

Realising the Dreamed Reality of Social Work Professional Education

***NESWA Social Work Practice Educator Conference
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Cultivating Research-Mindedness in Social Work Education

The Role of Practice Educators

Workshop in NESWA Practice Educator
Conference, 2018

Outline

- 15 mins **Professional challenges: the need for evidence**
- 20 mins **Group exercise – design your research for/about practice** (with examples of student dissertations)
- 20mins **Presentations** (5mins/group)
- 5 mins **Summary of what is research-mindedness**
- 10 mins **Placard Drawing : the role of practice educators**
- 5 mins **Closing remarks**

Living with A century-old identity

Challenge— Is social work a distinctive discipline? A profession? (Flexner, 1915)

- **Professionally lacking a clear boundary**
 - What ends are we serving? Medical, economic, psychological and spiritual ends are aspects of our field of concern
 - We are everything, we are nothing
- **Epistemologically relying heavily on other disciplines' knowledge, e.g. sociology, psychology and counselling**

Flexner, A. (1915) "Is Social Work a Profession?" (paper presented at the National Conference on Charities and Correction, 1915).

Kong, S. T. (2012). *Eclecticism for Social Work: Giving Hostages to Fortune or the Life Buoy for Establishing Disciplinary Boundaries/Knowledge?* Paper presented at the Interdisciplinary: Grounding social research and practice in an age of complexity, 5th ENQUIRE Postgraduate Conference, University of Nottingham. <https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/sociology/documents/enquire/cfp---5th-enquire-conference.pdf>

Professional Challenges

1. Professional status –

Why do we need research?

Research-minded practice

Development of distinctive knowledge base for social work

- Focus on the applied, and be critical about the idea that theories lead practice (Thyer, 2001)

Ensuring effectiveness

- Evidence-based practice: Meta-analysis of RCTs, RCT, Quasi-Experiment, Single Case Study etc.

CONTROVERSIES

If EBP is the answer, what are the questions?

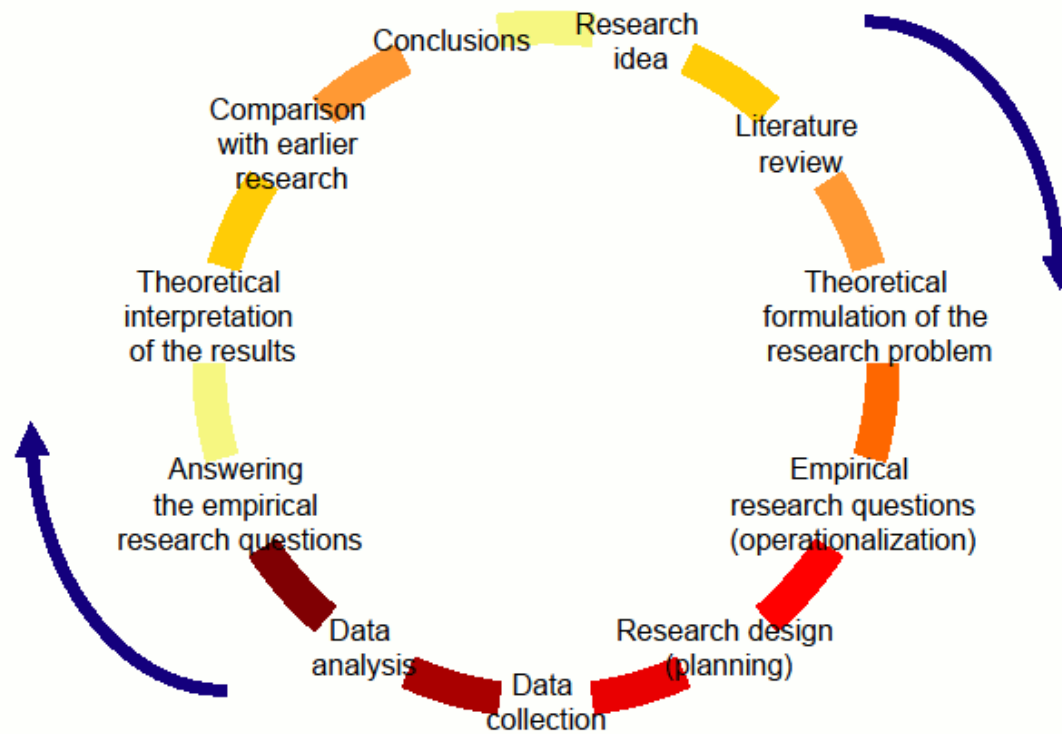
- Whose better outcomes? (**Witkin, 1996**)
- What counts as evidence? (**Shaw, 1999**)
- Why a cook-book recipe can solve the complex problems? (problem of decontextualization) (**Frost, 2009**)

Pursuing effectiveness, relevance and professional values

RESEARCH DESIGN FOR PRACTICE

General Steps of Research Design

The research process



Research Topics

- Integration of theory, evidence and practice in practice education
- Effective use of supervision in achieving the educational function of PE
- Support needs of Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSW)
- Retaining talents through effective practice supervision

5 mins/ group

PRESENTATIONS

Research Mindedness

1. **Inquisitiveness** - Evidence before theories, and sometimes even before experience
2. **Rigorous** – Data collection and analysis should be conducted in ways that support fuller understanding of the issue/concern/problem co-constructed by social worker and service users
3. **Openness** – Collection and interpretation of evidence is not neutral, participation of users and other stakeholders is of paramount importance. Ready to modify your understanding if evidence speaks otherwise
4. **Ethical** – Always do no harm, while we aim at doing good. Research is not only for improving effectiveness, but is also for cultivating critical capacity

What is the role of Practice Educator in cultivating research-mindedness in social work profession?

PLACARD PREPARATION

Closing Remarks

SHARING