

The **AURA Programme Consortium** and **WHO HIFA-Fr**
are pleased to announce:

RESEARCHERS OF THE FUTURE: 21ST CENTURY APPROACHES FOR EFFECTIVE, GLOBAL RESEARCH

An **online** learning event and facilitated discussion which will take place over three days:

From 12.00/Midday to 15.00 GMT
Monday 2nd to Wednesday 4th November, 2015

Topic 1. **How has research shifted in practice?** Experiences from researchers working in a global research context.

Opening Address:

Mark Hepworth, Professor of People's Information Behaviour at Loughborough University.

"Hi I'm Mark Hepworth, a Professor of People's Information Behaviour at Loughborough University and the Centre for Information Management. Welcome, today to this event which is a regional event we are working on together with WHO and it is co-hosted by WHO – HIFA-Fr. The purpose of the event is to think about and discuss the changing research context and also what implications that may have for researchers of the future.

What we have seen over a number of years is changes in terms of research and research agendas and research practice. In the 60's we were pretty much still high bound to some extent by quantitative approaches. You would tend to expect a highly scientific paper to have a strong quantitative focus but gradually ideas, stemming partly from social sciences and philosophy, we saw a shift to valuing the qualitative element of research. And in the 70's and 80's we saw a general acceptance of mixed methodologies. I think we've also seen an appreciation of the importance of context particularly when we're talking about human studies, studies that involve people and the importance context has for explaining situations and the need to understand context even perhaps before we have defined the research questions. We've seen an increased uncomfortableness with uncertainty and complexity and so on.

Now this complexity of research and appreciating the complexity has led to multi-disciplinary approaches and too collaboration between people coming from different backgrounds to address research problems, questions, situations. We've also seen much more willingness to learn on route while research is being taking place, while implementation is taking place in a kind of action learning way. However this does have challenges and may cause differences or tensions between researchers which will undertake this kind of research, and possibly the donors, the funders, maybe the participants who are involved in the research but also possibly the supervisors, the senior lecturers, the senior research supervisors within institutions. However what we have seen is perhaps an embracing of mixed methods, of different approaches, of research projects having more time allocated to them because of an appreciation of the complexity of the... and complex nature of the problems that we are addressing.

However we are still in a situation where we are dealing with this change, we are coping with this change, we becoming more comfortable with this change. And the question arises, in terms of how we prepare our future researchers for this context. What should they know, do they need to know more about networking, do they need to know more about how to have impact and communicate their research or how to engage with other participants, other collaborators etc. In addition to the way we understand new techniques, new methods, digital resources etc. Hence the conversation, the discussion that we hope will follow will help us to reflect on some of these issues and come out with some potential solutions. Initially you will hear from a number of researchers and academics about their research and how their research has changed and how their research has embraced complexity. I hope that you enjoy this opportunity and we look forward to hearing your voice. Thank you”.

(23 October, 2015. Length 6:32 mins)

Conference Speaker (1)

Gerry Bloom, Co-Convenor of the Health and Nutrition Cluster at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS).

“I’d like to talk a bit about research in context of complexity and rapid change. In the past much of the theory of health systems practice and research first emerged in a context of efforts of countries to set up basic service to meet the needs of a poor and largely rural population. And the underlying idea was to replicate a relatively simple model in a number of countries. And that lead to a certain approaches in research. Two factors are powerfully influencing health systems research and changing it. First is the speed of multiple interconnected changes that influence health and health services. And I’ll say a bit more about that in a minute. And the second is the rising expectations of people for protection from epidemics and access to safe and effective health services in almost every country. This is leading to a shift in emphasis from studies of how to transfer models of health system organisation to low income countries to studies aimed at supporting health systems adaptation to rapid change.

First of all I’ll talk about the kind of changes I have in mind. So many countries are experiencing all of these changes. First rapid urbanisation, and changes to transport networks and economic production leading to the emergence of new health problems and new environments within which governments have to try to tackle them. There’s population aging and that’s leading to changes in the pattern of illness with a lot more chronic disease. There’s increasing economic reliance on markets and integration into the global economies with all sorts of implications for health and health systems. This is leading to changing patterns of social and economic inequalities so there are new vulnerable groups with new types of health problems and new problems in getting access to services. And, overarching there are ecological changes exposing populations to new health risks from pollution or from the emergence of possible epidemics. Meanwhile, health sectors themselves are changing in response to social and technological changes. In many countries have been the emergence of pluralist health systems with all sorts of providers of health services and drugs in terms of their level of skill, their level of formal registration and their links to government. There’s been growing access to health information through the media and through mobile phones which is changing the relationships between individuals, and public and private providers, of health services. And, there’s the development of new technologies for diagnosis and treatment which is creating new opportunities but also new challenges.

