Transformative Learning

Understanding educational processes that support communities of practice to engage in and sustain change

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A Healthy Start for a Healthy Life

Windows of Opportunity for primary NCD risk reduction
The process of science is not complete until the community for whom the scientific knowledge has relevance are able to connect with this knowledge and decide for themselves how to use it within their social context.

Sir Peter Gluckman, 2011

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 27(1)

Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.


Knowledge Translation (KT)

Addressing the gap between what is known and what is enacted
Knowledge Translation

Knowledge translation involves the synthesis, dissemination, exchange & ethically sound application of knowledge, where knowledge is not limited to research findings, but is inclusive of relevant knowledge from research, practice, community experience and culture that collectively will inform actions.

It occurs within a complex system of interactions between researchers and knowledge users.

Adolescent Participation in the DOHaD Story

Changing power relations through collaborative narrative to catalyse the potential of DOHaD for intergenerational change.

Collaborative narrative enables individuals and groups to join stories from within their personal and cultural context with stories from outside of their experience to construct meaning (Lauritzen & Jaeger 1997).

Approaches to supporting professional practice teams to explore, interpret and decide if and how to use the concepts associated with early-life origins of health and disease.
Gaining clarity by examining complexity

People  Behaviour  Food  Society

Complexity Theory
Complex Adaptive Systems

Dynamic, involving multiple elements interacting non-linearly with each other and the environment
Elements evolve in response to interactions, influenced by historical and current settings
Small changes within the system may produce disproportionately significant consequences

Cynefin Framework

If we treat complex systems as simple, we risk falling off the cliff – and it is very hard to recover....

The Cynefin model, describes knowledge in relation to cause and effect as:
- simple (obvious)
- complicated (knowable)
- complex (emergent)
- chaotic

Human Agency

The ability of a person to act, make decisions, and take actions relating to their life and wellbeing. (DeJaehere et al, 2016)

The capacity to exercise control over the nature and quality of one’s life requires - intentionality - forethought - self-regulation - self-reflectiveness (Bandura, 2001)


Human agency exists within & is influenced by social systems

Decisions are not made in isolation of social systems.
The role of self efficacy in agency

Self-efficacy is the extent to which a person or group believes they have the capacity to learn, carry out a task, take action, or function socially (Bandura, 1977).

Self-efficacy is influenced by the socio-cultural environment of the individual – current and historical.

Self-efficacy is associated with engagement - which is an essential precursor to action. Engagement is a complex construct involving behavioural, emotional & cognitive dimensions (Fredericks, et al., 2004).


Agency Freedoms

“Having the conditions to exercise agency, that is access to information, the chance for discussion and evaluation of goals, including education; the freedom to make up one's mind without violence”

(Unterhalter, 2005)

Agency Freedoms

To develop and exercise agency requires access to resources and the possession of capabilities required to interpret and act upon evidence.

CAPABILITIES
Knowledge
Skills
Attitudes
Values

What capabilities are required to enable people make and act on evidence?
Access to evidence:
local, traditional, scientific, sociological

Opportunities for discourse and learning

Opportunities for evaluation and testing of potential actions

Increased potential for evidence-based decisions

Supporting learning that shifts thinking and promotes action

Promoting agency freedoms
Examining Assumptions

What values, beliefs and assumptions do each of us, our institutions, and our communities hold and how do these frames of reference influence our thinking and decision making?
Examining Assumptions

How do we make the invisible visible?

What values, beliefs and assumptions do each of us, our institutions, and our communities hold and how do these frames of reference influence our thinking and decision making?
Examining Assumptions

EVENTS
What is happening

PATTERNS OF BEHAVIOUR
Past | Present | Change

STRUCTURES
What has induced the behaviour patterns
What are the relationships between the parts

MENTAL MODELS
What values beliefs and assumptions are underpinning actions
Frames of Reference: Perceptions depend on situation
Frames of Reference: Making the invisible visible

- When we interpret another person's point of view from our angle, we allow our preconceived notions and prejudices to influence our interpretations.

