Resolving Wicked Problems: Practical Solutions

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Exercise

Open discussion:

What is the most pressing issue related to health inequity that you deal with in your work?
Strategies for coping with wicked problems

• Key ingredients
  – Collaboration
  – Dialogue
  – Shared Understanding

• Transdisciplinary approach
Dialogic communication

• Key elements
  – Engaging contact
  – Active listening
  – Mirroring
  – Exploratory questions
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discussion</th>
<th>Debate</th>
<th>Dialogue</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Present ideas</td>
<td>Succeed or win</td>
<td>Broaden perspectives</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seek answers/solutions</td>
<td>Look for weakness</td>
<td>Look for shared meaning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Persuade others</td>
<td>Stress disagreement</td>
<td>Find spaces of agreement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Share information</td>
<td>Focus on ‘right’ and ‘wrong’</td>
<td>Bring out ambivalences</td>
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<tr>
<td>Solve our problems</td>
<td>Advocate one perspective</td>
<td>Invite/allow differences of opinion and expertise</td>
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<tr>
<td>Give answers</td>
<td>Search for logic flaws</td>
<td>Discover collective meaning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Achieve preset goals</td>
<td>Judge other perspectives as inferior or distorted</td>
<td>Challenge our preconceived notions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Listen for disagreement</td>
<td>Listen in order to counter</td>
<td>Listen in order to understand</td>
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<tr>
<td>Avoid areas of conflict and difference</td>
<td>Focus on conflict and difference as advantage</td>
<td>Articulate areas of conflict and difference</td>
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<tr>
<td>Retain relationships</td>
<td>Disregard relationships</td>
<td>Build relationships</td>
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(Adapted from Kachwaha, 2002)
What is dialogue?

Exercise

• Now conduct the discussion using the ‘talking stick’

• What are the differences between the two types of exchange?
Issue and Dialogue Mapping
(Conklin, 2006)

• A technique for developing and mapping shared understanding of a problem
• Uses Issue Based Information Systems (IBIS – language) and Compendium (software)
• Works outward from a basic question
• Dialogue mapping = issue mapping + dialogue
• Questions / ideas / pros, cons / action items
Using IBIS

• IBIS is a language for structured thinking that allows us to
  – Move forward on an issue
  – Illustrate the logic behind our thinking
  – Share the process and understanding with others
  – Reach robust decisions
Using Compendium

- Compendium is the software designed for use with IBIS
- Web-based data software
- Other mapping software can be used
  - SimpleMind
  - MindMeister
Types of questions

- Deontic (What should we do?)
- Instrumental (How should we do it?)
- Criterial (What are the criteria?)
- Conceptual (What does ‘X’ mean?)
- Factual (What is X? Is X true?)
- Background (What is the background to this problem?)
- Stakeholders (Who are they?)
- Future (What will happen...?)

(Adapted from, Cognexus, 2010. p.29-30)
Example of health inequalities

What can be done to reduce health inequalities in Canada?

Reduce poverty

Poverty is related to virtually all other determinants of health

How?

Institute a guaranteed annual income

Institute a living wage policy

Remove lower limit tax exemptions for higher income earners

Increase minimum wage

Decrease taxes

By laws to prevent large grocery from monopolizing markets

This has been done in many places and the income gap is still growing

Politically unpopular

Would allow full time workers to reach the poverty line

Cost too high to businesses

This would raise the level of income of those at the bottom of the ladder and improve health outcomes

Allow for a market-determined economy while supporting those at the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder

Inequity in health outcomes

The homeless

The extremely poor

Would lead to a complete dismantling of welfare state institutions

Increase social welfare

Unpopular with most political parties in Canada

Does against basic values in support of progressive income taxation
What can be done to reduce health inequalities in Canada?

- Reduce poverty
  - Institute a living wage policy
  - Remove lower limit tax exemptions for higher income earners

- Poverty is related to virtually all other determinants of health
  - Increase minimum wage
    - Politically unpopular
    - Would allow full time workers to reach the poverty line
  - Cost too high to businesses
    - This would raise the level of income of those at the bottom of the ladder and improve health outcomes

- Institute a guaranteed annual income
  - Allow for a market-determined economy while supporting those at the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder
  - Unpopular with most political parties in Canada
  - Goes against basic values in support of progressive income taxation

- Increase social welfare
  - The homeless
  - The extremely poor
  - Would lead to a complete dismantling of welfare state institutions
Issue mapping with SimpleMind
Policy/program ideas to reduce health inequities:

- - - - -

Q - question (of precision, of definition, etc.)
Identify key actors in the effort to reduce health inequities
Suggest 3-4 policies/programs to reduce health inequities and 2 arguments for and against
Strategies for coping with wicked problems

• Key ingredients
  – Collaboration
  – Dialogue
  – Shared Understanding

• Using a transdisciplinary approach
Conclusion / Summary

• Most public policy problems are wicked in nature.
• Wicked problems must be tackled differently than tame or complex problems.
• Focus on collaboration, dialogue and shared understanding.
• Incorporate all related knowledge systems and worldviews.
• « Mapping » issues and dialogues can be useful in reaching decisions on how to tackle wicked problems within complex adaptive systems.
References

Thank you!

Visit us at www.ncchpp.ca for more resources

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