A Paradigmatic Map of Professional Education Research

Caroline Humphrey

Abstract

This article maps out research in professional education with reference to a threefold typology of paradigms, i.e. the positivist, interpretivist and critical paradigms. The rationale for such an endeavour is fourfold. First, it directs attention to the neglected territory of methodology which is essential for researcher reflexivity. Second, it shows that most research in social work education has been situated within the positivist or interpretivist paradigms, and the relative dearth of studies in the critical paradigm raises important questions about anti-oppressive practice in research. Third, a comparison of studies in different spheres of professional education indicates that research into social work education has often not been as rich or robust as research into medicine or teaching, and this deserves further reflection. Finally, there is a practical rationale—although this exercise casts doubt upon our current capacity to develop evidence-based educational reforms, it should also signpost fruitful avenues for future research.

Introduction

My starting point is that methodology has been neglected in social work education research. Methodology concerns our general approach to a field of study which is informed by philosophical assumptions about the nature of people and processes in the field (their being), the nature of ourselves as scholars (our knowing) and the connections between these (our values around why we are studying this field). These assumptions shape our role in the field and relationships to participants as well as methods of data collection and analysis (McLaughlin, 2007 McLaughlin, H. 2007. *Understanding Social Work Research*, London: Sage.). Most researchers in social work education conflate methodology and methods by confining their discussion of methodology to specific research tools (e.g. Vitali, 2010 Vitali, S. 2010. "Can we measure and track the acquisition of competency on a professional social work degree?". In *The Outcomes of Social Work Education: Developing Evaluation Tools*, Edited by: Burgess, H. and Carpenter, J. Higher Education Academy Subject Centre for Social Work and Social Policy, University of Southampton.), and even those who seek to explain their methodology devote far more attention to methods than methodology and disregard the philosophical foundations of methodology (e.g. Evaluation of the Social Work Degree in England Team, 2008a Evaluation of the Social Work Degree in England Team (ESWDET) (2008a) Evaluation of the New Social Work Degree Qualification in England. Volume 1: Findings [online]. Available at: http://www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/groups/dh_digitalassets/@dh/@en/documents/digitalasset/dh_086077.pdf , accessed 9 October 2009, 2008b Evaluation of the Social Work Degree in England Team (ESWDET) (2008b) Evaluation of the New Social Work Degree Qualification in England. Volume 2: Technical Appendix [online]. Available at: http://www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/groups/dh_digitalassets/@dh/@en/documents/digitalasset/dh_086078.pdf , accessed 2 January 2010). A notable exception is provided by Jenny Secker (1993 Secker, J. 1993. *From Theory to Practice in Social Work. The Development of Social Work Students' Practice*, Aldershot: Avebury.) who decided to switch methodologies when undertaking research into students' integration of theory and practice. She had applied for funding to undertake a study in the positivist tradition foregrounding quantitative methods, but subsequently decided that an interpretivist approach foregrounding qualitative methods was more appropriate to an arena characterised by complexity and change.

There are two main causes for this neglect of methodology. First, a basic understanding of the philosophy of science is crucial to methodology, since this explicitly addresses the assumptions around being, knowing and valuing which are implicitly embedded in the practice of science, but social work researchers

are less likely to be familiar with this discipline than their social science counterparts. Second, the evidence-based practice movement in social care has prioritised pragmatic rather than philosophical considerations, which again channels thinking into concrete matters around which tools should be used to collect and analyse data in relation to any given topic (Sheldon, 2000 Sheldon, B. 2000. *Evidence-Based Social Care: A Study of Prospects and Problems*, Lyme Regis: Russell House.). Unfortunately, pragmatism can make us more vulnerable to commonsensical and atheoretical thinking which militates against critical reflexivity in research (Scott and Usher, 2000 Scott, D. and Usher, R. 2000. *Researching Education. Data, Methods and Theory in Educational Enquiry*, London: Continuum.). It is interesting to note that in a survey of social work research in Britain, theory and methodology provided the substantive focus for only 5% of studies (Shaw and Norton, 2008 Shaw, I. and Norton, M. 2008. Kinds and quality of social work research. *British Journal of Social Work*, 38(5): 953–970.).

I shall attempt to redress this lacuna by sketching out three major paradigms of research and providing examples of studies in professional education which broadly fit within each paradigm. The term 'paradigm' was coined by Thomas Kuhn (1962 Kuhn, T. 1962. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.) to refer to the constellation of philosophical assumptions which are shared by members of a given research community. The three paradigms to be explored here are the positivist, interpretivist and critical paradigms; each paradigm will be described by reference to its philosophical premises, or its answers to the following questions.

- Ontology is the realm of being (the ontic). How do we construe the nature of the things, beings and processes we are studying? How do we construe ourselves as human beings?
- Epistemology is the realm of knowing (the ēpistemē). Are different kinds of knowledges more appropriate for different kinds of things or beings? Is scientific knowledge a simple reflection of reality or a by-product of research methods and socially constructed frames?
- Axiology is the realm of values (the axiom). Why are we studying what we are studying? What do we hope to gain out of this endeavour for ourselves and our subject of study?

It should be stated at the outset that this threefold typology of paradigms has been deployed for the pragmatic purposes of locating and evaluating studies in professional education and enhancing critical reflexivity about the philosophical assumptions embedded within methodology. In other words, the paradigms are 'ideal types' in the Weberian sense, involving an inevitable simplification of complex concepts and practices (Craib, 1997 Craib, I. 1997. *Classical Social*

Theory. An Introduction to the Thought of Marx, Weber, Durkheim and Simmel, Oxford: Oxford University Press.). In recent years there has been a proliferation of research paradigms, but these may be considered as offshoots from the main paradigms, and readers should consult Lincoln and Guba (2000 Lincoln, Y. S. and Guba, E. G. 2000. "Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions and emerging confluences". In *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 2nd edn, Edited by: Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln, Y. S. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.) for a more detailed account of research paradigms.