Now, any one of these changes would pose important challenges to policy makers and providers of health services. But when put together, and the degree of interconnection, is creating a whole new

context within which researchers and governments are having to cope. At the same time governments are under growing pressure to meet rising expectations for access of services. There are no blueprints for how to achieve this and research can make an important contribution. However, this will involve different kinds of research and I want to illustrate some of the kinds of research that come largely from experiences I've had in China and in Bangladesh, and then I'll end by saying a bit about what that means for researchers.

So, first for instance in China there were very important studies to identify emergent problems and ensure that these problems reached the attention of policy-makers and the public. For example in China as they made the transition to a market economy, the price of health care was rising and more and more rural people were having to pay very high costs and were facing impoverishment. It was very important to identify and document it and bring it to the attention of policy makers. Then you need to work with innovators to test new approaches for addressing these problems. In China those innovators have tended to be local government but in Bangladesh it's large NGOs (non-governmental organisations) such as BRAC who are testing new solutions. The point about this that's different from old view of pilots is these are solutions that could be taken to scale. And as you do the research you need to monitor what works and why, how it could be adapted to large-scale implementation and also the unintended outcomes. Then, governments start implementing the change you need to support governments in taking the lessons of local experiments to scale. That means identifying problems, fine tuning reforms, finding new solutions and finally you need to monitor for new problems and new priorities, and generate learning from innovative local solutions that emerge. So, as you can see quite a different role for researchers and quite a different position in reform process.

In order to play this important role researchers will need to develop new approaches to their work. The first is, don't begin with a theory of how a health system should work but begin with a clear understanding of a problem to be addressed. Then you have to ensure that any intervention, any attempt to solve the problem is based on a very good understanding of the local context. You've got to bring different disciplines together to look at the problem from different points of view. So, we have no one solution to the problem. We need to build partnerships with innovators and with policy-makers to ensure that research is part of a learning process and a process of change. You need to recognise how much we do not know and of the need to monitor for both unintended outcomes, bad outcomes of interventions and innovations that are emerging through local efforts to address problems. And finally, we need to build mutual learning with others who are addressing similar problems in other countries through communities of practice or other mechanisms to ensure that each country doesn't have to reinvent the wheel but can share the lessons of implementing change. Big challenges but enormous opportunities for an effective research community".

(23 October, 2015. Length 6:01 mins)

Conference Speaker (2)

Shandana Mohmand, Fellow in the Governance Cluster at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS).

"I'm **Shandana Mohmand** (IDS Fellow), I'm part of the Governance Cluster at IDS, and together with a few colleagues I help facilitate a few programmes that are thinking through the use of different kinds of methods to answer policy questions. So a lot of what I have to say comes from that perspective. Within the programme we've been dealing with a very large group of researchers in Africa who've been dealing with very complex policy issues. We are also right now in the middle of a comparative programme that does comparative research between Latin America and Africa on

policy questions again. And, I think where I really want to come at this for today from is this idea of what a focus on policy does to research and research methods. And, I think what we've figured out in all of our combined collective work at IDS is that policy questions require a very different approach and where I'm going to bring this to in the end is the fact that as researchers working on policy issues we just need to be very, very open to all of the possibilities – be innovative but also I think the keyword really is open in our approaches. And, the disciplines that we come from, the ways in which we approach the questions.

So, essentially the policy world is incredibly complex you've heard a number of other speakers speak to that so I'm not going to go into that in too much detail but because they are so complex we have so many ideas now of what are more holistic ways to approach it. So, there's what we call the systems approach, the political economy approaches that are now being taken and one of the more recent trends is mixed methods approaches. I hesitate a little in terms of talking about traditional approaches and now mixed methods approaches because I think what's traditional is now a very long time in the past, and for many years now we have been dealing with more mixed approaches to research. But, essentially, I think we're still struggling with what mixing methods really means so we know that there's a very specific new, more open way to approach policy or complex policy questions so you bring in different methods. The reason you do that is because a single method gives you a partial answer and policy questions require more complete answers, and they require more rigorous evidence. Well, stronger evidence – yes. But when you say you are going to mix methods how exactly are you going to do it and it seems more and more we're getting stuck for some reason in this idea of qualitative or quantitative approaches and we bring these together and we call it mixed methods. But mixing methods is so much more than that. And, it becomes very simple to think about this, if you think about approaching something not as a method, not through an approach, not through a discipline but essentially as a question and what sort of an answer the question requires. And then that in itself sort of evolves into what are the different methods that you're going to have to use. And usually this puts a lot of pressure on researchers but that's what collaborations are for, and that's what interdisciplinary approaches are for.

