Interdisciplinary collaboration in social work education in the U.S., Israel and Canada

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The Study

- **Goal:** Provide an empirically-based understanding of the status of interdisciplinary activities, knowledge and skill in the classroom and field about interprofessional work in Schools of Social Work in class and field work.

- **Method:** 18-item Electronic Survey of Social Work Deans in the U.S., Canada and Israel.
מטאפורות של בי-תחומיות

טרנבות = "דבר חדש"

ליבת/עוגת ומומחיות

תערובת

_datasheet

הрактиובות

פרסקטיבוט שונוט

גירש ז'וק

הצירף הכנון
Definition of interdisciplinary collaboration

- “An interpersonal process through which members of different disciplines contribute to a common product or goal” (Berg-Weger and Schneider, 1998).

- In this study, we asked Deans to address, “sustained, formal interaction between your program and others, both inside and outside the university/college”.
Examples of interdisciplinary collaboration

- Clinical teamwork
- Community development
- University-community collaboration
- Inter-university collaboration across disciplines
“Collaboration” in social work education

Explicit education for interdisciplinary collaboration is not adequately reflected in the curricula of professional schools and academic departments, despite growing literature on the process and outcomes of interdisciplinary collaboration.
Collaboration in the U.S.

There are increasing interdisciplinary activities at the micro and macro level, with public and private funders requiring evidence of this collaboration, and social work educators often taking the lead in university-community partnerships.
Collaboration in Canada

Interdisciplinary collaboration has long been a common practice promoted by provincial and federal policies, and shaped by organizational structure. Recent activity focuses on evaluation of these efforts.
Collaboration in Israel

- Practitioners have legal mandates to provide clinical services and community work, with interdisciplinary practice being increasingly emphasized in schools of SW.
Methodology

- Electronic Survey used with follow-up phone calls.
- 226 social work programs were contacted – 180 on the NADD listserv, 10 Israeli programs, and 35 Canadian programs.
Sample

- 106 Deans responded
- Overall response rate of 47%
  - 78 from the U.S. - 74% of total sample;
  - 17 from Canada - 16% of total sample;
  - 10 from Israel - 10% of total sample [100% of all schools], and;
  - 1 unidentified
Sample

- Social work degrees offered
  - BSW  75%
  - MSW  94%
  - PhD  48%

- Most frequent program among U.S. respondents: MSW
- Most frequent program among Canadian respondents: BSW
- Most frequent program among Israeli respondents: BSW
Findings

- Faculty collaboration with:
  - Education 45%
  - Nursing 45%
  - Psychology 39%
  - Public health 36%
  - Law 35%
  - Public Policy 32%
  - Medicine 26%
  - [+ 16 more disciplines]
Findings

- Dual/joint degree programs
  - Exist in 56% of respondents’ programs
  - Most common: with Law – 30%

- Formal teaching arrangements
  - Exist in 59% of respondents’ programs
  - Most common: with Education – 24%
Findings

- Collaboration in field placement
  - Mental health 87%
  - Medical 83%
  - Schools 73%
  - Children & Families 72%

- Programs reporting no collaboration in field = 6%
Findings

- Class most suited to collaboration
  - Research 75%
  - Policy 73%
  - Macro Practice 73%
  - Electives 73%

- Programs reporting no collaboration in field = 6%
Findings

- Future plans to develop students’ knowledge and skills in collaboration
  - Community-based research/evaluation (62%)
  - School-wide projects with community organizations (44%)
  - Seminars (41%)
  - Dual-degree programs (40%)
  - Field education requirements (39%)
Findings by country – Academic Rewards

- Most frequent reward for collaboration in all three countries – university/school recognition

- Second most frequent reward in the U.S. and Canada – work load release. NO Israeli programs reported work load release.
Room to grow: Findings from qualitative data

“In order to teach students more about interdisciplinary collaboration, we need to expand the collaborative efforts of the faculty…

…and finding ways that the University actually rewards collaboration”
Room to grow: Findings from qualitative data

- “Faculty need to model this in their work, for it to become part of the organizational culture.”

- “Our budget model works against interdisciplinary collaboration in teaching and to some extent research.”

- “It’s hard to do – takes time, resources.”

- “The context in which interdisciplinary collaboration is explored is one which is hostile to it.”
One Discipline based interdisciplinary approach

A new interdisciplinary profession

Increase interdepartmental exchanges

Alternative?
Complementary?
Priorities?

Teach teamwork
Discussion questions

- Is interdisciplinary collaboration taught in your program?
- How can we maximize students’ learning through interdisciplinary experiences?
- How can collaboration be supported at the level of program, university & accrediting bodies?
- What are the best incentives for faculty to support collaborative work?
- What should be the next steps?