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Painting the big picture: The benefits of using a case study approach in school health research

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Background

- Context: Youth Excel collaborative aims to improve collaboration towards enhancing youth health policies and programs
- Purpose of case studies: to learn from existing youth health monitoring and knowledge exchange initiatives to accelerate capacity development in diverse Canadian contexts
- PE, MB, and NB selected as case sites due to existing capacities

Provincial Youth Health KE Systems

- Prince Edward Island
 - School Health Action Planning & Evaluation System – PEI (SHAPES-PEI)
- Manitoba
 - Manitoba Risk Factor Surveillance System/Manitoba Youth Health Survey (YHS)
- New Brunswick
 - NB Student Wellness Surveillance and Knowledge Exchange Initiative (NBSWS/KE)

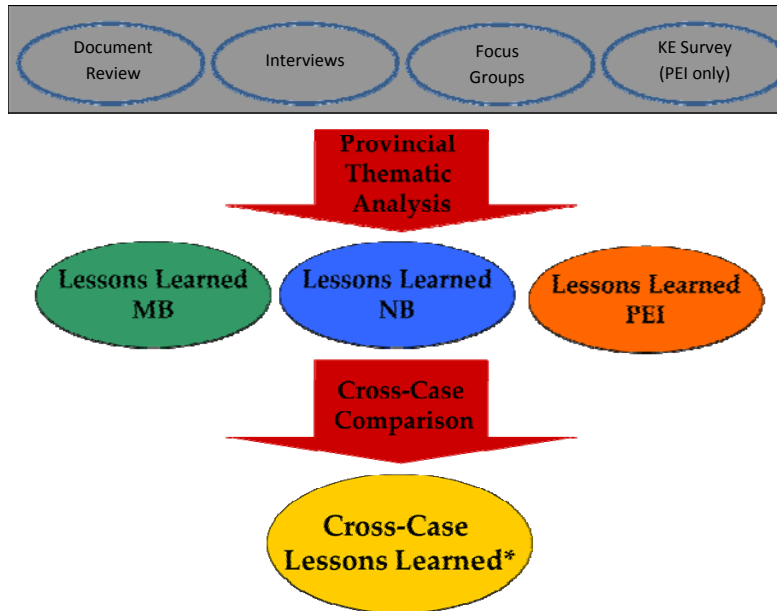
System Similarities

- Each focuses on...
 - Implementing a youth health monitoring system
 - Census-level
 - School-based data collection
 - Self-report student surveys
 - Synthesizing relevant evidence
 - School, district, regional and provincial reports
 - Moving evidence into action
 - Support for interpretation and use of reports
 - Generating evidence from action
 - Continuous improvement
 - Documenting success stories and best practices

Case Study Approach

- Situated between the quantitative and qualitative paradigms utilizing multi-data collection
- Effective means of gaining an in-depth understanding of a complex social phenomenon within the real-life context in which it occurs
- Suitable for answering HOW and WHY questions
- Exploratory case study using a multiple-case design (Yin, 2003)
 - No clear single set of outcomes; focused on description of phenomena
 - Multiple cases allow exploration of similarities and differences across diverse contexts

Our Case Study Process



Provincial Data Collection

- Each province used different methods depending on needs and context: e.g., interviews, focus groups, surveys, document analysis
- Allowed diverse stakeholder groups to participate: e.g., provincial government, NGOs, school administrators, teachers, students, etc.
- Multi-data collection provided:
 - Opportunity to hear views and experiences of many
 - Enhanced confidence in conclusions (triangulation)

Provincial Data Analysis & Reports

- Multi-data collection resulted in large amounts of data
 - Need to be organized
- Mainly qualitative data
 - Takes time to interpret
- Reports: Individual cases and reports allowed each province to tailor their writing and format to their own stakeholder audience(s)

Cross-Case Analysis & Report

- A priori categories/themes identified from:
 - Literature
 - Case study purposes
 - Pan-Canadian consultation
 - Cross-case conversations
- Individual case lessons shared iteratively
- Cross-case lessons consolidated within each category
- Collaborative writing of report
- Cross-case process was time-consuming but rewarding (also informed provincial analyses)

Case Study Findings

- Cross-case 'Applications':
 - Develop a conceptual knowledge exchange model/framework
 - Embed actions within existing systems and structures
 - Identify and engage passionate champions
 - Build on successes
 - Build trusting and respectful partnerships
 - Tailor knowledge exchange to diverse stakeholder groups

Case Study Findings

- Invite reader to experience uniqueness of each case study
- Explore wide range of themes
 - Not limited to cause and effect
- Deepened & extended understanding of complex KE systems
- Findings can help to shape youth health KE capacity in other jurisdictions

In conclusion...

- Challenges of case study approach:
 - Requires careful consideration of boundaries of the case(s)
 - Results in large amounts of data
 - Time consuming
- Benefits of case study approach:
 - Exploratory and descriptive
 - Captures 'stories' and experiences well
 - Contextual factors are emphasized
 - Flexible design that can be used in multiple contexts
 - Triangulation of data possible within and across cases
 - Collaborative process rewarding for research team members

Thank You

Questions? Comments?



Cross-Case and Provincial Case Reports available from:
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