The Positivist Paradigm

The positivist paradigm emerged from the work of early social scientists, such as Émile Durkheim, who sought to model the social sciences on the natural sciences (Craib, 1997 Craib, I. 1997. *Classical Social Theory. An Introduction to the Thought of Marx, Weber, Durkheim and Simmel*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.), although significant 'post-positivist' offshoots have subsequently blossomed (Phillips and Burbules, 2000 Phillips, D. C. and Burbules, N. C. 2000. *Postpositivism and Educational Research*, Lanham, MD & Boulder, CO: Rowman & Littlefield.). At the level of ontology, positivists adopt a naïve realism insofar as they assume that things are as they appear to be and exist independently of the perceiver. At the level of epistemology, this creates a schism between knower and known, along with an optimistic assumption that knowledge can be expressed in the universal language of statements and statistics and rendered transparent to all, generating consensus on 'the facts' (Lincoln and Guba, 2000 Lincoln, Y. S. and Guba, E. G. 2000. "Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions and emerging confluences". In *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 2nd edn, Edited by: Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln, Y. S. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.). At the level of axiology, there is a technical knowledge interest in uncovering factual truths for the sake of eradicating social problems, and positivist research is often funded by governments wedded to top-down social engineering (Hammersley, 1995 Hammersley, M. 1995. *The Politics of Social Research*, London: Sage. ; Soydan, 2010 Soydan, H. 2010. "Politics and values in social work research". In *The SAGE Handbook of Social Work Research*, Edited by: Shaw, I., Briar-Lawson, K., Orme, J. and Ruckdeschel, R. London: Sage.).

Positivist methodology is linked by an umbilical cord to a testable theory since projects are designed to test out hypothetical relationships between variables such as 'teaching input' and 'learning outcomes' as deduced from a prior theory such as the acquisition of skills and knowledge. The methods follow directly from this—researchers must either gather data on large representative samples in order to discern statistically significant correlations, or else undertake randomised controlled trials (RCTs) in order to confirm or disconfirm cause–

effect relationships (Judd *et al.*, 1991 Judd, C. M., Smith, E. R. and Kidder, L. H. 1991. *Research Methods in Social Relations*, 6th edn, Fort Worth, FL: Harcourt Brace.). RCTs involve the random assignment of subjects (e.g. students) to different treatment groups (e.g. different kinds of teaching) including a control or no-treatment group (i.e. no teaching) so that differences in learning outcomes can be attributed to differences in teaching input. The virtues of positivist research reside in the promise of securing objective knowledge, i.e. the clarity of research processes enables studies to be replicated by others; the use of representative samples means that findings can be generalised to wider populations; and only RCTs can prove causal relationships. However, there are recurrent predicaments in understanding and utilising statistical data in the social world (Porter, 1995 Porter, T. M. 1995. *Trust in Numbers. The Pursuit of Objectivity in Science and Public Life*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.), as well as ethical and practical constraints in applying RCTs within professional education (Carpenter, 2005 Carpenter, J. 2005. *Evaluating Outcomes in Social Work Education*, London: Scottish Institute for Excellence in Social Work Education, Dundee & Social Care Institute for Excellence.).

Positivist studies have predominated in medical education as a result of the hegemony of the natural sciences within the traditional medical curriculum and the willingness of medical educators to embark upon whole-cohort studies and RCTs. It has been routine practice in many medical schools to treat all data on candidates, students and graduates as research data, including data secured from admissions interviews and assessments. This has generated a robust database showing that the highest academic achievers on entry often make the worst clinicians (McManus, 1997 McManus, C. 1997. "From selection to qualification: how and why medical students change". In *Choosing Tomorrow's Doctors*, Edited by: Allen, I., Brown, P. and Hughes, P. London: Policy Studies Institute.), as well as longitudinal studies of the careers of entire cohorts of (ex) medical students (Allen, 1994 Allen, I. 1994. *Doctors and Their Careers. A New Generation*, London: Policy Studies Institute.). Medical schools also undertake RCTs so that some students may be given additional training which is denied to a control group of students on the same programme (e.g. Celebi *et al.*, 2009 Celebi, N., Weyrich, P., Reissen, R., Kirchoff, K. and Lammerding-Köppel, M. 2009. Problem-based training for medical students reduces common prescription errors: a randomised controlled trial. *Medical Education*, 43(10): 1010–1018.).

Studies in the positivist paradigm have emerged in social work education in recent years as a result of the interest in correlating student profiles and pedagogic processes with outcomes (Carpenter, 2005 Carpenter, J. 2005. *Evaluating Outcomes in Social Work Education*, London: Scottish Institute for Excellence in Social Work Education, Dundee & Social Care Institute for

Excellence.). We now have a longitudinal study correlating admissions data with student performances on placement in Australia (Ryan *et al.*, 2006 Ryan, M., McCormack, J. and Cleak, H. 2006. Student performance in field education placements: the findings of a 6-year Australian study of admissions data. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 42(1): 67–84.) as well as a few quasi-experimental studies in Europe and the US where students on different programmes were exposed to different kinds of empathy and ethics training, so that differences in learning outcomes could be attributed to differences in teaching (Nerdrum, 1997 Nerdrum, P. 1997. Maintenance of the effect of training in communication skills: a controlled follow-up study of level of communicated empathy. *British Journal of Social Work*, 27(5): 705–722. ; Sanders and Hoffman, 2010 Sanders, S. and Hoffman, K. 2010. Ethics education in social work: comparing outcomes of graduate social work students. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 46(1): 7–22.). Such quasi-experimental designs capitalise upon naturalistic variations between programmes without courting the dangers of a control group in a mandatory curriculum. Most social and educational researchers who specialise in quantitative methods now identify as 'post-positivist' insofar as they are cognisant of some of the difficulties in adopting a pure positivist standpoint, and they are willing to adapt or augment its methods. Nevertheless, they remain in the positivist tradition insofar as their quest is for objective generalisable knowledge (cf. Lincoln and Guba, 2000 Lincoln, Y. S. and Guba, E. G. 2000. "Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions and emerging confluences". In *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 2nd edn, Edited by: Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln, Y. S. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. ; Phillips and Burbules, 2000 Phillips, D. C. and Burbules, N. C. 2000. *Postpositivism and Educational Research*, Lanham, MD & Boulder, CO: Rowman & Littlefield.).

The Evaluation of the Social Work Degree in England Team (ESWDET) furnishes one of the best examples of a post-positivist study in the UK (ESWDET, 2008a Evaluation of the Social Work Degree in England Team (ESWDET) (2008a) Evaluation of the New Social Work Degree Qualification in England. Volume 1: Findings [online]. Available at: http://www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/groups/dh_digitalassets/@dh/@en/documents/digitalasset/dh_086077.pdf , accessed 9 October 2009, 2008b Evaluation of the Social Work Degree in England Team (ESWDET) (2008b) Evaluation of the New Social Work Degree Qualification in England. Volume 2: Technical Appendix [online]. Available at: http://www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/groups/dh_digitalassets/@dh/@en/documents/digitalasset/dh_086078.pdf , accessed 2 January 2010). The team collated the official data on student profiles and progression in relation to over 12,500 students who had enrolled on the new degree programmes in England with a view to ascertaining statistically significant correlations between profiles

and progression rates. They also invited all students to respond to online surveys in an important augmentation to traditional positivist methods, although only 25% of students responded, which raises questions as to whether their experiences and perspectives were shared by the 75% of non-respondents. In addition, they administered hypothetical case study vignettes to students in selected sites at the beginning and end of their programmes, and developed a coding frame to analyse responses objectively, with a view to ascertaining competence to practise.