So, if you think about a simple question that might apply to the health sector which is the government has very little money, it wants to start a new service – are people going to pay for it or not? Should they be paying for it or not? And a lot of this has to do with issues of perception and perceptions are hard to measure. People can say they'll pay for it – will they actually pay for it. How do you go about measuring something like that? And, I could imagine setting up a project around this that could start with maybe not asking people direct questions but maybe thinking through social media or other forms of information, data, that's already out there that gives me a sense of how people approach certain ideas. But then within this I come very soon to realising that people work as collectives and organisations work as networks. How do I get into that? Again, a simple set of questions might not get into it so I might want to think about using network analysis. But then within network analysis I realise that there's some people that work better with others than others do, than some other group does. That might require that I get into a far more detailed observation of behaviour patterns. But then within those, what's the history of this? What's the path dependence? Maybe I need a bit of process tracing to figure out that part. And in the end you might very well come round to the question of – okay I've got this answer but how generalisable is this and then you look for larger data, you could bring in the survey. All of this is happening, there's so many methods coming in here I almost lose track at which point it's qualitative and at which point it's quantitative. But all I'm trying to do is deal with an answer, try and come up with a more complete answer to a question that's incredibly complex and hard to measure.

So, I think that's the direction that we really need to go in, and I think that's the direction that researchers interested in policy questions are going to need to go in, and I think are already moving in. And, I guess as sort of a point to end on what does this mean for researchers? I think it means being very, very open to the possibilities. I think it means being open to methods, I think it means being open to approaches and disciplines. I think that puts, like I said earlier, I know that that puts too much pressure on researchers but there's so many of us doing this in so many different ways and the point is to do this in more collaborative ways so that you are able to get more complete answers to the questions we're asking".

(23 October, 2015. Length 5:54 mins)

Conference Speaker (3)

Jethro Pettit, Director of Teaching and Learning and Research Fellow at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS).

"I'm Jethro Pettit, I'm a researcher at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) in the Power and Popular Politics cluster. And, I'd like to talk about research that our team is doing around issues of citizen engagement in governance and efforts to strengthen civil society and to strengthen the participation and voices of people of decisions that affect their lives. And, the kinds of methodological challenges and changes that we are seeing in the way we go about this research.

I'd like to draw primarily on an experience of carrying out research for a major bi-lateral aid organisation that wanted to know about whether it's approach to strengthening civil society in Africa, Asia, and Latin America was relevant, was aligned with the realities of people living in poverty and marginalisation. And, whether it was effective in terms of bringing about stronger relationships between citizens and government, civil society and the State. And when we began to look at these questions, this was a qualitative research study, we realised that really it would require a range of qualitative methods not only sort of carrying out interviews and focus groups with stakeholders and actors at different levels and kinds of various positions, but particularly when it came to understanding the experience of the citizen. And the experience of people living in poverty and marginalisation and how those experiences affect their willingness and ability, and agency in engaging with civil society or government.

So, this was an interesting challenge because typically one might expect that one could arrive and carry out interviews, focus groups, stand on the doorsteps and ask people about their participation in civic affairs and in politics but very often you'll get a certain kind of an answer. And a certain lack of a real depth of understanding of what's going on in people's lives and how that affects their engagement. So, this was a very innovative study that decided to use an approach called the Reality Check Approach. Reality Checks involve researchers arriving and spending time, that is up to a week, in a community and living with families and with households. And not going about a systematic set of questionnaires or taking notes or carrying out research protocol in the sense one might expect in some qualitative research. Rather more of an ethnographic immersion of living with, going about daily activities with people, engaging in informal dialogue especially in times when people are relaxing in the evenings or around meals. And really trying to, to the best extent possible, which is never obviously fully possible but to the best extent possible, to really understand how people are experiencing their lives and how they see the possibilities for being active citizens, for being participants in governance processes or in civil society organisations.

