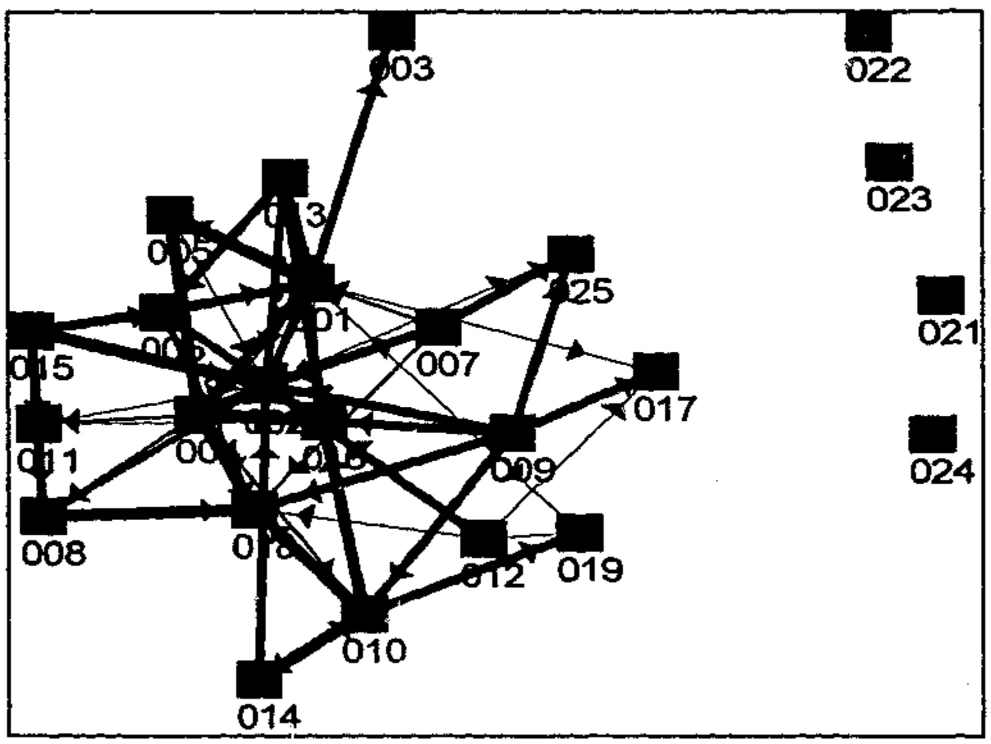

Figure 39: Managers contact to identify stakeholders: using all ties from daily to other.

In response to the question asking managers to identify the stakeholders of importance to their functional unit, Nodes 001, 004 and 005 in particular identified Nodes 021, 022 as being of importance. However, these were not identified as stakeholders with needs in the responses to this question. Members (Node 023) and volunteers (Node 024), although very important stakeholders within the organisation were not contacted for identification of their needs.

Summary

In summary, the visual presentation of the social network maps provided an opportunity for managers to consider their formal and informal social relationships. Manager participants were able to individually reflect and discuss the networks as a group. On reflection by one participant (Node 006), she identified that her map did not look like anyone else's. This insight prompted her to question: "Who should you go to, for a strategic advantage?" This question led to further discussion and recognition that in order to get their job done, there were advantages in going to other people outside the formal hierarchy and to stakeholders outside the organisation. The strength of the formal network was also recognised and acknowledged. Gaps in social relationships were identified that led to informal and ongoing action that was outside the action research sessions.

Quantitative Analysis of Networks

To consider in more detail the observations made from the visual interpretation of the network maps, the researcher undertook the metric analyses option provided through the InFlow program. This was to validate and confirm the visual interpretations made. A report on the network mapping interpretations and metric analyses was compiled by the researcher for the manager participants and was considered at a subsequent action research session. The manager participants considered that the metrics confirmed their visual interpretations.

The metric reports that were produced included small worlds, network reach, structural equivalence, group interactions and cluster analysis. A summary report on the connections for each manager (node) for each network was also produced so that each manager could consider their own networks.

The Network Centrality analysis was of interest as it related to the extent to which each node (manager) was connected to other nodes (managers) within the networks. Also of interest to the participants was an examination of the areas of density with each network. These node clusters were explored for direct connections to each other (clique) and those with direct and indirect connections to each other (social circle).

Centrality analysis

Network centrality was important as it provided managers with information about their location within the networks. The location of managers in the informal hierarchy influences their ability to access and control the flow of information and resources. In turn the ability to access information can have an impact on the quality of work and the ability of managers to keep the staff in their functional areas informed.

The node properties considered in the centrality analysis were activity, control, access and informal power. These properties of individual nodes are measured from displayed networks using the standard network centralities of Degrees, Betweenness and Closeness. The number of direct connections relate to node activity with the number of direct connections measured as degrees (low = 0 and high =1). The directions of the connections are 'in' representing central and 'out' representing peripheral to the network.

The control or influence that a node has over what flows in the network is measured by betweenness. Access to what is available in the network is measured by closeness. The combined metric of betweenness and closeness is an indication of a node location in the network and its informal power.

Centrality analysis was undertaken for the contact frequencies of daily or more and weekly. This was because the communication was more concentrated within these times. It did not necessarily mean that the quality of the communication was better with this frequency of contact. The analyses are based on the highest indices produced in the metric reports and are summarised in Table 12 and Table 13. The nodes identified represent those with the highest activity score in each network for each element of the centrality metric. The nodes with the highest and lowest activity in each of the networks are summarised in Table 12.

Table 12: Network centrality -individual manager activity (degrees)

NETWORK	(Q11) M & V	(Q12) TASK	(Q13) EXPERT	(Q14) G/VINE	(Q15) VALUED	(Q16) S NEEDS
Degrees(1) - Out High	001 002 005(2)	014 001 004	004 001 015	004 009	004	009 013 001 004 015
Degrees - Out Low	006	012 008 011	012 005 011	011	002	002 011
Degrees - In High	002	002 001	002	002 001	002 001	002
Degrees - In Low	013 012 009	007 010 013 012 008 009 015	007 010 013 012 008 009 011 015	010 013 012 008 009 015	014 013 008 006 009 011 015	007 013 012 009 015

(1) Degrees represent the measurement of how active the node is and the direction of communication with 'In' representing central and 'Out' representing peripheral to the network.

(2) Numbers represent nodes

The group in each network and the elements of centrality is summarised in Table 7-5. In all networks the Nodes 002 and 001 were identified as having the most control over the flow of information and the power 'to get things done'. Analysis of responses indicated that a large number of managers had little or no control over the flow of information in any of the networks. A range of nodes had higher closeness activity scores indicating ability to access information. The reports of the detailed metric analyses are appended (Appendix 7-3).

Table 13: Centrality summary for all networks

Network	(Q11) [illegible]	(Q12) [illegible]	(Q13) [illegible]	(Q14) [illegible]	(Q15) [illegible]	(Q16) [illegible] Needs
Group Size (Count)	18	18	17	17	16	18
Isolates (Count)	-	-	-	1	3	-
Potential Ties (Number)	306	306	272	272	240	306
Actual Ties (Count)	32	42	34	31	21	32
Density (%)	10	14	13	11	9	10
Betweenness (Nodes)	[illegible]	002	001	002	001	001
Betweenness Nil Control (Number of Nodes)	6	10	10	10	10	9
Closeness Out (Nodes)	013	010	009	009	006	015
Closeness In (Nodes)	015	016	003	016	016	002
Power Out (Nodes)	002	002	001	005	001	001
Power In (Nodes)	002	002	002	002	001	001

Four of the six networks summarised in Table 13, and two of the networks in Table 12, show a high level of close activity with internal organisational stakeholders who were external to the manager group. This activity was seen in all maps.

Cluster analysis

A cluster analysis was undertaken for each network to look for cliques or other densely connected clusters. Two clusters, where a group of nodes had direct connections to each other were found in the emergent task network. Cluster one had a membership of four with two satellites and cluster two had a membership of four with four satellites. Three nodes had membership in each cluster and six nodes had liaisons between each group. One cluster of four members was identified in the expert advice network. No clique clusters were identified in other networks.

When the networks were analysed for clusters where all nodes in the cluster could reach each other through direct or indirect ties in a maximum of two steps, social circles were identified in all networks. In the gossip network for example, there were no cliques identified but there were 15 social circle clusters with memberships between three and six. When the clusters were combined, the overlap between clusters could be seen.

Reflective Insights and Action

As could be expected, based on the formal organisation structure, control over what information flowed within the organisation was located with the Chief Executive and the General Manager. The analysis showed that the influence of the formal network was also very strong in the informal communication networks. The Chief Executive viewed this as an organisation issue because:

> "We haven't to date fully developed ... succession planning ... outside of (Node 002) and that needs to happen."
>
> (Source: AR Session Transcript 30/08/02)

The centralisation of power and control over what information flowed in the organisation indicated a bottleneck that was confirmed by participants. It was also noted that should the dominant node or nodes be removed from the network there was a potential for the networks to fragment into unconnected sub-groups. This was a pattern observed early in the research at which time the managers and their functions were isolated into silos.

A critical examination of the scope of the General Manager position also occurred as a result of the network mapping activity. To reduce the bottleneck located in the General Manager, a decision was made to continue with a strategic intuitive to implement a decentralised regional structure. This was a strategy to facilitate coordination of all service functions within a localised geographic area and was predicted to facilitate intra regional communication as it matured. The review resulted in a reallocation of human resource and occupational health and safety functions to general administrative staff. These reallocations and the move towards regionalisation had the potential to significantly reduce the number of managers and administrative staff who reported directly to the General Manager.

There were managers for example, Node 008, who were peripheral to the management group but had established networks that had potential strategic value. On the other hand, the weak connections this node and Node 007 had with other managers in the group suggested a lack of cohesion within the group. The peripheral links the regional managers had with the management group and with managers such as Nodes 003, 004, 005 and 006, in some networks confirmed the views held by some managers that there was a lack of connectedness and knowledge of each other's roles within the group.

Not every manager needs to communicate for all activities but the importance of people having networks and not becoming silos and not being blinkered was acknowledged after the networking analysis.[24] What were identified in the maps were the networks for seeking and exchanging advice. Network maps highlighted gaps in relationships that could be enhanced for strategic value. Gaps in contacts

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[24] Final Interview #007: 05/03/03

were noted and managers made a conscious effort to be inclusive of these individuals or groups. As a result, communications was perceived to be enhanced, silos started to break down and a there was preparedness to work more effectively together.[25]

Managers found the visual and interactive appreciation of the network maps powerful in interpreting their social interactions. The social network mapping assisted the manager participants in recognising the strength and necessity of informal social networks. Managers were less interested in statistical analysis of them.

Limitations to the Network Mapping and Analysis

Analysis of the data relied on a self-report of the contacts between individuals. As people are not good at reporting their individual situations, the data was subject to perceptual distortions (Nelson, 1988; Wasserman & Faust, 1994). At least one manager confirmed the distortions when indicating that having seen the map and been involved in reflective discussion she would now answer the questions differently.

The instructions to the managers bounded their responses to general identifiers for contacts external to the group, as internal and external to the organisation. As these contact nodes were not identifiable unless specified by the respondents, the opportunity to validate the reported links and develop a more comprehensive understanding of emerging networks was not possible. A complete understanding of emerging networks within the whole organisation was not obtained, nor was it sought. However, whole of organisation analysis could have been useful in identification of other key persons and networks within the organisation.

[25] Final Interview #015: 26/11/02 and Final Interview #006: 17/12/02

Discussion

As management is a communication intensive activity (Phillips & Brown, 1993), relationships between people in the organisation will influence the flow of information and the quality of communication within the system (Beer, 1967). Analysis of the communication networks showed that the formal organisation structure had the greatest influence over what flowed in the organisation and that the formal network was also very strong in the informal communication networks. This was contrary to the views expressed by manager participants that the informal (gossip) network was stronger.

The Chief Executive and the General Manager Operations were identified as the managers with the most dominant and centralised networks. These managers had control over access of information flow and had the highest informal and formal power. By managing both the formal and informal communication from their positions of power these managers were instituting a form of social control (Phillips & Brown, 1993). This control was a reflection of the cultural parentalism (Koiranen, 2003) that existed in the organisation and is discussed further in Chapter 8.

Organisations are considered to be symbolic socially constructed systems whose meaning is communicated by organisation structures and text (Pfeffer & Sutton, 1999, 2000; Phillips & Brown, 1993), such as organisation charts, policy statements and procedures. The problem of lack of penetration through the organisation could be in the translation of this meaning to staff and other stakeholders. The transformation of the organisation, from a culture of fellowship and volunteerism to a professional corporate organisation, required a way of linking ideas and symbols to create a new pattern of social relations. These were not readily understood or accepted by all stakeholders and resulted in managers and staff not taking action.

Argyris (1994) asserted that traditional communication techniques that follow formal structures inhibit the communication required for organisational growth. This was because they do not engage all staff and stakeholders in reflection on their work and behaviour. This was the case in the study organisation. Initial structures promoted functional silos and limited information transfer between senior and middle managers and between managers and the Board. As a result of the action research work and examination of the social networks, participant managers were in a position to influence ongoing structural change.

Phillips and Brown (1993, p. 1550) argued that an organisations culture is a product of communication in that:

> "It is the ongoing communication of organisational members that produces the fabric of myths and symbols through which these actors … come to understand the organisation …"

Additionally, the cultural image of an organisation is portrayed by the texts and other graphic symbols it produces (Phillips & Brown, 1993). The production of these is intended to project an image to be received by both internal and external stakeholders. The meaning of these is interpreted within a social and historical context.

Conclusion

Network mapping provided valuable insights into the control and flow of information within the senior management group and between the group and the rest of the organisation. The questions employed to generate the networks stimulated managers to consider individual and collective social relationships. The visual and interactive presentation of the network maps was powerful in that awareness of gaps in social interactions was identified. On the other hand, the managers were less interested in the statistical analysis of the maps, which was seen as primarily an academic exercise for the researcher.

From an action research perspective, changes to organisational structure as a result of insights obtained from the maps were important. A reduced reliance of managers on the Chief Executive and General Manager for both formal and informal communication was particularly important in order to improve efficiency of information flow to get work done. The strategic value of informal collaboration was also recognised as important and resulted in a conscious effort by managers to work more effectively with each other and with key stakeholders internal and external to the organisation.

Although there were limitations, the purpose of the network mapping and analysis was to assist managers to understand existing social networks in order that they might build better social networks. As participant researchers, the managers had an active role in interpreting the data. It was the outcomes of the interpretation of the networks that led to subsequent changes to the organisational structures in order to improve communication.

Chapter Summary

This chapter explored the issues of communication that were raised during the action research. The issues of communication were relational, formal and informal and reflected the dominant culture of the organisation. Figure 40 depicts the action research process of the Meta cycle.

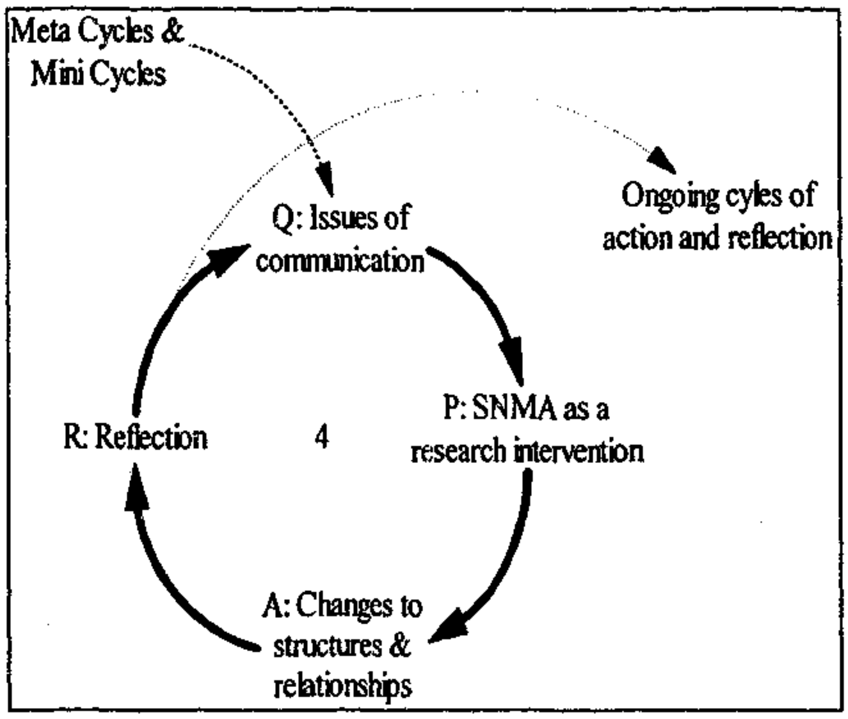

Figure 40: The action research process employed to address the issues communication.

Chapter 8 discusses the cultural shifts that were observed in the study organisation during the action research.

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Chapter 8

Summative Reflections: Organisational Outcomes and Metaphorical Explanation of the Action Research

Introduction

Research participants were interviewed at the conclusion of the involvement of the researcher in the area of action in order to obtain their individual perspectives on the outcomes of the research. The responses to the following questions are reported in this chapter.

- What organisational and structural changes have occurred that you can trace back to the AR Sessions? (That is, things that people would notice as being done differently.)
- What has the action research meant to changes in your management practices?
- If you had to think of a metaphor, what would you use to explain the events and processes of the last three years? (Have they changed over time?)

The first two questions relate to organisational change and research effectiveness. Changes in practice should be seen in light of interventions by the researcher whose value system had developed from years of experience as a professional manager and researcher in similar management situations. The third question is presented as metaphorical explanations of the action research process.

Organisational Change and Research Effectiveness

Organisational Change That Could Be Traced To the Action Research

This section presents and discusses the organisational outcomes of the research from the perspective of the participants. Of relevance to this section is the question:

> What organisational and structural changes have occurred that you can trace back to the AR Sessions? (That is, things that people would notice as being done differently.)

Managers were asked to identify the organisational and structural changes that had occurred that could be linked to the action research. There were a number of responses that identified uncertainty about what was linked with the action research. A clear distinction was not made between the action research sessions and the operational management meeting.

> "There have definitely been changes but I need to reflect how much has that been because there has been staff exec and what has been (pause) and how much has that been, because often we have a conversation (in the action research sessions) and change occurs and while you are mindful of the change you are not mindful of the cause." (#008)
>
> (Source: Final Interview)

To the researcher, this lack of clarity was a consequence of two events. The two meetings were established at the same time to facilitate the action research. The research participants and managers attending the staff senior executive and manager operational meeting was the same. In addition, as a consequence of the researcher attending the operational meetings there was a blurring of the researcher role as a researcher and participant manager.

The operational meeting was established to coincide with the commencement of the action research. Day-to-day operational matters were dealt with t the meeting as well as the meeting being the forum to facilitate and monitor the operationalisation of the research decisions to take action. The research participant group, by itself, did not have the authority to implement research decisions. As a result, there was an alignment of agenda items established between the meetings. This alignment was particularly evident in the later months of the research when the action research sessions were scheduled to either precede or to follow the operational meeting. The action research sessions were itemised as 'Staff Reflections' and often discussion on the agenda items flowed from one to the other.

Many of the issues addressed in the action research had an operational flow on. One example of this overlap was for example, the question: 'How are you going to involve Membership or stakeholders significant to your functional area?' This was an issue for discussion for all managers within the context of the action research. Membership was also the specific responsibility of the Manager for Membership. Progress reports on Membership became regular operational agenda items. Other examples included: the introduction of an agenda as an outcome of the action research session on 'The Knowing Doing Gap'; organisational structure changes as an outcome of the social network mapping and analysis and addressing issues of strategy and structure.

As a consequence of the action research, changes in the organisational structure altered the role of the Board. An appreciation of the difference between governance and management evolved. That is the difference between providing the policy direction to The Study Organisation and determining how it will be implemented. This significance of this change was evident in the following reflection:

> "... Part of what I learnt from that was just how controlling the Board was and that here was an external body meant to be doing governance, that had, a hands on influence in the way that the organisation was doing the work of the Board. It had set up strategies, but in fact it was trying to manage strategies." (#001)
>
> (Source: Final Interview Transcript

The beginning of the change could be traced back to the first iteration of change to formal structures. That first structural change also began the enhancement of communication, increased collaboration and transparency of purpose and function between managers and the Board and between manager and manager. This was a direct result of the action research process and the involvement of all senior managers as participants in the process. Critical questioning and problem solving activity led to individual and collective knowledge of The Study Organisation and the issues confronting managers in the implementation of the Strategic Framework. With the passage of time, managers, beyond the Chief Executive and the General Manager, were able to confidently report to the Board on their functional areas.

Additionally, a move from management and functional silos to the idea of networking was also observed to improve communication. This was also a direct result of the structure implemented for the action research sessions. The process of dialogue and increasing the practice of listening to other managers improved interactions between managers for mutual benefit. The social network mapping strategy also led to a better appreciation of the benefits to be gained from networking.

