

Teaching research in social work education

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Aims

- To reflect upon the role of research mindedness in social work education;
- To discuss different approaches to research teaching;
- To situate UK developments within the European context.
- Q: How important is it to teach research in social work education?

Timeline: social work research



- 2003 Degree in social work first established;
- 2006 Recognised as distinct discipline-ESRC
- 2007 Social work designated priority area;
- 2008 Development of a SW research strategy
- 2009 School for Social Care Research
- 2010 Research capacity building – RDI;
- 2012 Reform of social work education - E&W.

Competing debates



- Professionalization of social work;
- Rigour and standing of discipline;
- Decision making: using research to underpin evidence-based practice.
- Work-based programmes e.g. step up to social work and frontline;
- Skills for practice;
- Packed curriculum;
- Privileges EBP;
- Nuance and context.

Inclusion of research in international standards for SWE



- IASSW: ‘..use of research methods, relevant paradigms and... critical appreciation of the use of research...’
Global Standards
- theoretical ideas and evidence from international research’ will underpin effective social work (Scottish Executive, 2003; p. 30);
- social workers to keep their knowledge and skills up-to-date, to base their practice on evidence and research of what works, to be effective in their interventions and to be able to demonstrate the difference they make in people's lives’ (Northern Ireland, HSSPS, 2012)



The study

- Unfunded research conducted by working group of the JSWEC research committee;
- Early 2013 pilot study qualitative data: course aims, content and delivery of res. teaching;
- 3/13- 11/13 survey 60 HEIs 72% response;
- Five broad approaches identified.

Fish, J. (2014) Investigating approaches to the teaching of research on undergraduate social work programmes: A research note. *British Journal of Social Work*. 1–8
doi:10.1093/bjsw/bcu132



Five models for research teaching

| 1. Research informed teaching 23% | 2. Educated consumers 35% | 3. Research mindedness 19% | 4. Research capacity 35% | 5. Reflective practitioner Researchers 6% |
|---|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|---|
| Use research to identify EBI with SU | Critical appraisal of lit | Research proposal | Two linked modules Methods and dissertation | Two linked modules Research proposal/ethics |
| Or review lit. re practice issue | & Statement of relevance for practice | &/or ethical application, PI | Extended lit. review or 2ndry data analysis | Empirical research/ Dissertation |
| Links research to practice on placement | Linked to practice through topic | Operationalise topic Use of values | Quantitative methods or extended study | Research emerges from /located in practice |
| Q re search & CA skills | Fit with PCF and HCPC | SCIE/TCSW concepts | Develop understanding of statistics | Producers of research not just consumers |

Analysing the findings



- Most programmes included a distinct module;
- Use of teaching to deepen understanding of:
the process of research; search skills;
knowledge of literature; quantitative methods;
- More work needed in quantitative methods;
- Few HEIs included empirical research project.

Embedding research mindedness in social work ed.



- Distinct module contributes to skills development in use of research by students;
- Inclusion of empirical research – asking sensitive questions;
- Transferrable skills for social work;
- Social workers who are research active – contributing identifying topics, developing policy and practice;
- Growing the discipline.

Resources for teaching and learning



- ‘Research-mindedness in social work and social care’
<http://www.scie.org.uk/publications/researchmindedness/index.asp>
- (IRISS) Using Evidence toolkit <http://toolkit.iriss.org.uk>
- SWAPBox: <http://www.swapbox.ac.uk>
- The College of Social Work (2012) Research curriculum guide,
http://www.tcsw.org.uk/uploadedFiles/TheCollege/Media_centre/5thjulyCurriculum%20Guide_Research_proofed.pdf

SCIE home page

Resource home

- Introduction
- Are you research minded?
- Learning route
- Why be research minded?
- Research in social work and social care
- Making sense of research
- Finding resources
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- Useful organisations

Research mindedness

SCIE's Research mindedness learning resource has been produced to help students and practitioners of social care and social work make more effective and extensive use of research in their studies and in practice.



Introduction

Introduction to the Research mindedness resource.

[more >](#)



Why be research minded?

Exploring and defining research mindedness.

[more >](#)



Research in social work and social care

Exploring some of the areas that are tied strongly to social care research.

[more >](#)



Making sense of research



Finding resources

Helping you to conduct a review of the literature

What do you think?