So, we had a team of about 15 people working in three countries mostly researchers from those countries, speaking the language and understanding the local culture. And, they spent time in three

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different sites per country so there were nine sites. And, in each of those cases were immersed in the communities not just once but twice and sometimes three, over a course of three visits, over a period of two to three years. So these are slightly more longitudinal. The main advantage of this approach, and I should mention that the visits to the communities are not brokered by organisations, the researchers arrive and make their own relationships. So, they're not there on behalf of a particular organisation or intervention. But, they do declare themselves as researchers and ask permission of people to spend time with them for that purpose.

The main insights that came through from this study were really remarkable and I think gave the research team an understanding of what's going on in people's lives that simply could not have been gained through other methods of research. Primarily, what we found was a greater insight into the multiple dimensions of poverty and marginalisation. Many of these organisations and interventions are very sector specific. They're working on a particular issue they want to know what people think about one thing – health, education, livelihoods, and income, whatever that might be. In this case, what we found was that the dimensions of poverty and exclusion are so multi-dimensional that people live their lives in dealing with a whole range of issues and that really affects the way they can address any one of those issues. They may be so caught up with livelihood demands that they don't have time to deal with other issues. The other thing that came through very strongly in this study, was what we ended up calling 'rational passivity' and this was not the kind of lack of awareness of what their rights are, or a lack of a willingness to be involved. But very tactical decisions that people were making to, in a sense, collude with structures of power, patron-client relationships. Ways in which people were getting their day to day needs met. And that tactical collusion with power and with patronage systems prevented them from being active engaged citizens in the sense that many development programmes expect people to take up in terms of giving voice and being involved in meetings, going to consultation processes - participating.

So these realities, then were brought into comparison with the kinds of approaches, theories of change and interventions of various organisations working at different levels from local to national. And, through to global strategies for civil society strengthening. And what we found was a misalignment in some cases of strategies that assumed citizens to be active, liberal agents willing and able to give voice to their rights and to demand them. And the reality that people are in a sense coping and colluding with the very systems that are causing poverty and driving marginalisation. And that different approaches are needed to work on deeper processes of empowerment and building new forms of leadership and new forms of citizen action that don't make these simplistic assumptions about citizenship.

So, I think that this is an example of how research, even qualitative research, is more than just a single kind of method. It involved a range of different kinds of techniques from this deep ethnographic immersion, which showed us things that we never would have found out otherwise, through to more formal interviews and focus groups. We also carried out organisational accompaniment in which researchers simply spent a couple of days following people in organisations around, and watching and learning from what they were doing.

And finally, larger scale learning and validation workshops that brought all of the different people together who were involved in this research at different levels to participate in the analysis of the findings. To help us to validate them. To give us new insights. And, this is again an example of where research is more than researchers extracting knowledge and making sense of it themselves. But the opportunities that exist to bring those subjects of the research together in the process of making sense of the data and giving insights and even thinking about the implications of it for their own

work and for policy. And, these learning processes were built in throughout the three year research programme right through to the level of the organisation that commissioned the research, and their partners at the highest level. So the learning process by the time the research was done was not about filing a report and then trying to influence people. In a sense the influence had already taken place through the course of the research and the learning that was embedded within it.

So I think these are some of the implications for the future of research and the role of researchers. That we need to be thinking in multi-dimensional ways about our approaches, designing those approaches appropriately to meet the needs of the particular research. And above all to think about ways that all the stakeholders in the research can be part of the analysis as well as the provision of data. Thank you”.

(23 October, 2015. Length 9:55)

Debate 1

Group Discussion: Mark Hepworth (MH), Jethro Pettit (JP), Gerry Bloom (GB), Shandana Mohmand (SM)

We’ve just heard from three speakers about their perceptions of research and the kinds of research they’re doing, and how things have changed to some extent over time. And some of the implications of that for how we practice research. What we’d like to do now is just expand on that a little bit and unpick some of the common issues that seem to pop up in the previous talks.

(MH) Ok, so to pursue that theme – one of the things that kept coming through to me or to my ears at least was this notion of complexity. Why is that on the stage, haven’t things always been complex?

(JP) I could start with a few thoughts; I think we could think about complexity in two ways. One is kind of how complex the issues are, all the forces and dynamics of society, environment, economics, politics and change. And how those are all interacting in ways that feel to us to be becoming increasingly complex in a sense that they’re crashing in on each other and impinging on each other and so on. But I think there’s another kind of complexity which has to do with multiple perceptions, multiple perspectives that different people in a system are going to have very different ways of seeing the world, of understanding the world and acting within the world. And, one can’t assume a shared understanding or a shared conceptualisation of that complex reality because different actors will be working from different positions and places within that. So one of the tasks of research is not only to understand all the forces and drivers but also the different perspectives on them. And that requires... big implications for the approach, how is it that one can appreciate and draw out those different perspectives.