The scheduling of regular action research sessions and formal meetings were structures that were put in place that were seen as significant in developing relationships between managers:

> "I think those conversations and the fact that it was a regular occurrence, staff executive it was enough to get me prompted to do something about this. Not only that it brought people together, it helped to facilitate relationships because the people that were the starting point for that were actually present in the room, so it created a forum where there was face to face contact and like any meeting as that starts to develop it paves the way for further contact." (#008)
>
> (Source: Final Interview Transcript)

Inclusion in the action research group also provided the opportunity to participate in discussions and gain insights into the bigger organisation:

> "So, when I look back at the group and what the group did was actually ... I guess it made sense when I was part of the group. From an outsider's point of view, when I was observing or seeing what was happening it was almost a little bit hard to fit in the pieces. To think well, OK I can see the big picture and I can see where we are going but I don't actually know how we are going to go about it. Being the group, gave me an opportunity to really see exactly what was happening. To be able to think what changes are we looking at? Are we looking at organisational changes? Why are we doing them? I guess for me it links what our frameworks (strategic) are and what we are actually doing. Where as before hand it was all, just out there

> and I didn't understand how it was all going to be meshed together." (#009)
>
> (Source: Final Interview Transcript)

Organisational identity and ownership of management functions was facilitated through the group processes that were incorporated into the action research sessions.

> "I think there is a greater sense of ownership of the management function across a wider range of people. When we started it was basically seen as ... and my self, as being the drivers behind that. I think that what we have developed over the course of time in that there is a larger group of people who now see themselves as being able to have influence in the direction of the organisation and also the level of trust that is amongst, between people. I guess that what it has done is allow us to talk fairly openly about some of the problems and people actually saw that as a positive about saying well we are not looking at casting blame, here are some issues that now confront us and how are we going to work with that." (#002)
>
> (Source: Final Interview Transcript)

Communication was considered a significant issue where changes resulted from the action research process. This was linked to structural changes and individual relationships:

> "Communications was the other one. I think that as the organisation got bigger and, just the language that I picked up from the sessions about working in silos. I

> mean I wouldn't have used that but ... As an organisation we have moved to, if not program focused, program like focused, and as you get bigger and I think with different staff turnover, and it might not have been turnover at the manager level, but certainly in my experience, program connectedness and relationship was often driven by individual relationships. If they shift, then so does everything else." (#008)
>
> (Source: Final Interview Transcript)

The action research process was seen to improve the way managers communicated with managers and other stakeholders:

> "I would like to think that communication which has been a **big** (interviewee emphasis) point, particularly over this last 12 months. I would like to think that certainly the communication between management, staff, volunteers etc, has been definitely enhanced.
>
> I think it has also broken down or started to break down those silos that we talk about where there is more professional communication between programs ... and probably a preparedness to work more effectively together.
>
> I also think that one of the big things, as I see over the last couple of years that has **really** (interviewee emphasis) happened in communication has been in the recognition that it is not just participant focused. I think that there is a larger, **significant** (interviewee emphasis) recognition now that whilst our primary role

is working with participants or the consumer there is a lot of other people involved, that being carers, siblings etc.

I think having had more of a focus on how we communicate and I think that we have now gone to fortnightly meetings and supposedly having the opportunity for a bit more informal discussion rather than information exchange. Because what came out clearly was the importance of people having networks and not becoming silos and not being blinkered. So (pause) being very aware of the other players in our area. That improves the service you know, (pause) if it is in your horizon. If it is out of your line of vision, you have to keep looking over your shoulder to remember it or somebody has to tap you on the shoulder. I think that has been a clear change and I think that perhaps that has been taken on more as an issue." (#015)

(Source: Final Interview Transcript)

Structural changes identified by the managers related to the restructure of the organisation and the change in horizontal relationships, improved decision making from top down to more of a bottom up.

"We never really accepted that structure that goes from the top to the bottom. That goes in circles, (and) it is more, it is not that simple as what it looked. Basically that is what is what was, in the past and I think we have improved a lot in linking to all." (#003)

(Source: Final Interview Transcript)

The action reflection sessions helped with the understanding of structural issues and the need to restructure:

> "Strategically I knew that places (operational functions) shouldn't be there and I highlighted that I thought it would be more appropriate that for example, admin doesn't sit logically under contract services and that volunteers doesn't sit naturally under wherever it was … I think it was more accepted because of the understanding of when you (researcher) did that chart (social network mapping) with all the people coming out of it, … was the link and we realised that his critical competence to the organisation, if it disappeared, would be very difficult for the organisation to recover." (#004)
>
> (Source: Final Interview Transcript)

The structural changes were also seen as enhancing the professionalism of The Study Organisation:

> "… Structure … definitions … lines of accountability … the discussions on the volunteers … information and communication has been strengthened … So they're some of the things that I have seen as well as the organisation becoming, what I term as becoming more professional, professional in that there is documentation to back up what we have said and done." (#011)
>
> (Source: Final Interview Transcript

The various iterations of structural change were seen to influence the decision to move to regionalisation. This change commenced during the final months of the research and became the continuation of the organisational change process.

Reflection on practice was identified as an organisation wide change that was influenced by the action research process:

> "I think that one of the things that we have been encouraging people to do is to do is to actually reflect upon their practice. I guess that in doing that from my point of view was having to model some of that." (#002)
>
> (Source: Final Interview Transcript)

This change in practice was also identified as a significant change in individual practice and is presented in the next chapter.

Summary

In summary: the organisational and structural changes identified by the manager participants were those relating to changes in organisational structure and the impact these changes had on relationships and communication within The Study Organisation. These were the significant issues that were addressed and presented in Chapter 4 and Chapter 7. The action research process, in particular the long period of collaboration between the researcher and the participants and the process employed to clarify issues and reflect on decisions and actions, enabled the manager participants to make connections between organisation structures and the relationships between managers. Participation in the action research and the ability to influence positive organisation changes also had an impact on the way in which managers worked. The participant reflections on their own changes are presented in the following section.

Participant Reflections on Changes to Management Practices as an Outcome of the Action Research

This section examines participant perspectives on the effectiveness of the action research and the impact it had on their individual practice. Of relevance to this section is the question:

> What has the action research meant to changes in your management practices?

Participants were asked to reflect on changes to their own management practices that they made as an outcome of the action research process. There was a close relationship between organisational and individual changes that were identified as being linked to the action research. As a result there was some overlap in how the manager participants responded to this question when identifying their individual changes to management practices. There was also a close association with changes in organisation practice and changes in the way individuals managed within their own teams.

The value of reflection on practice was a change identified by a number of managers as being significant to the way they managed:

> "... (Management practices) turned upside down! Reflective practice, I do it more frequently, bounce ideas." (#010)
>
> (Source: Final Interview Transcript)

The ability to reflect and think about her own practice influenced one manager's approach to initiating changes and to clarifying issues with her team members:

> "I suppose the biggest change I have found myself doing is allowing myself to think ... to look at myself and to reflect on my own practices ... Now, I think it is

quite all right to think about things (before acting) and (then) to have ... a discussion with somebody ... that's when we get all the differences and difficulties (identified). So, that is one of the changes I have seen in my own practice, it is that ability to stand back." (#011)

(Source: Final Interview Transcript)

Another manager recognised that in the past he had not communicated organisational changes to his subordinates and recognised that as a result of the action research sessions he was improving communication with his own team:

"... If you want other people to feel part of the organisation, or know (what is going on), you have to inform them so I introduced staff meetings regularly." (#003)

(Source: Final Interview Transcript)

The same manager felt he had improved in the way he managed:

"I have learned to make decisions quicker ... distinguish what is priority and what is important to communicate to other managers or to involve people. I haven't had that feeling before .... But now I am thinking more because (of) these sessions." (# 003)

(Source: Final Interview Transcript)

Another manager made links between the issues being discussed at the action research sessions and how he could improve his own work area:

> "I think that in a whole range of ways and often some of the notes I was taking in some of those meetings, had nothing to do with the meeting, but they, umm, sparked or trigger things like 'I need to do that better'. Some of the notes that I have taken on some of our internal structures had nothing to do with the conversation but it might have been something aligned with that conversation or relevant in the larger context. But for me it was like, give me a thought and I would take some notes which did impact back here in terms of meeting structure." (#008)
>
> (Source: Final Interview Transcript)

Being included in the action research led to ownership of the issues and changes occurring in The Study Organisation:

> "I think what it has done is to work in a way ... to get more ownership from issues that are happening. It is being more inclusive in a way, to accept ownership with the changes that are occurring." (#002)
>
> (Source: Final Interview Transcript)

Inclusion in the action research led one manager to confirm the value and importance of their role which had an impact on the change processes and expected outcomes in her own area of practice:

> "It actually gave some importance to my role (being) included and you know that you are not thinking alone ... I guess you feel empowered ... understanding of the bigger picture, being part of it, being part of the process

… you are not just in the loop, you are actually one of the players and it does have an impact … It made me a little more determined to make things happen." (#014)

(Source: Final Interview Transcript)

While some managers identified the most significant change to their practice, a number of managers identified a number of changes. Another manager identified the importance of leadership and management in addition to improved communication:

"I know from my perspective, a lot of the things that I have learnt from those sessions I have applied to the team (meaning the team he manages) in regards to formal and informal communications.

I think that one of the big things that I have learnt through sessions is that to be a good manager you have to be a good leader. Because you are a manager it is not automatic leadership stuff. When I set up the team and I have constantly tried to be a leader who manages a team. I think that a lot of the stuff that I have done has really reinforced and I would say … I have this philosophy that in any of the caring professions, the minute that you think you have got all the answers, that is the time to get out. Because if you think you have got all the answers, you are not open, to growth and to change and to development and all of that.

I think that it has changed my management style in so far as supervision. I think that it is a more open, more fluid type of delegation. My management style is to observe but then to try and get the staff, to draw them out on issues. So if we were talking for example on upcoming education and training. I would have my ideas on what I believe some of the staff are needing and quite often the easiest thing is to say I think you should do a, b and c. But a more effective tool is to try and get staff to talk about it to try and get them to recognise that they would need those.

So that is putting in a lot of those, I suppose in many ways they are basic management structures but they are things that you quite often take for granted or they are things that you do without actually thinking about it. But when you reflect on it you see, yea that was a reaffirms what I am doing so that give you the impetus to take it to that next length.

I have learnt a lot and I have been certainly trying to, in team meetings, going though issues that we have talked about in our sessions. And keep the staff informed all the way through. It is almost as if it has been a natural evolutionary type thing. I really do link that right back to what we have been doing because it explaining processes, it is explaining, is that going to effect, explaining about silos. And how, the need to try and get right strategies to try and get away from the concept that it is us as a team but to recognise that it is us as an organisation we are part of a wider organisation. I think that that is directly attributed to some of the stuff that we have been talking about particularly in communication." (#015)

(Source: Final Interview Transcript)

In addition to reflection at the group level leading to insights into the big picture, there was also a change from thinking local to thinking global:

> "Certainly I know that I have changed over the last two or three years to be much more, my vision is coming more from ... the organisation out to the programs, rather than program first over to the big picture. I think, having muttered about those meetings in the early days, do we really have to meet so often. Of course now we are meeting every two weeks. ... (I have) become more of a manager and so I have more of a global view." (#007)

(Source: Final Interview Transcript)

The Strategic Framework included statements on the Mission, Vision and Values of The Study Organisation. This document was referenced throughout the research and guided much of the discussion and decisions taken in the research. Reflecting on the values and their incorporation into his management practice one manager said:

> "They (Mission, Vision and Values) had just come out and I guess that one of the things that have happened through the process is the way that they have become central to the things we do. I think it has been a useful process through the meetings and the talking it has always been coming back at various times about how do they apply? What is the sense of the organisation, what do we value what is our honesty? That for me has driven a lot of the way that I have been dealing with a number of my management issues. Well I guess if you

> incorporate them. You are hypocritical if you don't try and put them out..." (#002)
>
> (Source: Final Interview Transcript)

There was one manager participant who could not identify any transfer of learning from the action research sessions to their management practice. This participant saw any transfer from the action research sessions as being limited to the executive meetings. The participant did not acknowledge any transfer of learning to his own management practice. The same participant was identified as an outlier in the social network mapping exercise and left The Study Organisation shortly after.

Summary

To summarise the changes identified by the manager participants: decision making improved, improved communication within teams, taking time to think and reflect on issues, recognition of the importance of involvement and assuming accountability for issues and changes within the local and wider organisation. Changes in management practice could be seen in the way managers contributed to the action research and the operational meetings. There was also a noted change from a dependency on the action researcher for direction to the manager participants assuming responsibility.

A large number of the manager participants became involved in the action research and the operational management meetings as inexperienced managers. The action research process provided managers with the opportunity to be involved and to develop personal skills. As a result, confidence in their abilities developed. Change and insight at the individual level influenced the wider system through the transfer of process strategies to the local level. This had the potential to increase the long-term sustainability of change that was initiated at the action research group level.

Metaphorical Explanation of the Action Research Process

Initially, the cultural and political metaphors were identified by the researcher as those that best described the organisational context in which the research was being undertaken. These metaphors were used to guide the selection of methods to complement the action research methodology and were discussed in Chapter 3.

The issues that were to emerge during the action research were perceived by the researcher to be linked to important relationships between the manager participants. These relationships were influenced by organisational structures (Nelson, 1988), and could also be understood through the use of metaphors.

The use of metaphors is common in the management and systems literature and forms a basis of models for analysing and understanding organisations. Metaphors provide a means for conceptualising the organisation and how it is structured and functions (Morgan, 1980). Senge for example, conceptualised the organisation as a learning organisation and provided archetypes for understanding change within the learning system (Senge, 1992; Senge, Roberts, Ross, Smith, & Kleiner, 1994). Metaphorical analysis has been used as an activity to supplement the action research process (Cleary & Packard, 1992) and as a diagnostic tool to select complementary systems methodologies (Cleary & Packard, 1992; Flood & Jackson, 1991).

Metaphors have also been used for analysing decision making, creating a guiding image for strategy implementation (Perren & Atkin, 2000), increasing organisational effectiveness, and for explaining and understanding change (McCourt, 1997). McCourt (1997) for example, used metaphor as a vehicle for sense making within organisations. Where as Trompenaars and Woolliams (2003) used stereotypes of corporate culture, including that of family, to manage change across cultures within organisations.

In addition to identifying links between the action research process and organisational and individual changes in practice, manager participants were asked to reflect on the research process and to use metaphor as a way of explaining the process. The evaluative question of relevance to this section is:

> If you had to think of a metaphor, what would you use to
> explain the events and processes of the last three years?
> (Have they changed over time?)

In this section the metaphors used by manager participants to explain the research are presented and discussed.

The Conceptual Frameworks and Metaphors Offered By Manager Participants to Explain the Events and Processes of the Action Research Process

Manager participants brought with them different mental frameworks and assumptions to debate on issues that emerged throughout the research project. Their frameworks had developed over time, were influenced through their professional experience and their history and experience in The Study Organisation. The manager participants therefore brought different perspectives on the issues that were addressed during the research.

Significant discussion and debate was required to achieve satisfactory understanding or resolution of the issues being considered because of these differences. Differences in education and experience of staff and subsequently the frameworks they apply to problem solving exist in any organisation. What was different in the in the study organisation was that managers had a predominately social orientation within a community not-for-profit setting. Also out of the ordinary were the use of an action research process and an allocation of space for deliberate debate and reflection on the different mental frameworks. The professional background, experiences and gender of the manager participants were also reflected in the metaphors used as a way of explaining the research process.

Three participants offered metaphor related to knitting and weaving. These metaphors included the dimensions of strands or threads in different forms which when blended into a knitted or woven pattern gained strength and consistency.

> "Knitting ... a ball of wool or balls of wool ... knitting a Fair Isle jumper that you have got lots and lots of balls of wool that are all separate and tangled or whatever else but recreating the balls and knitting them into a lovely pattern that is functional that brings some joy, that is interrelated all those things." (#001)
>
> (Source: Final Interview Transcript)
>
> "It has been a weaving sort of process. Previously we had various strands and I guess that the links that we have done is that we have brought people from separate stands and used the processes to bind them together. I guess if you look at a piece of twine or something, if it is in individual stands it doesn't have much strength. It doesn't actually join. You can bind it so that it is a thicker knot but it really doesn't. It is still as a larger twine. I guess that what we have done, is in a way, have brought something that is actually broader and there is a lot of strength in something that is woven." (#002)
>
> (Source: Final Interview Transcript)

> "Lots of different coloured wool, that is all a bit unravelled but you are weaving it into a cloth where it has a consistent colour from the distance and the external view but made up of lots of different threads." (#007)
>
> (Source: Final Interview Transcript)

Elements of the last metaphor were used in considering the reasons for the difficulty participants had in defining Membership in that there was a need:

> "… to want to blend, but not to merge the primary functions of membership and contract services …we mustn't compromise one with the other, but let one enhance the other." (#007)
>
> (Source: Final Interview Transcript)

Some managers regularly used metaphor during the interview process to demonstrate their view of process and structural change. A recurrent theme when reflecting on the beginning and the progress of the action research process was related to shipping or boating:

> "The danger of the ship not knowing quite which way it was going ... could do a lot of unnecessary tacking, so how do you go forward with both (blending and merging the functions of the organisation)." (#007)
>
> (Source: Final Interview Transcript)
>
> "They are on another boat to me! (Laughter) Then that leads into you have got to look at it and say well the values and vision and establishing those thing, it still allows for all of those ideas but we have sort of got a

> ship without a rudder. We were going down the river ... Oh, we were, (and) we were rudderless." (#014)
>
> (Source: Final Interview Transcript)

While another manager used the sinking ship metaphor to emphasis the intermittent progress of the research until there was a merging of purpose.

> "For me it was like a sinking ship. The reason I say sinking ship is that in the sense, maybe a boat is better. We keep bailing out and at the end we look like we have got most of the water out and the next week, next fortnight we come back and there is always water in the bottom. You know we don't seem to be going forward, we seem to be staying and I think towards the end we plugged the hole! We would come back and there wasn't any (water) there and it was like well we can move on now, we are all, there is none of it still here. Sinking ship sounds terrible I know but it felt like each week we were doing the same things and then we got to a point when, hang on, it is plugged! I think the ship sounds terrible, but anyway it was just that repetitive stuff, we were back where we started and having to deal with a whole lot of stuff." (#008)
>
> (Source: Final Interview Transcript)

The idea of intermittent progress inherent in earlier metaphors was also reflected in a metaphor of a long journey:

> "I just see it as a long journey I wouldn't say that it is the end but it is a long journey ... it's a bit like forward

and backward … two step front, one back you know … and some times emotional and sometimes on the edge of the fight. … You don't know where you are going, when you started, well that is how I experienced it. Looking now I see the benefits … well sometimes I wasn't really clear." (#003)

(Source: Final Interview Transcript)

The notion of growth and that the growth was difficult can be identified in the following:

"Nothing good comes easy! 'Cause I really believe that it has been a hard process. It has been a painful process at times. It has been challenging. It has been rewarding. It has been all of those things but the net outcome, and I don't believe we have seen the outcome yet, that evolutionary thing and that will probably take a few more years to grow and enhance. It needs to be revisited to ensure we have maintained that flow. Um so yes I really believe that all those things that we went through, nothing good comes easy (with a smile)." (#015)

(Source: Final Interview Transcript)

"Something like the seed has been planted! (Said with laughter) You don't know what it is and the stem has appeared and a couple of leaves but we still don't know what it is going to turn out like!" (#010)

(Source: Final Interview Transcript)

The idea of movement that is never ending, colour and the need for people with different characteristics, but all necessary for progress to be made was demonstrated through the Chinese Dragon:

> "A very clear metaphor ... the metaphor I have is the (Chinese) dragon. It goes on and on and on and on and on and on and just when you think it is reaching the end it turns another curve. It's curving and snaking and swirling. Impossible to contain, it is all different heights, some people are on the shoulder, some people are on the ground, some people are short, some people are tall, some people need assistance, (and) some people don't. Just when you think you might have a handle hold on one part of it, they swap over because they can't, the person carrying the head can't carry it for too long and they have to swap over. It is a very slippery beast. I don't mean beast in a derogatory sort of way." (#006)
>
> (Source: Final Interview Transcript)

The trauma and transition of The Study Organisation and the impact on a close community was likened to the aftermath of bushfires that were being experienced by one manager at the time of the interview:

> "It is like a bush fire. It is a community, it is a small community you know you are fairly close, that is Ok then you have this huge shift what you had yesterday, (gesture) gone! And we had that with the change of you know, even the Board all of that we had it about committees on the Board. It all changed and we were

at a stage of what you went home knowing tonight wasn't necessarily what was going to come on the Fax tomorrow. So yes and I think probably a bit like there were times when it was a bit like the Disabled Games when yes you had the winning team but they were not really what they said they were and they substituted. I think we had a couple of players over the time that weren't genuine. Had made, you know they had been put on a pedestal and you just knew, your gut feeling said no. You are only in it for what you can get you shouldn't be here. I just look at it as a, it has been a war torn community, it is about coming out of, you know I always say that my job is a bit like working in Europe, you have got a whole lot of different languages and different communities that you work in that to me. I get to speak to more that the people in the action research and you get to talk to the other staff who get the spin offs from what we have been talking about and I am not connected with then except when I see them when I come in and some of those people were traumatised by it all. I think it is a community after a fire." (#014)

(Source: Final Interview Transcript)

Having reflected on what had changed as a result of the action research process and highlighted the significant points about personal reflection and individual learning that had been achieved, one participant stated that she could not use a metaphor and summed up the experience of the process as:

> "How can learning not be great? I think that would be it for me!" (#011)
>
> (Source: Final Interview Transcript)

Along the same line of thought another referred to the process as being around:

> "Reflection, practice, reflective practice ... that is really what it was we had, an organisational staff development exercise ... or a learning organisation." (#001)
>
> (Source: Final Interview Transcript)

Summary and Discussion

The participant managers offered a range of metaphors. The opportunity to explore the metaphor used by individual manager participants to explain the events and processes was limited to the interaction between the researcher and participant during interview and researcher interpretation. The use of single metaphors could be limiting in that they may conceal the total picture of the process (Clancy, 1989). Not being able to collectively explore the metaphors, their similarities or differences, with all participants meant that a collective representation was not obtained. Clearly this final process would have enhanced the results and is a strategy that should be used in similar future projects.