Please send us your comments and suggestions. It will help us to continue to improve our work in the future.

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Social Policy and Social Work Subject Centre

Working together with educators, practice communities, and organisations to promote and enhance the student learning experience

Search Go

Themes

- Admissions
- Assessment
- Curriculum development
- Education for sustainable development
- Employer engagement
- HE in FE
- Equality and diversity
- Internationalisation
- Interprofessional education
- Linking research and teaching**
- Practice learning
- Service User and Carer involvement
- Technology-enhanced learning

Linking research and teaching resources

On this page, you can find resources related to linking research and teaching, which can be highly beneficial to the student.

- [Projects](#)
- [Publications](#)
- [Case studies](#)
- [Book reviews](#)
- [Digital learning resources](#)
- [External resources](#)

Projects

[Researcher Development Initiative \(RDI\) Round 3](#) 'Increasing the confidence and competence of social work researchers II' - A JUC-SWEC led project. SWAP also supported JUC-SWEC's 'Building capacity in social work' RDI project Round 2, funded by the ESRC, which held several events supporting the training and development of social work researchers. See [SWAP's past events page](#) for details of these events.

Publications

[Supporting New Academic Staff \(SNAS\)](#) - Between 2005 and 2007 Professor Alan Jenkins and Professor Mick Healey directed the SNAS project, which was funded by the Higher Education Academy. As part of this project they worked with Subject Centres to examine the particular nature of teaching-research relations in disciplinary communities. Their [report on 'Linking Teaching and Research in Disciplines and Departments'](#) is available from the Academy website, as are other materials produced by Subject Centres as part of the project.

[Using social policy research in teaching \(PDF, 1.14MB\)](#) is an A4 booklet which was produced as part of SWAP's involvement with the Higher Education Academy's SNAS project (see above). The publication includes a report on an event for social policy academics, an introductory essay by David Gladstone and six case studies. Published October 2007.

The [Social Work Research Strategy in Higher Education 2006 - 2020 \(PDF, 110KB\)](#) and a [Summary of the Strategy \(PDF, 68KB\)](#) have been developed by a core group of senior academics on behalf of the [Joint Universities Council Social Work Education Committee](#)



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confidence through evidence

TOOLKIT

Introduction

Acquire

Assess

Adapt

Apply

Glossary

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Acquire

Definition: Finding the right evidence

Having a clearly defined idea of what you want to find out, developing a search question using key terms, an appropriate range of resources and a coherent search strategy will help you to find the right evidence.


Key Points:

- Formulate a clear idea of what you want to find out (your search question) and check that it is the right question.
- Take extra care in deciding your search terms; they greatly influence the results of your evidence seeking.
- Think carefully about the sources of evidence you decide to search and be able to explain your decisions.
- Make clear notes about your search strategy so that you or someone else can repeat the same search.

To open the links in this section in a new window, use your mouse to right-click on the link and choose the 'open link in a new window' option.

| Attachment | Size |
|---|-------|
| Acquire_full link list1.doc | 36 KB |

 1. What topic should you focus on?

 2. What do you need to find out?

Curriculum guide – Research and research-mindedness

Prof Roger Smith

Introduction and terminology

Social work practice relies fundamentally on the application of the best knowledge and understanding available to all aspects of intervention, in the interests of people who use services. It therefore requires qualified practitioners who are both aware of available research, and have the skills to assess, interpret and apply its insights effectively; that is, who are 'research-minded'. *Research-mindedness* is a term which is intended to capture a range of attributes comprising 'a critical understanding of the application to social work of research', demonstrated through awareness of the value of research, the ability to identify appropriate sources of evidence, an appreciation of the methods used to obtain research evidence, the ability to make sense of and interpret potentially complex and sometimes conflicting findings, and the capacity to apply research messages appropriately in specific practice settings.

Key curriculum issues

On one level, it must be clear that research permeates all aspects of the social work curriculum, given that it necessarily informs academic input across the spectrum. However, research-informed teaching is merely one aspect of the task. Alongside this, qualifying students will need to acquire a range of critical skills to enable them to make best use of messages from research; and, in turn, to develop their own capabilities to inquire into complex issues systematically and with a coherent purpose – skills that are also relevant to direct practice.

In a curriculum context where other academic inputs and the time dedicated to practice learning make significant demands of their own, the organisation and management of effective learning around the theme of

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