Making Research Relevant:
The intersection of disciplines and sectors

Prof. Judith Phillips

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Outline

• Interdisciplinary research
• Research - policy - practice interface
• User engagement and participation
Forms of Collaboration Across the Disciplines

“Multidisciplinary”, “cross-disciplinary”, “interdisciplinary”, “transdisciplinary” (Hennessy and Walker, 2011)

- **Multidisciplinary**: Multiple disciplines collaborate without significant cross-fertilisation of theories, methods and epistemologies.

- **Interdisciplinary**: Incorporates explicit integration of disciplinary perspectives and methods.

- **Transdisciplinary**: A new hybrid field of inquiry emerges from an extended period of collaborative work (e.g. psychoneuroimmunology).
Why interdisciplinary approaches are important

- Global ageing - societal challenges can only be solved through working together
- Involving multiple or unusual disciplines together can lead to innovation
- Avoids duplication and maximizes funding resource
- Urgency for policy and practice to address demographic change and issues within constrained budgets - so integration of health and social care policy & practice imperative
- Importance of user engagement and participation and relevance of research to older people
Lund Revisited: Tackling Societal Challenges - Priority Actions

- Europe needs clear political commitment to step-up efforts to align strategies, instruments, resources and actors at national and European level in order to address the grand societal challenges.

- This commitment needs to be underpinned by an excellent science base, world-class research infrastructures and a new generation of researchers with the right set of skills; notably, creativity, entrepreneurship and innovation.

- Europe needs to connect with partners around the world, in advanced, emerging and developing countries to address the grand societal challenges in partnership and to attract the world’s best researchers and innovators and private sector investment.

- Greater impacts on the challenges have to be achieved through involvement of the public sector and industry in knowledge creation, with a stronger focus on open innovation and the role of end-users.
What is involved in fostering and nurturing interdisciplinary approaches?

- **Common purpose**: Research challenges where a problem focus is unlikely to conform to disciplinary boundaries

- **Time and communication**: regular & early communication to facilitate understanding among the disciplines

- **Leadership** – leaders must be identified early, have the “right touch”, acceptable to collaborators, able to articulate the goals of the project, establish a collaborative culture of trust and sharing in which team members share the credit

- **Shared resources and revenue** – agreements about the expectations and needs of all team members

- **Equal effort across team** – defining clear roles and responsibilities, setting time lines and convening frequent group meetings can help reinforce team functioning
Barriers to Inter-disciplinarity in Research (Bruun, Hukkinen and Klein 2005)

- **Structural impediments** – the organisation of science and associated (dis)incentives for interdisciplinary work
- **Lack of knowledge** – unfamiliarity with other disciplines and of a vision of their potential contributions, values and language
- **Cultural obstacles** – differing accepted understandings, practices, values and language
- **Epistemological differences** – divergent disciplinary world views
- **Methodological differences** – varying styles of enquiry
- **Psychological factors** – attitudes and disciplinary identity; investment in their own field and community
- **Reluctant reception** – problem of communicating interdisciplinary research to non-scientific audiences, e.g. funders, public
UK approaches to foster inter-disciplinarity within ageing research

- RCUK – expectations for social and economic impact: EQUAL; NCAR; GO; NDA; LLHW
UK Research Council Interdisciplinary Initiatives in Research on Ageing

• UK National Collaboration on Ageing Research (2001-2004) MRC, ESRC, EPSRC, BBSRC
• Strategic Promotion of Ageing Research Capacity (SPARC) (2005-2009) EPSRC, BBSRC
• The New Dynamics of Ageing (NDA) Programme (2005-2011) ESRC, EPSRC, MRC BBSRC, AHRC
• Centres and Programmes in Lifelong Health and Wellbeing (2007-2013) MRC, BBSRC, EPSRC, ESRC

MRC Medical Research Council, ESRC Economic and Social RC; BBSRC :EPSRC Engineering and Physical Sciences
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• Interdisciplinary Research Centres (Newcastle, Sheffield, Cambridge and London)

• English Longitudinal Study on Ageing

• What Works Centre

http://www.ageing-better.org.uk/
New Dynamics of Ageing Programme

- Largest programme of research on ageing of its kind in the UK (9 years; £20m; 200 researchers)
- 2 substantive research themes: Ageing well across the lifecourse & Ageing and its environments
- Supported innovative interdisciplinary research groups and methods; doctoral training-collaborative research projects; programme grants; preparatory networks
New Dynamics of Ageing Programme