The reinterpretation of the metaphors by the researcher therefore reflects the frame of reference of the researcher and may have led to interpretations that was not intended (Vaara, Tienari, & Santii, 2003). However, having worked with the manager participants for three years the in an action research process the contextual background was known to the researcher. The dimensions of each metaphor were examined by asking questions such as 'what are the elements that make up each metaphor? Are they alike or different and what activity/behaviour is portrayed?' The summary of the examination of the metaphor and identified elements is presented in Table 14.

Table 14: Metaphors and their common dimensions

METAPHOR / DIMENSION	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
Strands/threads	X	X	X							
Unravelled/tangled	X		X							
Different colours	X	X	X							X
Movement	X	X	X	X				X		X
Growth	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	
Change	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Teamwork							X	X		X
Journey	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	

Interestingly, none of the metaphors used to communicate the process were common to those used in the literature to portray the complexities of organisational life or change within organisations. For example, there were no references to the process being organic, bureaucratic or mechanistic. However, the analogies used did create a vision of separate units, working together and blending to achieve a unified structure or purpose. The complexity of the task of achieving a common future was reflected in the reference to the Fair Isle jumper.

The metaphors relating to the ship and to the journey are suggestive of the lack of initial understanding of The Study Organisation context in which the strategic change was being introduced, as well as the lack of clarity of the direction to be taken. The forward and backward movement generated by the bailing of water and of 'steps forward and back' are suggestive of the stops that needed to be made along the way to assess progress and to communicate to managers being introduced into the group. They are also suggestive of the development of a coordinated effort required for forward movement of The Study Organisation when there was no longer the need to bail the water.

The metaphors that relate to a journey, the bailing of water and movement can also be likened to the recursive cycles of research activity and reflection. Issues under consideration were often returned to the research agenda for further deliberation. An issue would be resolved only to resurface at a latter stage. Movement to the next issue occurred as the managers increased their understanding of the issue that was being considered, which was often complex.

The ideas of movement, growth and change were also depicted in the use of the weaving and knitting metaphors. These same metaphors were also suggestive of the individuality of the managers identified early in the research and their coming together to form a team. Individual strands of different colours suggestive of the different skills and attributes that managers brought to the group in order to form a functional operational management team.

An interesting observation made by the researcher was that in sharing their metaphors, manager participants did not indicate closure to the ongoing process of change.

> "I wouldn't say that it is the end but it is a long journey." (#003)
>
> (Source: Final Interview Transcript)

"I don't believe we have seen the outcome yet, that evolutionary thing, and that will probably take a few more years to grow and enhance." (#015)

(Source: Final Interview Transcript)

Images of weaving, knitting, the growth of a seed, are readily associated with the family metaphor. They are images often associated with a cottage home. They could also be associated with different family members either working alone or in the company of others for mutual benefit. .

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented a summative evaluation of the research from the perspectives of the participating managers. The organisational, structural changes and individual changes to the management practice pf participants were presented. The metaphor used by managers to explain the events and processes of the research were also presented.

In the next chapter reflections on the roles the researcher performed in the research and the researcher effectiveness are discussed.

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Chapter 9

Summative Reflections: Researcher Role and Effectiveness

Introduction

The researcher was presented with many challenges as an outsider undertaking action research in an organisation over a prolonged period of time. The research outcomes were influenced by many factors. These included but were not limited to: the knowledge the researcher had of the not-for-profit sector, the relationships that were established between the researcher and the research participants and the willingness of participants to commit to an action research process over a prolonged period of time. The participant managers were asked to reflect on and describe the researcher role in the transition of The Study Organisation.

The evaluative question asked of the research participants and presented in this chapter was:

> Describe (the researcher) role in the transition of the organisation and the relationship at the end of the process. (Was the relationships one of dependence or independence?)

Examination of the transcripts identified reflection on the researcher role and some personal attributes of the researcher in addition to reflections on the role of the action research sessions. The chapter is structured around the participant responses and reflection by the researcher.

Participant Reflections on the Researcher Role

Researcher Role

At the beginning of the research, the researcher role was questioning to seek understanding of The Study Organisation and to clarify issues:

> "What I actually saw in the first instance was you were asking the questions about what the organisation was about and seeing if there was a common understanding about that within people. We all have a different picture of the organisation. I think we, there are people who view things differently." (#002)
>
> (Source: Final Interview Transcript)
>
> "So my interpretation of those early days was that your input was a lot about lets clarify, let's take stock of where we are at um where is it that we want to get to but what are some of the ... I think you tangiblised (sic), how do you say that? You crystallised a lot of the things that were just flying around. You were trying to take hold and get us to clarify exactly what we were talking about because we were all wishy washy I think." (#011)
>
> (Source: Final Interview Transcript)

Another saw the role as one of facilitation:

> "I saw that as a facilitation of something, and as a help to, you know, to sometime initiate discussion or, or raise the issue to really help us to get to some common agreement. To get to some structure that we could put

> in place. So that's why I think it is useful because it is a process. It never stops." (#003)
>
> (Source: Final Interview Transcript)

The researcher was also seen as an external facilitator who was able to guide the managers through the issues because researcher was not connected with the organisation, other than as a researcher:

> "I saw your role, as it is always helpful to have somebody who is, it is like having an external facilitator come in, they are not connected, they don't have their own agenda, they assist with process as opposed to being connected to the agenda, if that makes sense. So you could ask questions that, nobody took personally, that didn't cause a reaction and because they were questions out there rather than personal challenges. I think externally you had the freedom to make all sorts of inquiries and it was seen then as inquiry in itself as opposed to something else hidden here that you were trying to expose.
>
> I thought you, I don't know, guided us through the inquiry. I just see that when with other things where we have had an external person come in it, there is a disconnect (sic), freedom to explore and it allows the exploration rather than I don't know.
>
> Yes. I saw that you had that. I think at times you were able to feed back, take what you were getting and then feed it back. So you also had somebody outside of it and looking at it from an organisation perspective and

> throwing it back. It was like oh, ok. I hadn't considered that, so you were also able to get, take people to a level where they could see it from a different perspective rather than organisation agenda perspective.
>
> You get used to being challenged with stuff, 'so why has that occurred' and if you stand back from that and reflect on what is occurring now or why that might occur. I think those, that questioning became part of what people took on anyway. In initially it was like, ooh, we are just, and then ok lets stand back and look at let's break this down. I think toward the end some people would do that automatically, it's like, well let's reflect-on this." (#008)
>
> (Source: Final Interview Transcript)

The researcher was also seen as the tool that was instrumental in achieving clarity on the issues under discussion by making the necessary connections:

> "I don't know, (pause) you are the tool! You are the tool that has allowed us, you ask the questions, umm, to force us to think, to think more clearly. That in itself for me has created that dependency. There is a comfort in the Staff Execs especially since you have been there, ... you are hearing what we are saying but you are seeing more, you are observing more of what is happening as opposed to the nitty gritty of what is being talked about. And there is a comfort in that because although I try to do that, you pick up on things and when you then come back in the afternoon session

and say, look at your practical example today. We all turn around and go, yea, that is right, we did do that. So yea, you are the tool and I am going to miss the tool because of the links you make. Does that make sense?" (#011)

(Source: Final Interview Transcript)

Another view was that the researcher was an architect with practical and academic insights and who was able to facilitate managers to reach their own decisions:

"I saw your role as an architect in many ways. Someone, who not only has the academic insights but the practical insights, very much leading, you were, I think again for you at times the easiest thing would have been to say 'hey this is what you have got to do folks!' There would have been a fair amount of frustration there at times. But I very much saw your role as the architect, the facilitator who I guess like what I have been talking about with the communication stuff with the teams is that they are giving us the answers. Working with us to get us to provide those things because you know, quite often if you are given and answer to something it doesn't mean a thing. It is only words. If you really have to fight and reflect and think hard to achieve that you get a lot more beneficial results.

So yes, your role has been to me, and I can only speak for me, um, very much trying to draw me out to look at my skills to look at my weaknesses to feel comfortable

> with my weaknesses and to feel comfortable with my strengths. But then to recognise that there are all of those bigger picture things with all the other people and doing the same with all of those to draw those areas out so that we could all be part of it and then try to put them into practice." (#015)
>
> (Source: Final Interview Transcript).

Another participant saw the role of the researcher as purely academic:

> "I have to confess I saw you role as being primarily academic. ... I saw it primarily as an academic exercise and toward the end I became more aware of it rolling out in more real ways. I think you were pretty consistent ... I am not aware of significant changes in style or agenda." (#006)
>
> (Source: Final Interview Transcript)

This participant demonstrated this view throughout his involvement in the research. Other reflections also indicated that he did not recognise any transferability from the outcomes of the sessions to his management practice. The same participant was identified as being an outlier when the social network maps were examined.

As the role of the researcher became clearer there was a change in the way the researcher role was seen:

> "What I see now is that we are trying to crystallise things so much, that you are saying no, no. It is not the opposite but you are getting us to, umm, move outside our comfort zone, think, talk, clarify it but then allow discussions as well. So don't make the assumption that

you know people automatically know what you are talking about etc. So I haven't said that very clearly." (#011)

(Source: Final Interview Transcript)

The researcher was seen as good humoured which had an effect on the quality of the research sessions:

> "I think your good humoured approach has been wonderful, because I think that allowed people to relax in meetings and discuss and be themselves and be a bit more open about how things are rather that feeling the we have got to make sure we are getting it all done and need to be seen to be saying the right thing. It allowed people to be a bit more frank and honest which can only ever be a good thing." (#007)
>
> (Source: Final Interview Transcript).

The role of the researcher as an observer and as a participant was highlighted by a number of participant managers.

> "I would suggest you kept quiet for the times … during the actual meeting, until something, I would watch you and until something came up that was obvious to you. You gave a different perspective on something. Then, in the reflective part of the sessions you facilitated some of the discussions or brought it across into the reflective process and part of it would be a facilitator, certainly a mentor and teacher." (#016)
>
> (Source: Final Interview Transcript)

> "I guess from that initial position of subject/object feeling that you have really used the ethnographic approach and become part of the process to a position now of where you have never taken our independence away from us." (#001)
>
> (Source: Final Interview Transcript)

Manager participants joining the research group for the first time found it difficult to 'catch up' with where the group was at in discussion on issues. There were a number of managers who had not participated in the research from its commencement. How the research sessions functioned and their purpose was not clearly understood by those outside the group. One manager who joined the research after some months reflected on the action research sessions as:

> "Like what is it and it's not ... and you know the AR sessions weren't that tangible sometimes and that was hard for me, because, you have just come from (being) completely new to wanting things tangible to take away ... that I just hadn't been exposed to." (#011)
>
> (Source: Final Interview Transcript)

Involvement in the action research was a new experience for this manager. As the research had been in progress for some time, the topics being discussed and the relationships between the researcher and the participants were well developed.

Another manager, who had joined the group much later, saw the action research sessions as the space where the hard issues were discussed openly and honestly:

> "I guess what was, what the perception out there was from the people not involved in the group, was I understood it to be more of a debrief, more of a, umm, I guess it was more about looking, looking at

> organisational issues but looking at them in a different level. So the ... sessions I understood were where we discussed the 'hard issues' but we discussed them openly and honestly and people can step back and reflect blah, blah, blah (sic)." (#009)
>
> (Source: Final Interview Transcript)

These reflections on the action research experience are expressions of managers being exposed to an action research experience for the first time. For those managers who commenced participation after the structure of question, debate and reflection had been well established, the experience was confusing. This was despite efforts by the researcher to establish a process whereby a summary of research session structure and progress to date was provided when a new manager joined the group and each session began with a summary reflection on the previous session.

The process of summary reflections was also frustrating for other manager participants, who had been involved in the research from early days. The process was seen as a forward and backward movement and repetitive. However, new participants often provided different perspectives on the issue being considered. It was necessary to recommence the dialogue to ensure all views were taken into account. The cyclic nature of action and reflection was a characteristic of action research and the process contributed to the clarification of the hard issues that required ongoing debate.

This was indicative of the interaction that had developed in the existing group and the complex nature of the issues and the discussion. For one participant who joined the action research after it had been in progress for some time there was initial confusion as to what the role of the researcher in The Study Organisation was:

> "I guess initially it was confusing about what your role was … I had heard about the '(Researcher's) sessions' but I hadn't actually understood what your role was. So when I came into the first meeting I still, I didn't understand what your role was. … You would comment on a number of different issues … you were looking around and taking it all in … you would come in and do that mapping process with the communication and I still couldn't see what your role was. I am thinking, I understand parts of it, but then how is Bev going to put all this together? … As time went by I could see that you were the link in many ways. I could see your role was changing and I could see that obviously things had happened in the past that you had finally, that were coming to fruition and you were quite pleased with all of that … . So, although we had had the conversation about what your role was, it was still a little bit fuzzy." (#009)
>
> (Source: Final Interview Transcript)

The role of the researcher was summarised by one manager in the following way:

> "I think that you convened, then you facilitated, you have run some absolutely brilliant hypotheticals, the 'what ifs', but you have been a person who is pragmatic. So you have really, and you have done that, but you have also, you have put part of yourself into the process as well. You haven't been, you haven't stood outside and judged or said today we are going to do: da, da, da, da; you have actually joined in and become part

> of the group. But in saying that I think I have always had it very clear that you are external as well. You have really become the confidant. And you have been the steering person you have been the driver because otherwise we would have not got anywhere. And you have been clear about what it was you wanted us to do." (#014)
>
> (Source: Final Interview Transcript).

This reflection recognised the leadership role of the researcher in setting up the structure for the conduct of the action research had in setting the direction for the research. Also identified was the academic but at the same time practical and sensible approach taken by the researcher. The researcher had become a sounding board for participant managers. This was an indication of the relationship that had been established between the researcher and the manager participants. It was also an indication that the space created for the action research and reflection was safe.

Relationship with the Research Participant Group

The researcher was seen to have a relationship with the group that was established early in the research but was not clear to managers new to the group:

> "What I saw was that there was this connection between you and the group who were already there and this level of understanding and discussion that I couldn't understand. I tried to think, well what is that, and what is, it that (researcher) brings that this group has accepted so well and you could tell that there was this looking forward to '(researcher's) session' and I'm thinking I don't get it." (#011)
>
> (Source: Final Interview Transcript)

One manager participant reflecting on the imminent withdrawal of the action researcher after three years with The Study Organisation stated that:

> "... Sometimes you can't have your cake and eat it too." (#014)
>
> (Source: Final Interview Transcript)

The researcher relationship with the group was expressed at the final action research session when 'poppers' full of streamers were discharged and covered the researcher. One manager participant referred to the final regular action research meeting as an illustration of the relationship of the participant managers with the researcher:

> "...poppers, I would be using that as a metaphor, it was a release of energy ...it was a contrast to the reluctance and suspicion of the first meeting in 2000 ... to: but you can't be going, you have helped us release this colour, this energy, this party, this organisation, you are part of us!" (#001)
>
> (Source: Final Interview Transcript)

Participants had accepted the researcher as an insider after having initially considered the researcher as an outsider.

Section Summary

Participants initially saw the role of the action researcher as being fuzzy. These reflections mirrored the lack of clarity manager participants had about the role of the academic researcher in The Study Organisation. The role was also seen as an architect who was both an academic and a practitioner.

The management group saw the researcher as a tool and a facilitator, mentor and teacher. The researcher was also thought of as a confidant and an observer with various personal attributes and skills. The researcher was identified as being part of the group as well as external to the group. The research sessions were recognised as the place where the difficult issues were addressed in a frank and honest environment and without judgement.

Researcher Reflections on the Researcher Role

Once entry to The Study Organisation had been negotiated and the potential research participants were identified, there were three issues confronting the external researcher. One was to establish a working relationship with the participants that required an understanding of the social interaction processes between the managers and between the managers and the broader organisation. The second was to gain an understanding of The Study Organisation - its history, culture, structures and functions. The third was how the action researcher role would be executed.

A relationship had to be established with the manager participants in order o be effective as an action researcher. Initially there was some scepticism about the research and the researcher role prompting one manager to clarify the researcher role by stating:

> "(Researcher) will not be doing anything to us but challenging us to resolve issues." (#002)
>
> (Source: AR Session Notes 26/06/00)

The researcher reflected on the role and how it would be shaped:

> I need to ... reflect on my role in the process, historical context of my self in the process. Need to reflect on my role as researcher, my value system, how I operate

> – neutral, overt, covert, my emotions. How valid are my insights? What are my tactics, eg challenger?
>
> (Source: Researcher Reflections 18/09/00)

An early decision made by the researcher was that inquiry would be used as an education and learning tool as distinct from coaching and mentoring. But in fact both approaches were used. It was evident from participant reflections on the researcher role that both sets of behaviours were enacted.

A climate of enquiry had to be established. A style for the conduct of the sessions began to evolve:

> Today … I was concerned that I was talking too much, clarifying where we had come from for the benefit of those 'new' to the group. Teasing out goals, conceptually linking across programs …
>
> (Source: Researcher Reflections 30/10/00)

The continual changes to the composition of the group of manager participants in the early phase of the research led the researcher to reflect critically on her role as facilitator of the action research process and the level of participation by managers:

> I do not always summarise points and outcomes of the previous session, important when there are new attendees or representatives or absentees. I do not ensure that ALL the group have a say, some 'talking over' occurs also. I do not always ask critical clarifying questions (suggests to me that a lot of the talk is at conversation level).
>
> (Source: Researcher Reflections 8/01/01)

Attendance at the operational managers meetings allowed the researcher to keep track and up to date with progress in addition to the action research reflective sessions. On these occasions the researcher role was that of observer. This led to the researcher considering the link between the action research sessions and the operational meetings:

> I observe (a form of field work), analyse, reflect (myself on the issue) then reflect back to the group for an ongoing plan.
>
> (Source: Researcher Reflections 15/01/01)

There were occasions when the researcher also noted a change in role from observer to contributor by providing advice. On reflection the researcher concluded that this was mainly due to her past experience with the issues under discussion. The researcher had many years of experience as a manager and had to balance the distinction between the research process and the management process. There were some occasions where the researcher took on the role of a manager and became involved in management tasks. Examples of this was the design of a template for developing business plans, reframing the terms of reference for the operational senior managers meeting and the final draft of the glossary of terms.

The researcher referred to Schein (1994) and Stringer (1996) to establish a structure for future meetings. The researcher would reflect on the process, refer to notes and readings, outline a plan for the following research sessions and then implement the plan. The implementation phase would seek feedback from manager participants, facilitate critical discussion and reflect on the session.

During one operational management meeting, the researcher noted that she had to ask frequently for clarification of the acronyms. This led to a reflection on the duality of the role of the researcher as an insider/outsider and the content/process focus of the research:

> At times the process of facilitating the sessions with the managers I definitely feel the outsider. That is I feel somewhat 'alienated' from some discussions of content about the functioning of the organisation. This reflects my lack of knowledge about some aspects of the organisation. This makes me feel uncomfortable or uncertain about how to proceed with questioning and challenging except for clarifying. This does not always give me opportunity to extend the managers to consider alternatives to solutions that is to consider other ways.
>
> (Source: Researcher Reflections 8/06/01)

As the outsider there was some disconnectedness with the business (the what) of the organisation. According to Gummesson (2000, p. 81), the most difficult task for the researcher who is external to the organisation is the "acquisition of institutional knowledge and knowledge of social interaction processes." This was the case in this research situation and it meant that the researcher required time to get to know The Study Organisation, its strategic direction and the people. In turn, this meant that the researcher needed to identify and clarify many issues of organisation functioning. This led the researcher to consider the researcher role within The Study Organisation as the person in control of the process (the how) of the action research and that this process was iterative, reflective and critical.

There were occasions where the researcher became aware that words and concepts were used where the understanding was different from the way in which managers interpreted them. The language was academic, for example, when asked to identify 'management strengths' within the group this was not interpreted by the participant managers to include management skills such as organising, monitoring and budgeting but rather as personal strengths brought to their management role. This led to a discussion on the role and functions of managers and the researcher providing resources for the managers to use. This was an example of the researcher acting in a learning facilitation role.