Significant findings emerged, but the practicalities around making sense of and making use of the data are problematic. For example, the team demonstrated that students from minority groups take longer to complete programmes and are more likely to withdraw from programmes than other students, but no supplementary data around cases or contexts are supplied, and it is probable that only qualitative research with specific groups of disadvantaged students in specific sites will suffice to ground practical reforms (e.g. Bartoli *et al.*, 2008 Bartoli, A., Kennedy, S. and Tedam, P. 2008. Practice learning: who is failing to adjust? Black African students' experience of practice learning in the social work setting. *Journal of Practice Teaching and Learning*, 8(2): 75–90.). Likewise, the vignettes suggested that the capacity for reflection and analysis was under-developed in over two-thirds of final-year students, but this cannot assist educators in the pedagogic task of developing critical reflection which requires an alternative design (e.g. Chow *et al.*, 2011 Chow, A. Y. M., Lam, D. O. B., Leung, G. S. M., Wong, D. F. K. and Chan, B. F. P. 2011. Promoting reflexivity among social work students: the development and evaluation of a programme. *Social Work Education*, 30(2): 141–156.). Indeed, there may not even be a close correspondence between thinking about vignettes and working with people, so the vignettes test the acquisition of attitudes and understandings rather than practical skills in the field, as subsequently made clear by the team (MacIntyre *et al.*, 2011 MacIntyre, G., Green Lister, P., Orme, J., Crisp, B. E., Manthorpe, J., Hussein, S., Moriarty, J., Stevens, M. and Sharpe, E. 2011. Using vignettes to evaluate the outcomes of student learning: data from the evaluation of the new social work degree in England. *Social Work Education*, 30(2): 207–222.). So, on closer inspection, post-positivist studies may lack some of the rigour of positivism as well as the richness of interpretivism.

The pursuit of excellence in positivist research presupposes a radical shift in our own cognitions, competencies and cultures. At the level of cognition, the stumbling block revolves around the ethics of educational research. It has been assumed that students should retain choice and control over their participation and that experiments are likely to prejudice the progress of at least one group of students (Carpenter, 2005 Carpenter, J. 2005. *Evaluating Outcomes in Social Work Education*, London: Scottish Institute for Excellence in Social Work

Education, Dundee & Social Care Institute for Excellence.). These assumptions can be challenged—for example, Olle ten Cate (2009 ten Cate, O. 2009. Why the ethics of medical education research differs from that of medical research. *Medical Education*, 43(7): 608–610.) argues that ethical principles need to be modified in medical education research where students are not a traditional vulnerable group and where the benefits for future generations of students are almost certain to outweigh the risks to any current cohort. At the level of competence, most social work educators are simply not trained in experimental research (or even statistical data analysis); and at the level of culture, educational research remains an optional extra for staff as well as students, in contrast to its embeddedness within schools of medicine.

Another recent English study by Sharon Vitali (2010 Vitali, S. 2010. "Can we measure and track the acquisition of competency on a professional social work degree?". In *The Outcomes of Social Work Education: Developing Evaluation Tools*, Edited by: Burgess, H. and Carpenter, J. Higher Education Academy Subject Centre for Social Work and Social Policy, University of Southampton.) may signal a cultural shift here. She tracked the acquisition of competence among a whole cohort of students over a three-year degree programme and construed the research as integral to the standard evaluation apparatus in relation to programmes and progression, thereby generating a positive requirement upon students and staff to participate. This is a rich and robust multi-method and multi-perspectival study, drawing upon specific tools to evaluate the acquisition of specific competencies over time, as well as interviews with students at different stages of the programme conducted by practice educators, service users and academic tutors, and a close reading of academic assignments and practice portfolios. The virtues and vices of erasing the boundary between routine evaluations of students' progress and innovative in-depth research may be a controversial topic, but one which is ripe for debate.

The Interpretivist Paradigm

The interpretivist paradigm has its origins in Max Weber's verstehende sociology, i.e. understanding involving empathy as well as objectivity (Craib, 1997 Craib, I. 1997. *Classical Social Theory. An Introduction to the Thought of Marx, Weber, Durkheim and Simmel*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.). It has spawned myriad offshoots ranging from phenomenology (Bentz and Shapiro, 1998 Bentz, V. M. and Shapiro, J. J. 1998. *Mindful Inquiry in Social Research*, California: Sage.) to post-structuralism (Peters and Burbules, 2004 Peters, M. A. and Burbules, N. C. 2004. *Poststructuralism and Educational Research*, Lanham, MD & Boulder, CO: Rowman & Littlefield.). The premises of all forms of interpretivism are diametrically opposed to those of positivism. Whilst positivists assumed that human beings and social worlds could be studied like

anything else (i.e. from animals to atoms), interpretivists insisted that there was an ontological hiatus between human beings and their social worlds and other kinds of beings, things and processes in the natural world. Interpretivists start from the premise that our capacity for consciousness in relation to ourselves, others and the world is the distinguishing mark of our humanity, so we conduct our affairs in accordance with our motives, meanings, life-goals and self-concepts, and we co-create cultures with shared patterns of feeling, thinking, believing and doing. This reconfigures our epistemological orientation since the only way of understanding the social world is to draw from the well of our own humanity in order to make sense of the other person or community from the inside out. Social constructionism is the watchword of this epistemology, since we are all in the business of (re)constructing our concepts and world-views, whether we are lay actors or scholars, and there can be as many different views of the world as there are people viewing it (Lincoln and Guba, 2000 Lincoln, Y. S. and Guba, E. G. 2000. "Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions and emerging confluences". In *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 2nd edn, Edited by: Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln, Y. S. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.). In terms of axiology, there is a practical knowledge interest in making sense of the social world from a variety of perspectives rather than proclaiming universal 'truths' (Soydan, 2010 Soydan, H. 2010. "Politics and values in social work research". In *The SAGE Handbook of Social Work Research*, Edited by: Shaw, I., Briar-Lawson, K., Orme, J. and Ruckdeschel, R. London: Sage.). Whilst many adherents of the interpretivist paradigm believe that an account grounded in polyvocality (the multiplicity of voices and views in any given social world) will generate a more holistic truth about a specific social reality, they dispute the existence of any ultimate 'Truth' or 'Reality'.