(GB) I tell you another reason why people become interested in complexity in the health sector and that is a number of years ago it was seen that there were a few policy options that needed to be implemented and if they were, health services would improve and meet the needs of the people. And a number of studies in the past few years have found that the design of a policy was much less important than the process of implementation. And so increasingly in the health sector, there’s also an interesting in what’s called implementation research which is that how do we take a good idea and then use it to change how, in this case, how a health system is functioning. And as people thought about that, it’s become clear that there is not a straight connection between a policy and a good outcome. And so it’s led to people understanding that if many things happen that you didn’t expect. Many good things happened you didn’t expect and you need to build on. And, many

unintended bad things emerged and so there's much more of a sense that we need to understand the context within which we're managing change. And that has led to an interest in complexity.

(SM) If you were to extend that and the thought about implementation then I think things have become more complex as well. Governments are dealing with larger populations in more concentrated spaces. Cities are becoming largely unmanageable given the sort of growth that's happening within them. And, I think the expectations of the state have changed as well. I mean... the idea that the state really should be providing for everybody that's going to be playing a role that citizens now expect certain services. I think there's been a sea-shift in that in the last thirty years as well with democratisation. And the relationship between the state and citizen is certainly more different now. So, it's put pressures on policy that are fairly complex.

(MH) And it seems to have led to an appreciation, or an acceptance, and that's a bit of a question mark of learning that takes place on route to some extent which is potentially a bit uncomfortable. You know, maybe that's uncomfortable for funders. Maybe it's uncomfortable for participants. Maybe it's uncomfortable for academics in terms of how they publish. I'm not sure but this process, you seem to be saying, or you seem to be implying or what I'm hearing is that the emphasis on learning, while one is actually implementing or conducting some research or beginning research. But does that cause tension?

(SM) I think it's made people move out of their comfort zones, and that creates all kinds of pressures. We have in the sort of trainings that we do, we have all the time the line – 'but this is not what I usually do and this is not where I come at this from, this is not how I'm trained' – and the fact that we're essentially saying well forget about all of that and try something new or collaborate with somebody else who will have a different way of answering that I think is really shaking up people and moving them out of their comfort zones. Which is a difficult process. But also this idea that their own method or approach may not be very complete, or that were looking for complete answers

(MH) quite challenging yes...

(SM) absolutely, and...

(MH) critical...

(SM) yes...

(GB) But I might put that... turn that on its head and as draw attention there's a really very good special issue of the Lancet a year or two ago on what they called the Bangladesh Paradox, which was why in a country where there are many problems in the public system and many issues of dominance etc. why could Bangladesh achieve much better health outcomes than other countries in South Asia? And, this was written by people who had been involved for many years of informed process. And, their conclusion on the capacity to innovate, the capacity to learn from small scale innovations and take them to scale was a key element. And so though although this is coming from the research community, these learning approaches are becoming more and more embedded in how large organisations function. And, I guess the other example I could've brought and mentioned is the Chinese government in implementing a very rapid reform. The whole process involved local learning and then taking lessons from local learning to scale. So these are processes that are way beyond the research community.

(JP) Yes, and I think where the tensions come in that Mark is talking about. Where there's a need for these learning process approaches in the way policy is reformed and practices developed. The funding environment is often working against that because it has predetermined results that need to

be achieved and designs that need to be submitted. And so, I think the challenge at the funding end is to come up with more flexible framework kinds of approaches that allow for that kind of emergent, action learning or implementation research approach. And, I think it also shifts the role of research from being something that kind of comes at the end of a three or five year project, makes a summative assessment about what worked and didn't work and sort of feeds back into the next blueprint. I think there's a role for that, but I think the kind of research that both Shandana and Gerry are talking about is one that's much more about an accompaniment, a process approach where practice can evolve through a learning process. And, research needs to adapt itself to be able to play that role walking alongside these processes. And in turn, funders need to adapt themselves to allow for those sorts of processes rather than demanding prescribed results at the beginning.