The researcher also had a role in making sense of observations and the data from the process of the action research. The sense making was from a personal framework in which the participants may or may not have been interested but which needed to be made clear. However, in the role of action researcher one priority was to facilitate managers to consider their current situation as well as provide them with other options. The structure of questioning, dialogue, planning and reflection put in place for the action research process facilitated this.

Section Summary

There is little in the literature to prepare the researcher for the action researcher role. It is obvious from the reflections of the participants and the researcher in this research that the role has many facets. The researcher behaviours demonstrated knowledge, skills and personal attitudes that had been acquired over many years of learning and experience.

The researcher practised many roles throughout the research. As an experienced manager, the researcher was able to act as advisor and teacher on many aspects of organisational management. Although the researcher did have past experience as an action researcher, that experience had been as an insider. The experience as an outsider researcher was new and as such meant that relationships had to be developed and could also be shaped. As was demonstrated by the actions of the managers in the final session this was achieved.

Knowledge of The Study Organisation had to be built up over time. In order to develop the understanding, the researcher practiced a style of critical questioning that was focussed on the issue and not the person. The ability to stretch the boundaries was made easier by being an outsider and not being influenced by day-to-day political and relational agendas. As an outsider, the researcher was also able to focus on the big picture.

The concepts of instrument, tool and architecture reflected an ability of the researcher to make plans and carry them out. This was confirmed by the use of academic and practitioner concepts. The action research focus on collaboration and participation between the researcher and participants requires good interpersonal relationships to be established. The relationship that was established reflected the mutual respect between the researcher and the participants. To achieve this, the role also required flexibility and maturity in order to maintain the research focus as well as consider the 'in-the-moment' issues that were to arise.

Chapter Summary

This chapter began by presenting the participant managers views on the role of the researcher and concluded with the researcher reflecting on the role. The final chapter summarises the research outcomes, limitations of the research and suggestions for further research.

Chapter References

Gummesson, E. (2000). *Qualitative Methods in Management Research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Schein, E. H. (1994). The process of dialogue: Creating effective communications. *The Systems Thinker, 5*(5), 1-4.

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Chapter 10

Summary, Implications and Conclusions

Introduction

This study recognised the need for research into the appropriate management structures in the not-for-profit domain. The intention to develop a model for the effective collaboration between grass-roots support and professional administration in an individual organisation was achieved. This final chapter concludes the thesis by summarising conclusions about the propositional research questions, the lessons that were learned, the implications for the voluntary / not-for-profit sector, the limitations of the action research and recommendations for further research.

Conclusions about the Research Questions

The issues and dilemmas that arose from the action research experience were presented and discussed in Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7. Cycles of action concerned with strategy and structures were addressed in Chapter 4; in Chapter 5, the meaning of Membership was explored and in the process other stakeholders of importance to the organisation, including Members, were identified and defined; in Chapter 6 the concept of the knowing doing gap was used to explore the researchers perception that managers were not acting on decisions to act; and Chapter 7 the issues of communication, specifically the issues of relationships and networking were examined. The research outcomes from the perspectives of the participants and the researcher were presented and discussed in Chapter 5. Further findings, specifically reflections on the role and effectiveness of the action researcher were presented and discussed in Chapter 6.

In this section, the outcomes of the cycles of action are linked to the original research questions that were developed from the literature and preliminary understanding of the context of the organisation in which the research was conducted.

Substantive Questions

> Question 1: What formal structures and processes maintain the cooperation of the Membership during a strategic change process?

Establishing an operational meeting that included senior staff executive and managers in conjunction with the regular action research reflection sessions provided a structure for managers of all functional areas to meet regularly. This combination facilitated information exchange, discussion and debate on issues of concern and a forum to progress action decisions. As a result of these sessions managers were informed and developed a common understanding of the issues and possible solutions. As a consequence, the manager participants were in a position to influence the Board to make significant changes to organisational structures.

Initial existing formal structures were perceived to be problematic in that they promoted a singular, rather than a global, approach to strategy implementation that resulted in delayed decisions for action. However, managers were able to use the existing structures to negotiate for structural changes with the Board, as the representatives of the Membership. In this way managers were able to maintain the cooperation of the Membership in the operational concerns of the organisation.

The research has shown that The Study Organisation became dynamic and responsive to changing internal conditions. The progressive implementation of flexible formal structures reflected the interests of internal stakeholders. This led to an improved ability of the senior management group to balance central and local decision-making. As a result, there was a reduced reliance on central decision making only.

Although all stakeholders with a vested interest in the strategic direction of the organisation were not involved or represented in the action research, there was an increased involvement of all managers in decision-making over operational issues. This involvement resulted in improved decision making, particularly in relation to organisational structures and accountabilities. As a result, there was an alignment between the requirements for efficiency and accountability to funding bodies.

> Question 2: How does a not-for-profit organisation develop managerial structures that deal with the evolving relationship between its Membership community and its professional staff?

A number of concurrent events influenced the development of managerial structures and an appreciation of the relationships between Membership and professional staff. These were related to operational structures and organisational relationships. First however, managers had to develop an agreed understanding of organisational Membership and other stakeholders of importance to The Study Organisation.

Achieving an understanding of the organisational Membership was an important step in the operationalisation of the strategic plan. Managers were in a position to identify and include those stakeholders of importance to their functional areas in their programs. Identifying and defining other stakeholders provided the Membership, Advocacy and Policy Manager with a focus for the expansion of Membership and for fundraising.

Improved communication and negotiation between operational managers and the Board resulted in three major changes to the formal organisation structures. Each change moved to a closer integration of the two core functions of Membership and Contract Services. The integration of the functions could be seen as a result of shifts in the way each group of people constructed their identity in relation to the other (Vaara, Tienari, & Santii, 2003). Rather than identifying themselves as being apart from the other, there was a coming together and recognition of the complementary nature of the services.

Question 3: How does a not-for-profit organisation resolve the dilemmas that arise during strategic change?

Many strategic dilemmas arose in the course of the research as a result of the tensions created by the different cultures that existed within the organisation. Tensions were identified between the values and purposes of the Membership and professional staff and between volunteerism and corporatism. On the one hand, the Strategic Framework was aimed at retaining and developing Membership functions while on the other, developing a corporate business reliant on Government funding for the continued provision of contract services. The evolution of tensions is depicted in Figure 41.

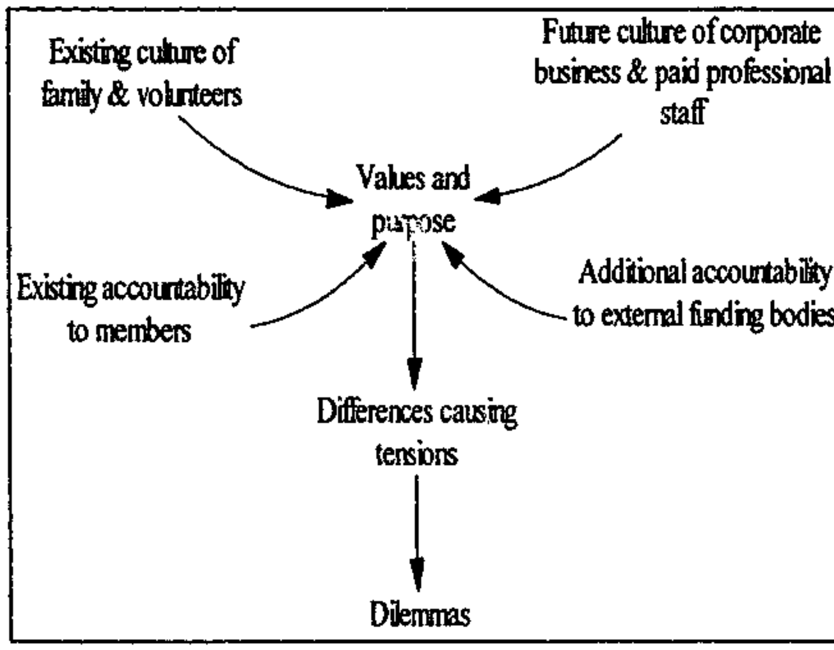

Figure 41: The evolution of dilemmas

The primary practical issue of interest to the researcher and the organisation was strategy implementation. As a researcher with prior knowledge and experience in strategy implementation, the issues that arose appeared familiar. However, the action researcher should not commence an action research project with the expectation that the issues will be definitive or that there will be a comprehensive outcome. The issues that were addressed in the action research were those considered to be important to the participants in collaboration with the researcher.

As an outsider, the researcher needed to gain an understanding of the initial internal structure and functioning of the organisation (Gummesson, 2000) and identified a number of issues as being problematic. Research priorities identified by the researcher were not necessarily the operational priorities of participant managers.

It was however, necessary to resolve issues as they arose in order for the organisations strategy to be implemented and for strategic change to commence.

Strategic management is by implication, futuristic and involves a process of planning, implementation, monitoring and ongoing planning. The dilemmas that arose in the research were linked to structure, the identification of organisation membership and other stakeholders of importance to the organisation and communication. These issues may appear to be unrelated to strategy implementation; however they were systemically relevant to the complete picture of strategic management in The Study Organisation. Figure 42 depicts the relationship.

The Strategic Framework and subsequently the Forward Plan were developed from within two contexts. The first and the one that had the most influence on the way in which the action research progressed, was generated by the organisation Membership. The strategic directions reflected the historical beginnings and culture of the organisation as a not-for-profit voluntary entity. The second was developed in collaboration between Members and the operational staff managers who had influenced incremental changes to the original strategic plan and organisational structure as a result of the action research.

The Strategic Framework was instrumental in the way in which the organisation was structured and resourced. Management was expanded by the employment of people external to the organisation and through the promotion of internal clinical professionals. Both groups had a clinical professional focus and had limited experience as managers. The background of the managers had an impact on the operational interpretation and implementation of the Strategic Framework.

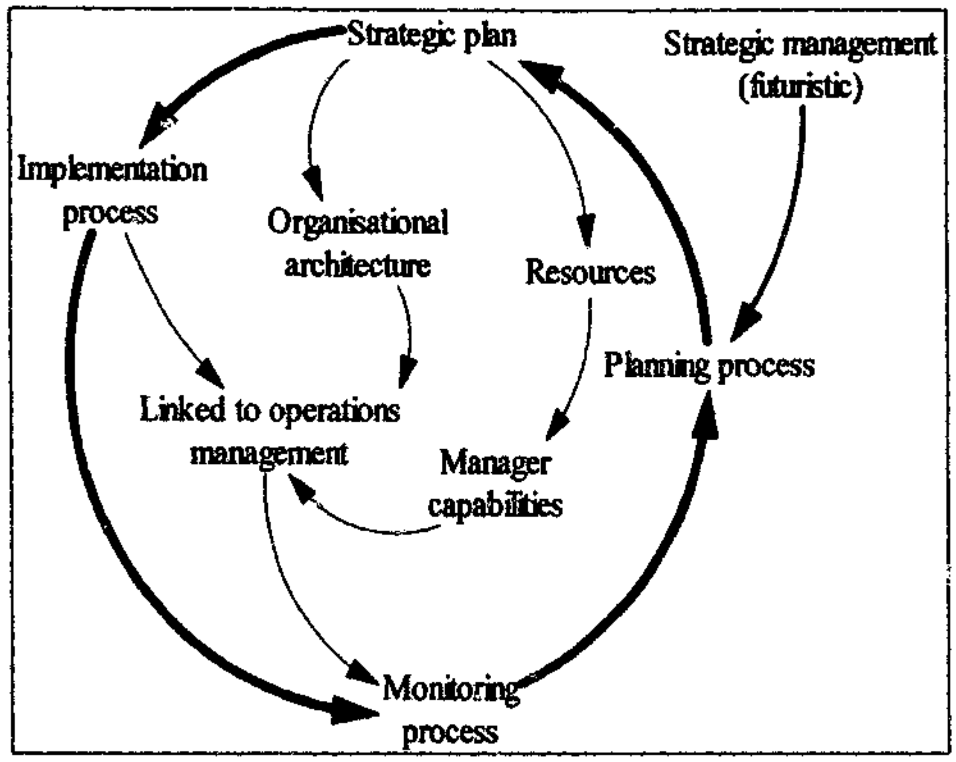

Figure 42: Strategic management cycle and related factors

Establishing meetings and establishing the processes by which they would be conducted, in order to undertake the action research and to facilitate operational management, led to understanding the relationships between strategic functions and the accountabilities of managers. As a result, duplication of activities was eliminated, in particular between the functional areas of Membership, Advocacy and Policy, and Development.

Organisational Membership was historically significant and was linked to the ongoing success of the organisation. The organisation wanted strategic change and at the same time active involvement by Members in services for Members and in the Contract Services. Through the process of clarifying assumptions as to who were the Members, managers were able to identify other stakeholders of importance to the organisation. An increased Membership was important as an increased membership results in an increase in the financial resources. Availability of additional financial resources results in an expansion of non-contract services to members.

Issues of communication were complex and were addressed through a number of technical and functional means. The use of social network mapping and analyses provided the managers with an opportunity for visual interpretation of social networks. As result managers developed understanding of the relationships between managers and between managers and other people within the organisation. The network maps provided managers with a social context to collectively work together to achieve the common goals of the organisation.

Argyris (1997) argued that there were two important steps for change to occur. One was to make undiscussable problems discussable and the second was to use embarrassment and threat as a basis for productive reasoning and learning. The first option was the preference of the researcher. The action research sessions were a place where the hard issues could be raised and discussed. This included issues that arose in the area of action and issues of priority. As a result agreement on the issue to be explored and on decisions for action was achieved.

Through this facilitation, the participating managers developed confidence in their beliefs and were able to take their concerns and proposals for corrective action to the Board for ongoing deliberation. This strategy ensured the Board was involved in the deliberations of the managers who were concerned with operationalisation of the strategic plan. In turn, the Board developed a confidence in the ability of the managers that eventually resulted in a restructure. The restructure facilitated the integration of membership and contract services and the delegation of operational functions of the organisation to the Chief Executive and functional managers.

The organisation in which the research was undertaken had a strong culture of mutual support and self-help that could be traced to origins of the organisation. The origins were outlined in Chapter 1. Early indications of the cultural and political metaphors that appeared to be dominant were discussed in Chapter 3. Other evidence led the researcher to consider the metaphor of family as being the significant metaphor that could frame the existing culture and activities of the organisation. The culture that influenced the transition of the organisation from a volunteer could be explained through the metaphor of family and family relationships. Specifically the transition could be explained as the merger of two families, the Membership family and the professional contract services family, to achieve a common purpose.

Cultural rules and practices had a significant influence on early attempts by manager participants to implement the Strategic Framework. Power and authority was vested in the formal parentalistic hierarchy of the organisation. The Board through its subcommittees had an active involvement in the operational management of the organisation. Managers were unwilling to take decisions to act without first referring to the Board or its subcommittees.

Transition of the organisation did occur when the manager participants were ready to explore the issues of concern and were in a position to influence the Board. Change to structures occurred when there was commitment from the Board for the change to occur. The involvement of all managers in the action research and operational management of the organisation led to the development of a common understanding of the strategic directions of the organisation.

Questions of Method

> Question 1: How effective was the process of action research as a research methodology?

The process of action research was strategic in that it provided a structure whereby the purpose of the research and needs of the researcher and the participating managers could be met. The cyclic nature of action research process included questioning, planning for action, action and reflection, created a learning environment. It also enabled the practical concerns of the managers of the organisation to be identified and addressed. In addition the process enabled a shared vision of the organisation to be developed.

Reflection was a significant activity of the research process with three layers being evident. Layer one involved the researcher reflecting on the framework of ideas and the methodology. The outcomes of these reflections were reported back to the participants and as interventions in the action research process. The interventions included: Strategic Assumption Surfacing and Testing; exploration of the knowing doing gap; internal capability analysis; and social network mapping and analysis.

Layer two involved reflection by the manager participants outside the action research sessions and was primarily focused on the problem context. This attention often led to action being taken on the issue or problem and decisions being returned to the action research sessions for further consideration. In addition there was evidence from the final interviews that reflection was being incorporated as a routine practice of managers.

The third layer of reflection involved the researcher and manager participants at the action research session. This involved reflecting on previous sessions, outcomes and proposed actions. The three layers of reflection were evident when addressing the issues of concern and with each layer of reflection understanding of the issue became deeper and clearer. Reporting back to the group on further reflections increased awareness of the importance of reflective practice and contributed to the evolution of a learning system.

The principles for the conduct of the action research sessions were along the lines of those used in the Strategic Assumption Surfacing and Testing exercise. They included raising assumptions, listening, clarification and discussion leading to dialogue and a deeper understanding of the issues and for problems that were of concern to the participants and related to the strategic directions and operations of the organisation. The process was a founding intervention in the transformation process.

The principles also became incorporated into the operational management meetings of senior managers as a routine. In particular, the use of critical questioning and reflection by the participants resulted in cooperation of managers in the implementation of strategic change. The layers of reflection employed in the research involved: reflection within the action research sessions and individual reflection outside the group situation.

Researcher effectiveness also influenced the progress of the action research. The researcher was armed with a range of theory and interventions and was able to respond to the situations that emerged as a result of the action inquiry process. The maturity of the researcher was also necessary in order to bring out the complexities of organisational life within a climate of trust.

The conclusions in relation to this question are that the action research methodology was effective in that it enabled the practical concerns of the managers of the organisation to be identified. The development of a shared vision of the organisation can be related to the effectiveness of the use of the processes of action research and systems thinking. The use of the cyclic and reflective processes of action research facilitated the ability of the management group to articulate the role of community support within the organisation. The process also fits well with a strategy approach in that good strategy is also a cycle.

> Question 2: How useful were research complementarities to understanding the organisation and for facilitating strategic change?

The complementary research strategies included Strategic Assumption Surfacing and Testing and Social Network Analysis. Additional strategies included internal capability analysis and an exploration of the knowing doing gap. Strategic Assumption Surfacing and Testing led to the identification and definition of Members and other stakeholders. Social Network Analysis assisted the manager participants in recognising the strength and necessity of informal social networks. Internal capability analysis assisted the participants to appreciate the skills brought to the group by each manager. The exploration of the knowing doing gap brought the importance of completing the problem solving cycle to the attention of managers.

In relation to this question, it can be concluded that systems methodologies and underlying metaphors provided theoretical guidance to implementing strategic change.

Conclusions about the Research Problem

The research was concerned with the process of structural change that facilitated the transition of a not-for-profit membership based organisation to a professional organisation. Measures of success included the identification of a structure to increase the financial base of the organisation. Of particular relevance was establishing an efficient structure to expand organisational Membership and to develop and enhance services to Members. Additionally, the processes by which structural change was achieved were examined.

Implications for Strategic Management in the Voluntary Not-For-Profit Sector

Barriers to strategy implementation in the voluntary not-for-profit sector, previously identified in the literature, included an inability to maintain the core values of the not-for-profit organisation, limited availability of resources and managerial capacity (Lyons, 2001) and reduced flexibility and responsiveness in providing services (Wilson, 1996). These barriers were evident in this research but as was shown, by providing managers with the opportunity to become active participants in the strategy implementation process adjustments to the strategic plan were possible.

Successful implementation of major strategic change into not-for-profit organisations, which are orientated towards community health services, will be influenced by a number of factors. To be successful it will be necessary to:

Address knowledge deficits of managers and the governing body in the areas of strategic management, the development of business plans and the importance of social relationships in achieving a common future.

Ensure roles and accountabilities of managers and the governing body is clear so as to facilitate effective communication and accountabilities

Develop a climate where flexibility of structures and processes is in place

Ensure the involvement of all stakeholders in the transition process

Take account of the cultures that coexist within the organisation and establish a culture where an alignment of values is pursued.

Limitations of the Action Research

Limiting the action research participant group to staff executive and senior managers limited the opportunity for the researcher to validate perceptions that arose throughout the research with other key stakeholders. However, the reporting processes within the formal organisation structure meant that managers participating in the research were in a position to share their perceptions with the Board. Subsequent structural changes that occurred as a result of the influence of managers were confirmation of the validity of perceptions.

This was an in-depth action research processes in one not-for-profit organisation; the outcomes are therefore based within one organisation. The ability to generalise to other organisations will be limited. However, the detail on the methods used, provides the opportunity to identify outcomes of the learning from the study that will be applicable to organisations with a similar membership base.

There may be unintentional interpretive errors in the content analysis of the qualitative data transcribed from action research sessions and interviews. In an effort to reduce researcher interpretation bias, researcher perceptions were reflected back to participants at each session to confirm or disconfirm observation. Although transcribed interview tapes were returned to participants only one was returned with statements clarified. Personal contact with other participants led the researcher to believe that the transcripts were accurate. The opportunity to challenge individual perceptions and researcher conclusions within a group discussion was not available.

While every endeavour has been made by the researcher to accurately represent the issues and dilemmas faced in the research, that fact is the researcher was an 'outsider' to the organisation. Although the researcher became a participatory 'insider' in the process of the action research, the inside truths could not be entirely accessed. However, the research management group and the results that they wanted would have been mediated the interpretive bias of the researcher. The manager participants are likely to interpret the data through their own needs; again it is the pragmatics of the situation. Does it matter what it 'right' or is it what is done that is more important.

