the ex-soldiers have severe psychological and social problems after their war experiences and are unable to settle down into civilian life again, so what is needed is trauma counselling.

Thus you disagree on the cause of the reintegration problem – but you do agree that there is a problem and that substantial funding is needed to solve it. Your manager wants to fly in a team of trauma counsellors, whereas you want to spend the money on setting up a job creation programme. What do you do?

One choice is to try to enlist the support of other field workers from your own and other agencies and, if possible, use their data to support your case. If you are able to build a good alliance with others and present a strong, well-documented case then you may be able to challenge your manager. But this is highly risky if you are unsure about Head Office politics.

Alternatively, let us start with perceptions and logic bubbles – first with your own. Have you checked your logic bubble and considered that your manager may have a point? Have you become too focused on the obvious lack of jobs? Might you learn something from these outsiders?

Next, think about your manager’s logic bubble. Her commitment to counselling is real, but think with Kuhn and Kuhn of personal and institutional factors that may also influence her thinking. As a manager working at Head Office she will also be considering how any response will be regarded by fundraisers and other donors. She may feel that being seen to be innovative and responding to new thinking will be good for her career. And if you mount a successful and innovative programme of trauma counselling, then it could raise the prestige and income of your agency.

Lateral thinking plus consideration of her logic bubble might produce a compromise solution. You could agree that counselling is needed – but you could also point out that this will be wasted if the soldiers are then not gainfully employed. Thus you could create a joint package of trauma counselling and job creation. This would go a long way to solving the problem – on which you are both agreed.

10.3.1 Three-stage models of decision making

Dealing with unprogrammed decisions in a structured way that still leaves sufficient space for creative thinking has led various writers to develop three-stage models of decision making. Each author gives them different names, but they look the same. Two important ones were developed by Herbert Simon and John Adair. (We have adapted this discussion from course B654, *The Effective Manager, Book 3 Making Decisions*, pp. 12–14, and from Adair, 1999.) Because of their similarity, we list them side by side.

The intelligence or analysing stage requires study of the problem and a search for information that is relevant to the issue and its resolution. Within this stage there is also a need to provide a clear specification of the criteria to be satisfied by the answer or answers. Adair and others stress that the key skill is the ability to ask the right questions. Only by asking the right questions in the right way will you be able to properly define the objective
or goal of the decision which has to be made or the issue that has to be addressed, and work towards a solution.

The second stage is a systematic search for likely answers to the issue being addressed. This is where the application of creative thinking could prove useful. The third stage consists of choosing the best answer or answers to suit the criteria.

The three-stage model may help you to identify the separate stages you need to engage in during a decision-making or problem-solving process. But there is a drawback to representing them in this way – they make the process seem too linear. There is a danger of de Bono’s vertical thinking or shifting too much to Simon’s programmed decision. In reality, it is not a linear or a segmented process.

Simon, Adair and others stress that sometimes the process will not progress smoothly from one stage to another. There will be overlaps and the need to move backwards. The process may have produced an answer, but as you worked through the systematic path you may have changed your mind about the issue or about the criteria which your solution could satisfy. Or now that you have an answer, you feel that it will not do, and you need to go ‘round the loop’ again. Thus, following the three stages may be only the first stage of an iterative process.

The British military has developed a very similar decision-making method, outlined in Box 10.2.
Box 10.2 Military decision-making model

The British military teaches a similar decision-making method, presenting it as a four-step, circular process. Stage 1 is the analysis of the mission and the tasks necessary to fulfil it. Stage 2 is to evaluate the military, political and environmental factors, and then to develop several courses of action (COA). This is equivalent to design, search or synthesise in the other models, and is where lateral thinking is most important. The military model splits up the final stage of the Simon and Adair models. Stage 3 is to list the advantages and disadvantages of each course of action – valuing or testing. Stage 4 is making a choice or a decision.

The diagram in the ‘British army field manual’ (MoD, 2002) is explicitly circular, with stage 1 including ‘subsequent review’. This means the decisions have to be monitored and reviewed. If the situation changes, it is necessary to return to stage 1 and go around the circle again to be sure the original assumptions and decision are still valid.

