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Exchanging Prevention practices on Polydrug use among youth In Criminal justice systems (EPPIC)

Translation and transferability of approaches and intervention programmes

Executive summary: WP7

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Introduction

This report provides a summary of the work and findings of Work Package 7 (WP7) of the Exchanging Prevention practices on Polydrug use among youth In Criminal justice systems (EPPIC) project (www.eppic-project.eu). The full cross national WP7 report is available:

https://www.eppic-project.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/WP7_FINAL_CROSS_NATIONAL_REPORT_.pdf

This WP set out to:

- Investigate the extent to which policy approaches and inventions identified in partner countries are seen to be transferable/translatable between different policy systems, different cultures, & different (national, local) contexts
- Identify factors facilitating or impeding transfer/translation of best practice
- On the basis of the findings, propose criteria for assessing the potential of interventions to transfer/ translate across contexts.

The focus of the work in WP7 is at the level of interventions for the specific target group, however, Rein and Schon (1993) argue that the overall policy approach frames how interventions at the level of practice are developed and furthermore, that the different levels interact and impact on each other.

Policy transfer and translation: key concepts

Policy studies literature provided the theoretical framework for WP7. A number of overlapping terms are used in the literature, furthermore, the terminology used has evolved over time as conceptual ideas have developed (for a definition of key terms see Box 1). We know from the literature that there here has been a move away from thinking about policy (or knowledge) 'transfer' or 'diffusion' as straightforward and technical and mechanistic and the emphasis is now on "translation" (Prince, 2009, p.173) and "variation, difference and distinction" (Newburn, 2010, p.346). The literature highlights the *complexities of context* and the need for interpretation (see Stone, 2012). A variety of terms are used including divergence, hybridisation, mutation, adaptation. However, some policies and practices may not be 'transferable' as they have arisen from the specific legal, educational and social systems of their 'host state' and are neither ideologically nor culturally proximate (Hulme, 2005, p.423).

Box 1: Definition of key terms used in policy studies literature

Diffusion: 'the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among members of a social system' (Berry and Berry, 1999, p. 171).

Transfer: 'knowledge about how policies, administrative arrangements, institutions and ideas in one political setting (past or present) is used in the development of policies, administrative arrangements, institutions and ideas in another political setting' (Dolowitz & Marsh, 2000, p.5).

Translation: "policy translation can be understood as multiple and variable processes incorporating (i) diffusion/transfer; (ii) assemblage/bricolage; (iii) mobilities/mutation; (iv) interpretation/localisation; and (v) trial and error" Stone (2017, p.56).

Convergence: "the tendency of societies to grow more alike, to develop similarities in structures, process and performances" (Kerr, (1983) p.3 cited by Bennett, 1991, p. 215)

Policy borrowing & selective borrowing: Steiner-Khamsi (2016, p. 383) uses metaphor: "Local actors reach out & grab the arm of the octopus that is closest to their particular policy agenda, and thereby attach (local) meaning to a (global) policy...Policy borrowing is never wholesale, but always selective."

Methods

Using i) 'real world' examples of innovative interventions identified within EPPIC project; ii) principles of transferability (drawn from the EPPIC project and the literature)

In each partner country workshops/interviews were conducted to explore:

- What factors are taken into account when making decisions about whether an intervention could be replicated elsewhere e.g. from one place to another, across settings
- Transfer and adaptation (translation) of interventions
- Factors that might facilitate or impede the transfer of 'best practice' measures and initiatives
- Cross national similarities and differences

Factors included setting intervention delivered in, resources, underpinning principles, cultural context and compatibility of regulatory and policy frameworks.

Information was obtained from 44 respondents (Austria 5; Denmark 6; Germany 4; Italy 7; Poland 9; UK 13). A detailed description of the methods can be found in the full cross-national report.

Key findings

- Exchange of best practice was valued by respondents but simple transfer was not seen as viable.
- Participants argued that if interventions were to succeed they required ‘translation’ (i.e. adaptation to varying degrees) to fit different, often complex contexts and to respond to local needs.
- The main barriers to ‘translation’ between one country and another were thought to be:
 - incompatibility of legal and regulatory frameworks
 - systems and structural differences
 - organisational factors
 - policy frameworks
- Within country transfer of the interventions, whilst more straightforward, could still face challenges (e.g. lack of resources, policy direction).
- In considering whether it might be possible to transfer/translate an intervention, there were differences as to what factors (e.g. setting, policy framework etc) were considered most important.
- Differences reflected different professional backgrounds, disciplines, cultural context, experience of transfer/translation and systems e.g. legislation, policy framework.
- However, there was broad agreement that these factors were critical:
 - Target group for the intervention
 - Strength of the evidence base
 - Cultural context

Conclusions

The results of WP7 support the idea that interventions require ‘translation’ from one context to the other. Indeed, there seemed to be an expectation that interventions would need adaptation (to varying degrees) to respond to local needs and to ensure the materials were culturally appropriate. It is important to note that this need for ‘translation’ was not on the whole seen as a ‘problem’ rather as an opportunity to produce an intervention that was relevant for the young people it was being offered to.

However, barriers to ‘translation’ were identified. Critical barriers were believed to be incompatibility of systems and policy frameworks e.g. interventions that would require a legislative change or fundamental policy shift to allow them to be implemented. This is not to argue that they are always insurmountable but to acknowledge that the ‘translation’ of such interventions would require political will, the input of multiple-actors and may take a considerable time to achieve.

Although further work is required, from the EPPIC project it is possible to identify principles upon which interventions for drug experienced young people in contact with the criminal justice system can be assessed when considering transfer and translation (see Box 2). Underpinning the principles is a recognition that interventions will require translation and that interventions need to have an inbuilt flexibility that does not compromise the intervention.

Box 2: Principles for the transfer of interventions for drug experienced young people in contact with the criminal justice system

- ❖ Young person centred: strengths based, build agency, holistic
- ❖ Age appropriate: taking into account developmental age, literacy levels & educational attainment
- ❖ Culturally nuanced: language (e.g. colloquialisms, slang terms for drugs), images used in materials (which can be adapted to meet local needs, the dynamics of the cultural landscape)
- ❖ Localisation: meets the specificities of the local socio-economic and cultural context
- ❖ Flexibility: able to respond to changes e.g. drugs consumed, method of consumption, drug markets, drug terms etc
- ❖ Involvement of young people with lived and living experience (e.g. design, delivery, translation)
- ❖ Interface: with other interventions, programmes, systems

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