Further Research

This action research recognised the need for research into the appropriate management structures for the implementation of strategy within the not-for-profit domain. Recommendations for research include research to further examine:

- Processes employed for collaboration between membership support and professional administration in multiple not-for-profit community based organisations in order to develop a model for effective strategy implementation.
- Processes employed for implementation of revised strategic directions in established professional not-for-profit organisations to identify if similar pertinent issues and dilemmas arise and how they are resolved.
- The impact of relationships between individuals within and between functions on effective strategy implementation within not-for-profit and profit organisations.

Conclusion

This research began with the intention of examining the process of strategic change that facilitates the transition of a not-for-profit membership based organisation to a professional organisation. What the study was really about was facilitating the transition of two strategically different social groups to form a common organisation. The groups included organisational Membership represented by the Board, and paid staff represented through operational managers.

Integration of the two purposes of the organisation was achieved through the active participation of operational managers in an action research process. As a result of the insights obtained through the process of participation in the action research, managers were in a position to engage the Board and therefore the Membership, in ongoing discussions about structures, roles and common purpose.

Changes to organisational structures and functions were incremental and corresponded with the development of managers in their roles. As manager's knowledge of the organisation grew, their confidence developed. Successful implementation of strategy can be achieved where the opportunity is provided for managers to critically examine issues and reflect on decisions and actions taken. The conditions identified as necessary for implementation of strategy into a not-for-profit organisation were an alignment of core values, an inclusive philosophy and well-established interdepartmental relationships.

In conclusion, the action research was successful in that (1) the researcher and the manager participants were able to critically challenge and discuss assumptions about the issues of concern, (2) the structures that evolved were acceptable to the management group and the Board and the Membership, and (3) the action research process provided the opportunity to achieve a synthesis of purpose within the organisation.

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Postscript

The researcher revisited The Study Organisation and met with the Chief Executive eighteen months after withdrawing from the area of action. The implementation of the Forward Plan has progressed and the organisation has begun its third major iteration of strategic planning to encompass the next four years. Significant progress has been made on the strategic and structural changes initiated during the action research.

Structural and strategic change continues within The Study Organisation. A regional structure has been implemented and regional managers appointed. This has led to improved horizontal integration of services. There is now a single point of entry for people with mental illness into the system of services that are provided by The Study Organisation.

The Board and the senior management continue to redefine their relationships. There has been significant progress made in the differentiation of the Governance and leadership role of the Board and the management and leadership role of the Chief Executive. The Board, with few exceptions, now delegates all management responsibilities to the Chief Executive.

The committee structures of the Board have been more clearly defined to reflect the corporate and constitutional objects of the organisation. A Community Connection Committee ensures the interests of the Members and other stakeholders are reflected in the strategic direction of the organisation. There is now a structural link between family, volunteers and consumers of services and the Contract Services.

Ongoing work on defining the roles of Members has resulted in significant increase in the financial Membership of the organisation and in the number of active volunteers. A common database has been implemented to detail all stakeholders of significance to the organisation and therefore provide a more accurate account of numbers.

The dialogic and reflective processes implemented during the action research are present in management meetings and have been incorporated into regular manager supervision sessions.

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Appendix 1-1: (The Study Organisation): Strategic Framework

[Organisation] : Strategic Framework

Preamble:

[ ] is a membership organisation. Our primary purposes are support, education, service delivery and advocacy for improved services, for people with mental illnesses, their families and friends. We operate in the context that people with mental illnesses have the potential to live meaningful lives and work to support and enhance this. Further, we acknowledge that mental illness has broad effects on families and friends, and that this group has rights for support. We also acknowledge that community attitudes have a direct impact on the outcomes of mental illness.

Vision:

> Our vision is of a society in which mental illness will be understood and accepted. People with mental illnesses will be afforded the same regard as those with physical illnesses and resources will be available to offer early interventions and state of the art treatment and support. These interventions will be so effective that long-term negative consequences of mental illness will have disappeared for the person and their family. People will no longer experience stigma and that society will treat them with the same respect and dignity as any other person, and welcome and fully include them as community members.

The following values underpin how [ ] functions:

Values:

We value the contributions of people with mental illness, their families and friends in our organisation, and the community and set out the following values that underpin all our activity:

- Honesty
- Acceptance
- Equity
- Flexibility
- Commitment
- Participation

These values are briefly defined here and set out more fully in operational plans.

Honesty means that integrity underpins all our dealings with members, volunteers, clients, staff and the community. In relationships with people seeking support and advice we will be open, truthful, genuine and respectful. It also means that staff will reflect upon their own practice and develop new

Mission:

[-] works with people with mental illness their families and friends to improve their well being. More specifically we work to achieve mental health reform through education, support and advocacy, and we provide a range of innovative programs in both membership and services. We also provide mutual support and self-help, day programs, home based and accommodation services, respite and residential rehabilitation services.

The vision, values and mission are put into practice through four strategic organizational goals related to Development, Advocacy, Services and Finances.

Development eg expand untied funding
Advocacy eg advocate on mental health issues at systemic and individual level
Services eg develop best practice models
Finances eg use resources efficiently and effectively

Strategic Objectives:

1. **Membership**
2. **Development**
3. **Advocacy**
4. **Services**

1 Membership

To reach our goals, must increase the size and scope of our membership, and reach entire families. Our structures must support grass roots participation and the development of a knowledgeable and well-equipped membership and volunteer base.

Strategic objective:

Membership be at 5000 members by 2005. The membership committee will oversee the achievement of this goal and ensure the operational goals include:

Operational goals:

1.1 A formalised process for understanding and reporting on membership need and interest will provide an understanding of why people join .
1.2 A formalised recruitment and retention strategy will be in place.
1.3 Relationships of the membership to branches and roles of branches in both recruitment and retention will be defined.
1.4 Member benefits will be articulated, published and promoted.
1.5 The relationship of support groups to recruitment and retention of members will be investigated, and the outcomes of this review will be implemented.
1.6 A framework for supporting the membership and branches will be developed, and this will include the clarification of operational guidelines, provision of information, the development of effective communication and assistance with educational activities. This will be achieved in collaboration with advocacy and mutual support and self help.
1.7 There will be process in place for identifying champions (future leaders, profile raisers, community figure heads etc).
1.8 will be innovative in its approaches to member issues.

2. Development:

In order to implement our mission must become a charity of choice within the mental sector.

Strategic Objective:

By 2005 will have established diversified funding streams which will raise (?) per year of (non tied) money. The development committee will oversee the achievement of this goal and ensure the operational goals include:

By 2002 will have developed and established an endowment fund.

By 2002 [-] will have established a strong and vibrant development committee.

Operational goals

2.1 Co-operative relationships will be established with a range of partners.
2.2 An established bequest and in memoriam program will be in place.
2.3 Regular funding from Trusts and Foundations will be established.
2.4 A range of special campaigns will be operating.
2.5 A range of sales activities will be operating.
2.6 Branches will be identifying and developing potential donor sources
2.7 Clear guidelines will be in place for both branches and [-] , to clarify roles and scope of branch fundraising and that of central development.
2.8 A development plan, which co-ordinates fundraising within [-] will be in place.
2.9 A public relations strategy will be in place, which includes established media relations
2.10 A communication tool will be developed for each of the major stakeholders
2.11 There will be an ongoing commitment to exploring innovative development strategies.

3. Advocacy

[-] will have advanced its aims when through an active education, research and advocacy program there are regular referral to family support, education, and psychosocial rehabilitation programs from clinical services, private psychiatrists and GPs. There will also be regular involvement in under and post-graduate courses for health professionals and emergency service personnel.

Strategic Objectives:

By 2005, [-] will be recognized as a key organisation, which provides and is consulted for evidence based information on practice, policy and education in the field of mental illness. The advocacy committee will oversee the achievement of this goal and ensure the operational goals include:

By the end of 2001, [-] will have a strategy to improve accommodation and support options for people with mental illness.

By the end of 2000 [-] will have an evidence based and documented family education and support strategy.

By the end of 2000 [-] will have a documented media strategy.

Operational goals:

3.1 An established research and advocacy agenda.
3.2 A research history in the psychiatric disability field will be established
3.3 Support kits and guidelines for branches will include local demographic information on mental illness, local services and service gaps.

3.4 Specific local information on accessing services will be produced and in place in each branch.
3.5 Advocacy training and information sessions will be available for all branches
3.6 Programs which train and support branches undertake schools and community education, local action, and media presentations will be in place.
3.7 A community education program will be in place
3.8 **Establish whether the role of branches is primarily advocacy or primarily recruitment**

4. Services:

will have delivered best practice in mental health care, when there are systematic, formalised and documented external program review.

Strategic Objective:

> **By 2005 will have consolidated services which reflect best practice, operating at least two programs which are recognised as demonstration projects and achieved operating funding of $7,000,000 per year.** The service committee will oversee the achievement of this goal and ensure the operational goals include:

Operational goals:

4.1 An established process which monitors and develops quality programs, and which ensures participation of service users in program outcomes.
4.2 An evaluation program will be in place, which formally reviews services, documents evaluation outcomes and modifications.
4.3 Service gaps will be identified and plans established for program enhancement and development.
4.4 Partnerships will be developed which improve linkages to specialist and generic services.
4.5 A staff development program will be in place, which supports the achievement of mission and values.
4.6 A framework for the interaction between services and membership will be in place, and this will include fundraising and member recruitment.
4.7 The advocacy framework will be in place, which supports service roles in individual, family and community advocacy.
4.8 Pilot projects will be established from time to time.

Source: A: (Organisation) Strategy 17120000Mk2.doc

Appendix 1-2: Ethics Approval

MONASH UNIVERSITY

21 March 2001

Dr. Tim Haslett
Management
Caulfield Campus

Ms. Beverly Catherine Walker
3 Carlyle Close
Hurstbridge 3099

Project 2001/011 - Impact of strategic change in a membership organisation

Thank you for the information provided relating to the changes as requested by the Standing Committee on Ethics in Research Involving Humans.

This is to advise that the amendments have been approved and the project may proceed according to the approval as given on 6 February 2001.

[redacted]

Ann Michael
Human Ethics Officer
Standing Committee on Ethics
in Research Involving Humans

RESEARCH GRANTS AND
ETHICS BRANCH
PO Box 3A
Monash University
Victoria 3800, Australia
Telephone [illegible]
Facsimile [illegible]
Email [illegible]

[illegible]
ABN 12 377 614 012

Appendix 3-1: Sequence of Events

Sequence of events

DATE	ACTIVITY
2000	
January 2000	Chief Executive contacted me by phone to explore possibility of me undertaking my research within the organisation.
February 2000	Exploratory meeting with the Chief Executive and General Manager for briefing on organisation background and strategic context.
April 2000	In principle agreement reached for the research to be undertaken
May 2000	Presented research proposal to potential manager participants. Obtained approval from the Committee of Management and consent from managers. Established a structure for the conduct of the action research/reflections sessions Began to explore the operational relationships between the two major organisation functions: membership and clinical/contract services Executive and Senior Staff Meetings established
June 2000	Attended two Senior Executive & Manager Meetings Issues of structures, connections and how to get better communications throughout the organisation Facilitated one action research/reflection session Continued exploration of functional relationships and relationships with the Membership Structural issues between the Membership, Advocacy and Development functions identified Began considering how the Strategic Framework could be implemented across the organisation
July 2000	CE Focus Groups with Members and Branches to discuss Mission, Vision and Values. Analysis of Focus group proceedings and report Facilitated one Action research/ reflection session AR participant group expansion to include all contract service managers
July 2000	Membership and Advocacy Subcommittees (and managerial functional areas) merged to become Membership, Advocacy and Policy
August/September	Managers continued operational Senior Executive & Manager Meetings
October 2000	Attended three Senior Executive & Manager Meetings Terms of reference for Staff Executive & Managers meeting adopted Facilitated one action research/ reflection session Began focused strategy interpretation for business planning
November 2000	Attended one Senior Executive & Manager Meetings

	Policy & Procedure Manual structure adopted Facilitated one action research/reflection session Continued strategy interpretation and business plan development
December 2000	AR sessions for strategy interpretation and business plan development
2001	
January 2001	Attended two Senior Executive & Manager Meetings Proposal for a Volunteer Coordinator Position put to the Finance Committee and Board of Directors Organisation Review and reorganisation with appointment of Regional Managers Issues of overlap between the roles and functions of Program Managers and Regional Managers Means to address dissemination and communication of information that arises from Senior Staff Executive meeting to all staff considered.
February 2001	Attended two Senior Executive & Manager Meetings Branch rules completed First volunteer count: 220 across all services Facilitated one action research/reflection session SAST and the definition of stakeholders Expansion of AR participants Review of AR session structure Proposal for relocation of premises Discussion document tabled on the progress of the organisation towards its strategic objectives
March 2001	Attended two Senior Executive & Manager Meetings Membership criteria revised Facilitated one action research/reflection session SAST and definition of member/ship and identification of other stakeholders. Developed a glossary of stakeholder definitions
April 2001	Attended two Senior Executive & Manager Meetings. Managers develop business plans/annual plan. Facilitated one action research/reflection session: Group expansion Participants (consumers) and staff added to stakeholder definitions
May 2001	Attended two Senior Executive & Manager Meetings Name change proposed for organisation Need for consistent and clear communication about changes to the rest of the organisation. Managers remain unaware of the developments in other programs. Reflection now seems part of everyday practice.

	Facilitated one action research/reflection session Began discussion on two questions: 'What does an 'active membership' mean?' and 'What involvement do managers expect or want from the membership?'
June 2001	Attended one Senior Executive & Manager Meetings. Evidence of application of the process of questions, discussion, action plans and reflection in the routine meeting. A manager stated at the end of the meeting that "reflection now seems to be part of every day practice." Addressed Organisation identity Facilitated one action research/reflection session Continuing discussion around "maintaining an active membership"; the issue of a centrally located administration and how to ensure inclusion of key stakeholders in the 'larger organisation' to confirm their value and connectedness.
July 2001	Attended one Senior Executive & Manager Meetings Facilitated one action research/reflection session An 'in- the-moment' discussion on naming and identification of the new premises for the organisation - linked to organisation identity. Discussed the culture of the organisation and the change implied by the relocation from a mansion to a traditional business looking facility. Raised the question of how the change was going to be communicated.
August 2001	Facilitated one action research/reflection session Organisation name change discussed Organisation culture - name it, own it, maintain it, organisation incorporated Issues of induction/orientation of stakeholders to the organisation. Proposal for a 'virtual bus'. Issues of volunteering Reflection on action research process and the value of participation and reflection
September 2001	Attended one Senior Executive & Manager Meeting Evidence of collaboration between contract service programs on issue of staffing and orientation. 'At Home' farewell to C ... House and historical display followed by a 'staff celebration'. Facilitated one action research/reflection session Examining stakeholder involvement in the organisation Issues around data collection and accountability for performance
October 2001	Attended two Senior Executive & Manager Meetings at new premises Quantifying the number of volunteers and members Name change and perceived loss of identity

	Discussion on policy and future status of Branches New President of the Board Attended (by CE request) a general meeting between the Chief Executive and general/administrative staff where recent organisation changes were discussed.
November 2001	Attended one Senior Executive & Manager Meeting Facilitated one action research/reflection session Changed composition of the group Summative reflection on research process, progress and achievements in 2001. SD model for expanding membership base Two managers resign
December 2001	Facilitated one action research/reflection session Annual review of action research progress, issues identified and action. Identified gaps in decisions to act and actions, Interviewed two managers who had resigned the organisation
2002	
January 2002	Facilitated one action research/reflection session Perceptions that the relocation of premises has led to a change in culture from a 'homely' environment of one of a corporate business. Identification of gaps between strategy and progress in achieving targets. Focussed particularly on issues of formal and informal communication.
February 2002	Attended one Senior Executive & Manager Meeting Revisited organisation chart Proposed corporate image for all documents and signage tabled
March 2002	Attended one Senior Executive & Manager Meeting Reflection on the action research and the participation and inclusion of all senior managers Two year strategic plan tabled: improved clarity from original plan and provides for an overall direction to managers Revisited the informal/formal communication issue. Examination of the communication structures in place with the membership, Branches etc by each manager. Facilitated one action research/reflection session Discussion on the implication of changes to the Board and its structure. Moving towards a governance role. The consequences for managers will be increased accountability and responsibility to manage areas of responsibility Session included "knowing doing gap" and translating decisions into actions
April 2002	Attended one Senior Executive & Manager Meetings Facilitated one action research/reflection session

	Manager turnover leading to proposed increase in action research participant managers Discussed the direction for the action research in terms of future strategic challenges The significant theme was for improved interconnectedness, cooperation and communication between programs Resignation of an original participant in the research
May 2002	Attended one Senior Executive & Manager Meetings Impacts of the Forward Plan discussed Facilitated one action research/reflection session Action research group expansion (third major expansion) A management capability/gap analysis was undertaken in response to the question: What management skills are required to implement the strategic/forward plan? Barriers to action identified structural confusion – linked to overlap of functions, staff turnover and revisions of organisational structures; and lack of formal meeting structure. Time constraints and the need to provide negotiated time frames. Difficulties with setting priorities for actions and knowing how to carry out the actions Desired group strengths/skills identified the need for trust, team connectedness, strong interconnectedness, seamless functions, commitment to follow through and external communication. Interviewed a manager who had resigned the organisation
June 2002	Attended one Senior Executive & Manager Meeting Changes to organisation structure communicated. Regionalisation put on the agenda. Organisation "branding" and preferred shortening of name. Forward Plan to be developed into business plans with reportable KPA. Increased manager accountability for performance Proposal to evaluate consumer carer participation in programs Facilitated one action research/reflection session Commenced a process for examination of the communication networks in use
July 2002	Attended one Senior Executive & Manager Meetings Structural changes, position titles and organisation wide meeting structure. Working group set up to look at regionalisation Ongoing discussion on branding Facilitated one action research/reflection session Expansion of group to be more inclusive Provided initial and limited feedback on communication networks

August 2002	Attended one Senior Executive & Manager Meetings Proposed structure to facilitate carer participant (consumers) participation in the organisation Proposed organisation changes so that Branches report directly to The Manager Membership, Advocacy and Policy and not the Board A process for participants to become Members of the organisation Facilitated one action research/reflection session
September 2002	Attended one Senior Executive & Manager Meetings Impacts of regionalisation discussion paper tabled Realignment and transition from the Strategic Framework to the Forward Plan – Impacts and issues discussion paper. Facilitated one action research/reflection session Social (communication) network analysis an interactive session
October 2002	Attended one Senior Executive & Manager Meetings Began discussion on staff development and training needs Organisation structure: creation of a new position for Community Connections; regionalisation discussions Submitted report on communication network analysis to managers
November 2002	Attended one Senior Executive & Manager Meetings Regionalisation implications for restructuring, re alignment of positions and redundancy. Planning for 2003 Facilitated one final action research/reflection session Review of research over the three years and obtained permission to interview managers on their experience
December2002	Conducted evaluation interviews
2003	
January2003	Conducted evaluation interviews
February 2003	Conducted evaluation interviews

Appendix 3-2: Explanatory Statement

Project Title: Impact of Strategic Change in a Membership Organisation

My name is Beverly Walker and I am doing research under the supervision of Dr. Tim Haslett a senior lecturer in the Department of Management towards a Doctor of Philosophy at Monash University.

The Chief Executive following consultation with staff executive and managers and the Board of Management has given consent for collaboration in the research on behalf of the organisation.

Action research and systems methodologies will be used to analyse the evolution of (Organisation). from a membership based organisation to a professional organisation while still maintaining the commitment of an active membership.

It is anticipated that there will be mutual benefits gained from this project based on the cooperation and participation of the staff executive and program managers taking part in action / reflection meetings. At these meetings problems in relation to the implementation of SFV Inc strategic plan will be identified, ideas for solving the problems suggested and evaluated and recommendations made for putting in place changes to management practice.

The conditions and rules for the conduct of these meetings that have been agreed between the researcher and the management group after reading the research proposal include:

Frequency: Meetings will initially take place every second week and will last one hour to one hour and a half and will be in work time. You may also need to do up to one hour's extra work between meetings, again in work time. It is expected that the meetings will continue for approximately 18 – 24 months. Changes to the frequency and duration of the meetings will be mutually negotiated between the researcher and the group as the action research process develops.

Note taking: I may need to audiotape all or some of the meetings to assist with note taking. The conditions for audio taping, as negotiated with the group, are that I will use the tapes to write notes about the meeting process and use the data as the basis of reflection at the next meeting. The tapes will not be retained as a permanent record of meetings. Access to the notes will be restricted to the group and the written records will be available to my supervisor and me.

Participation: All group members have the right to decline to do particular activities without giving reasons, but must be willing to contribute to the group process, rather than merely listening and observing.

The full research proposal is available in your library and minutes of the meetings contain a summary of progress to date.