These philosophical premises have implications for methods and methodology. The most common research method is the face-to-face interview. This is guided by a set of topics or themes chosen by the researcher but conveyed in the manner of open-ended questioning in order to allow other topics or themes to emerge from the conversation. Here, researchers seek to draw upon their own empathy, experience, intuition and imagination to develop an insider understanding of the life-story of the other (Silverman, 1993 Silverman, D. 1993. *Interpreting Qualitative Data. Methods for Analysing Talk, Text and Interaction*, London: Sage.). It is thus quite distinct from a survey or structured interview in the positivist tradition where the same questions must be presented in the same order to all respondents, often with fixed categories of answers, in order to safeguard objectivity. The broader methodology is typically informed by participant observation, and it becomes ethnography when the researcher inhabits the life-world under investigation. Ethnography within our own communities requires the cultivation of anthropological estrangement in order to offset the familiarity which predisposes us towards commonsensical

understandings, whilst ethnography in unfamiliar cultures requires that we become a bona fide member of the other culture in order to appreciate their way of life (Maso, 2001 Maso, I. 2001. "Phenomenology and ethnography". In *Handbook of Ethnography*, Edited by: Atkinson, P., Coffey, A., Delamont, S., Lofland, J. and Lofland, L. London: Sage.). Either way, ethnographic research lends itself to the development of grounded theory, i.e. theory grounded upon the world as experienced and expressed by lay people, albeit refined by academic scholars (Charmaz and Mitchell, 2001 Charmaz, K. and Mitchell, R. G. 2001. "Grounded theory in ethnography". In *Handbook of Ethnography*, Edited by: Atkinson, P., Coffey, A., Delamont, S., Lofland, J. and Lofland, L. London: Sage.). The virtues of the interpretivist paradigm are that it is rooted in humanism and associated with high levels of internal validity (i.e. it uncovers what it sets out to uncover with detailed examples) as well as researcher reflexivity (i.e. researchers recognise the socially constructed nature of their own accounts). Nevertheless, qualitative research can be idiosyncratic in ways which detract from its scientific credibility—reliability is always compromised since it is unlikely that anyone else could replicate an ethnographic enquiry at a later date, and even a different researcher working at the same time in the same site may uncover different phenomena.

Interpretivist studies in professional education can be broadly categorised along an 'insider–outsider' continuum. 'Outsider' research is most highly developed in medicine which has attracted attention from sociologists and anthropologists whose ethnographic accounts of the personal and professional lives of medical students in the US and the UK provide colourful and critical insights into the 'hidden' as well as 'official' curriculum and practicum (e.g. Becker *et al.*, 1961 Becker, H. S., Geer, B., Hughes, E. C. and Strauss, A. L. 1961. *Boys in White. Student Cultures in Medical School*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. ; Sinclair, 1997 Sinclair, S. 1997. *Making Doctors. An Institutional Apprenticeship*, Oxford: Berg.). 'Insider' research refers to the studies conducted by educators in the service of enhancing pedagogy in their own profession. It is highly developed in teaching where it tends to assume the form of case studies of individual student teachers (e.g. Calderhead and Shorrock, 1997 Calderhead, J. and Shorrock, S. B. 1997. *Understanding Teacher Education. Case Studies in the Professional Development of Beginning Teachers*, London: Falmer Press.).

The most innovative work in professional education, however, has been spawned by hybrid researchers who are 'insiders' in respect of education but 'outsiders' in respect of the profession(s) under investigation. The most famous example is Donald Schön (1987 Schön, D. A. 1987. *Educating the Reflective Practitioner. Towards a New Design for Teaching and Learning in the Professions*, San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.), an educator in the US whose

observations of student doctors, psychotherapists and performance artists revolutionised our understandings of professional pedagogy by proposing that learning in any practicum abides by an artistic model of role-modelling, improvising and innovating *in situ* rather than a scientific model of applying theories acquired in the classroom. More recently, a team of educational researchers in England explored the aporetic nature of assessing competence in student nurses. They conducted over 200 observations of practice learning and practice assessment sessions and over 500 interviews with nursing students and their educators. They formulated a phenomenology of practice based upon the different perspectives available to students as they mature into professionals and argued that assessment should be aligned to this. The 'here-and-now' perspective of imitating others in order to do a task correctly yields to an 'alternative now' perspective when the student can harness intuition and imagination to do something differently with a difficult patient or situation, and this becomes the springboard for a 'potential future' perspective when the student envisages new practices or services which would benefit patients in that setting (Phillips *et al.*, 2000 Phillips, T., Schostack, J. and Tyler, J. 2000. *Practice and Assessment in Nursing and Midwifery: Doing It for Real*, London: English National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting.).

The interpretivist paradigm is very popular in social work where insider researchers typically undertake studies which are sound in quality but small in scale. For example, there are accounts of students' motivations in entering the profession (e.g. Christie and Weeks, 1998 Christie, A. and Weeks, J. 1998. Life experience: a neglected form of knowledge in social work education and practice. *Practice*, 10(1): 55–68.); their struggles with the teaching of anti-oppressive practice in academic settings (e.g. Chand *et al.*, 2002 Chand, A., Clare, J. and Dolton, R. 2002. Teaching anti-oppressive practice on a diploma in social work course: lecturers' experiences, students' responses and ways forward. *Social Work Education*, 21(1): 7–22.); and their experiencing of emotional turbulence in fieldwork settings (e.g. Barlow and Hall, 2007 Barlow, C. and Hall, B. L. 2007. What about feelings? A study of emotion and tension in social work field education. *Social Work Education*, 26(4): 399–413.). In-depth longitudinal projects which are capable of generating new theoretical schema are rare commodities. In the UK the best examples are Derek Gardiner's (1989 Gardiner, D. 1989. *The Anatomy of Supervision. Developing Learning and Professional Competence for Social Work Students*, Buckingham: Open University Press.) analysis of the learning and teaching styles and stages of students and their supervisors, and Jenny Secker's (1993 Secker, J. 1993. *From Theory to Practice in Social Work. The Development of Social Work Students' Practice*, Aldershot: Avebury.) account of students' acquisition and application of theories. Elsewhere the best example is the Australian study by Jan Fook, Martin Ryan and Linette Hawkins (2000 Fook, J., Ryan, M. and Hawkins, L.

