

Health promotion and health services: management for change

By A. Johnson and K. Paton, 2007. Oxford University Press; South Melbourne. Pp271. ISBN 0195556143

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It has been one of those weeks. You take refuge in a bookshop. With the blood from banging your head against a brick wall partially obscuring your vision, you wander the shelves. The words *Health Promotion, Health Services, and Management for Change* jump out at you.

Maybe 'the answer' is in here. And, in part, it is.

The book is written by an Australian public health academic and a UK lecturer in organisational development. It is broken into three parts, with the authors talking to their respective areas of expertise and predominately focusing on their country of residence. As with the structuring of many health services, it is a co-located rather than integrated partnership. This results in some duplication and creates the feeling of two books. Cross referencing and/or using the same case studies could have significantly strengthened the book.

The context for change is set in the first part of the book. The three chapters – 'Argument for Reorienting Health Services', 'Settings Approach to Health Services' and 'Changing Health Services to Become More Health Promoting' – build a compelling case for change and suggest the key focus areas. The imperative to focus on health services rather than simply hospitals is particularly convincing. The chapters are well written and very accessible. You will find yourself saying 'yes ... yes'. The pain in your head will increasingly become a badge of honour and you will feel the energy and enthusiasm for a return to the fray flood your body and soul.

You will smile with the confirmation that the years you spent 'doing' projects with hospitals had limited impact and stopped the moment the 'extra' money ran out. Much like the push in the 1980s for blood pressure screening that created large cohorts of 'worried well' with nowhere to go, but provided conference papers to dine out on for years. It was with great excitement that we included hospital staff in many of these 'projects'.

You will wholeheartedly agree with the need to take a systems approach across health services to achieve the shifts. The evidenced-based *Health Promoting Health Services Reorientation Framework* presented in Chapter Three is a powerful tool for conceptualising the way forward. As noted by the author, it will also be a useful tool for evaluating any reorientation approach.

So, by now you are re-energised for the challenges ahead and have a clear way of thinking about the change you want to drive. As the book states, "knowing how to actually manage the change process is the key to successful reorientation. This can be a very challenging task." Indeed!

The second part of the book opens with Paton's personal view "many participants of the European Health Promoting Hospitals network underestimate the scale of the change required". He further states that "he heard hundreds of examples of 'transactional' change, but not one single example of 'transformational' change". Back to projects and conference papers to dine out on! If he had read the first part of the book he would have found some Australian examples of transformational change.

This part of the book has five chapters, 'The Challenge of Changing Health Services, A Model for Effective Change Management' (his in partnership with a colleague), 'Organisational Development as an Approach to Change', 'Resistance and Commitment to Organisation Change' and 'Leading and Managing Change'. Like the first part, it is a well-written and accessible journey through the transformational change literature supported by case studies. Again you will smile when you recognise many circumstances and individuals.

Supported by the 'tools' presented in the third part of the book, this Framework for Organisational Change is a self-directed learning package which will prove useful for anyone embarking on a change process. Books on change management abound on the shelves. They now appear to outnumber cook books. The strength of the organisational change framework presented in this book is its links the public health context. The case studies are UK based. Had they been drawn from the local examples used in the first part of the book, the lessons learnt could have been more relevant. At least, they are not about Toyota.

So we have a book that presents a strong case for change, a solid way of thinking about the change; the changes; and a robust, practical framework to drive the change process. So what's missing?

Well, the audience. Despite the Foreward stating that the "book offers an excellent resource ... from health ministers and chief executives down", I fear it will only be a resource for the converted to move the chairs around on the deck of the Titanic. Although maybe this time enough chairs will move to shift the weight and change the course.

I have long been a believer in the adage 'health promotion is everybody's business'. This book has provided me with an opportunity for reflection, and new ideas to use as I wipe the blood from my forehead and continue my journey to change the world.