If you have any queries I will be happy to discuss these with you. Alternatively you can contact Dr Tim Haslett in the Department of Management telephone 9903 2998 or fax 9903 2718.

Should you have any complaint concerning the manner in which this research (project number 2001/011) is conducted, please do not hesitate to contact The Standing Committee on Ethics in Research Involving Humans at the following address: The Secretary The Standing Committee on Ethics in Research Involving Humans PO Box No 3A Monash University Victoria 3800 Telephone [redacted] Fax (03) 9905 1420 Email: [redacted]

Signature .... Date....................................

Thank you.

Beverly C Walker

Phone: (supplied)

(Prepared: February 2001)

Appendix 3-3: Research Activity Data & Collection

Codes:

M1= Senior Staff Operational Meeting

M2 = Meeting Organisation Other

AR = Action Reflection session

ID = Informal discussion

TC = Telephone conversation

IF = Interview Final

IE = Interview Exit

J = Journal notations

TT = Tape Transcription

DATE	ACTIVITY	MINUTES & NOTES OF MEETINGS	JOURNAL NOTATIONS & REFLECTIONS & MEMOS	TAPE	NOTES
2000			BOOK 1		
1/09/99-29/05/00			X		Notes and reflection on literature
19/01/00	TC		X		
26/04/00			X		
28/04/00	TC		X		
8/05/00	M1		X		
11/05/00					
17/05/00			X		
22/05/00	M1		X		
29/05/00			X		
			BOOK 2		
6/06/00	M1		X		
19/06/00	M1	X	X		
21/06/00			X		
26/06/00	ID AR	 X	X X	 X	Some transcription in journal
14/07/00	M1		X		
20/07/00	AR		X		
3/08/00	M1	X			BW not present
10/08/00	M1	X			BW not present
14/08/00	M1	X			BW not present
28/08/00	M1	X			BW not present
4/09/00	M1	X			BW not present
11/09/00	M1	X			
18/09/00	M1	X	X		
25/09/00	M1	X			
2/10/00	AR ID		X X		
9/10/00	M1	X	X		
16/10/00	AR		X		
23/10/00	M1	X			
30/10/00	AR		X	X	Some transcription in journal
13/11/00	M1	X			
20/11/00			X		
27/11/00	AR		X	X	
4/12/02	M1	X			

8/12/00	TC				Cancelled next AR session MI instead
11/12/00	M1	X			
18/12/00	AR		X	X	Some transcription in journal
2001			**BOOK 3**		
10/01/01	M1	X	X		Also reading and reflection
12/01/01			X		Summary of 2000 AR activity
15/01/01			X		
16/01/01			X		Reading & planning for session structure
24/01/01	M1	X	X		
29/01/01			X		
7/02/01	AR	X	X	X	Problems with tape
21/02/01	M1	X			
5/03/01			X		
7/03/01	AR & M1	X	X	X	Book 3 Some transcription in journal
21/03/01	M1				AGENDA
4/04/01	M1	X			
7/04/01	MI		X		
			BOOK 4A		
07/03/01 - 09/01			X		Reading notes and reflections
			BOOK 4B		
18/04/01	M2		X		
27/04/01	M2		X		Quarterly Program Managers
2/05/01	AR		X	X	
4/05/01			X		
16/05/01	M1	X			
31/05/01	M1	X			
8/06/01			X		
13/06/01	M1	X	X		
27/06/01	AR	X NOTES	X	X	Problems With tape Also notes from a manager
11/07/01	M1		X		
13/07/01			X		
25/07/01	AR		X	X	Problems With tape

26/07/00			X		
22/08/01	AR	X - NOTES	X	X	Problems With tape
23/08/00			X		
5/09/00	M1	X	X		
20/09/01	AR		X		
3/10/01	M1	X	X		
31/10/01	M1		X		
14/11/01	AR		X T	X TT	OR WAS THIS THE 27/11/01? Review of 2001 activities 2 x Tapes
28/11/01	M1	X			
12/12/01	AR		X	X TT	Short taped meeting – ON SAME TAPE AS 23/01/02
2003			**BOOK 4B**		
23/01/02	AR		X 4B	X TT	CONFIDENTIAL tape –not to be transcribed by third person or given to third person by request of the group
6/02/02	M1		X		
0/03/02	AR		X	X TT	2 x TAPES
17/04/02	AR	X NOTES	X	X TT	2 X TAPES only tape 2 transcribed
19/04/02	M1	X			
24/04/02	M1		X		
24/05/02	AR	X	X	X TT	
28/06/02	AR	X	X	X TT	
			BOOK 5		
09/01 - 20/03/02					Reading notes and reflections Review & Summary of 2001 Progress
			BOOK 6		TRANSCRIBED
21/03/02 - 20/06/02			X		Reading notes and reflections and

					insights
19/04/02	M2		X		Quarterly program Managers
14/05/02	ID		X		Progress and my reflective models
23/05/02	M1		X		
			BOOK 7		
16/06/02 - 27/09/00			X		TRANSCRIBED Reflections on Supervisions, Cohort sessions, Critical reflections sessions and readings
16/06/02			X		Reflection on reflection
28/06/02	M1		X	X TT	
24/07/0.	M1 & AR	X	X	X	Some recorded on 23/06/02 tape Second tape partially transcribed
30/08/02	M1 & AR		X	X TT	
27/09/02	M1 & AR		X	X	Some in Book 8
			BOOK 8		
27/09/02 - 11/02/03			X		TRANSCRIBED (PARTIAL) Reflections on Supervisions, Cohort sessions, N Vivo sessions and readings
25/10/02	M1 & AR	X	X		AR not held due to time restraints
22/11/02	M1 & AR		X	X TT	Final AR Session and summary of the three years & major events
			BOOK 9		
12/02/03 - 29/07/03					Reflections on Supervisions, Cohort sessions. Reflections on readings and data
10/04/03	TC		X		
			BOOK 10		
29/07/03 - 2004					Reflections on Supervisions, Cohort sessions, reading, data and thesis writing
INTERVIEWS-					

EXIT (3)					
18/12/01	IE #016			TT	
4/12/01	IE #017			TT	
6/05/02	IE # 019		X	TT	Book 6
INTERVIEWS Final (12)					
26/11/02	IF #015		X	TT	Book 8
29/11/02	IF #001		X	TT	Book 8
29/11/02	IF #002		X	TT	Book 8
6/12/02	IF #009		X	TT	Book 8
6/12/02	IF #011		X	TT	Book 8
17/12/02	IF #003		X	TT	Book 8
17/12/02	IF #004		X	TT	Book 8
17/12/02	IF #006		X	TT	Book 8
10/01/03	IF #008		X	TT	Book 8
12/02/03	IF #014		X	TT	Book 9
5/03/03	IF #007		X	TT	Book 9
13/03/03	IF # 010		X	T	Telephone Interview Book 9

Appendix 4-1: Forward Plan: Objectives

Forward Plan Objective

OBJECTIVE ONE

Governance, Ensure a clear delineation between Governance and staff roles and to continue to evaluate these roles and responsibilities.

OBJECTIVE TWO

Achieve Strong, Informed – effective voice, to impact on people with mental illness, their families and friends.

OBJECTIVE THREE

Establish long term financial security and increase the level of independent funding

OBJECTIVE FOUR

Consolidate and provide best practice, high quality and flexible services for people with mental illness their families and friends

OBJECTIVE FIVE

Best practice in human resource management

Source: Forward Plan 2002 -2004: Impacts on Organisational Communications within (The Study Organisation). Undated document tabled June 2002

Appendix 5-1: Stakeholder Definitions (Research Version)

Membership:

Membership of the organisation is approved by the Board of Directors and:

- requires payment of an annual subscription;
- carries such rights and privileges as voting and various membership services.
- carries responsibilities as specified by the Constitution.

(Organisation) Supporter:

(Organisation) Supporters may have a particular interest in organisational involvement without the formal relationship a membership implies.

(Organisation) supporters are stakeholders of the organisation.

(Organisation) Supporters can be indirect contributors to the organisation.

(Organisation) supporters may be:

> ***Donors*** to the organisation – provide the organisation with no strings attached monetary or in-kind consideration, either unsolicited or in response to a specific campaign.
>
> ***Promoters*** of the organisation – provide the organisation with public promotion through oral, written, electronic or active participation, e.g. through a media story, passing on an annual report, recruiting participants in activities.
>
> ***Champions*** of the organisation – actively adopt the interests of the organisation and work towards furthering the prospects of the organisation.
>
> ***Merchandisers*** of the organisation – sellers of raffle tickets, purchasers of entertainment publication.
>
> ***Ad hoc supporters*** of the organisation – provide participation in the activities of the organisation, e.g. purchasers from the OP Shop, attendees at functions, visits to stalls, participants in program open days.

(Organisation) Supporters, specifically excludes:

Members of the organisation.

Volunteers of the organisation.

Participants of the organisation.

Volunteer:

A volunteer is a person who provides a service within specific frameworks:

- that benefits communities;
- is of their own free will;
- without financial payment.

Volunteers contribute to (Organisation) through most program and local locations within Service and Advocacy.

Participant:

A participant may be any person:

- with a mental illness who may be referred to in another organisation as a consumer.
- who is friend or family member who may be referred to as a carer in other circumstances

A participant may be one and / or the other.

Staff:

A staff member is a person who provides services on behalf of the organisation assuming a duty of care within legislative frameworks and receives financial payment for these services.

Staff are encouraged to participate in any of the roles defined above

Updated 18/04/01

Appendix 5-2: Stakeholder Definitions (Website)

Key Stakeholders of the '

Participant

A participant is a person who receives a prescribed service from any of programs. A participant may engage in roles and activities within the organisation outside of a prescribed service, including being a member of the organisation.

Consumer/ Client

A person with a mental illness who is involved with the wider mental health service provision. It does not include people with mental illnesses who are not involved with mental health services.

People with a mental illness

This group includes people who are participants or consumers/clients (see above) but also includes people living with a mental illness who are not involved with any wider mental health services.

Friends and families of people with a mental illness/Carer

A person whose life is affected by virtue of a close relationship and a caring role with a person with a mental illness.

Members

Individuals or organisations that join the Victoria as Members are approved by the Board of Directors and pay an annual subscription. Membership carries rights, privileges and responsibilities, such as voting rights, as determined by the constitution.

Staff

A paid employee of the Victoria, including full time, part time and casual workers.

Volunteers

A volunteer is a person who provides a service that benefits the community, without financial payment, and of their own free will. Volunteer roles do not replace paid staff and are designated as volunteer positions only.

Funders

Victoria services are primarily funded by the Victorian Department of Human Services (DHS) with some additional funding from the Commonwealth Government. Community support is essential for non-funded services, such as advocacy, education and research.

Supporters

Supporters of may have a particular interest in involving themselves with the organisation without the formal relationship that membership implies. Supporters are stakeholders of the organisation and may be directly or indirectly contributing to the organisation. Supporters may also be members, volunteers and participants of the organisation.

Supporters Include:

Donors - Donors provide the organisation with monetary or in kind consideration, either unsolicited or in response to a specific campaign.

Promoters - Promoters provide the organisation with public promotion through oral, written, electronic or active participation eg through a media story, passing on the annual report, recruiting participants in activities etc.

Champions - Champions actively adopt the interests of the organisation and work towards furthering the prospects of the organisation.

Merchandisers - Merchandisers may sell raffle tickets or purchase goods through other fundraisers.

Contributors - Contributors provide ad hoc participation in the activities of the organisations eg purchasers from the Op shops, attendee's at functions, visits to stalls or participants in open days.

Appendix 7-1: Social Network Analysis Questions

Communication Network Analysis Questions

This survey is being undertaken so that social networking of the management group can be analysed to enable managers to become familiar about information flow within the organisation and to identify interventions to facilitate effective communication and collaboration.

Part A: Demographics

Please complete the following questions by circling the most appropriate responses, unless otherwise indicated.

1. Identification.

   (Please print your initials) ______________________________

2. What is your gender?
   1. Female
   2. Male
3. What is the title of your management position?

   (Please print title of your position) ______________________________

4. How long have you been in your current position?

   (Please print the month and year of appointment) ________________

   What is / are your area/s of responsibility (functional area).

   (Please circle)
   1. Administration
   2. Finance
   3. Contract Services *(list)*
      i. ________________________
      ii. ________________________
      iii. ________________________
      iv. ________________________
      v. ________________________
      vi. ________________________
   4. Membership, advocacy, policy
   5. Development
   6. Other *(list)*: ____________________

5. To whom do you report?

   *(Please use their initials)*______________________

6. Who are the **primary** stakeholders in your functional area?
(Please circle)

1. Supporters
2. Donors
3. Promoters
4. Champions
5. Merchandisers
6. Contributors
7. Membership/Members
8. Volunteers
9. Participants
10. Staff
11. Other (list): ____________________________

7. How long have you been a member of the Senior Staff Executive group? *(Please print the month and year of appointment)* ________

8. In what month / year did you join [The Study Organisation]?
(*Please print both the year and the month*) ______________________

9. *Where is your office located?*
(For example F... Place, Geelong) ____________________________

Part B: Information flow

10. With whom do you discuss [The Study Organisation] mission, vision and strategy?

List *(Use initials)* **Frequency of contact** *(circle one for each)*

________________ *daily or more, weekly, monthly, quarterly, other.*
________________ *daily or more, weekly, monthly, quarterly, other.*
________________ *daily or more, weekly, monthly, quarterly, other.*
________________ *daily or more, weekly, monthly, quarterly, other.*
________________ *daily or more, weekly, monthly, quarterly, other.*

11. With whom do you work to get your job done (exchange information, documents and other resources)?

List *(Use initials)*	**Frequency of contact** *(circle one for each)*
________________	*daily or more, weekly monthly, quarterly, other.*
________________	*daily or more, weekly, monthly, quarterly, other.*
________________	*daily or more, weekly, monthly, quarterly, other.*
________________	*daily or more, weekly, monthly, quarterly, other.*
________________	*daily or more, weekly, monthly, quarterly, other.*

12. To whom do you go for expert advice in doing your work?

List *(Use initials)*	**Frequency of contact** *(circle one for each)*
________________	*daily or more, weekly, monthly, quarterly, other.*
________________	*daily or more, weekly, monthly, quarterly, other.*
________________	*daily or more, weekly, monthly, quarterly, other.*
________________	*daily or more, weekly, monthly, quarterly, other.*
________________	*daily or more, weekly, monthly, quarterly, other.*

13. With whom do you discuss what is going on at work, and who is doing what in [The Study Organisation]?

List *(Use initials)*	**Frequency of contact** *(circle one for each)*
________________	*daily or more, weekly, monthly, quarterly, other.*
________________	*daily or more, weekly, monthly, quarterly, other.*
________________	*daily or more, weekly, monthly, quarterly, other.*
________________	*daily or more, weekly, monthly, quarterly, other.*
________________	*daily or more, weekly, monthly, quarterly, other.*

14. With whom do you discuss what is important and valued in [The Study Organisation]?

List *(Use initials)* **Frequency of contact** *(circle one for each)*

________________ *daily or more, weekly, monthly quarterly, other.*

________________ *daily or more, weekly, monthly, quarterly, other.*

________________ *daily or more, weekly, monthly, quarterly, other.*

________________ *daily or more, weekly, monthly, quarterly, other.*

________________ *daily or more, weekly, monthly, quarterly, other.*

15. With whom do you discuss **primary** stakeholder needs and service demands?

List *(Use initials)* **Frequency of contact** *(circle one for each)*

________________ *daily or more, weekly, monthly, quarterly, other.*

________________ *daily or more, weekly, monthly quarterly, other.*

________________ *daily or more, weekly, monthly, quarterly, other.*

________________ *daily or more, weekly, monthly, quarterly, other.*

________________ *daily or more, weekly, monthly, quarterly, other.*

The results will be shared and discussed at a future Action Research session.

Thankyou, please return completed questionnaire to Beverly Walker or if you prefer a sealed box is located in the office of the PA to the Chief Executive.

Appendix 7-2: Transcript of Action Research Session on Static Social Network Maps

AR Session 30/08/02

SNA feedback using OHP and static maps

Location: Fairfield

Present: #11, #02, #10, #14, #05, #01, #13, #03, #08, #15, #09, #07, #04, #06, #12, and Researcher

Absent:

Tape 1 of 2

Side A

Topic: SNA

Researcher: There are some elements of today's meeting (operational managers meeting) that I was going to ask questions about and through the action particularly in terms of Member involvement #04. The three documents, I would be interested down the track about how that has improved the involvement of Members within different programs. That is actually where I started three years ago with that question. I might pick up some elements of (Member involvement) ...I have got some questions based on the data from the SNA. *(Researcher memo: link between operational and action research sessions)*

In my mind what I am hoping to do is to have some sort of document to get back to you to make some sense out of the data. Most of the analysis that the program does look at links between people the strengths of links between people, the control over information in and out, whether there are two-way links between people. When I show some of the maps, there are for me, you can look at them and might come up with some ideas about what it means. There are different ways in which these cane be manipulated, but I only have the basics today.

In terms of my research question, for me I have identified something interesting. Which is why today I was going to come back to the questions that I have been posing all the way through in terms of what you have been doing to involve and integrate Member input into your programs? I will just go though, although #04 has today answered some of the question because he is moving. Because that is #04's folio, he is moving with it. But it is still the issue for all the other managers.

(042) I don't know whether you need me to ... one of the first questions, other than the demographic, that I asked you to complete was about whom you reported to. It is pretty obvious whom you report to.

With one of the questions I have been able to impose two questions together so that we can get a picture of the relationship between the formal and informal communication. This activity came out of an earlier session, issues about your communication and forma and informal communication links. I hope that makes sense for some people who were not here. ... So then, from the questionnaire I have entered the data and been trying to analyse it. That was the first question and I don't have a map of that.

The next (OHP) includes all questions and includes all links (5-1). You might see that there are some groupings and patterns of all the questions. Which when I come back to the analysis, interpreting and writing something, it will show that there are some people in the organisation who have the power in terms of communication.

In terms of ...people go to them for certain bits of information. Q11, it is mainly the patterns that I want you look at ... The boxes, what I tried to do was group nodes together who were the senior executive, those in #01 team, ... GM team, who were in contract services. There are people who you communicate with external to the organisation or to the group, remember I placed a boundary around this group. Then there were other groups of people that I grouped together, who I thought might be used when I set this up; on this side I grouped stakeholders. When I mixed and matched all the data it ... I have left the map without organisation, as it was too difficult to read.

In terms of whom you discuss ... Q11, I tried to tease out, and some people actually put down who were external to this group, eg staff. So where they have done that I established a group of staff, because that came up quite a lot/ some just put external to the group. *(Researcher memo: This highlights the possibility of confusion the managers who completed the task had with completing the task. It may also highlight a difference in perception the Researcher held about the staff executive members held about what the communication problem was ... between group members or generally.)*

Given that this group of managers is charged with the promotion of the mission vision etc from the BOD you would hope that you didn't only discuss it amongst yourselves. Even so, there is obviously a lot of activity, a lot of discussion amongst this group. ... Now what that means, who knows, but it might be that you are trying to clarify what it means. It is interesting that there are some people, not all, that go outside the group quite a bit in terms of who they discuss them with. In terms of your strategy and your strategic direction, when you get it in paper form you might be able to make some assessment about what that means. I haven't put any judgement on it, except for the areas that interest me in relation to my research questions.

In terms of your strategic direction, there is some contact with the external groups, not a lot with external stakeholders. It might mean that if you were to do this questionnaire you might do it differently. ...

(104) I am mainly interested in your strongest ties, it should also be the weakest if a tie was considered important. Not everyone that you speak to. The BOD always looks like it is outside somewhere ... from #01 some others go to some of the BOD meetings.

The thicker the line, remember you had to rate it, weekly etc, frequency of contact. The thinner the line the less frequent it is. The stronger the line the more frequent the ties ...

OHP ...That was about mission vision and values, there is obviously a tight communication link there between this group and also there are these, particularly external to the group, that external and internal to the organisation, which is what you would expect. Whether you would expect more over here in terms of those external stakeholders, I don't know.

#01: It is an interesting question isn't it, because um if I talk to myself, I am talking to a Member (Researcher memo: highlights the conflict between being an employee of the organisation and a financial Member?)

Researcher: Well yes I know, there are those (laughter and noise) that is why this morning when the question was asked how many people in this group are Members. It is an issue for you. It is a very closed management group if you are only talking to yourselves as managers and yourselves who may also be Members or other stakeholders. It depends on what is your primary role. I could not interpret that, I just put it down as external. Where I had clues as to what was meant I added another node, like staff, because it was obvious that a lot of people talked to staff.

#01: Can I just ask a question here to the group? Did you all get … from #05 last week, this week … on the how to form a Branch?

All indicated they got them today.

#01: OK (somebody commented about distraction/disruption?)

Researcher: In terms the emergent network … like the task, I don't have another map but I did if you remember hand draw one last time and it is a similar sort of pattern.

Q13 was your expert network … now there is a link out again to participants. There is at least one if two people within the group that actually use participants in terms of getting feedback (Researcher memo: Is this my interpretation?).