The British army tries to decentralise its decision making and give maximum authority to commanders in the field, which can be quite important in a rapidly moving peace support operation. This decision-making cycle is linked to the relationship between a commander in the field and his or her superiors at headquarters. The mission will come from superiors, but it is for the commander to evaluate the conditions, develop the courses of action, and watch for changes in the situation. This process ‘allows a commander – without waiting for further order – to exercise personal initiative and exploit a situation in a way which his superior would intend’ (MoD, 2002).

The danger with models like this is that they are often applied mechanistically, creating a false sense of security. Decision takers set out the principal objective and then consider just a few possible alternatives, often derived from past decision-making experiences. They often just take small steps in the hope that outcomes can be predicted on the basis of what
happened in the past – turning an unprogrammed decision back into a programmed one by breaking it into small pieces. These models are a useful starting point but should be used flexibly. To try to avoid models being used mechanically, Adair developed a useful checklist of questions, which we give in Box 10.3 in an adapted form.

Finally, when making a decision, never overlook the power of a simple list. Write down the issue or the problem. Note your decision-making criteria. Then list all the possible solutions you can think of. Next to each possible solution or decision, list all the advantages and disadvantages that you can think of. This simple list will help highlight the many pluses or minuses of a course of action and weigh them up against each other. The actual process of creating the list will stimulate your thinking and help with analysis and the search for possibilities.

**Box 10.3  A decision-making checklist**

One aid to finding a solution to a problem is to develop a list of key questions that should always be answered, and then, when you think you have an answer, go through the list ticking off each question to be sure you have not missed anything. This list of questions is adapted from Adair (1999) and refers to the three-stage model.

Analyse:
- Have you carefully defined what the decision is about?
- Are you certain you know what it is you are trying to achieve?
- Have you identified all the important factors and actors involved?
- Should you spend more time on information gathering?
- Have you reduced the issue or decision down to its essence without oversimplifying?

Synthesise, search for possible answers:
- Have you used creative thinking to suggest possibilities?
- Have you considered the logic bubbles of the key stakeholders?
- Have you checked your assumptions?
- Have you shortlisted the most feasible possibilities?
- Have you thought of synthesising several solutions to see whether they offer a more effective solution than the one proposed?
- How will you judge which is the best decision to take? What are your criteria?

Select, evaluate, test:
- Have you considered your proposed decision from every aspect?
- How will it affect each stakeholder?
10.4 Two scenarios on choices and decisions

In this section we work through two detailed scenarios, based on real events in actual wars, to give you practice in decision-making and problem-solving skills. Negotiation skills have already come into play but we focus on them more specifically in Section 10.5, where we will also focus on some of the causes of interpersonal disputes and some ways of handling this difficult aspect of working relationships. When you read the textbook Chapter 11 ‘Preparing to intervene’ by Jonathan Goodhand you will learn more about decision making and the ‘filters’ that shape decision-making processes.

**SCENARIO 5**

You are a field officer with WorkAid in a small Asian country were there is an intermittent civil war between the government and an anti-government group known as the ‘Unity Front’. The annual rains have been disappointing and the harvests have failed in many parts of the region where you are based. WorkAid provides food for work, such as road improvement, and there is a need to expand the programme in your area to avoid severe food deficiency and an outflow of people. This is your responsibility. The army is not keen on expansion but after considerable negotiations and international pressure the government has agreed. The Unity Front allows the programme to expand and in spite of various difficulties all is proceeding well.

Your district headquarters lies inside government-held territory but many of the recipients live in territory under the control of the Unity Front. To reach your distribution centre and collect their food allowances the recipients have to cross between the two territories.

Then comes news that a group of recipients on their way home after collecting their rice were killed when one of them stepped on a landmine. Before they left the army had advised them to remain in the town. As a result, other recipients are afraid to come to the headquarters to collect their rice allocation.

A week later another group of recipients in a neighbouring district are also killed by a landmine on their way home with their food allocation. This increases local fears, and people stop coming for their regular rice ration. Many people are becoming desperately hungry as a result and some are taking the risk of crossing the boundary to become refugees on the government-controlled side.