Avoiding pitfalls in interdisciplinary education

As the world’s social-environmental problems increasingly extend across boundaries, both disciplinary and political, there is a growing need for interdisciplinarity, not only in research per se, but also in doctoral education. We present the common pitfalls of interdisciplinary research in doctoral education, illustrating approaches towards solutions using the Nordic Centre for Research on Marine Ecosystems and Resources under Climate Change (NorMER) research network as a case study. We provide insights and detailed examples of how to overcome some of the challenges of conducting interdisciplinary research within doctoral studies that can be applied within any doctoral/postdoctoral education programme, and beyond. Results from a selfevaluation survey indicate that early-career workshops, annual meetings and research visits to other institutions were the most effective learning mechanisms, whereas single discipline-focused courses and coursework were among the least effective learning mechanisms. By identifying the strengths and weaknesses of components of NorMER, this case study can inform the design of future programmes to enhance interdisciplinarity in doctoral education, as well as be applied to science collaboration and academic research in general.

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