

Strengths of qualitative research in social work's "policy practice"

Clara Cruz Santos¹

Cristina Pinto Albuquerque

Faculdade de Psicologia e Ciências de Educação da Universidade de Coimbra

ABSTRACT

In this article, we defend the argument that the immersion of qualitative research in social workers' daily practice, allowing its supra immediacy comprehension and analysis, can increase social work's "policy practice". The possibility to influence policies, to assess and build renewed responses to structural constraints and social injustices, and to critically discuss and influence service's functioning and power structures is very connected with the ways of construction and use of practice-based evidence. Qualitative research can be used by social workers in daily practice to achieve these goals. Using comprehensive approaches qualitative research gives significance to politics' concepts and highlights the impacts of policies and intervention on people and territories. This argument is based on two main assumptions: (i) The qualitative research allows joining fragments of social reality analytically, identifying common patterns under the appearance of daily practice heterogeneity, and (ii) It permits the systematisation of data over the apparent chaotic discourses without neutralising the uniqueness of personal narratives.

Keywords:

Qualitative Research; Social Work; Daily Practice; Policy Practice

INTRODUCTION

The complexity and unpredictability of contemporary society demand social work's research and practice closely interconnected with professional action and its political impacts. The conception of social work as a profession that seeks to influence policies and promote social change and progressive legislation towards social justice has been at the forefront of the profession since the beginning of its existence. This is assumed thus not only as a deontological commitment but also as a social worker's moral duty (Gal & Weiss-Gal, 2013; Banks, 2006). Even so, the ways to achieve these

¹ As autoras são doutoradas em Serviço Social e docentes na Licenciatura, Mestrado e Doutoramento de Serviço Social na Faculdade de Psicologia e Ciências de Educação da Universidade de Coimbra. Endereço para contacto: clarasantos@fpce.uc.pt

goals and the conceptions about what social change and social justice effectively mean are very connected with historical and ideological perspectives, influencing the balance between professional ends and means in context.

Under the assumption that society is the source, or at least the background, of individual distress (Gal & Weiss-Gal, 2013), social workers must understand client's environment as multi-referenced and dynamic, so the importance of an interpretative and hermeneutical approach of problems in different social, organisational and political settings is unequivocal. The need to identify, assess and understand, under different analytical perspectives, not only results but also, processes, pathways and meanings, is a fundamental element of a professional practice-oriented for the dynamic construction of effective personal and social development. In this sense, the main argument of this article is to stand for the development of a qualitative research culture within social worker's practice, as a strategy to promote, by a continuous "reflection-on-action" (Schön, 1983), a more effective and political social work.

In fact, as several authors underline (Lietz & Zayas, 2010; Høgsbro & Shaw, 2017; Shaw & Holland, 2014), the immersion of a research culture in daily practices, namely through the lens of qualitative methods and data, can provide very pertinent inputs not only to increase social workers' knowledge base and the understanding of emerging problems, but also to step up social work's political influence. This implies that social workers strategically use and interpret the data collected in their daily practice, considering: a) the collective under the individual narratives, b) the shared impacts of policies and measures, c) the connected links between apparently disconnected situations and dimensions, and d) the interpretive bonds between cases and group conditions. Social workers, as "frontier professionals" (Albuquerque, 2011), occupy, in fact, a very strategic mediation position in organisations, allowing to understand profoundly and empirically the connections between micro, mezzo and macro levels. The use and interpretation of this privileged knowledge to influence policies and propose new interventions are still pertinent (Drisko, 2008). Under this scope, we consider that the reflective and reflexive engagement in qualitative research "on action" and "in action" can change this scenario progressively.

This implies, however, at least two conditions. First, the research culture cannot be seen, by professionals, as something external and strange to practice and developed only by academics, but as an intrinsic part of professional and ethical engagement (Dominelli, 2004; Healy, 2001; Shaw, 2016). Second, the social workers' engagement in daily practice research culture implies a more profound theoretical and methodological training (Lietz & Zayas, 2010), as well as the development of the capacity and the possibility to identify transversal elements over daily practice routines and apparent uniqueness.