In terms of involving participants as a group of stakeholders, there is some evidence of … there is a very strong line. … (147)

Again there is a similar sort of a very powerful person within the group in terms of going to for expert advice, Um, a lot of people go to somebody external and I was not able to tease out who that was, also it was not asked at this stage, but some people did qualify. There is a lot of expertise centralised.

Now one of the things that #01 in a couple of meetings ago, mentioned that one of the concerns of the BOD was around the issue of expertise and the fact that it was centralised and what would happen if you took that person out, or those persons out. These are going to be questions that you don't necessarily answer in the context of my research but there are some things have been of concern to you as a group in terms of your communication. One of the other things that you wanted was the improved communications between programs, so you wanted improved vertical and horizontal communications.

#01: What are the characteristics of some of those other key that one down on your right, the bottom right, in that … the box at 5 o'clock … there is a lot of communication, what are the characteristics

Researcher: These are the people … (173)… One of the things you can't see well, one of the things I have to ask you, when I put this together, do I put it together … (discussion about identification of nodes by use of numbers or initials)

#01: Right

Researcher: The direction of the arrow is here, but for other people …. (186) a lot of people for expert advice go outside. (Further clarification of node ID) There is a lot of concentration of people going inside this group for expert advice, but …

#02: That is what you would expect.

Researcher: But there is also a going outside. Does that make sense?

#01: It does actually.

(Laughter)

Researcher: This person here (Node #02) has a lot of power and a lot of control about what comes in and what goes out. (Laughter)

The … nothing is right or wrong, but in terms of given also that #02: has a number of people reporting directly to him … It might be other things about structure, you can either accept it or change it. One of the things, if only I could, what I think I might do, if I can get it to work properly on my word processor will project … what I could show you what would happen if I took that person out of the network. (Noise) what would happen if we made different links between people? Because, you can change, (225) and (reference to example on white board), to change the relationship between the groups.

#01: #06, you would have an interest in that wouldn't you?

#06: vague responses not decipherable

#01: Why, I am saying that is because you, initially identified the issue of not organisational connection, and so that might actually show some of that organisational connections rather than (249 mumble) level.

#04: In terms of that stuff that I did in my …

Researcher: some of it is intuitive

#04: Yes, a lot of stuff in terms of what I did in my MBA related to the whole idea of your formal structure and the informal structure and the idea of developing, you know the whole idea of the key centre of the organisation is the coffee room or the cigarette area and what organisations are increasing, where you really find out what is happening or hear at the photocopier. *(Researcher memo: a link with prior learning)*. Now you find out a lot of information at the photocopier so what organisations are doing is providing … that kind of

#02: The facsimile machine (laughter)

#04: I am talking about casual connections in the organisation, they just naturally occur what organisations are trying to do is to let those happen and make sure that they way they work (266)…the objectives of the organisation there is some chaos theory working as well with these natural networks that form …

(Some talk over not easy to hear)

#04: When you want to bounce an idea off you ring up certain people.

(More talk over).

#01: So, where are the hubs with this?

Researcher: Well, what I have done here, at the very beginning of the year there was a very long and intensive discussion, for those who were here about the formal and informal networks and at the time there were things said, you discussed the value, and there was some concern about the strength of the informal communication network.

#15: Yes.

Researcher: and you wanted to make or concentrate on the strength of the formal. I think that making use of that formal, eg this is your direct report (OHP Q6 & 14), so the two major hubs in terms of direct reports are to #01 and #02. The rest of that is the informal.

#01: You ... those who are outliers ...

Researcher: That is "with whom do you discuss what is going on at work and who is doing what?"

#01: Who is #14 and #10?

Researcher: (Clarified who they were).

Researcher: I grouped them together because (coughing over) even though she is part of this group (noise) ... I think I will revert to using numbers. (Laughter)

Researcher: Here there is somebody who obviously values participants in terms of the input into all things of the organisation.

#01: and what is that #07 (clarification)

#07: I wasn't here.

Researcher: I need to look at who that is then *(Researcher memo: Clarified that the questions had been answered by #07 at a later date)*, (noise and talk over) you need to keep in mind that a lot of people went to external to the organisation. Now whether external to the organisation is inclusive of participants or who that I can't tease out from the information I have got. A lot of people went external to this group but internal. I did tease out staff where it was repeated a d defined. So that could include staff and all those other people. That is fairly strong as there is a lot of going to ...

#12: So you got all this from those few questions and the questionnaire? (Talking over)

Researcher: Clarified that it was the very first meeting you were at.

That is OK; you need to look at it in the context of what your job is too. Because there is a lot of the data (346) because I know some of you are now Regional Managers, I tried to re group some of the data to see what patterns emerged but it was not easy to do. (Noise)

#01: There should be more networks. To me this was the image is that this is your formal, and there are arrows under that so in terms of wanting to know what goes on in the organisation to some extend the formal channels are used. But more of it is external. So you are actually using some form of informal network to find out what is going on.

#01: Who is #12?

Researcher: Clarified.

#01: What I am interested in, is the building of the informal internally. It is what #06: was saying the informal internal is not right.

Researcher: There may ...

#11: Informal internal to the group, or internal informal, or external to the organisation?

#01: I am talking about ...

End of Side A

Side B

#01: It would seem .... That internal informal there would have been a lot of stuff in that? Is that right?

Researcher: You would have thought so?

#01: Yes.

#04: That is not building there.

#01: Internal to the group (talk to clarify)

#11: Internal to the group

#14: The people that belong to that group are in the top box and the big box (clarification by #14 of OHP where staff was bounded into groups to identify different clumps).

Researcher: It is these two combined; to try and get some boundary around different groups or roles I just tried ...

#10: The top box?

Researcher: That is the external to this group but internal to the organisation. And there is a lot of strong. We haven't asked these people anything. So we don't have any arrows going both ways. So we don't know whether they would perceive that the same.

#01: That other group, external to the organisation?

#11: But I take your point #01, in regards to that group. The two boxed that have the red (direct accountability) and it is more out. There is not much linkage between the managers. You would have expected that there would have been arrows between them. ...

#02: You see what is interesting here though, you have a little spot out there that is (admin staff member) ...

Researcher: I removed those initials (nodes) because there were some other initials that I added to the data because they were in the network. But in this case no one did.

#01: ... (admin staff member)? (Talking over by other participants to clarify)

Researcher: She came up, as there was one or two who specifically in their 1-5 put (admin staff member), for some of the questions there was a link.

#11: Because, that person ... would certainly come under the external internal. Yes

Researcher: That is why, when I could identify in some way, I added them. But where there were groups, I don't know who was in the group. It would be more meaningful now to actually find out. Some of you did put for example XE and who those people might be.

(30)

#01: The internal linkages are interesting aren't they?

#11: Yes, I think so, I hadn't thought about it.

Researcher: OK

#01: It is interesting looking at that where #06: sits. So he is sitting with the direct reports, as he is a direct report to me.

Researcher: But informally there is not a lot going in to #06.

#01: umm

#11: I wonder if we could begin to look at part of the reasons why, I mean I don't know if you can, ... there could be some sort of reflection on where people are accountable to and therefore have common purpose. You would expect there to be a great big hub where people are accountable to #02 in and another one up there (meaning to #01).

Researcher: Well that is what you see on some of the questions that were asked.

#11: and then I wonder if there was a comparison between #09 and likes of #06 who is accountable to #01. Whether there is that sort of different patterns because of the nature of where you are accountable.

Researcher: When I look at the strength of the informal network in terms of where the power is centralised the major people are #02, XE1, XI1 and #01, #11, are probably the 5.

#01: #11?

(Response by another participant – not clear who) She is …

Researcher: #11 did come up in the first five in a number where people go to #11.

(Laughter)

#11: For what, the informal stuff?

Researcher: … (52) You don't have as much of the control.

#11: I don't have any, but I will chat to anyone! (Laughter)

Researcher: But you see you are perceived to have.

#01: You are perceived to have influence.

Researcher: So you are perceived to have that influence or that information … if I want to find out what is going on in this organisation I will go to you.

(Laughter and talk over)

#01: It is very interesting to reflect on that internal (network) because that is one of the things that we have been struggling with that the organisational structure was very like that and we haven't built up work teams that were doing cross program work together that would strengthen some of those informal connections. And that is really our task and that is really about regionalisation and some of that stuff about moving the power out.

#11: I think it would have been interesting to do across the organisation. But also a bit of a comparison from the time we did have that meeting I remember vividly in my mind and now. Because I think that there has been a considerable shift.

#01: Yes there is.

(Lots of noise of agreement)

#01: But we have been working on it for a while.

Researcher: When I go back through, you know my notes, one of my … what I call mega cycles, I have grouped very broadly as communication. One of your communications has been your formal structure, now that has changed three or four times as I have shown you previously. And one of the other issues that come up regularly is improving collaboration.

#02: Yes.

Researcher: So it is improving the formal networking ...

#02: Yep.

Researcher: In terms of what is important so ... this is the important and valued (OHP) you see what is important and valued ...

#01: at least Members get a go...

Researcher: Well this is, but the link is very week.

#01: Coming from me is it?

#04: But it might have come out in the XE or XI

(Noise of agreement)

Researcher: One of the things I needed to do was to limit, but now I realise that the program can take something like 160 we could have expanded (Explaining the links) There would still be a strong link to external to this group, which in one way ...

#01: there should be too.

Researcher: there should be ...

#01: if there were not we would be in real trouble.

Researcher: What is important and valued was a fairly even distribution after #02: etc

#01: This point at stopping at #02 and myself I regularly worry about and that is how do we relocate the power out there more rather than having it all come in to #02.

#02: Yes

Researcher: That is something that you are probably, that is something that you are going to have to address, it may be something that you do need, or want to. Given it is one of the issues about ... But then in another way some of this stuff does indicate all the power is not with the chief executive that in a sense does represent the structure of the organisation ...

(Chatter)

#11: ... I take it that #02 and #01 are the hub ... the next level down would be very useful.

#01: The next level down would be very useful.

#11: yes. ... There is a lot of ... I think you would find in the transition that there is going to be an awful lot linking to the other dots (nodes) as well so that when you are looking at the other hums #02 would be come smaller. ... I am talking about people becoming accountable to the people here. There might be a lot of little hubs (talking) and then in comparison #02 hub, might not seem big. (117)

#01: However it is an organisational issue. Because there isn't anybody that we haven't to date fully developed that succession planning stuff outside of #02 and that does need to happed, there does need to be some broader ...

#11: #15 highlighted that

#13: The regionalisation program is only just starting to kick in so it is probably premature to get an accurate picture. But ...

Researcher: I don't know that this is accurate, it is really those images and what do the pictures show you intuitively about some of the things ...

(Talking over)

#01: and #14 ...

#13: For instance in Gippsland if it had been taken 6 months ago it would have been reflective of one report there too. There has been a reorganisation, but it still would reflect one report to #02.

Researcher: But you would expect that a lot of your communicaaon does link in with your formal lines, because your organisational structure and your accountability are there to give you that formal communication structure and as managers a lot of that ...

#13: I would predict that as regionalisation starts to reach maturity that there would be intra regional communication. Spending last week away with #14 and #09 we can start to talk about those sorts of issues, which had never been presented as an opportunity before. (Noise talk)

#02: and you notice the difference just by casting the eye out the window (of office); at times you see the different groups, (talk and laughter)

Researcher: So that at least in terms of what is import ant and valued ...

(142) Stakeholders

(152) Reference to what #04 is doing now in terms of involving you (meaning the manager group) in developing that Membership in your functional area, it will be interesting to see this down the track as to how that would include that interaction.

#04: Since you have been talking about Membership and we talked about it earlier, I am really, it is a really interesting area I talked about it in terms of the whole organisation of ... this talk is making it more pertinent that it is a strategic objective and forward plan and it is interesting in terms of that we haven't been something, it seems that, about what you are doing to engage the Membership in your programs it would be very interesting (164) I don't whether ...

#01: I don't know really, I am reflecting on it too and I wonder whether or not in terms of the programs the message is getting weaker, because, I don't know whether or not the some of the programs that have been designed to do specific things that you it would be inclusive of Members. Some maybe Members and we would be trying to recruit members but whether or not it is a particular Membership program I am not sure.

Researcher: That might reflect and given your new organisation structure doesn't have separate reporting to the BOD by Memberships activities and the others thought the CE it um ...

#01: Because ...

Researcher: The dynamic has changed over the three years

#01: Because the difficulty that we struggled with and #09 and #06 and others know it only too well, with the enmeshment of Members within programs had in fact been one of our difficulties over the last (20) years. And we are still trying to resolve that. The other part of it is if there is a program within a region and if I could use #15 now, in the East, we promote that and we let Members know of it we are almost ... because it is not there just for Members, it is there for the broader community and if we are inviting Members and then putting them on a waiting list that is inappropriate. So how do we honestly manage that?

#06: I think we have blurred Membership and program participation in a way, which for members is very confusing, and we are paying the price for that and it is a long 20-year on price.

Researcher: Given the Fairhaven Review, one of the issues specifically raised was the concern of Members in relation to the over professionalisation of the organisation.

#01: Can I just reflect on the Fairhaven review?

Researcher: That is OK that is where a lot of this started ...

#01: But if I can reflect on the F review, which was absolutely essential for our future development, what was happening there was (skewed?) by the voice of many and what we have now is many voices of many, not as may as we would wish, but we are actually operating on numbers and ...at the time of the Review we did not know how may Members we had, now we have close to 1200 Members, which is double.

Researcher: I... it may be that with refinement you have come to where you need to be in that it is not so much Membership but it is the ethos o the philosophy of what the Membership (interruption) yes in terms of mutual support etc.

#02: It could also be a reflection of change in communicate the broader community has the expectation that if there is a difficulty there should be a service provided for it and if you look at when the org started there was a sense of community that you went out and did thing s to make things happen because they weren't provided. So you got people organising groups (225)

#01: and provide a service for themselves rather than improve MH services for all.

(232)

(Sounds of agreement from a number of managers)

#06: We have to recognise that there are some inherent tensions in the model that we are working on. The Membership based organisation that came from grass roots when we are professionalising or corporatising, whichever way you want to see it, there are dual messages there are multi messages.

We invite ownership and belonging on the one hand and say to people but you can only own so much of it and only have input. I mean in theory we say you can only have input but in reality it doesn't have that follow though. I am not saying that it should necessarily either but ...

#01: But, what, that is the question though isn't it? What are we inviting Members to have participation in? *(Researcher memo: The question I have been asking for two years)* I think we have got some clarity about that of late and we are having, we are inviting Members to express their voice, to advocate for better Mental Health Services and then we report on the outcome of that. We haven't got that really difficult thing that we really couldn't sort out – oh I am only doing this as I am going to get a service for my loved one. We have moved away from that where we have the continuing difficulty in those places where that separation has not been made. I say in Frankston and to some degree in Geelong.

#06: For those people who are long standing Members what they have experienced and we probably have never dealt with this issue is a sense of loss about something that they felt ownership for has in reality been taken from them.

Researcher: But even so the organisation is still the Membership.

#01: That is right.

Researcher: And so there is still that issue about the Membership through the Board employing professional staff to provide a service to meet that need. But then you are saying, whose hat are you wearing when you say we are allowing them or not allowing them? (Silence)

#04: When we were looking at the benefits of Membership we were looking at what can we do? One of the important things that came up very clear, that we couldn't, that idea about discounts to programs we talked about it was very tense. The Programs we are being contracted to do that and make them available to every body and there fore we can't go out saying these programs you can get discounts etc. It is a very sensitive issue that. It is the area of most tension that is why when we are talking about Membership we have got to be talking about it; it is a conceptual framework, the buying in ...

#01: But can we come back to our 'raison d'être' our 'raison d'être' is in our constitution and our constitution, our old constitution in fact reflected better what our reason for being is and that was to advocate for better medical services, to promote community education, to support families, to increase opportunities for housing and rehabilitation options for people. That is what I wanted to bring clearly into the last constitution but the Tax Man is going to penalise us so we put a whole lot of other gobbledy gook in there, but really still our purposes are those. It is not for the provision of services to people who are members that has never been the focus.

Researcher: But it is submitting and getting these contracts to provide the services you are getting the services but it is also for others.

#06: There is a further tension there, in order to wield more power and have a stronger voice we have to professionalise and corporatise and that means leaving some things behind.

#11: But I don't know that it does (some talk over)

#11: I was going to go back a little in regards to the comments or the discussion we had earlier about the benefits and I think that and certainly my thinking was (word not decipherable)... providing or performing that was the beginning stage of the blurring (some interjection not decipherable) of the whole issue. And another comment that you two used, and I don't know whether it was intended in that particular way, but something like we encourage people to become Members and then we put a waver (?word) on it ...

#01: No, no, no I was saying that the real difficulty is if we encourage people to be Members and we say then we will provide you with housing and support and then we out you on a waiting list

#11: Ohm.

#15: waiting list.

#11: yes I just want to move a way, in my mind it is quite clear that the Membership group can very well be participants but you don't have to.

#01: Absolutely not

#11: So they are separate in my mind.

#01: Yes

#15: Yes

#06: In MSSH if you are a Member you get a discount.

#11: But that maybe for materials?

#06: No for carer education.

#11: But are we funded to provide that?

#01: No only through Membership.

#11: But for a Member to get a discount to come to A... House I don't have the discretion to do that.

#02: Yes, you can't do that.

#01: members or non-members don't pay for counselling (coughing and noisy!)

Researcher: Accessing services that may or may not have been there but actually are seen as a need for a particular group. But it includes not just the Members who have advocated getting the services. It includes Members but is also inclusive.

#01: Like for example if we developed a respite option that was particularly designed to support Members, whatever that might be, we did that out of out own money and we developed that product and we fund raised fro it only Members would access it ...

#11: I haven't got any problem with that.

#01: and, that is the same as with education that we provide, the 14 Principles, we did that it wasn't State Government and it wasn't funded (noise and talk over)

#04: The initial point that I felt and this has been really helpful for my understanding of it, the initial point that I was saying was that we talked about Membership, but what I would like to be done that it becomes a more concrete part of the process and more objective, both through the monthly reports that go through here and people coming up and saying we run a scheme like this so that we actually get that feedback, there is a feedback loop on, see what I mean, it gets into the strategic objectives.

#01: Well I don't know #04:, I actually don't know because #15: program is absolutely funded to provide home based outreach support or whatever but when I wrote the tender to do that stuff I wrote it as Government Contract I wrote it under our mandate of providing more and different range of housing options which was the mandate in our ...

#04: Well if you take that logic then #11: shouldn't be talking anything about what is organisational. #15: has a is employed by (study organisation) and he got involved in branding he doesn't need to use branding or have training on that or any other aspect relating to that. The fact that he is part of our organisation he holds the values and holds the corporate norms for here and they are part of the (missing word) process. That contractual relationship with them

#01: About Members?

#04: About Members, it is as much about branding or

#11: (missing words) technically specially I don't see that is my role, whether they are or not

#01: That's the question I am actually

#04: That is why I am bringing it up because I think it

#11: I mean I am obliged to provide the service to people in the community whether they are Members or not it should not make any difference to me, within that process

End of side B Tape 1

Side A Tape 2

#11: nor would I ever feel comfortable reporting on that on a monthly basis.

#01: And therein lies the conversation I had with you some months ago around anxiety about we have a captive audience in many of our programs around service provision. It is a contractual provision provided by government. But there are numbers of staff who feel that there is an ethical breach if you then begin to push Membership for the benefit or another benefit for which your contact is not designed. That conversation has been had loud and clear and that is why the organisation has developed different mechanisms around Membership.

(Reflective Pause)

Researcher: I think certainly for me we need I need to tie where we are at, at the point where I exit, but it is still an issue when we have got these differences where you are actually employed by Membership based organisation to provide a contract service for which that organisation has in terms of increasing your Membership or that is obviously and issue. In terms of the organisations philosophy, values, and mission and from the Membership framework it is still everybody's responsibility?

#02: Hang on, there is an (mumbling and missing words) but there was an issue about Churches and people raised this issue, why should churches be providing employment services? Because will they have a bent for providing only to Christians? (Noise of acknowledgement) Is there an expectation that the staff that will work with them will only be Christians and will be spreading the word? Is there much difference in saying we are a Membership organisation. Churches are Membership organisations they have a belief etc are we actually, we have to watch that we don't put ourselves into a position where we could be seen to be compromising our position (interruption)

#06: well on that point we would not and could not discriminate against a prospective participant because of their values, but in terms of Membership, if someone joins they are embracing the values, we hope that participants do and as long as (undecipherable) their is not really much other criteria in terms of their participation.

#01: So can we, is that comes to the next question, and that is should we consider that being a Member of this organisation adds value to that person? Having considered all of the power and control issues and it is about empowerment too is it not? Because it is about you adding your voice for better mental health services etc, etc. Here is a range of options that you might join including us that maybe the way that you do it. But just pushing one people has come up against the ethical issue.

#11: I think it is clear that I think, I personally I can't speak for anybody else, I am clear in regards to (missing word}, I am clear in regards to (missing word) that to me is enough to have a discussion on (word) For each of these (can't decipher too soft) At the end of the day it is not hat came with my position, you do that and I think that it is important but I don't want to confuse the issue in regards to what am I doing a hard sell ... potential participants, I am going out I am doing (missing words) assessment but is it to get (something about service provision and Membership).. Sometimes it should go hand in hand but not always.