2000. *Professional Expertise. Practice, Theory and Education for Working in Uncertainty*, London: Whiting and Birch.). Their five-year project involved interviewing a whole cohort of 30 students on nine occasions during and after their programme of training. The initial interview focused upon students' biographies, whilst subsequent interviews combined case study vignettes supplied by the researchers with accounts of critical incidents in the curriculum and practicum chosen by the students themselves. The aim was to explore the development of competence, and to this end it was supplemented by interviews with 30 expert practitioners, which enabled them to identify the core ingredients of professional expertise, notably those of creativity, reflexivity and contextuality which mediate the application of technical skills and knowledges.

In an international literature review, Marietta Barretti (2004 Barretti, M. 2004. What do we know about the professional socialisation of our students?. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 40(2): 255–283.) highlighted the paucity of research into professional socialisation in social work, pointing out that our focus has been on professional education in the official curriculum and practicum rather than professional socialisation in the hidden curriculum and practicum which may be just as significant in shaping the trajectories of our students. Yet even at the level of professional education itself, we have not yet generated much grounded theory specific to social work—the most common strategy is to apply and adapt theoretical schema which have been developed for pedagogy and practice elsewhere, such as teaching (e.g. Gardiner, 1989 Gardiner, D. 1989. *The Anatomy of Supervision. Developing Learning and Professional Competence for Social Work Students*, Buckingham: Open University Press.) or nursing (e.g. Fook *et al.*, 2000 Fook, J., Ryan, M. and Hawkins, L. 2000. *Professional Expertise. Practice, Theory and Education for Working in Uncertainty*, London: Whiting and Birch.). Strangely, social work seems to suffer both insularity and dependency in relation to other professions. The low status of social work makes it less attractive to outsider or hybrid researchers, leaving research to insiders whose primary task as educators leaves limited surplus capacity for research (Green, 2006 Green, L. C. 2006. Pariah profession, debased discipline? An analysis of social work's low academic status and the possibilities for change. *Social Work Education*, 25(3): 245–264.), a situation which is compounded by the relative paucity of funding for social work research (Marsh and Fisher, 2005). Under these conditions both anthropological estrangement and grounded theory will elude us, making us more dependent upon theory and research in other spheres of professional education. Notwithstanding our credentials for qualitative research—which is highly congruent with the ethos and practice skills of social work—we need more ethnographic and theoretical studies within the interpretivist paradigm.

The Critical Paradigm

The critical paradigm was inspired by the work of Karl Marx and the Frankfurt School in relation to the predicaments posed by class and culture, respectively (Craib, 1997 Craib, I. 1997. *Classical Social Theory. An Introduction to the Thought of Marx, Weber, Durkheim and Simmel*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.). It has spawned a number of schools of thought associated with feminist, anti-racist and disability rights scholars, but its overarching philosophy is summarised in the critical realism of Roy Bhaskar (Collier, 1994 Collier, A. 1994. *Critical Realism. An Introduction to Roy Bhaskar's Philosophy*, London: Verso.). The distinction between surface and depth realities is crucial to its ontology and this gives rise to the postulates of transphenomenality (i.e. that depth realities go beyond surface appearances) and counter-phenomenality (i.e. that depth realities may even contradict surface appearances). Physics shows that the pulsating reality of the subatomic realm is quite different to our everyday experiences of the solidity of things; experimental psychology confirms the psychoanalytic postulate of a subconscious realm and a censorship mechanism which defends us from our own depths; and critical theory unveils the deep structures of society which conspire to perpetuate exploitation and oppression in spite of surface measures designed to promote equal opportunities. Critical scholars thus disagree with the positivist premise that things are as they appear to be, and the interpretivist premise that social reality ultimately revolves around a multiplicity of perspectives, but this critical ontology creates epistemological, methodological and axiological dilemmas.

On the epistemological front, critical scholars typically assume that they and/or the oppressed groups whom they represent have access to a truth which is superior to that of other scholars and/or other groups of lay actors, against whom the charge of 'false or flawed consciousness' may be levelled. Truth, however, cannot be read off from social positions or perspectives, and research can be skewed by scholars' prior commitments to substantive social criticism (Hammersley, 1995 Hammersley, M. 1995. *The Politics of Social Research*, London: Sage.). On the methodological front, critical scholars seek to treat surface appearances as potentially symptomatic of deeper realities (Collier, 1994 Collier, A. 1994. *Critical Realism. An Introduction to Roy Bhaskar's Philosophy*, London: Verso.). This is a welcome contribution to methodology, since there is no such thing as a transparent set of data, whether in the guise of statistics or interview transcripts. However, the quest to dig for deeper realities or alternative interpretations is also hazardous—there is no way of adjudicating upon when we have reached the deepest reality, and the deeper we journey, the more we will journey alone, having overturned all other 'superficial' realities en route. On the axiological front, truth is to be uncovered for the sake of promoting social justice, and the quest to educate and empower oppressed peoples is at the heart of this emancipatory knowledge interest (Soydan, 2010 Soydan, H. 2010. "Politics and values in social work research". In *The SAGE*

Handbook of Social Work Research, Edited by: Shaw, I., Briar-Lawson, K., Orme, J. and Ruckdeschel, R. London: Sage.); but critical scholars have sometimes educated the people in truths not recognised by those people or imposed their own political ends upon the people (Fay, 1987 Fay, B. 1987. *Critical Social Science: Liberation and its Limits*, Oxford: Polity Press.). Fortunately, an offshoot of the critical paradigm has developed which sidesteps these controversies. Participatory action research involves academics engaging a variety of local stakeholders (e.g. politicians, professionals and citizens) as co-inquirers in a research project. This means that changes in consciousness, cultures and practices emerge from the grassroots in a dialogic manner, informed by research evidence about the everyday experiences of all groups of local people as gathered and analysed by representatives of those groups (Reason and Bradbury, 2001 P., Reason and H., Bradbury, eds. 2001. *Handbook of Action Research. Participative Inquiry and Practice*, London: Sage.).