- A person's frame of reference is based on their socio-ecological context including experience, education, cultural, social and physical exposures, resources, community, family, personality and personal situation (physical, mental and emotional).

- Understanding our own frame of reference, and experiencing exposure to others' frames of reference, can be transformational.
Frames of reference reflect a specific worldview, based on assumptions and expectations involving values, beliefs and concepts (Dirkx et al., 2006).

Frames of reference form over time through experience and the development of understanding, and are influenced by epistemic assumptions about what is and can be known and the role of evidence in problem solving (Mezirow, 2011).


Transformative Learning (Mezirow, 1994)

“Transformative learning is the process of using prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of one’s experience in order to guide future action.”

Mezirow 1996

This can lead to:
- Planning a course of action
- Acquisition of knowledge and skills to implement the plan
- Testing out of new roles or perspectives
- Building competence and confidence in new roles and perspectives
- Reintegration of the new perspectives into ones life – i.e. a change in frame of reference.

The process of transformative learning

Derived from (Kroth and Cranton, 2014)

- Critical reflection leading to decisions that may involve engaging or incorporating different ways of thinking or acting into everyday life
- A disorienting dilemma
- Define & reflect upon existing frames of reference
- Examine different & potentially divergent frames of reference
- Critical reflection & dialogue
- Testing out potentially different or amended frames of reference
- Developing new capabilities to enable different options
- Imagining, considering or developing different options or ways of thinking

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Shifting practice via appreciative inquiry
Solving Problems

What is going wrong?

The default position is to look for what is wrong.
Solving Problems

Surly that makes sense?

The default position is to look for what is wrong
Solving Problems

Problem identification

The issue is seen as a problem to be solved

Analysis of cause

Implement ‘best’ solutions

Generate Solutions

Adapted from ‘The Appreciative Inquiry Commons’ https://appreciativeinquiry.champlain.edu
How might it affect people if they are labelled as a ‘problem’?

Deficit thinking is negative
It often places blame on the individual
In the case of obesity – deficit thinking ignores the evidence of the complexity of the issue – and the role of socioecological and intergenerational factors

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Adapted from “The Appreciative Inquiry Commons” https://appreciativeinquiry.champlain.edu
Negativity reduces motivation

Negative feelings are hard to disguise; they are reflected in professional practice

If practitioners are feeling overwhelmed they are not capable of visualising positive opportunities & motivating clients towards positive actions
Could we look at it another way?

What is happening that is positive

The focus turns to positive opportunities

Could we build on that?

What are the possibilities?

Positive commitment to a vision

Adapted from ‘The Appreciative Inquiry Commons’ https://appreciativeinquiry.champlain.edu
Why does appreciative inquiry work?

• Sharing positive experiences encourages discussions about what works

• Sharing success with others builds the confidence of the person who is sharing

• Colleagues in the discussion know and trust that person, making the success story credible and possible in their community

• Engaging in professional conversations about what is working builds positivity and hope – this encourages engagement in positive actions

• Generating a positive vision for the future as a community influences the behaviours in the community now, and the chance for positive change in the future

Adapted from ‘The Appreciative Inquiry Commons’ https://appreciativeinquiry.champlain.edu
Appreciative Inquiry

Once the focus of the inquiry is defined, the 4 Ds can guide the process of inquiry.

Discovery
A grounded exploration of the ‘best of what is’

Dream
Visioning and debate collaboratively, articulating ‘what might be’

Design
Working together to develop ‘what might be’

Destiny
Collectively experimenting with ‘what can be’

Collaborative Narrative
Collaborative narrative enables individuals and groups to join stories from within their personal and cultural context with stories from outside of their experience to construct meaning (Lauritzen and Jaeger, 1997).

Access to evidence: local, traditional, scientific, sociological

Opportunities for discourse and learning

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Critical reflection leading to decisions that may involve engaging or incorporating different ways of thinking or acting into everyday life
What would a workshop look like in your team that used 

**Appreciative Inquiry**

to explore and develop potential new ideas for practice?