#01: But gosh we wouldn't want to be pushing and doing a hard sell on Membership at that time (initial assessment) I mean that would be unethical. (Noise with talking over)

#11: yea sure, it is information would be great and I will certainly do that but to (not decipherable).

#06: I think

#04: The idea behind it is not to become a hard sell but it is relating to this is part of our strategic plan. Then I would say to you then it will rely on each manager (not decipherable) therefore I wont do it. If it is strategic, I am not trying to cause, this is a good discussion, and I am trying to ...

Researcher: It is there in your Forward Plan and there is already a conflict.

#04: and when #01: says, when you go through the Forward Plan I want you to think about every part, so when I went through I looked at Governance, how does Governance affect my area? I wrote aspects about how it relates and I went to every part and when I looked at Membership and if I was program then that is something that I would have to tie into my strategy and tie into my reporting line.

(Noise and talk over all at once)

#09: (missed words) it is just the how.

Researcher: One of my original questions was how do you keep Membership informed in terms of the services that you are providing because the Membership is the organisation.

#09: Exactly, that is not what I am disputing

Researcher: It is not even about numbers necessarily, but what do you do and how do you go about it?

#04: I am talking about it going into the process so that when somebody joins they say oh do you know we are a Membership based organisation the reason why it is good to join is x, y, z so it is part of the process. But unless it becomes part of the strategy it is not going to be on the principle persons (lost words) what they think is a good idea at that time and (...) a new rule as somebody else may think it is not because of time priorities ...

#01: Well hang on, I think that there are other ways and certainly part of it is via branches and there are different ways and that is why we want to see Branches formed because therefore you have a separation you have got the medication separation if you like. The (...) of the service and the agent ...

#11: (not able to decipher)

(Lots of everyone talking)

#04: That's why I wanted it talked through rather than being left to the person or the individual ... (Everyone talking over each other again)

Researcher: My last one was the question about with who do you discuss primary stakeholder needs and service demands. (Showing OHP) That is part of the group staff are in our initial definition of stakeholders, participants, but these are the other stakeholders.

#09: What was the question again (Researcher)?

Researcher: Repeated question.

#13: Where is funding body?

Researcher: It may be under external? (It would depend on whom the managers included into this group). There is one strong link to external.

#02: Well you know that that is #10 and you could say that XX would be his major contact in the (designated) region as we are in partnership so you would actually expect him to see them.

(Talking between managers)

Researcher: The original stakeholders were identified with Members.

#01: Oh, I didn't even think of them!

Researcher: I don't know whether that is helpful I am trying to get something together as a report.

#01: That is very useful, I found that very useful (Sounds of agreement from others)

Researcher: It is just pictures to intuitively hang on to.

#01: It does it really links with regionalisation. (Lots of talking between managers)

Researcher: Making links to how it changes the power it is that principle of decentralising. (Talking) In terms of this I would imagine that there has been so much change over the three years that there has been a gradual decentralisation

#01: Yep

Researcher: and included in this group has demonstrated that.

#11: But also it is a bit of mapping to see where it is going, what are the changes and the regionalisation for me (lost in other managers talking over)

End of session. End of tape 2, Side A (338)

Appendix 7-3: SNA Reports (8)

Appendix 7-3.1 Mission, Vision and Strategy Discussion

Network Centrality...

NETWORK

Q11. With whom do you discuss (organisation) m, v, & strategy?

Group A Membership	
	XE1
014	XI1
003	XI2
007	Group Size 18
010	Potential Ties 306
013	Actual Ties 32
012	Density 10%
002	
001	Computing geodesics
004	32 paths of length 1
008	56 paths of length 2
005	41 paths of length 3
006	22 paths of length 4
009	2 paths of length 5
011	1 paths of length 6
015	0 paths of length

Group A : Degrees (Out)	Group A : Degrees (In)
0.353 001	0.412 002
0.294 002	0.235 XI1
0.294 005	0.176 001
0.176 004	0.176 004
0.118 014	0.176 006
0.118 013	0.118 003
0.118 011	0.118 XE1
0.118 015	0.059 014
0.059 007	0.059 007
0.059 010	0.059 010
0.059 012	0.059 008
0.059 008	0.059 005
0.059 009	0.059 011
0.000 003	0.059 015
0.000 006	0.059 XI2
0.000 XE1	0.000 013
0.000 XI1	0.000 012
0.000 XI2	0.000 009
0.105 AVERAGE	0.105 AVERAGE
0.279 CENTRALIZATION	0.346 CENTRALIZATION

Group A : Betweenness (White & Borgatti) : Uniform

0.538 002

0.258 001

0.119 015

0.113 014

0.101 004

0.063 010

0.050 011

0.031 007

0.016 008

0.000 003

0.000 013

0.000 012

0.000 005

0.000 006

0.000 009

0.000 XE1

0.000 XI1

0.000 XI2

0.072 AVERAGE

0.494 CENTRALIZATION

Group A : Closeness (Out)

0.233	013
0.224	012
0.224	001
0.224	009
0.221	005
0.218	002
0.210	015
0.198	004
0.195	014
0.175	007
0.066	011
0.062	010
0.062	008
0.059	003
0.059	006
0.059	XE1
0.059	XI1
0.059	XI2
0.145	AVERAGE
0.193	CENTRALIZATION

Group A : Closeness (In)

0.156	XI1
0.134	XE1
0.121	008
0.121	011
0.119	XI2
0.118	006
0.116	003
0.115	002
0.114	010
0.110	007
0.110	001
0.110	004
0.109	014
0.109	015
0.104	005
0.059	013
0.059	012
0.059	009
0.108	AVERAGE
0.105	CENTRALIZATION

Group A : Power (Out)	Group A : Power (In)
0.378002	0.326002
0.241001	0.184001
0.165015	0.114015
0.154014	0.111014
0.149004	0.105004
0.116013	0.088010
0.112012	0.085011
0.112009	0.078XI1
0.110005	0.071007
0.103007	0.068008
0.063010	0.067XE1
0.058011	0.059006
0.039008	0.059XI2
0.029003	0.058003
0.029006	0.052005
0.029XE1	0.029013
0.029XI1	0.029012
0.029XI2	0.029009
0.108AVERAGE	0.090AVERAGE

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Appendix 7-3.2 Network Centrality – Emergent Task

Network Centrality...

NETWORK

Q12. With whom do you work to get your job done?

Group A

Membership

014

003

007

010

013

012

002

001

004

008

005

006

009

011

015

XE1

XI1

XI2

Group Size 18

Potential Ties 306

Actual Ties 42

Density 14%

Computing geodesics

42 paths of length 1

45 paths of length 2

14 paths of length 3

0 paths of length 4

Group A : Degrees (Out)	Group A : Degrees (In)
0.294014	0.588XI1
0.294001	0.471002
0.294004	0.353001
0.235010	0.294003
0.235002	0.176006
0.235009	0.118004
0.176006	0.118005
0.176015	0.118XE1
0.118007	0.118XI2
0.118013	0.059014
0.118005	0.059011
0.059012	0.000007
0.059008	0.000010
0.059011	0.000013
0.000003	0.000012
0.000XE1	0.000008
0.000XI1	0.000009
0.000XI2	0.000015
0.137AVERAGE	0.137AVERAGE
0.176CENTRALIZATION	0.507CENTRALIZATION

Group A : Betweenness (White & Borgatti) : Uniform

0.159002

0.155001

0.056014

0.030006

0.016004

0.002011

0.000003

0.000007

0.000010

0.000013

0.000012

0.000008

0.000005

0.000009

0.000015

0.000XE1

0.000XI1

0.000XI2

0.023AVERAGE

0.144CENTRALIZATION

Group A : Closeness (Out)	Group A : Closeness (In)
0.139010	0.246XI1
0.114014	0.143003
0.102009	0.138XI2
0.101013	0.130002
0.094006	0.128001
0.094015	0.121004
0.092012	0.121005
0.088001	0.075006
0.088004	0.066011
0.087002	0.066XE1
0.086005	0.062014
0.066007	0.059007
0.062008	0.059010
0.062011	0.059013
0.059003	0.059012
0.059XE1	0.059008
0.059XI1	0.059009
0.059XI2	0.059015
0.084AVERAGE	0.095AVERAGE
0.120CENTRALIZATION	0.330CENTRALIZATION

Group A : Power (Out)	Group A : Power (In)
0.123 002	0.145 002
0.121 001	0.142 001
0.085 014	0.123 XI1
0.070 010	0.071 003
0.062 006	0.069 XI2
0.052 004	0.068 004
0.051 009	0.060 005
0.050 013	0.059 014
0.047 015	0.053 006
0.046 012	0.034 011
0.043 005	0.033 XE1
0.033 007	0.029 007
0.032 011	0.029 010
0.031 008	0.029 013
0.029 003	0.029 012
0.029 XE1	0.029 008
0.029 XI1	0.029 009
0.029 XI2	0.029 015
0.053 AVERAGE	0.059 AVERAGE

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Appendix 7-3.3 Expert Advice

Network Centrality...

NETWORK

Q13. To whom do you go for expert advice?

Group A

Membership

014	015
003	XE1
007	XI1
010	
013	
012	
002	
001	
004	
008	
005	
006	
009	
011	

Group Size 17

Potential Ties 272

Actual Ties 34

Density 13%

Computing geodesics

34 paths of length 1

39 paths of length 2

29 paths of length 3

21 paths of length 4

0 paths of length 5

Group A : Degrees (Out)	Group A : Degrees (In)
0.313 004	0.688 002
0.250 001	0.375 001
0.250 015	0.313 XE1
0.188 007	0.188 003
0.188 009	0.125 014
0.125 014	0.125 004
0.125 010	0.125 006
0.125 013	0.125 XI1
0.125 002	0.063 005
0.125 008	0.000 007
0.125 006	0.000 010
0.063 012	0.000 013
0.063 005	0.000 012
0.063 011	0.000 008
0.000 003	0.000 009
0.000 XE1	0.000 011
0.000 XI1	0.000 015
0.125 AVERAGE	0.125 AVERAGE
0.213 CENTRALIZATION	0.638 CENTRALIZATION

Group A : Betweenness (White & Borgatti) : Uniform

0.535 001

0.343 002

0.333 004

0.096 014

0.025 006

0.000 003

0.000 007

0.000 010

0.000 013

0.000 012

0.000 008

0.000 005

0.000 009

0.000 011

0.000 015

0.000 XE1

0.000 XI1

0.078 AVERAGE

0.485 CENTRALIZATION

Group A : Closeness (Out)

0.120009

0.119010

0.114015

0.110014

0.110007

0.108008

0.107013

0.106012

0.106011

0.105004

0.104001

0.101002

0.101005

0.101006

0.063003

0.063XEi

0.063XI1

0.100AVERAGE

0.044CENTRALIZATION

Group A : Closeness (In)

0.276003

0.254002

0.246XEI

0.235001

0.216XI1

0.205006

0.203004

0.178005

0.071014

0.063007

0.063010

0.063013

0.063012

0.063008

0.063009

0.063011

0.063015

0.140AVERAGE

0.298CENTRALIZATION

Group A : Power (Out)	Group A : Power (In)
0.320001	0.385001
0.222002	0.299002
0.219004	0.268004
0.103014	0.138003
0.063006	0.123XE1
0.060009	0.115006
0.059010	0.108XI1
0.057015	0.089005
0.055007	0.083014
0.054013	0.031007
0.054008	0.031010
0.053012	0.031013
0.053011	0.031012
0.050005	0.031008
0.031003	0.031009
0.031XE1	0.031011
0.031XI1	0.031015
0.089AVERAGE	0.109AVERAGE

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Appendix 7-2.4 Informal / Gossip

Network Centrality...

NETWORK

Q14 With whom do you discuss what is going on?

Isolates

007

Group A

Membership 014

003

010

013

012

002

001

004

008

005

006

009

011

015

XE1

XI1

XI2

Group Size 17

Potential Ties 272

Actual Ties 31

Density 11%

Computing geodesics

31 paths of length 1

19 paths of length 2

1 paths of length 3

0 paths of length 4

Group A : Degrees (Out)

0.313004

0.313009

0.188010

0.188013

0.188002

0.125012

0.125008

0.125005

0.125006

0.125015

0.063014

0.063001

0.000003

0.000011

0.000XE1

0.000XI1

0.000XI2

0.114AVERAGE

0.225CENTRALIZATION

Group A : Degrees (In)

0.375002

0.375XI1

0.313001

0.250XE1

0.125003

0.125006

0.125011

0.063014

0.063004

0.063005

0.063XI2

0.000010

0.000013

0.000012

0.000008

0.000009

0.000015

0.114AVERAGE

0.296CENTRALIZATION

Group A : Betweenness (White & Borgatti) : Uniform

0.105 002

0.024 001

0.024 004

0.010 014

0.010 006

0.000 003

0.000 010

0.000 013

0.000 012

0.000 008

0.000 005

0.000 009

0.000 011

0.000 015

0.000 XE1

0.000 XI1

0.000 XI2

0.010 AVERAGE

0.101 CENTRALIZATION

Group A : Closeness (Out)	Group A : Closeness (In)
0.105 009	0.145 XI1
0.088 004	0.124 003
0.087 013	0.116 002
0.087 012	0.115 001
0.087 005	0.082 XE1
0.081 010	0.075 011
0.081 015	0.071 006
0.080 006	0.066 014
0.076 002	0.066 004
0.075 001	0.066 005
0.071 008	0.066 XI2
0.066 014	0.063 010
0.063 003	0.063 013
0.063 011	0.063 012
0.063 XE1	0.063 008
0.063 XI1	0.063 009
0.063 XI2	0.063 015
0.076 AVERAGE	0.081 AVERAGE
0.063 CENTRALIZATION	0.141 CENTRALIZATION

Group A : Power (Out)	Group A : Power (In)
0.090002	0.110002
0.056004	0.073XI1
0.052009	0.069001
0.049001	0.062003
0.045006	0.045004
0.044013	0.041XE1
0.043012	0.040006
0.043005	0.038014
0.041010	0.038011
0.040015	0.033005
0.038014	0.033XI2
0.035008	0.031010
0.031003	0.031013
0.031011	0.031012
0.031XE1	0.031008
0.031XI1	0.031009
0.031XI2	0.031015
0.043AVERAGE	0.045AVERAGE

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Appendix 7-3.5 Important and Valued

Network Centrality...

NETWORK

Q15 With whom do you discuss what is important, valued?

Isolates	
007	
012	
XE2	
Group A	015
Membership	XE1
014	XI1
003	XI2
010	
013	Group Size 16
002	Potential Ties 240
001	Actual Ties 21
004	Density 9%
008	Computing geodesics
005	21 paths of length 1
006	9 paths of length 2
009	2 paths of length 3
011	0 paths of length 4

Group A : Degrees (Out)	Group A : Degrees (In)
0.333004	0.333XI1
0.267001	0.267002
0.133014	0.200001
0.133008	0.133003
0.133009	0.133005
0.067010	0.133XE1
0.067013	0.067010
0.067005	0.067004
0.067006	0.067XI2
0.067011	0.000014
0.067015	0.000013
0.000003	0.000008
0.000002	0.000006
0.000XE1	0.000009
0.000XI1	0.000011
0.000XI2	0.000015
0.088 AVERAGE	0.088 AVERAGE
0.281 CENTRALIZATION	0.281 CENTRALIZATION

Group A : Betweenness (White & Borgatti) : Uniform

0.117001

0.039004

0.013010

0.000014

0.000003

0.000013

0.000002

0.000008

0.000005

0.000006

0.000009

0.000011

0.000015

0.000XE1

0.000XI1

0.000XI2

0.011AVERAGE

0.114CENTRALIZATION

Group A : Closeness (Out)	Group A : Closeness (In)
0.102 006	0.127 XI1
0.097 004	0.105 002
0.096 001	0.088 003
0.094 005	0.082 001
0.082 014	0.082 005
0.076 008	0.081 004
0.076 009	0.076 XE1
0.071 010	0.076 XI2
0.071 013	0.071 010
0.071 011	0.067 014
0.071 015	0.067 013
0.067 003	0.067 008
0.067 002	0.067 006
0.067 XE1	0.067 009
0.067 XI1	0.067 011
0.067 XI2	0.067 015
0.078 AVERAGE	0.079 AVERAGE
0.054 CENTRALIZATION	0.107 CENTRALIZATION

Group A : Power (Out)	Group A : Power (In)
0.107001	0.099001
0.068004	0.064XI1
0.051006	0.060004
0.047005	0.052002
0.042010	0.044003
0.041014	0.042010
0.038008	0.041005
0.038009	0.038XE1
0.036013	0.038XI2
0.036011	0.033014
0.036015	0.033013
0.033003	0.033008
0.033002	0.033006
0.033XE1	0.033009
0.033XI1	0.033011
0.033XI2	0.033015
0.044AVERAGE	0.044AVERAGE

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Appendix 7-3.6 Primary Stakeholder Needs

Network Centrality...

NETWORK

Q16 With whom do you discuss primary stakeholder needs

Group A

Membership

- 014
- 003
- 007
- 010
- 013
- 012
- 002
- 001
- 004
- 008
- 005
- 006
- 009
- 011
- 015
- XE1
- XI1
- XI2

Group Size 18

Potential Ties 306

Actual Ties 32

Density 10%

Computing geodesics

32 paths of length 1

22 paths of length 2

6 paths of length 3

1 paths of length 4

0 paths of length 5

Group A : Degrees (Out)	Group A : Degrees (In)
0.294009	0.471002
0.235013	0.235001
0.235001	0.235XE1
0.235004	0.235XI1
0.235015	0.118010
0.176010	0.118004
0.118014	0.118006
0.118005	0.059014
0.059007	0.059003
0.059012	0.059008
0.059008	0.059005
0.059006	0.059011
0.000003	0.059XI2
0.000002	0.000007
0.000011	0.000013
0.000XE1	0.000012
0.000XI1	0.000009
0.000XI2	0.000015
0.105AVERAGE	0.105AVERAGE
0.213CENTRALIZATION	0.412CENTRALIZATION

Group A : Betweenness (White & Borgatti) : Uniform

0.139001

0.067004

0.040006

0.024010

0.008014

0.008008

0.000003

0.000007

0.000013

0.000012

0.000002

0.000005

0.000009

0.000011

0.000015

0.000XE1

0.000XI1

0.000XI2

0.016AVERAGE

0.130CENTRALIZATION

Group A : Closeness (Out)	Group A : Closeness (In)
0.121 015	0.147 002
0.102 013	0.124 XE1
0.092 006	0.111 XI1
0.088 009	0.085 003
0.087 001	0.081 001
0.087 004	0.080 004
0.086 005	0.079 005
0.075 014	0.066 014
0.075 010	0.066 010
0.062 007	0.066 006
0.062 012	0.062 008
0.062 008	0.062 011
0.059 003	0.062 XI2
0.059 002	0.059 007
0.059 011	0.059 013
0.059 XE1	0.059 012
0.059 XI1	0.059 009
0.059 XI2	0.059 015
0.075 AVERAGE	0.077 AVERAGE
0.100 CENTRALIZATION	0.153 CENTRALIZATION

Group A : Power (Out)	Group A : Power (In)
0.113001	0.110001
0.077004	0.074004
0.066006	0.073002
0.061015	0.062XE1
0.051013	0.056XI1
0.050010	0.053006
0.044009	0.045010
0.043005	0.043003
0.041014	0.040005
0.035008	0.037014
0.031007	0.035008
0.031012	0.031011
0.029003	0.031XI2
0.029002	0.029007
0.029011	0.029013
0.029XE1	0.029012
0.029XI1	0.029009
0.029XI2	0.029015
0.045AVERAGE	0.046AVERAGE

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Appendix 7-3.7 Emergent Task Cluster Analysis

Cluster Analysis...

NETWORK

Q12 With whom do you work to get your job done?

Group A

Membership 014
003
007
010
013
012
002
001
004
008
005
006
009
011
015
XE1
XI1
XI2

Group Size 18
Potential Ties 306
Actual Ties 42
Density 14%

Cluster [1]

Membership 003
002
001
004

Satellites 012
005

Cluster [2]

Membership 002

001

004

XI1

Satellites

012

008

005

015

Kernels

002

[1] [2]

001

[1] [2]

004

[1] [2]

Liaisons

014	[1] [2]	006	[1] [2]
013	[1] [2]	009	[1] [2]
012	[1] [2]	015	[1] [2]
005	[1] [2]		

Combined Clusters

[1] and [2]

% of Overlap: 75%

Membership

003 002 001 004 XI1

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Appendix 7-3.8 Expert Advice Cluster Analysis

Cluster Analysis...

NETWORK

Q13 To whom do you go for expert advice?

Group A

Membership

014
003
007
010
013
012
002
001
004
008
005
006
009
011
015
XE1
XI1

Group Size 17
Potential Ties 272
Actual Ties 34
Density 13%

Cluster [1]

Membership

003
002
001
015

Satellites

012
011