- Quality of sleep
- Nutrition and ageing **
- IT use
- Working late Strategies to enhance productivity **
- Connectivity of older people in rural areas **
- Healthy ageing across the lifecourse
- Designing a technology enabled garment system
- Migration across the lifecourse in Bangladeshi families
- Tackling ageing incontinence through theory, tools and technologies**

- Ageing and biology **
- Ages and stages: Theatre production – representations and recollections of ageing**
- Life course analysis of longitudinal data
- Cell ageing
- Financial abuse
- Music for life
- Dignity in care
- Mobility and ageing
- Poverty in ageing
- Ageing and Fiction **Canadian project linked
“lever taps...much easier”

“no bending...it's great”

“pull-out cupboards"

“TV for company... counter-top dishwasher really good”

“bi-fold doors give me more space”

“fantastic, I can reach everything”

“it's just me, so I only need a small table”

“much lighter now”

maximising storage space
Older people's use of unfamiliar space
Design For Ageing Well
Improving quality of life for the ageing population using a technology enabled garment system

Key Outputs
Impact Output 1: Co-Design Methodology New to Clothing Design
Impact Output 2: ISPO HealthStyle Exhibition
Grey and Pleasant Land?: An interdisciplinary exploration of the connectivity of older people in rural civic society

Travelling through the rural lifecourse (WP3)
OPUS- Key ingredients for success

- Project related
- Investigator specific factors
- External issues
Key ingredients – Project related

• Needs buy in and time commitment from all partners- clear focus and role for everyone.
• Know why and how you are involved and the history of the project (big teams ins and outs)
• Knowledge of the project – its raison d’etre and how disciplines hang together
• Language
• Novel and innovative methodology
• Have a separate work package on interdisciplinarity to look at process and outcome- will help to look at the project as a whole.
• Informal networking- regular team meetings and socials
• Be up front with challenges - Conflict can open up interdisciplinarity
• Team dynamics - Feeling at ease to challenge and be challenged
• Size and hangers on
Key ingredients for success - Investigator specific & External issues and barriers

• Know who you are working with – trust and ability to deliver
• Right person for the team - recruitment difficulties
• Appreciation of diversity of paradigms and perspectives
• Good leadership
• Individuals pet topics considered
• Getting involvement with external stakeholders and partners right – expectations and ways of working within and external to the team
• Coping with under resourcing
• Administrative complexity
Evaluation of the NDA

- Problem solving approach - primary driver of interdisciplinary work
- Older Peoples Reference Group – first of its type set up by a research programme
- Preparatory networks, sandpits and funding
- Involvement of all users; encouragement of champions; supporting researchers at all stages in their careers; transparency in communicating intent, progress and achievements; varied and robust knowledge transfer; understanding the challenges faced by older people themselves (Lansley)
- Good peer review to assess large scale multi disciplinary research
- Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) and international collaboration
Evaluation of the NDA- differing views

• Uneven progress (Lansley, Ageing and Society, 2013)
• Few PIs were mid career so no investment in capacity building and future leadership
• NDA interdisciplinary? Single domains dominated- ESRC. MRC (balance corrected by specific calls)
• Mismatch of the call and quality of the bids that came forward
• Return to home disciplines
Evaluating the **impact** of the NDA research programme

**Instrumental impacts**
- Sus-IT influencing national policy on digital inclusion
- Ageing & Poverty in India influencing the introduction of a universal pension in South India
- TACT3 developing a national toilet map and smart underwear
- SomnIA introducing cognitive behavioural therapy for insomnia (CBTI) in several NHS Trusts

**Conceptual impacts**
- Dignity in care helping professionals to think differently about older people with high support needs
- Look at me! challenging ageism and sexism through the use of co-produced images of older women
Evaluating the **impact** of the NDA research programme

**Capacity building impacts**

- Design for Ageing Well bringing specialist expertise into small clothing companies and increasing understanding of the needs of older consumers
- Ages and Stages leaving as a legacy a thriving intergenerational theatre company
- The NDA Programme providing support and guidance to projects and researchers on achieving and promoting impact; and developing case studies to demonstrate how to achieve impact from previous research
Inter-sectoral collaborations and connections

Research-Policy

• A New Science of Ageing → ‘Active Ageing’ as policy approach

• ‘Active ageing is a rare policy concept that could unify the interests of all stakeholders: Citizens, NGOs business interests and policy makers’

• ‘A partnership between science and policy could transform the experience of ageing and later life’ (Walker, 2014)
Lessons learned- facilitators to intersectroral connections

