Challenges faced and strategies used when conducting Transdisciplinary research by Trans Global Health PhD students

Introduction

- Perceived transition in global health determinants, constellations and research approaches
- Awareness of limitations of mono- multidisciplinary research
- Transdisciplinary research (TDR) is becoming a key paradigm in global health field
- TDR approach is research across disciplines, between the disciplines, and beyond and outside all disciplines.
- Trans Global Health program educates new generation of global health scientists using TDR approach

Objective: To contribute to the enrichment of the body of knowledge of TDR by identifying the challenges experienced and the strategies used to cope with these challenges by Trans Global Health PhD students conducting TDR

Research question: What strategies are there to cope with the challenges experienced while conducting transdisciplinary research in practice among Trans Global Health PhD students

Theoretical Framework

- TD wheel is a provocative graphic geared to help TD researchers visualize and discuss the elements and process of TDR

Sub-questions
- What kind of challenges are experienced in the problem-, research- and the researcher (R) context?
- What challenges are experienced during the process phase of a TDR?
- What challenges are experienced during the product phase of a TDR?
- What strategies are used to cope with these challenges?

Methodology

- Qualitative research ➔ Semi-structured interviews
- Research Sampling ➔ 10 Trans Global Health PhD students
  ➔ Different start year of study program (2013-2016)
  ➔ Different project themes and student backgrounds
- Results Analysis: ➔ Content analysis of interviews (coding sheet)
  ➔ Order coding: open, axial then selective

Preliminary Results

Context

Faced Challenges
- Different research setting/language
- Research skills
- Short research contract/managing many supervisors

Coping Strategies
- Help from local research assistant
- Be open, flexible, understanding of others
- Set goals, mindset/know who to go to and for what

“Working in another context is it’s own challenge”

Process

Faced Challenges
- Iterative problem framing process
- Not on the same page with stakeholders
- Unequal academic and non-academic partnerships

Coping Strategies
- Feedback with stakeholders
- Communication to find middle ground
- Stay transparent in communication

“so the problem formulation kept on changing given with every new data cycle I had”

Product

Faced Challenges
- No difference between the value of Societal vs Science aspect
- Less societal impact than expected
- No application of results as expected

Coping Strategies
- Incorporate societal discussion in scientific paper
- Use of local field network for discussion
- Argue point of view and topic relevance/contact with personal network

“ I was kind of disappointed, like what is the evaluation useful for, yes it’s great for the report but how does this translate into a new context and in implementing technology in those regions”

Preleminary Conclusion & Discussion

Conclusion

- Relationship building and networking as strategy to majority of the challenges
- Growth in (qualitative) research skills due to a different research context
- Communication and constant feedback engage stakeholders

Future Research

- How to improve societal impact of TDR
- Is TDR approach applicable in another field?
- Same type of research with professional global health scientists

Take home message

When conducting TDR make sure to build relationship with stakeholders involved, argue your point of view and expect growth in (qualitative) research skills