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Chapter 18

Interdisciplinary Professional Doctoral Education: Translational Research for Allied Health Professionals

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ABSTRACT

Interdisciplinary professional doctoral pathways and their associated learning trajectories are now a recognised mechanism of operationalising translational research from the context of work-based praxis. The longstanding debates of how best to bridge the theory-practice nexus in healthcare remains a challenge, although the progressive development of professional doctorate programmes has seen a rise in the number of clinical and professional practice doctorates across Western educational providers. This chapter provides an insight into how core concepts of performativity, transformative learning, and the potential to measure the impact of knowledge translation at the front line of person-centred care can all influence the holistic provision of doctoral education pathways with strategic relevance and operational pragmatism.

'If you are out to describe the truth, leave elegance to the tailor' (Ludwig Boltzmann 1844-1906)

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INTRODUCTION

This chapter will aim to provide an insight into the operationalisation of translational research in the context of research-based practice/work-based praxis (Meissner, Cottler & Michener, 2020). Contextualising this within European Allied Health Professions (AHPs) practice provides a series of opportunities to incorporate how health professions pedagogic practice ought to accommodate the various signature pedagogies represented across disparate AHPs. It is also an opportunity to highlight the collective and interdisciplinary practice that frame interprofessional and multi-disciplinary working at the heart of translational practice. In terms of the structure and agency provided by healthcare practice, the context of AHP healthcare and practice is an ideal opportunity to consider the macro, meso and micro level contexts of translational research and the barriers and enablers of this in practice.

At the heart of all translational research lies the common aim of improving and making progressive developments, which ultimately benefit the outcomes of patient centred assessment, diagnosis and management. The capacity to transfer theoretical or applied knowledge into similar situations and contexts is central to this process and this chapter provides an insight into how this can be achieved in the context of an interdisciplinary professional doctorate scheme. The engagement of service users and their families and carers is also central to the success of initially establishing areas of strategic need for research, alongside the formation of steering groups of professionals and lay personnel who are best placed to share knowledge in the process of research.

This chapter will predominantly focus on key theoretical aspects of health professions pedagogy and scholarship and the research, design and methodological approaches, best placed to address the research of them in doctoral research, namely Action Research, in the context of transformative learning and the translation of knowledge into practice-based settings. The ontological and epistemological bases of these research methodologies enable translational research to be an authentic and trustworthy approach to interpretivist research which gains momentum and impact at the front line of person-centred care. Indeed, the nature of truth versus perceived reality resonates throughout research-based practice and is based partially by presupposition, assumption and the epistemic bias which defines humankind and its perception of the world. It is here that Boltzmann's empirical stance, *'If you are out to describe the truth, leave elegance to the tailor'* has particular resonance in the field of 'real-world' rather than in constructed realities of research found in controlled laboratory settings (Israelit, 1996). It is the complex ambiguity of the world, which ensures work-based research undertaken inside professions by those with culturally and temporally marked identities of their own professionalism, ought always to be acknowledged in relation to the concepts of truth and verisimilitude.

THE HISTORY OF KNOWLEDGE ECONOMIES IN ALLIED HEALTH

The relatively expedited process of relationship building in the needs led knowledge that came from the late nineties, had an impact on the overall dynamic between stakeholders, academic institutions, and the need to equip personnel with the skills of systematic research (Peters, 2020a). Amidst this polemic change and the emergence of a neoliberalist system of Higher Education, there had been longstanding criticism of the relevance of traditional, theoretical doctoral programmes such as the PhD, which bore little relevance to the bridging of the theory-practice nexus. Next, the emphasis on developing the concept of the 'researching professional' versus the 'professional researcher' was compounded in the context of

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