Working in multi-disciplinary teams to create research programs in intergenerational care programs

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This presentation will reflect on the journeys of researchers, practitioners and consumers from early childhood, aged care, health care management, economics, human resource management, nursing, public health, and psychology to create innovative, evidenced-based, intergenerational care programs ready for trial. The multiplicity of perspectives were combined to explore the business case behind creating sustainable intergenerational care programs in Australia, which specifically focused on the educational, workforce and economic outcomes, as well as the social and behavioural benefits for participants. Working collaboratively over a 12-month period, practitioners, academics and consumers came together to design the research program and then in the following 9 months trialled the model proposed across 4 trial sites (which involved 6 organisations). Two of the trial sites ran a visiting model, where either aged care participants came to child care sites, or child care participants visited the aged care centre. The other two sites were co-located on the same venue, and participants walked to a common area. A range of qualitative and quantitative tools were used to measure the outcomes from this project. To select these tools, the multidisciplinary team came together to select the most appropriate tool that would be practically and theoretically appropriate to the study. The collaborative nature of this project has resulted in more innovative outcomes and deeper understanding and respect for alternative ways of working. One of the significant findings from the research was the acknowledgement that the early childhood workforce gained from working with colleagues from the aged care sector and vice versa. The pedagogy of care that underpinned the program drew from the principles, practices and outcomes from the Early Years Learning Framework, which provided a foundational focus on which each discipline then used to exchange concepts to build the program. The program developed was then used to draw clear connections and evaporate boundaries between previously siloed sectors.

This project throws three questions to the audience

1. What disciplines can we draw from to continue to cross professional boundaries to improve our knowledge and understanding in the early childhood sector?
2. How can we measure the effectiveness of multi-disciplinary practices to create programs such as the intergenerational care program described?
3. What professional values underpin researcher bias in intergenerational care space?

Group bio

The whole intergenerational care team is made up of practitioners, researchers and consumers of aged care and child care. This multidisciplinary team was purposely developed to cross disciplines in order to create a business case for intergenerational care in Australia. Jennifer Cartmel has been involved in a range of research projects across childcare
workforce and early childhood development. Katrina Radford’s research explores how we can better support the aged care workforce. Anneke Fitzgerald is an organisational behaviour specialist in health care, and Nerina Vecchio’s research explores respite care and community aged care programs in Australia from a health economist perspective. Combined, our broader team is made up of 13 industry and academic partners who specialise in early childhood, aged care, health care management, economics, human resource management, nursing, public health, and psychology. The team undertakes a number of specialised projects under four key theme to develop the business case. These areas are: Education, Workforce, Economics, and Evaluation. Combined, our team aims to change policy in Australia and contributes to the international body of evidence around successful and sustainable intergenerational care programs.