The critical paradigm has been most influential in schools of education where student teachers and practitioner-researchers have engaged in action research in schools and colleges, informed by the norms and values of critical pedagogy and critical social science (Noffke and Somekh, 2009 S., Noffke and B., Somekh, eds. 2009. *The SAGE Handbook of Educational Action Research*, London: Sage.). In contrast, it has been dubbed the 'missing paradigm' in medical education research, where the voices of students and service users are noticeable by their absence (Bunniss and Kelly, 2010 Bunniss, S. and Kelly, D. R. 2010. Research paradigms in medical education research. *Medical Education*, 44(4): 358–366.). Social work occupies a liminal space here. On the one hand, there is a strong policy lead for the involvement of service users and carers as co-educators and co-researchers in social work education (Levin, 2004 Levin, E. 2004. *Involving Service Users and Carers in Social Work Education*, London: Social Care Institute for Excellence.), resulting in critical and creative contributions to the curriculum and practicum (e.g. Advocacy in Action and Sure Search Collective, 2006 Advocacy in Action and Sure Search Collective (eds). 2006. Service Users and Carers in Social Work Education. *Social Work Education*, 25(4) (Special Issue)). On the other hand, students have been disregarded as potential co-educators and co-researchers, in spite of their life-experience as service users and carers (Christie and Weeks, 1998 Christie, A. and Weeks, J. 1998. Life experience: a neglected form of knowledge in social work education and practice. *Practice*, 10(1): 55–68.) and their training in research-informed practice. The UK Code of Ethics for Social Work and Social Care Research emphasises the need to work in partnership with disempowered groups and to promote emancipatory research (Joint Universities Council Social Work Education Committee, 2002 Joint Universities Council Social Work Education Committee (2002) Code of Ethics for Social Work and Social Care Research [online]. Available at: http://juc.ac.uk/swec-res-code.aspx , accessed

30 March 2011). It is not clear whether or to what extent students would constitute a disempowered group (cf. ten Cate, 2009 ten Cate, O. 2009. Why the ethics of medical education research differs from that of medical research. *Medical Education*, 43(7): 608–610.), although social work researchers have endorsed the notion of emancipatory education for students on the grounds that they are adult learners who need to be liberated from conformity-based competence (Fook *et al.*, 2000 Fook, J., Ryan, M. and Hawkins, L. 2000. *Professional Expertise. Practice, Theory and Education for Working in Uncertainty*, London: Whiting and Birch.). Unfortunately, a gulf may have opened up between the rhetoric and reality of anti-oppressive practice in the territory of social work education research, at least as far as students are concerned.

According to Roni Strier (2007 Strier, R. 2007. Anti-oppressive research in social work: a preliminary definition. *British Journal of Social Work*, 37(5): 857–871.), the main ingredients of anti-oppressive research in social work include the active participation of subjects, particularly those in subordinate positions; egalitarian researcher–participant relations; the foregrounding of qualitative methodologies which solicit hitherto silenced voices; the recognition that those who have supplied the raw data for the research in the form of their own life-stories have a legitimate claim to property ownership in respect of the research products; and the generation of actionable knowledge which can be converted into social change. A perusal of the literature, however, suggests that students have typically been treated as objects rather than subjects of educational research, and suppliers of data rather than stakeholders in projects or even consumers of products. Linette Hawkins (1996 Hawkins, L. 1996. "Participation of "the researched": tensions between different paradigms". In *The Reflective Researcher. Social Workers' Theories of Practice Research*, Edited by: Fook, J. St Leonards, New South Wales: Allen and Unwin.) reported that she had to suspend her own norms and values around participatory research during the Australian study, and that she had to persuade her colleagues to provide students with feedback on the findings. In the recent UK initiative to evaluate outcomes in social work education, most researchers set up a steering committee comprised of educators, service users and carers, and students were only mentioned as committee members in one paper written by service users (Fox and Ockwell, 2010 Fox, J. and Ockwell, C. 2010. "Service user and carer involvement in the OSWE Project in England: the experiences of two service user researchers". In *The Outcomes of Social Work Education: Developing Evaluation Tools*, Edited by: Burgess, H. and Carpenter, J. Higher Education Academy Subject Centre for Social Work and Social Policy, University of Southampton.).

Social work education research has borrowed heavily from students' life-stories, their experiences in the curriculum and practicum and their written products in the form of questionnaires, portfolios and academic assignments, but most of it is relatively inaccessible to students since it is written up in the form of articles, monographs and reports rather than student-friendly textbooks. Conversely, most textbooks for students are not informed by research with students, and typically provide the academic version of what should go on in social work education, interspersed with hypothetical case examples (e.g. Doel and Shardlow, 2005 Doel, M. and Shardlow, S. M. 2005. *Modern Social Work Practice. Teaching and Learning in Practice Settings*, Aldershot: Ashgate.). In other words, there are missing links between educational research about students' development and the education and empowerment of students themselves. The author has recently completed an ethnographic study of social work education which engaged students throughout the project, and which resulted in a textbook for students grounded upon their real-life experiences of the official and hidden curriculum and practicum (Humphrey, 2011). But this does not go far enough. To fulfil the canons of anti-oppressive research, students would have to become co-designers of a project, co-inquirers in the process and co-producers of the texts, alongside educators, service users and carers, and educational research would become action research undergirding reforms to the curriculum and practicum. So, in spite of our adherence to an anti-oppressive ethos, we need to include students as co-inquirers if we are to realise the potential of the critical paradigm.

Conclusion

This article has furnished a map of research into professional education with reference to three paradigms. Borrowing from the schema set out by Shaw and Norton (2008 Shaw, I. and Norton, M. 2008. Kinds and quality of social work research. *British Journal of Social Work*, 38(5): 953–970.), the general argument is that the neglect of methodology undermines the epistemic value of social work education research, and that the limitations of empirical studies to date impact upon its social and technical value. This is particularly problematic in countries such as England where the curriculum and practicum are undergoing a raft of reforms spearheaded by policy-makers committed to evidence-based practice.

Three types of recommendations can be presented in order of priority. The most urgent need is to ensure that social work researchers are conversant with methodology as well as methods, which requires specialist research training beyond the basic understanding of research methods built into the current and forthcoming social work curriculum in England. If students and service users are to be co-inquirers in a project, it is important that academic researchers

explain their broader philosophical position to their co-inquirers, which might in itself engender an interesting debate.

The second recommendation is that we develop more robust studies within each paradigm, maximising the best of each world or the virtues of each paradigm. We need robust studies in the positivist paradigm to secure reliable and representative data, preferably in relation to whole cohorts. We need rich studies in the interpretivist paradigm to generate grounded theory around professional education and socialisation, and outside or hybrid researchers would be helpful here. We need studies in the critical paradigm to ensure that students (as well as service users, carers and educators) are full stakeholders in projects who can co-create as well as consume its products. All of these studies should be accorded equal value on an *a priori* basis, and in due course a literature review comparing the findings and methods of different studies could be illuminating.