(GB) And government officials or other innovators also need to adapt how they are equipped to work with researchers

(MH) Ok, thank you. Yes and that kind of learning approaches it may be stimulated by ideas and evidence and how evidence is gathered gradually. Maybe it's connected with notions of evidential impact as well. I mean, to some extent, for me it sounds like research grown up. I know that sounds a bit trite but it seems like research coming of age in a way... of appreciating reality of connecting research with real-world problems and trying to make a difference. Is that a bit too strong to say?

(GB) I mean I think it's partly researchers coming of age, and it's also people who are implementing change understanding that they can't take forward big reforms without having evidence. And so, it's a mutual partnership that becomes the key. And, when one thinks of Africa which probably is embarking on a process of rather rapid change now. Its researchers seeing themselves as having an important role in this change process. And understanding that tomorrow's Africa will be very different to yesterdays. And, how can researchers be looking forward at what's coming rather than back? So yes, I think it is part of seeing that when big changes happen researchers have to come of age.

(MH) Yes and be part of journey, a participative journey... in a sense.

(SM) I think it's a really exciting time in that sense... is that I think research and policy have come very close together at this point. And you're absolutely right Gerry about researchers in Africa that we deal with. They're all asking policy relevant questions and they're going beyond it. It's not that its policy relevant but they're asking questions that are on the policy agenda and that are being actively debated. And they are interested in contributing. So a lot of the questions that we get is very much about wanting to be relevant to questions that matter and trying to provide answers to questions they know people are looking for. I don't know the history enough of this to know how much that has changed. But that's certainly the point that we're at right now – the policy researcher.

(JP) I think there's perhaps an expectation now that research shouldn't just be a sort of definitive moment in a big policy cycle where you suddenly get the evidence on what was working and do something different going forward. I mean, there are moments like that of course that are important but I think you're describing something that is much more of a process in which the research goes alongside implementation or practice and in which there's a possibility for it to feed into what people are doing rather than sort of feeding up to a policy level and going back down through some sort of line management. And, I think that's why you're beginning to see research design incorporate questions of learning, uptake and communication right from the beginning rather than the bolt-on at the end that is supposed to inform a policy maker somewhere in the stratosphere. It's all learning for

all of those who are implicated in the research and that being built in from the beginning in the design and approach. But, this is all work in progress. I don't think we're there yet...

(GB) Well, but since... because I know a lot of this discussion is about people that live in Africa. I mean, countries are embarking on extremely rapid urbanisation, very big changes in their economy, and very big changes in their infrastructure. Very big changes in mobile technology and access of almost every citizen to a mobile phone. All very big expectations now of the public of having health services that meet their needs, and governments that in several countries have already made commitments to national insurance strategies which we all know are high benefit but high risk. And so, researchers now have important roles to play in enabling this change process to avoid some of the worst mistakes and to invent the new models for the 21st Century. So, it's not just researchers thinking differently but the development possibilities are opening up in ways that research has to contribute if people are to avoid big mistakes.

(MH) And perhaps you know the state of affairs, in a sense, people appreciate the criticality of the situation in a way... in a global context that perhaps maybe has been apparent but has not been taken on board to that extent and maybe that is one of the drivers. Obviously, and I think it's beyond this conversation now but will certainly be the outcome of the regional event to think, you know, what implications this has for researchers themselves and the training of researchers and their capacity. You've mentioned for example the understanding of context, the use of social media, Twitter and various things like that. You've mentioned also the need to network, and create these networks etc. etc. These are skills in the past that researchers didn't place that much emphasis on, to some extent. Yes so, just to turn the attention a little bit towards the implications for us in helping to develop future researchers. What comment would you make in terms of this shifting perspective, this slightly new way of perhaps approaching research and so on, and the relationships with wider stakeholders? What comments would you like to make with regard to that?

(GB) Well if I was perhaps a young researcher listening to this I would've found this very intimidating. We have to have all the classical skills and many new skills. And I think that's a challenge for young researchers but it also poses questions for the leadership of research institutes and the departments they work in. How can we get people with these multiple skills to work together to be effective. So, I think it's important to look at the individual capacities but also at the institute level leadership.

(MH) thank you

(SM) Just to add very quickly to that is a very similar thought and working with researchers who work in African Universities we sort of realise that there are continuing sort of... challenges in terms of... openness to new methods. So there's... I'm wondering how to sort of put this... but there seems to be institutional rules and regulations that stop a lot of openness, a lot of experimentation, a lot of taking on new ideas and some cases a hypothesis that you've submitted years before when you started your research is something you're expected to hold yourself to at the end your research just because the university regulation works like that. So, it's one thing to ask researchers to be more open but I think that Gerry's absolutely right in saying that the institutions have regulations that need to change in accordance with that. And I think a lot of discussions with people in those positions would be a very good way to go about it.