• Recognizing that information needs of policy makers and researchers are different – findings need adapting for different audiences

• Good case narratives and metaphors; clear messages

• Capture the social media market- ‘time lag’ avoided and many practitioners do not have access to libraries

• NDA programme provided a good synthesis of the projects

• Researchers engaged in the process and understanding of the policy process

• ‘Alliance for Useful Evidence’ Nesta EPPI Centre – what works in terms of uptake

• http://www.alliance4usefulevidence.org/event/what-works-for-research-uptake/
Developing Evidence-Enriched Practice in Health and Social Care with Older People – simple but not simplistic
Previous experiences of talk in health & social care services

• ‘We are either told off or told what to do.’
• ‘We have lots of meetings, but we rarely meet in the real sense of the word.’
• ‘We used to have discussions with managers, now we have policy briefings.’
• ‘You know what I would like? To be given a free hand for one year. For everyone to get off my back and let me do what I think is right’.
Evidence compared

A Better Life Challenge

‘Recognise that all support is founded in meaningful and rewarding relationships’

Valuing and talking together about related evidence from:

• Service users
• Frontline staff
• Organisational policy
• Research
The five elements of the Developing Evidence-Enriched Practice (DEEP) approach

1. Value and empower people
2. Value and use a range of evidence
3. Present evidence well
4. Talk and think together well
5. Sort things that get in the way
The DEEP project in a nutshell

• Appreciative action research...
• In health and social care services...
• Across six sites – five in Wales and one in Scotland...
• Exploring research and other evidence and...
• Using it in service and workforce development...
• To promote a better life and address the seven challenges
• Not imposing research
Areas chosen by participants for development

• *Relationship*-centred practice
• Positive and rights based approaches to risk management with people with dementia
• Meaningful activities in care homes and day services
• Supporting caring relationships through the development of meaningful short breaks
• Addressing loneliness and building community links
• Personal outcome focused assessment support planning and review
Did anyone spot the before and after?
‘Live free and beauty surrounds you
The world still astounds you
Each time you look at a star’

‘You do not need to listen to those that say you are weak’
George Davies
1. Securing senior management buy-in and valuing and empowering project participants

- Appreciation and respect
- Honesty – saying it as it is
- Permission
- Mutual trust
- Celebration
2. Valuing and including a range of evidence

- Research findings, including ‘A Better Life’
- Practitioner knowledge
- The voice of service users and carers
- Organisational knowledge, including policy
3. Capturing and presenting relevant evidence in accessible and engaging formats

- Short research summaries
- Stories and quotes
- Good practice examples
- Normative frameworks
- Provocative statement
4. Facilitating the exploration and use of evidence

Meaningful conversations:
- Create relationships and contexts
- Support collaborative decision making, e.g. regarding risk
- Facilitates learning

Facilitated serendipity:
- Allows for emergence
- Requires vigilance
5. Recognising and addressing national and local organisational circumstances and obstacles

• Recognising the impact of budget cuts
• Challenging narrow views of ‘independence’
• Challenging simplistic rules and regulations, e.g. regarding professional boundaries and risk
• Challenging the burden of poorly designed paperwork
• Challenging tick-box approaches to quality assurance
Impact of talking together

• A richer understanding of the word ‘friendship’ and what this means in the context of health and social care service provision

• Replacing a Professional Boundaries policy with a Sharing Lives and Professional Boundaries policy

• Different ways of working at the frontline, e.g. A Train to Cardiff

• More dynamic and nurturing team meetings, including sharing of emotions

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Conclusions

• Evidence informed policy and practice is critical - Research plays a vital part

• Requires an interdisciplinary approach to get at the complexity of older people’s lives

‘as science moves closer to application, decision-and policy making problems occur that cannot be confined to narrow disciplines or kept within the borders of specific departments’ (Karlqvist, 1999, p379)

• Various literatures and tools on ‘How to do’ this

• Communication and relationship building at the heart if we are to improve the lives of older people
Further information

New Dynamics of Ageing
http://www.newdynamics.group.shef.ac.uk/

Alliance for Useful Evidence
http://www.alliance4useful证据.org/event/what-works-for-research-uptake/

DEEP full report and 4-page summary:

DEEP project on-line resource:
http://deep-resources.chrismog.co.uk
Thank You

Professor Judith Phillips
Professor of Gerontology
Stirling University
Scotland, UK

Email: Judith.Philips@stir.ac.uk
Twitter:
@JudithEleri
@judithp75851541