

Abstract:

Introduction: A healthy life means creating and maintaining health where the term health means a state of complete physical, mental, social and spiritual well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. To satisfy these four aspects of health, it goes beyond the responsibility of health sector alone. Although organizations in various fields and disciplines have recently realized the importance of collaborative work in order to achieve four dimensions of health, results of studies show that attempts have failed to establish successful inter-organizational relationships and there is still gap to reach this end. As such, the current study was conducted in 2012 with the aim of identifying challenges in building an effective inter-sectoral collaboration (ISC) for health.

Method: A qualitative case study was employed and the Kerman Province Health Master Plan (HMP) was selected as the study case. Gray's three-stage model of collaboration (i.e. pre-condition, process, outcome), developed in 1991, constituted the core conceptual framework underpinning this research. Inter-sectoral collaboration formed in each stage was then analyzed using three models of social determinants of health (SDH), successful collaboration factors introduced by Gray in 1985 and Mattessich and colleagues in 2001. There was a triangulation of data collections tools in this research including interviews, observation, document analysis, and expert panel. Semi-structured interviews using purposeful and snowball sampling were conducted with 14 executives and members of the HMP development group. Some meetings held on health and food security and workshops on HMP implementation were observed. A textual analysis of policy documents was further conducted. Virtual and face-to-face expert panels were also held with national and local experts in the field. A qualitative thematic framework analysis was employed to analyze data.

Results: This study led to the identification of four general components in the formation of ISC including infrastructures, opportunities, threats, and challenges. Each component, in turn, consists of a set of subgroups namely factors determining successful collaboration. In total, 205 subgroups were identified which were further classified into two main sub-divisions of effective (key) and relatively effective (acceptable) based on their importance, priority and degree of influence at all three stages of collaboration.

The findings, further, yielded a model for conceptualizing a successful ISC for health, which consists of five inter-related components. In terms of ability to change (influence) these components, from the most difficult (the hard layers) to the least difficult (the soft layers) these include environment, governance, power, process, and consensus building.

The subgroups extracted in this research were also grouped based on the six groups of environmental factors, members, processes and structure, communications, resources and goals defined by Mattessich and colleagues.

Discussion: Findings of this study show that success of ISC in improving community's health requires advocacy and support at both national and provincial levels. National support includes the role of national policy-makers in providing a favorable condition for establishing and maintaining ISC at the provincial level by intervening in the three components of environmental control, governance and power which are very difficult to manage at the provincial level. Support at the provincial level includes attempts of the central collaboration group to coordinate the goals, resources, structure, communications, members and the process in order to achieve collaboration objectives. Integrating national and provincial support will give rise to a general consensus among all beneficiaries from diverse fields on the concept of "health" which will consequently lead to reaching ISC objective in promoting community's health.

Keywords: inter-sectoral collaboration, challenges, health improvement, conceptual model, social determinants of health

**Challenges of Inter-Sectoral Collaboration to Improve Community
Health and providing Resolutions: A Case Study of Kerman
province's Health master Plan**

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