(JP) Yes, and perhaps just to return to the theme of research communication and uptake I think there are all sorts of opportunities for innovation if that space is made available for people to engage in using video photography, all sorts of story-telling... other kinds of you know data

visualisation. There's so many ways that researchers are now expected to be communicating as they go along this isn't just about what you we do at the end but the continual communication including back to the people who are the subjects of the research so that they can be part of the change process that is coming through the learning and not only expecting the sort of formal report at the end to somehow affect their lives. And I think that's an expectation on researchers to be more engaged, to communicate in different ways with multi-media and it sounds intimidating perhaps but I think people are very innovative and these technologies can be quite powerful and empowering for those who use them and I think there are opportunities for new generations of researchers to do things very differently from the way they've been done in the past. And it's an open field for people to experiment with, and with huge possibility.

(MH) Thank you for that...yes I think it is a huge opportunity... it's a... well, I would say a fun opportunity in a way. For me research is like Christmas... to be able you know do work where you're actually paid to find things out. Woo... fantastic! And I think the younger people are in a better place, in sense and I think that's a challenge with the leadership, and they are in a way in a better place, more adept at these various technologies and more familiar... So, I think the conversation will continue and thank you very much for input.

(All) Thank you"

(23 October, 2015. Length 20:01 mins)

Conference Speaker (4)

Laura Camfield, Senior Lecturer, University of East Anglia (UEA).

"I'm Laura Camfield from the University of East Anglia (UEA), and I've been asked to talk to you today because since my PHD in the early 2000s I've been working exclusively in an inter-disciplinary way, well at least trying to, using mixed methods on two large international projects both looking at well-being. So, I faced quite a lot of the challenges but also understand the value and importance of this work particularly as we deal with increasingly complex problems in research and evaluation.

So, in the last five years since joining UEA my work has been more focused around methodology and particularly around pedagogies of teaching inter-disciplinarily and mixed methods, and thinking about how within research projects you create conditions in which that can best exist. So, in the next ten minutes I'm going to talk a little bit about some of my experiences.

So, the first question I wanted to raise is this question around multi, inter, post, trans... all these different terms but what do they actually mean? Well, as part of the q-squared movement there was quite a good analysis made of the differences between multi and inter-disciplinarity. And, basically multi-disciplinary is where you bring multiple disciplines together. But they might not be interacting, they might not be questioning each other's paradigms. They might be working alongside each other, but not really working together. Inter-disciplinarity attempts to move beyond that. It attempts to get people engaging quite critically with paradigms held by other disciplines. And also to think about how their own work can be improved drawing on different examples. Trans-disciplinarity is where disciplines... I think very similar to inter-disciplinarity where you have researchers working together to solve a common problem. And then, post-disciplinarity would be a situation which is often said to be reached within development studies, where people are less strongly attached to their particular disciplines. And, actually I think that that can be quite problematic because I think being grounded in a particular discipline, in my case anthropology, gives you a place from which you can speak, from

which you can reflect critically on your own practice or launch into a critique of other's work. I mean, it gives you quite an important perspective.

So, when people talk about inter-disciplinary working it can just mean picking up methods from different disciplines and putting them in a toolkit without really much thought about different disciplinary understandings around ontology (how the world is) and epistemology (how we can know about the world) which's obviously very important and shape the methods in which we use, the methods which we use, and then the ways in which these methods then construct data. I mean the very notion that methods can construct data indicates that I come from a quite a particular ontological and epistemological perspective.

So, all of these disciplines and these methods have particular intellectual histories and I think it's very important to understand those in using them, which is why inter-disciplinary working is a very good model. If you move to post-disciplinary then you forget the history essentially and I think you can then perhaps head into some problems. There's also a sense in which, within development studies at least, a post-disciplinary vision could be one that's influenced by the strongest actor which would undoubtedly be development micro-economics. So, a post-disciplinary world might be one where we in fact all become economists and I don't feel so comfortable with that. I think that particular disciplines have rich and important contributions that we should draw on. So that's why, although it is challenging to do in practice, I position myself within inter-disciplinarity.