The third recommendation is that we consider cross-fertilising the premises and practices associated with different paradigms within any given research team or site. Such an endeavour can make for dissonance as well as convergence at a number of levels insofar as different stakeholders holding different datasets or philosophical premises are likely to collide sooner or later, but this may be the necessary prerequisite of capturing the complexity of our social world (Greene *et al.*, 2010 Greene, J. C., Sommerfeld, P. and Haight, W. L. 2010. "Mixing methods in social work research". In *The SAGE Handbook of Social Work Research*, Edited by: Shaw, I., Briar-Lawson, K., Orme, J. and Ruckdeschel, R. London: Sage.). In other words, if we delve into the hidden curriculum and practicum, we should not expect them to correspond neatly to their official counterparts, and if we invite students and outsiders to become co-inquirers, then our processes and products will become multi-faceted and multi-layered. Ultimately, we may find ourselves co-constructing a new paradigm for researching professional education in a transdisciplinary and transprofessional manner (cf. McLaughlin, 2007 McLaughlin, H. 2007. *Understanding Social Work Research*, London: Sage.).

This cross-fertilisation of paradigms should be distinguished from the mixed methods movement. Studies which draw upon a variety of methods have a valuable role to play in social and educational research, and contribute to the deconstruction of an often unhelpful dichotomy between qualitative and quantitative methods. However, there is no necessary link between pragmatically combining methods and critically reflecting upon methodology. Whilst some social researchers have embraced pragmatism as a *bone fide* philosophy offering an alternative paradigm which could enable them to transcend traditional paradigmatic controversies, many educational researchers

have used pragmatism to bypass philosophical issues in research, embracing instead an a-paradigmatic standpoint (cf. Scott and Usher, 2000 Scott, D. and Usher, R. 2000. *Researching Education. Data, Methods and Theory in Educational Enquiry*, London: Continuum. ; Gorard and Taylor, 2004 Gorard, S. and Taylor, C. 2004. *Combining Methods in Educational and Social Research*, Buckingham: Open University Press. ; Greene, 2007 Greene, J. C. 2007. *Mixed Methods in Social Inquiry*, San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.). To cross-fertilise paradigms requires that we pay conscious attention to the philosophical premises of paradigms which shape methodology beyond methods, and mixing methods outside of this crucible of philosophical reflexivity is more likely to perpetuate the neglect of methodology.

References

1. Advocacy in Action and Sure Search Collective (eds). 2006. Service Users and Carers in Social Work Education. Social Work Education, 25(4) (Special Issue)
2. Allen, I. 1994. Doctors and Their Careers. A New Generation, London: Policy Studies Institute.
3. Barlow, C. and Hall, B. L. 2007. What about feelings? A study of emotion and tension in social work field education. Social Work Education, 26(4): 399–413.
4. Barretti, M. 2004. What do we know about the professional socialisation of our students?. Journal of Social Work Education, 40(2): 255–283.
5. Bartoli, A., Kennedy, S. and Tedam, P. 2008. Practice learning: who is failing to adjust? Black African students' experience of practice learning in the social work setting. Journal of Practice Teaching and Learning, 8(2): 75–90.
6. Becker, H. S., Geer, B., Hughes, E. C. and Strauss, A. L. 1961. Boys in White. Student Cultures in Medical School, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
7. Bentz, V. M. and Shapiro, J. J. 1998. Mindful Inquiry in Social Research, California: Sage.
8. Bunniss, S. and Kelly, D. R. 2010. Research paradigms in medical education research. Medical Education, 44(4): 358–366.
9. Calderhead, J. and Shorrock, S. B. 1997. Understanding Teacher Education. Case Studies in the Professional Development of Beginning Teachers, London: Falmer Press.
10. Carpenter, J. 2005. Evaluating Outcomes in Social Work Education, London: Scottish Institute for Excellence in Social Work Education, Dundee & Social Care Institute for Excellence.
11. Celebi, N., Weyrich, P., Reissen, R., Kirchoff, K. and Lammerding-Köppel, M. 2009. Problem-based training for medical students reduces common prescription errors: a randomised controlled trial. Medical Education, 43(10): 1010–1018.
12. Chand, A., Clare, J. and Dolton, R. 2002. Teaching anti-oppressive practice on a diploma in social work course: lecturers' experiences, students' responses and ways forward. Social Work Education, 21(1): 7–22.

13. Charmaz, K. and Mitchell, R. G. 2001. "Grounded theory in ethnography". In Handbook of Ethnography, Edited by: Atkinson, P., Coffey, A., Delamont, S., Lofland, J. and Lofland, L. London: Sage.
14. Chow, A. Y. M., Lam, D. O. B., Leung, G. S. M., Wong, D. F. K. and Chan, B. F. P. 2011. Promoting reflexivity among social work students: the development and evaluation of a programme. Social Work Education, 30(2): 141–156.
15. Christie, A. and Weeks, J. 1998. Life experience: a neglected form of knowledge in social work education and practice. Practice, 10(1): 55–68.
16. Collier, A. 1994. Critical Realism. An Introduction to Roy Bhaskar's Philosophy, London: Verso.
17. Craib, I. 1997. Classical Social Theory. An Introduction to the Thought of Marx, Weber, Durkheim and Simmel, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
18. Doel, M. and Shardlow, S. M. 2005. Modern Social Work Practice. Teaching and Learning in Practice Settings, Aldershot: Ashgate.
19. Evaluation of the Social Work Degree in England Team (ESWDET) (2008a) Evaluation of the New Social Work Degree Qualification in England. Volume 1: Findings [online]. Available at: http://www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/groups/dh_digitalassets/@dh/@en/documents/digitalasset/dh_086077.pdf , accessed 9 October 2009
20. Evaluation of the Social Work Degree in England Team (ESWDET) (2008b) Evaluation of the New Social Work Degree Qualification in England. Volume 2: Technical Appendix [online]. Available at: http://www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/groups/dh_digitalassets/@dh/@en/documents/digitalasset/dh_086078.pdf , accessed 2 January 2010
21. Fay, B. 1987. Critical Social Science: Liberation and its Limits, Oxford: Polity Press.
22. Fook, J., Ryan, M. and Hawkins, L. 2000. Professional Expertise. Practice, Theory and Education for Working in Uncertainty, London: Whiting and Birch.
23. Fox, J. and Ockwell, C. 2010. "Service user and carer involvement in the OSWE Project in England: the experiences of two service user researchers". In The Outcomes of Social Work Education: Developing Evaluation Tools, Edited by: Burgess, H. and Carpenter, J. Higher Education Academy Subject Centre for Social Work and Social Policy, University of Southampton.
24. Gardiner, D. 1989. The Anatomy of Supervision. Developing Learning and Professional Competence for Social Work Students, Buckingham: Open University Press.

