Rethinking Our Work: a Facilitation Framework

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Where it began: health promotion research in schools

Centre for Adolescent Health, Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne, Australia.

- Gatehouse Project 1996-2001 (GP)
- Adolescent Health and Social Environments Program 2003-2008 (AHSEP)
- *beyondblue* Schools Research Initiative 2003-2005 (bSRI) with partners in SA & Qld

A collaborative approach

Facilitators worked intensively with up to 6 schools or up to 3 clusters of 4-11 schools

- In GP & bSRI, facilitators worked directly with core teams in individual schools
- In AHSEP, facilitators worked with teams representing groups or clusters of schools & supported the coordinators of those clusters

Where the role began

- Experienced educators – understood schools
- Took on multifaceted roles in introduction, implementation & evaluation of initiatives
- The face of research teams in schools & face of schools at Centre for Adolescent Health

What do you think matters most to successful implementation?

- Timing?
- Resources?
- Politics?
- Opportunity?
- Flexibility/adaptability?
- Leadership?
- Context?

Well understood and recognised in the literature.
Has led to talk of the need for " readiness" before implementing – we need to address these before we can start

Notwithstanding the critical influence of these factors …

Proposition 1:

That the project co-ordinator /project facilitator should assume that such factors will exist. They are part of the essential data/ information/ knowledge/circumstances that you inevitably work with and around.

What else might we consider?

Proposition 2:

That the project co-ordinator /project facilitator needs to pay attention to enabling factors that engage the project participants whatever the contextual factors that hinder or help it .

Let's pose another question…

So…what is it that people need in order to be willing, creative, collaborative, contributing participants/ partners?
(So we create a working environment where the team is greater than the sum of it parts?)

Sense of ownership
Sense of mattering
Moral purpose; why are we doing this
Clarity; what are we doing & why this way
Understanding of ideas and language
Explicit, rather than assumed, expectations
Willingness to take risks
Trust

What does this mean for the role?

Proposition 3:

That the project co-ordinator /project facilitator needs to re-imagine, re-conceive their role in order to address these factors.

How does the naming and conception of the role drive the tasks differently – including the relationship between researchers and practitioners?

Developing the role of critical friend

Our experiences in the projects brought unique insights into processes of change and intense reflection about the challenging nature of the relationship between "Critical Friends", the schools/communities with which they work and project outcomes.

Butler, H., Krelle, A., Seal, L., Trafford, L., Drew, S., Hargreaves, J., Walter, R. & Bond, L. (2011) The Critical Friend: Facilitating change and wellbeing in school communities. Camberwell, Vic: ACER Press.

Reconceptualising implementation

- Conceptualising implementation as an ongoing process of change not a product to be 'done';
- Facilitating the change process (not just training and technical assistance);
- Bringing an in-depth understanding of the educational context and adolescent health and wellbeing; and,
- Assisting schools to integrate this work within their core business (Bond & Butler 2010)

An evolving role...

- Technical assistant?
- Translator of research into practice?
- Trainer?
- Learner?
- Mentor?
- Advocate?
- Listener/reflector?
- Catalyst?
- Active participant in change processes?

How this is achieved

- Facilitating Processes;
  - Being inclusive and transparent around about how things are done, decision-making, consultation, information sharing.
- Nurturing Relationships;
  - Being respectful of different needs and opinions, attitudes and beliefs amongst team members, leadership, staff and community. Paying attention to individuals, honouring their investment.
- Clarifying concepts;
  - Achieving a shared understanding by creating opportunities for individuals to articulate , explain and question, interrogate the language, ideas, assumptions.

Facilitation framework

	Clarifying Concepts	Nurturing Relationships	Facilitating Processes
Getting in	Goals, aims objectives, concepts, frameworks, beliefs, understandings	Community, stakeholders, respect, credibility	Roles, boundaries, agreements, MOUs, policies, practices
Getting on with it	Exploring, interpreting, challenging, advocating, promoting	Building, cultivating, nurturing, consulting encouraging, enabling	Gathering, analysing, strategising, resourcing, monitoring
Getting out	Planning, transition, celebrating	Negotiating, acknowledging, recognising	Reviewing, developing, embedding

Facilitation Framework

- Processes are often messy rather than neatly sequenced, cyclical rather than linear
- Effective critical friends draw on a repertoire of actions, depending on the context, participants & phase in the change process; Getting in, Getting on with it, Getting out
- Typically, most attention paid to 'Getting on with it' - often insufficient attention paid to 'Getting in' and 'Getting out'.

Clarifying Concepts, Nurturing Relationships, Facilitating processes

Part of my job is ... helping them to make meaning and coherence of what can seem like 'one damned thing after another'...I think that is an important part of our role...to notice things and articulate them and then have conversations in various forums...

(Critical Friend, AHSEP Interviews 2006).

Critical Friend as 'go-between'

the model...of having that Critical Friend is vital...I understand that there will be tensions between the researchers and the education backed people, teachers, and I know the Project has changed internally over a period of time because of the interaction of the Critical Friends back into the Centre for Adolescent Health and the fact that there has been that flexibility here to alter has been wonderful. Because people outside of schools don't understand how schools function and people inside schools don't realise that there are people outside who don't. They think it's obvious, everyone knows how schools function.

(Assistant Principal, Gatehouse Project Key Informant Interviews 2000)

The Critical Friend: Facilitating change and wellbeing in school communities

- **Part 1: Theory and Context**
- **Background** – Why use critical friends in education & health promotion?
- **The role of the Critical Friend** – What do they do & what support do they need?
- **The facilitation process** – How does the Critical Friend negotiate the phases of facilitation of the change process?
- **Framework for action** - what type of action might be required by the Critical Friend & those with whom they are working at a particular point in a project?
- **Part 2: Activities**
- Activities for dialogue, planning and action. Teaching notes for adapting to different contexts.