TOWARDS A NEW SCIENCE OF AGEING

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ELEMENTS OF A NEW SCIENCE OF AGEING

- Multi-disciplinarity and inter-disciplinarity
- Holistic Approach to Ageing (Life Course, Diversity, Contextual)
- User Engagement (The Key Role of Older People)
- Knowledge Transfer (Impact on Policy, Practice and Product Development)
AGEING IS INEVITABLE BUT MALLEABLE

INTRINSIC
(genetic)

EXTRINSIC
(environment/lifestyle)

AGEING
(loss of function/adaptability)

Adapted from Grimley Evans (2004)

NDA Programme Meeting, 1 November 2011, London.
We are not students of some subject matter but students of problems. And problems may cut across the borders of any subject or discipline

Karl Popper
Promoting multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary ageing research in the United Kingdom

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ABSTRACT
Multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary working has for long been advocated in gerontology, and sometimes contested. Although collaboration between disciplines is common practice in many areas of ageing research, much remains to be done to develop and support such work. Internationally, funding agencies, scientific associations and other stakeholders in ageing research are actively involved in establishing the methods and means to promote cross-disciplinary co-operation in the field. In the United Kingdom (UK) since the late 1990s, the statutory Research Councils with key interests in ageing and older people have been actively pursuing research programmes that feature multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinarity. The National Collaboration on Ageing Research (NCAR), a partnership among four of the Research Councils to stimulate cross-disciplinary collaboration, worked with scientists, funding bodies, and research users to develop approaches to multi- and inter-disciplinary research, and their work informed the New Dynamics of Ageing (NDA) Programme, a major cross-Research Council programme of multi-disciplinary research which spans the social, medical, biological and engineering sciences and the arts and humanities. Drawing on the authors’ participation in these activities, this article reviews key developments in the promotion of multi-disciplinary science on ageing in the UK and highlights how this is being pursued in the NDA Programme.

KEY WORDS – science policy, research development, multi-disciplinarity, inter-disciplinarity.

Background

The need for explicit multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary approaches in the study of later life has been advanced by scientists and other research stakeholders in the field of ageing for some time (Alkema and Alley 2006; Clair and Allman 2000). Given that ageing is a multi-dimensional
EIGHT OVERARCHING PRINCIPLES

- An Holistic Person – environment Approach to Ageing (All Disciplines)
- A Life Course Perspective (Continuous Ageing)
- Multi-disciplinarity (The New Science of Ageing)
- User / Stakeholder Engagement (The Key Role of Older People)
- Knowledge Exchange (Impact on Policy, Practice, Product Development)
- Diversity, Cross-national, Cross-cultural (The European Research Area)
- Capacity Building (Following Generations, NMS)
- Maximising Technological Innovation (EU Priority)
THE PRIORITY OF ACTIVE AGEING

Healthy Ageing

Mental Capital

Home and Community

Bio-gerontology

Inclusion and Social Participation

Social Protection

Unequal Ageing

Active Ageing Across the Life-course