25. Gorard, S. and Taylor, C. 2004. Combining Methods in Educational and Social Research, Buckingham: Open University Press.
26. Green, L. C. 2006. Pariah profession, debased discipline? An analysis of social work's low academic status and the possibilities for change. Social Work Education, 25(3): 245–264.
27. Greene, J. C. 2007. Mixed Methods in Social Inquiry, San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
28. Greene, J. C., Sommerfeld, P. and Haight, W. L. 2010. "Mixing methods in social work research". In The SAGE Handbook of Social Work Research, Edited by: Shaw, I., Briar-Lawson, K., Orme, J. and Ruckdeschel, R. London: Sage.
29. Hammersley, M. 1995. The Politics of Social Research, London: Sage.
30. Hawkins, L. 1996. "Participation of "the researched": tensions between different paradigms". In The Reflective Researcher. Social Workers' Theories of Practice Research, Edited by: Fook, J. St Leonards, New South Wales: Allen and Unwin.
31. Humphrey, C. 2011. Becoming a Social Worker. A Guide for Students, London: Sage.
32. Joint Universities Council Social Work Education Committee (2002) Code of Ethics for Social Work and Social Care Research [online]. Available at: http://juc.ac.uk/swec-res-code.aspx , accessed 30 March 2011
33. Judd, C. M., Smith, E. R. and Kidder, L. H. 1991. Research Methods in Social Relations, 6th edn, Fort Worth, FL: Harcourt Brace.
34. Kuhn, T. 1962. The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
35. Levin, E. 2004. Involving Service Users and Carers in Social Work Education, London: Social Care Institute for Excellence.
36. Lincoln, Y. S. and Guba, E. G. 2000. "Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions and emerging confluences". In Handbook of Qualitative Research, 2nd edn, Edited by: Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln, Y. S. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
37. MacIntyre, G., Green Lister, P., Orme, J., Crisp, B. E., Manthorpe, J., Hussein, S., Moriarty, J., Stevens, M. and Sharpe, E. 2011. Using vignettes to evaluate the outcomes of student learning: data from the evaluation of the new social work degree in England. Social Work Education, 30(2): 207–222.
38. Marsh, P., Fisher, M., with Mathers, N. and Fish, S. 2005. Developing the Evidence Base for Social Work and Social Care Practice, London: Social Care Institute for Excellence.

39. Maso, I. 2001. "Phenomenology and ethnography". In Handbook of Ethnography, Edited by: Atkinson, P., Coffey, A., Delamont, S., Lofland, J. and Lofland, L. London: Sage.

40. McLaughlin, H. 2007. Understanding Social Work Research, London: Sage.

41. McManus, C. 1997. "From selection to qualification: how and why medical students change". In Choosing Tomorrow's Doctors, Edited by: Allen, I., Brown, P. and Hughes, P. London: Policy Studies Institute.

42. Nerdrum, P. 1997. Maintenance of the effect of training in communication skills: a controlled follow-up study of level of communicated empathy. British Journal of Social Work, 27(5): 705–722.

43. S., Noffke and B., Somekh, eds. 2009. The SAGE Handbook of Educational Action Research, London: Sage.

44. Peters, M. A. and Burbules, N. C. 2004. Poststructuralism and Educational Research, Lanham, MD & Boulder, CO: Rowman & Littlefield.

45. Phillips, D. C. and Burbules, N. C. 2000. Postpositivism and Educational Research, Lanham, MD & Boulder, CO: Rowman & Littlefield.

46. Phillips, T., Schostack, J. and Tyler, J. 2000. Practice and Assessment in Nursing and Midwifery: Doing It for Real, London: English National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting.

47. Porter, T. M. 1995. Trust in Numbers. The Pursuit of Objectivity in Science and Public Life, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

48. P., Reason and H., Bradbury, eds. 2001. Handbook of Action Research. Participative Inquiry and Practice, London: Sage.

49. Ryan, M., McCormack, J. and Cleak, H. 2006. Student performance in field education placements: the findings of a 6-year Australian study of admissions data. Journal of Social Work Education, 42(1): 67–84.

50. Sanders, S. and Hoffman, K. 2010. Ethics education in social work: comparing outcomes of graduate social work students. Journal of Social Work Education, 46(1): 7–22.

51. Schön, D. A. 1987. Educating the Reflective Practitioner. Towards a New Design for Teaching and Learning in the Professions, San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.

52. Scott, D. and Usher, R. 2000. Researching Education. Data, Methods and Theory in Educational Enquiry, London: Continuum.

53. Secker, J. 1993. From Theory to Practice in Social Work. The Development of Social Work Students' Practice, Aldershot: Avebury.

54. Shaw, I. and Norton, M. 2008. Kinds and quality of social work research. British Journal of Social Work, 38(5): 953–970.

55. Sheldon, B. 2000. Evidence-Based Social Care: A Study of Prospects and Problems, Lyme Regis: Russell House.
56. Silverman, D. 1993. Interpreting Qualitative Data. Methods for Analysing Talk, Text and Interaction, London: Sage.
57. Sinclair, S. 1997. Making Doctors. An Institutional Apprenticeship, Oxford: Berg.
58. Soydan, H. 2010. "Politics and values in social work research". In The SAGE Handbook of Social Work Research, Edited by: Shaw, I., Briar-Lawson, K., Orme, J. and Ruckdeschel, R. London: Sage.
59. Strier, R. 2007. Anti-oppressive research in social work: a preliminary definition. British Journal of Social Work, 37(5): 857–871.
60. ten Cate, O. 2009. Why the ethics of medical education research differs from that of medical research. Medical Education, 43(7): 608–610.
61. Vitali, S. 2010. "Can we measure and track the acquisition of competency on a professional social work degree?". In The Outcomes of Social Work Education: Developing Evaluation Tools, Edited by: Burgess, H. and Carpenter, J. Higher Education Academy Subject Centre for Social Work and Social Policy, University of Southampton.