Unravelling the concept of integrated public health policy: Concept mapping with Dutch experts from science, policy, and practice

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ABSTRACT

Background: While expectations of integrated public health policy (IPHP) promoting public health are high, assessment is hampered by the concept's ambiguity. This paper aims to contribute to conceptual clarification of IPHP as first step in further measurement development.
Methods: In an online concept mapping procedure, we invited 237 Dutch experts, 62 of whom generated statements on characteristics of IPHP. Next, 100 experts were invited, 24 of whom sorted the statements into piles according to their perceived similarity and rated the statements on relevance and measurability. Data was analyzed using concept mapping software.
Results: The concept map consisted of 97 statements, grouped into 11 clusters and five themes. Core themes were 'integration', concerning 'policy coherence' and 'organizing connections', and 'health', concerning 'positioning health' and 'addressing determinants'. Peripheral themes were 'generic aspects', 'capacities', and 'goals and setting', which respectively addressed general notions of integrated policy making, conditions for IPHP, and the variety in manifestations of IPHP. Measurability ratings were low compared to relevance.
Conclusion: The concept map gives an overview of interrelated themes, distinguishes core from peripheral dimensions, and provides pointers for theories of the policy process. While low measurability ratings indicate measurement difficulties, the core themes provide pointers for systematic insight into IPHP through measurement.

1. Introduction

The purpose of integrated public health policy (IPHP) is to positively impact population health through contributions from various policy sectors and organizations. The rationale behind IPHP is grounded in the epidemiological understanding that health is influenced by different types of determinants Lalonde [16]: genetic makeup, lifestyle, social and physical environmental factors, and the quality and accessibility of prevention and health care. Many of these determinants are mainly influenced by policies of non-health sectors. IPHP can be characterized as coherently addressing the different types of determinants of health through purposeful contributions from multiple policy sectors and organizations [13,16,19]. As health is an outcome of complex and dynamic relationships among various actors and determinants [13], IPHP is a complex undertaking. It at least requires a variety of knowledge and capacities, the agency of multiple actors on multiple

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Table 1
Selected core publications on integrated public health policy.

Author/year/publication type	Contribution	Main concept	Definition main concept	Aspects mentioned
WHO/1997/Report	Provides consensus on the definition of intersectoral action for health	Intersectoral action for health	'A recognized relationship between part or parts of the health sector with part or parts of another sector which has been formed to take action on an issue to achieve health outcomes (or intermediate health outcomes) in a way that is more effective, efficient or sustainable than could be achieved by the health sector acting alone.'	Discusses determinants of health, intersectoral action at work, partnerships and strategies, policy and program implications Presents elements of successful intersectoral action for health: social mobilization and empowerment; leadership, champion and/or catalyst; analysis/priority-setting; mutually beneficial relationships; integrated action at micro and macro level; human, technical and financial resources; variation in institutional long-term policy; institutionalization of health impact/gain assessment; training, tools and capacity development; coordination and integration mechanisms, partnering.
Milio/2001/glossary	Places healthy public policy within other policy constructs and invites testing in use and discussion	Healthy public policy	'Healthy public policies improve the conditions under which people live: secure, safe, adequate, and sustainable livelihoods, lifestyles, and environments, including housing, education, nutrition, information exchange, child care, transportation, an necessary community and personal social and health services. Policy adequacy may be measured by its impact on population health.'	Also explains the following concepts: policy, public policy, organization policy, policy goals, healthy public policies, policy making process, policy stakeholders/players, actors, policy environment, policy instrument, political strategy, strategic information
Freiler et al./2013/glossary	Presents concepts and terms useful in understanding the implementation of health in all policies as a cross-sectoral policy	Health in all policies	'Health in All Policies [. . .] is [. . .] a governmental strategy to improve population health by coordinating action across health and non-health sectors.' 'A single case of HiAP reflects a multisectoral initiative towards healthy policymaking involving the national or state/provincial level of government where sectors collaborate (often through processes of cooperation, coordination or integration) to develop policies and programmes that include population health initiatives for preventing the manifestation of inequities [in the determinants of health].'	Discusses: policy implementation, intersectoral action, intersectoral engagement, agenda setting, raising awareness, win-win approach, capacity building, institutional capacity, expert capacity, prior experience
Kickbusch and Gleicher/2011/report	Tracks governance innovations that have been introduced to address priority determinants of health and summarizes them as strategic approaches to smart governance for health	Governance for health	'Governance for health is defined as the attempts of governments and other actors to steer communities, whole countries or even groups of countries in the pursuit of health as integral to well-being through both whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches.' 'Governance for health promotes joint action of health and non-health sectors, of public and private actors and of citizens for a common interest. It requires a synergistic set of policies, many of which reside in sectors other than health as well as sectors outside of government, which must be supported by structures and mechanisms that enable collaboration'	Determinants of health, governance for health and well-being, whole-of-society/government approach, interdependence, complexity, co-production Presents intersectoral action for health, healthy public policy and health in all policies as three successive waves in governance for health and places them on a continuum of less-to-more policy integration