

Saskatchewan's Primary Healthcare (PHCI) and Surgical Initiative (SkSI): Embedded Researchers to Support Health System Transformation

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Outline of Presentation

- Overview and context of the study
- Describe the role of embedded PhD researchers as agents of evidence informed health system change
- Outline the advantages and challenges specific to this study
- Highlight two examples of how the embedded PhD researchers are supporting the policy decision making process

Overview and context of the study

- Collaboration: CHSRF, Saskatchewan Ministry of Health, and Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy, University of Regina
- Timeline: September 2011-August 2014
- Purpose: Systematically examine change processes relating to both the Saskatchewan surgical and primary health care initiatives to explore:
 - the major obstacles to large system transformative change
 - the major enablers for large system transformative change
 - why has transformation proven so difficult in practice
 - how to intervene in a way that can help to overcome barriers to transformation as they arise

Describing the Embedded Researcher Role/Methods

- Physically embedded within the Saskatchewan Ministry of Health (Surgical Initiative Branch & Primary Health Services Branch)
- Embedded for the purpose of engaging in real time acquisition of evidence and to provide feedback and policy advice to key decision-makers to facilitate change
- Mixed method case study design - largely guided by a conceptual framework drawn from the literature and expert opinion
- Data Sources
 - Participant Observation (*Field notes – Interpretive*)
 - Documents (i.e. *budgets, commissioned reports, internal documents*)
 - Key informant interviews (*health system decision makers and other health system stakeholder groups*)
 - Surveys (*ibid*)

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'Don't wait up, I'm going out on field research
for about three years!'

Advantages for Decision Makers/Participants

- Added objectivity from an outsider's perspective
- Improved quality of information
- Prospective - time appropriate evidence
- Foster collaboration and communication between decision makers and stakeholders



The facts are coming! The facts are coming!

Advantages for the Research

- Time line permits a longitudinal examination of change processes within health systems
- Privileged access to both private and public information
- Improved understanding of a highly complex phenomena within its real life context
- Inherent flexibility in the design
- Provides privileged access to data to complete PhD

Challenges for Decision Makers/Participants

- Risks of exposing shortcomings
- Feeling vulnerable as a result of self-reflection and sharing information
- Defining and establishing relationships

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"I need someone who'll ask the tough questions, no matter how risky."

Challenges for the Research

- Sensitivities of organizational environment
- Building relationships and gaining trust to establish credibility
- Frequent participant/data access negotiations
- Self awareness of previous knowledge and assumptions
- Sharing preliminary findings may unintentionally give rise to perceived false representation and possibly feelings of betrayal on the part of the participants
- Limited prescriptive guidelines

Using the Embedded Researcher: Assessing Stakeholder Consultation to Inform Decision Making

- Assessing the effectiveness of stakeholder engagement
 - primary health care initiative and surgical initiative
 - Criteria developed from literature and intended objectives of consultations
- Two separate online questionnaires conducted with stakeholders
- Objectives of questionnaires
 - influence future selection of consultation mechanisms
 - identify broader health system concerns potentially unrecognized by Ministry of Health
 - highlight areas for future targeted improvement

Using the Embedded Researcher: Assessing Stakeholder Consultation to Inform Decision Making

- PHC
 - validation of consultation process
 - identification of concerns
 - policy impacts from consultation process remains to be seen
- SkSI
 - guiding coalition is an effective mechanism for engaging stakeholders
 - enhanced collaboration and communication amongst system partners;
 - successful in focusing attention on system level goals;
 - future success dependent on improved frontline engagement and courage and commitment to tackle difficult issues head on (i. e. appropriateness)
- Findings will be shared/used to inform future decision making
 - formal report and presentation of findings to senior leadership and decision-makers within Ministry of Health