Then the second thing I would say is that the nature of the problems that we encounter as researchers and as evaluators are increasingly complex and complicated. So if we move on the next slide which is a summary of Glouberman and Zimmerman's work around the difference between simple, complex and complicated we can see that actually very few projects or interventions fall in to this first category of simple. These are the so-called low hanging fruit. The kinds of things the Gates Foundation focuses on. But arguably all these low hanging fruit have been picked and what remains now are the truly wicked problems of development. Problems which involve comprehensive social change which may be resisted by many actors, which are quite socially embedded, say in Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), child marriage. Problems about which few agree even that it is a problem or particularly what the solution would be. And I think also when you look at simple interventions – so mosquito treated bed nets, something I've always imagined is a paradigmatic simple intervention but when you know a little bit more about it you discover that in fact that isn't the case that even simple interventions have quite complex aspects to them. Within the case of bed nets it's actually very common in fishing communities for fishers to use the nets to do their fishing rather than necessarily to protect their families. Obviously it's a choice that their making but it's one that you would need to be aware of in evaluating the success of distribution and also perhaps a mismatch between the success of distribution and reduction in incidence of malaria. Similarly with iron tablets the data has shown it's a great intervention if a single individual gets it. If it's shared across the whole family, if the child is then ill as a result of taking iron tablets, it tends to be less successful.

My third point would be that in engaging with these increasingly complex problems, and emerging problems, McDonald Rumsfeld talking about the known knowns and the unknown unknowns, what we don't know that we don't know. I mean that seems very much to characterise the state of many interventions and research problems like the reintegration of child soldiers – it's very new and very problematical on a number of levels. In terms of how you actually do it you learn as you go along. Programmes need to be quite flexible and adaptive, and then very detailed in recording what they're doing. So whereas with a simple problem you could imagine a single discipline might possibly be able

to solve it. How do you get vaccines approval to work, how do you get vaccines to the children? Once the children are vaccinated they're not then vulnerable to particular diseases. Maybe you only need clinicians, nurses, specialists in healthcare distribution but for more complex and multi-dimensional problems around say economic empowerment then clearly you need a number of different specialisms working together. And this is where we come back to this idea of inter-disciplinarity.

So my second point would be that disciplines are quite different we are socialised quite differently within these disciplines, and we often hold quite different value systems which are then associated with the approaches that we take. So, this question of the place of the individual within anthropology and other disciplines, is very, very important. If you have a more quantitative mind-set then you don't get it quite right with an individual questionnaire but actually it's cancelled out by the large numbers of other questionnaires people take since it's not really the individual it's the average, it's the mean that's the important thing that you're working towards. The place of context as well is this something that should be controlled for, or is it a valuable object of study and learning in itself. That's definitely a disciplinary difference. And, also the way in which you work with participants and colleagues. Is it okay to administer a massive questionnaire to people that takes sort of four to five hours. Quantitative people say yes it is. Qualitative people say no it isn't where actually some quantitative people say that there's a clear diminution in data quality as the questionnaire length extends so obviously there are critical perspectives within different disciplines.

I think the final and very fundamental difference is of course the difference... the extent to which you believe that the data is actually not collected, but is actually generated through the interactions that produce it and an anthropologist or a sociologist or a social scientist essentially I think that would be a premise that you would work from. You need to look very carefully at the instruments that you use and the context in which you collect data to see the ways in which you might be inadvertently constructing the data that you then go on to report. And obviously an awareness of this, and also the way the biases a particular researcher then shape... the way in which they analyse their data is coming into economics and other disciplines. And we see this very much in the increasing advocacy for replication because few studies in fact within psychology and economics can be reliably replicated. I think Ewen Addis found that it's about a third because very particular conditions were in place at the time in which the study was done which means, it's not... it can't necessarily be assumed to be a general phenomenon that's being observed. It could be in fact be one constructed by the study itself. So, economic replicators have actually found that treasured ideas around the reasons for economic growth in Africa or the benefits to women of micro-credit when you attempt to replicate them just don't stand up. And this is a really important insight for programming.

(23 October, 2015. Length 8:35mins)

A key question...

Mark Hepworth, Professor of People's Information Behaviour at Loughborough University

"One of the issues that we may like to address stemming from the talks that you have heard and the discussions that will follow is this challenge that I have been alluding to a whole range of methods that we might apply. What implications might it have if our research is suppose in a way to address these complexities and lead to impact and outcomes that actually makes a difference in society? Should all our research be focused and underpinned by certain values, values of the social world of what we do and the social impact of what we do. Does that apply to all research, does it apply to



laboratory based research not just researchers concerns policy and implementation of policy in society. This is a key question”.

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