

Advancing Engaged Research Globally — Region by Region
Assessing Training Needs
Short Summary of Regional Workshop: [Asia]
October 29, 2024, online
Coordinator: Ria Lambino, Research Institute for Humanity and Nature

Background

This workshop has been initiated by the Td Training Collaboratory and the ITD Alliance and created a space to explore the needs for training collaborative, engaged research from different perspectives, involving scholars, policy makers, funders, educators and trainers. It explored the status of trainings in Asia, including existing offers and organizations providing these, types of trainings and current demands and asked participants to elaborate on desired futures and recommendations related to trainings to strengthen collaborative, engaged research. An online session was held on October 29, 2024 and this summary provides highlights of the discussion in this workshop.

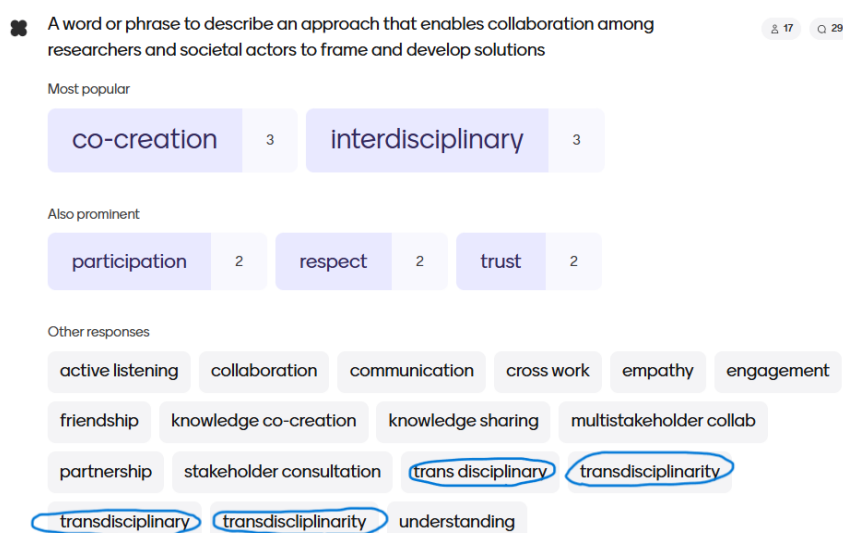
The data collected provides insights for future funding of training and trainers of collaborative, engaged research. In addition, it will serve as orientation for a newly forming working group of the ITD Alliance on education and training.

The workshop received 19 participants in total, coming from East Asia (Japan, Taiwan, Mongolia), Southeast Asia (Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines), South Asia (India) with different backgrounds; most participants identified themselves as researchers (12/19).

Results

To do justice to the heterogeneity of language used to name collaborative, engaged research, participants presented words or phrases used to describe an approach that enables collaboration among researchers and societal actors to frame and develop solutions together and focuses on a complex problem.

In Asia, *transdisciplinary* (in many forms of the word) and *co-creation* (3+1 “knowledge co-creation”) are used the most (4), followed by *interdisciplinary* (3)



What exists: In Asia, professional training has covered a range of skills, from KPI setting and publication development, to funding acquisition, proposal writing, and science-policy communication etc delivered through in-person workshops, online and hybrid sessions, hands-on fieldwork, and case studies. Initiatives like Inclusive Innovation workshops on TD facilitation skills, Future Earth's TERRA School, and foundational courses at the Sokendai program of RIHN introduce system thinking, problem-solving, teamwork, stakeholder analysis, and leadership. Much of the learning occurs through interdisciplinary dialogue, co-design projects, and "learning by doing" and these are not always

explicitly framed as TD training. Despite growing interest and funding opportunities, more structured TD-specific training could better prepare researchers for the complexities of this approach.

What could be: Participants recommended developing essential tools and skills such as systems thinking, science communication, and bridging silos. Priority actions include creating modular training programs that build foundational TD knowledge, raise awareness, and provide actionable guidelines, coupled with tools for monitoring and evaluation. Efforts must bridge the gap between science, policy, and practice through improved communication and partnerships with diverse stakeholders, ensuring multiple perspectives. Training should be tailored to different audiences, prioritizing researchers across career stages to disseminate knowledge widely and effectively. Some participants indicated key topics like sustainability, urbanization, air pollution, and just transitions. Trainers must combine expertise with strong delivery skills, sharing real-world experiences to inspire and educate. Training formats should be flexible, blending in-person sessions for engagement with online and on-the-job learning to suit diverse needs and schedules.

Recommended actions for building the field or advancing “transdisciplinary research” in Asia.

Participants suggested to build a core community for promoting TD approaches, creating collaborative spaces connecting researchers, policy makers and local communities to identify pressing issues and co-create solutions through workshops, roundtables, and hybrid alliances. Develop initiatives for co-creation, knowledge sharing, and methodological development. This includes engaging research institutions, universities, and national academies to train relevant social actors in TD approaches, while securing funding for TD courses and initiatives. Tailored leadership structures is critical, alongside developing resources like a white paper and analysis of TD research in Asia.

Specific organizations that should be leading this effort, due to their influence or experience Local NGOs, already engaged in real TD work, should be key players, along with universities and their management, which are central to training researchers and raising awareness. Senior and young academies, national think tanks, transnational organizations like the UN, IAP, TWAS, and ISC have the capacity to promote and lead TDR initiatives. International NGOs, such as the Tzu Chi Foundation, Indian Institute of Human Settlements, WGIA - International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs and International Funders for Indigenous People. Networks such as Future Earth and the Association of Research Councils of Asia can build the necessary collaborative structures and governance. Engaging funding bodies like the World Bank and other research councils is vital to securing financial support, while fostering inclusive innovation and training programs to equip stakeholders with the skills for impactful TD research.

Responsible organizations:

The workshop series was initiated by the Td Training Collaboratory, a global consortium of leading scholars/thought leaders and practitioners in transdisciplinary research, formed to identify key elements of what researchers need to know, do and be in the context of transdisciplinary research and to create materials for trainers. It was conducted in collaboration with the the Global Alliance for Inter- and Transdisciplinarity (ITD Alliance), a membership-based association that connects diverse, distributed networks of institutions and individuals around the world to foster inter- and transdisciplinarity. For more information see: www.itd-alliance.org.

Regional coordinator: Research Institute for Humanity and Nature is an inter-university research institute based in Kyoto, Japan promoting comprehensive research in global environmental studies covering a wide range of humanities and social sciences perspectives based on data from natural science. RIHN conducts interdisciplinary research traversing the academic foundations of the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences, as well as problem-solving transdisciplinary research in collaboration and cooperation with society.