

# ▲ A WHO Report: *Framework for Action on Interprofessional Education and Collaborative Practice*

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This article summarizes the key features of the World Health Organization's *Framework for Action on Interprofessional Education and Collaborative Practice*. The *Framework* is a call for action to policy-makers, decision-makers, educators, health workers, community leaders, and global health advocates to move toward embedding interprofessional education and collaborative practice in all of the services they deliver. *J Allied Health* 2010; 39(3 pt 2):196–197.

AT A TIME WHEN the world is facing a shortage of health workers, policy-makers are looking for innovative strategies that can help them develop policy and programs to bolster the global health workforce. The World Health Organization's (WHO) *Framework for Action on Interprofessional Education and Collaborative Practice* (the *Framework*)<sup>1</sup> highlights the current status of interprofessional collaboration around the world, identifies the mechanisms that shape successful collaborative teamwork, and outlines a series of action items that policy-makers can apply within their local health system (Fig. 1). The goal of the *Framework* is to provide strategies and ideas that will help health policy-makers implement the elements of interprofessional education and collaborative practice that will be most beneficial in their own jurisdictions.

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This paper excerpts the Executive Summary of the WHO's *Framework for Action on Interprofessional Education and Collaborative Practice* (WHO/HRN/HPN/10.3. Geneva, WHO, 2010)<sup>1</sup> and is used with permission of the WHO.

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## *The Case for Interprofessional Education and Collaborative Practice for Global Health*

The *Framework* recognizes that many health systems throughout the world are fragmented and struggling to manage unmet health needs. Present and future health workforces are tasked with providing health services in the face of increasingly complex health issues. Evidence shows that as these health workers move through the system, opportunities for them to gain interprofessional experience help them learn the skills needed to become part of the collaborative practice-ready health workforce.

A collaborative practice-ready workforce is a specific way of describing health workers who have received effective training in interprofessional education. Interprofessional education occurs when students from two or more professions learn about, from, and with each other to enable effective collaboration and improve health outcomes. Once students understand how to work interprofessionally, they are ready to enter the workplace as members of the collaborative practice team. This is a key step in moving health systems from fragmentation to a position of strength. Interprofessional healthcare teams understand how to optimize the skills of their members, share case management, and provide better health services to patients and the community. The resulting strengthened health system leads to improved health outcomes.

## *Moving Forward with Integrated Health and Education Policies*

The health and education systems must work together to coordinate health workforce strategies. If health workforce planning and policy-making are integrated, interprofessional education and collaborative practice can be fully supported.

A number of mechanisms shape how interprofessional education is developed and delivered. In the *Framework*, examples of some of these mechanisms have been divided into two themes: educator mechanisms (e.g., academic staff training, champions, institutional support, managerial commitment, learning outcomes) and curricular mechanisms (e.g., logistics and scheduling, program content, compulsory attendance, shared objectives, adult learning principles, contextual learning, assessment). By considering these mechanisms in the local context, policy-makers can

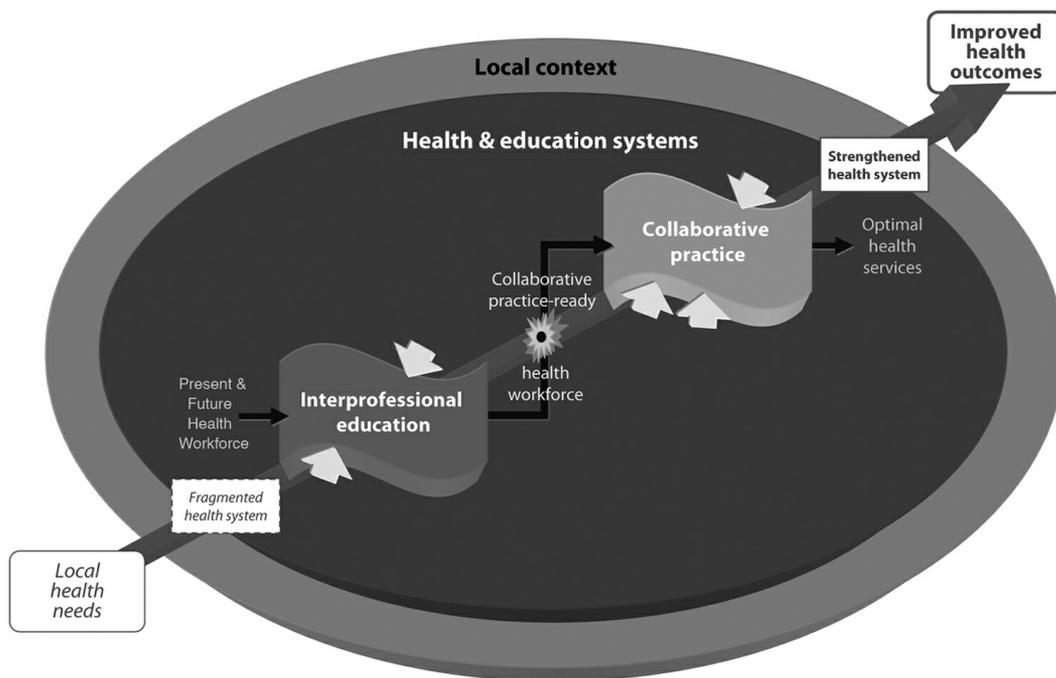


FIGURE 1. Action items for collaborative healthcare. (From WHO: *Framework*,<sup>1</sup> p 9; used with permission.)

determine which of the accompanying actions would lead to stronger interprofessional education in their jurisdiction.

Likewise, there are mechanisms that shape how collaborative practice is introduced and executed. Examples of these mechanisms have been divided into three themes:

1. Institutional support mechanisms (e.g., governance models, structured protocols, shared operating resources, personnel policies, supportive management practices);
2. Working culture mechanisms (e.g., communications strategies, conflict resolution policies, shared decision-making processes); and
3. Environmental mechanisms (e.g., built environment, facilities, space design).

Once a collaborative practice-ready health workforce is in place, these mechanisms will help them determine the actions they might take to support collaborative practice.

The health and education systems also have mechanisms through which health-services are delivered and patients are protected. The Framework identifies examples of health services delivery mechanisms (e.g., capital planning, remuneration models, financing, commissioning, funding streams) and patient safety mechanisms (e.g., risk management, accreditation, regulation, professional registration).

#### A Call to Action

It is important that policy-makers review this *Framework* through a global lens. Every health system is different and

new policies and strategies that fit with and address their local challenges and needs must be introduced. The *Framework* is not intended to be prescriptive nor provide a list of recommendations or required actions. Rather, it is intended to provide policy makers with ideas on how to contextualize their existing health system, commit to implementing principles of interprofessional education and collaborative practice, and champion the benefits of interprofessional collaboration with their regional partners, educators, and health workers.

Interprofessional education and collaborative practice can play a significant role in mitigating many of the challenges faced by health systems around the world. The action items identified in the *Framework* can help jurisdictions and regions move forward toward strengthened health systems and, ultimately, improved health outcomes. The *Framework* is a call for action to policy-makers, decision-makers, educators, health workers, community leaders, and global health advocates to take action and move toward embedding interprofessional education and collaborative practice in all of the services they deliver.

#### REFERENCE

1. World Health Organization: *Framework for Action on Interprofessional Education and Collaborative Practice*. Geneva, WHO, 2010. Available at: [http://www.who.int/hrh/resources/framework\\_action/en/](http://www.who.int/hrh/resources/framework_action/en/).