Reflexivity and strategic orientation are, thus, central elements to improve the social work's political influence, using arguments founded in data collected and

interpreted systematically within “research-informed practice and practice-informed research” (Holloway, Black, Hoffman, & Pierce, 2009, p. 2).

Currently, many authors defend an evidence-based practice (EBP) has an important framework to improve social work’s results and assessment (Jenson, 2005; Gambrill, 2007; McNeece & Thyer, 2004). EBP implies however that, social workers have the possibility and the skills to actively and autonomously search pertinent findings to guide informed decisions in their differentiated and interconnected domains of action. Several criticisms are appointed to the assumptions of a practice based on generalised evidence. It is not our goal to develop these critical perspectives here, nor to put the use of general research evidence in question, but to underline the importance of producing (also) local knowledge and qualitative studies connected with real practice and life-contexts.

Under this perspective, we propose, in this article, a critical reflection about the possibilities and conditions to promote the articulation between daily practice knowledge and its systematisation and interpretation to constitute more general arguments and findings. Consequently, we defend the idea that social worker’s daily practice is an important basis to increase their “policy practice”, that is

Activities, undertaken by social workers as an integral part of their professional activity in diverse fields and types of practice that focus on the formulation and implementation of new policies, as well as on existing policies and suggested changes in them. These activities seek to further policies on the organisational, local, national and international levels that are in accord with social work values (Weiss-Gal & Gal, 2011, p. 12)

To develop our argumentative thesis, we have used a systematic literature review with a high-level overview of primary research. It provides not only deeper information, but also the conditions to synthesize and appraise research evidence (Kysh, 2013). In other words, the systematic review provides a critical evaluation and integration of the findings presented in documents, papers and articles which address to our main goal: how qualitative research may function as a form to promote the important role of social work in political and strategic dimensions.

1. Political Dimension and Holistic approach of Qualitative Research

The production of valid and objective evidence is essential in contemporary social work. However, it cannot be divorced from preoccupations of adequacy and social responsibility concerning data produced. Research in social work must, in fact, go beyond the regulatory, normalising and reproductive logics, to a more critical approach to influence public policies and to contribute effectively to the improvement of human conditions and social development (Høgsbro & Shaw, 2017).

Currently, social work is confronted with renewed social, political and professional challenges. These challenges are associated not only with compelled

demands of results and quantified assessment under the setting up of management orientations but also with the keeping and complexity, in globalised contexts, of structural constraints and inequalities. The unexpected and multi-dimensional manifestations of current problems are associated namely with the appearance and increasing of new social risks and the absence of adequate and enough resources to deal with them, especially considering the current spreading of a neoliberal philosophy that advocates the role and growth of the market without restrictions, and the reduction of social welfare expenses (Berk-Clark & Pyles, 2012). In this context, it is perceived a profound transformation of the role of the State in addressing current social issues, and a growing demand for the participation of new social actors in social protection, in particular, Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) associations and even enterprises and organisations of the economic sector. This way the conception of “social rights” is currently associated with a new ideology of co-responsibility of the beneficiary as a protagonist in individual and social change projects (Sena, Cordes, & Hespanha, 2017).

Under this new social logic, the professional approach also changes and implies, necessarily, overcoming immediacy to a more complex balance between the individual and the collective, the micro and the macro level, and between different time frames (past, present and future). The transformations in public policies associated with a managerial orientation and, in many cases, palliative guidance, make more visible the heterogeneous and random purposes of current social intervention.

In this context, qualitative research’ process acquire a central pertinence. It promotes a deeper understanding of social work impact on social conditions and human lives. Moreover, it underlines a reflective capacity that allows professionals and clients’ empowerment, as well as the construction of an informed theory “on” and “In” action.

1.1. Political and Strategic Dimensions in Social Work Research

The qualitative research implies a relationship between the observer and the subject which, by its complex feature, provides multiple and sometimes ambivalent perspectives about how to understand reality. Qualitative studies offer, in fact, a relative degree of intelligibility on social and human phenomena. At this level, it is possible to identify the vectors that allow what Toulmin (1990 in Fick, 2005, p.12) characterise as “empirical functionality” in qualitative research. These vectors can be characterized by (i) a return to orality; (ii) a return to the particular (studies are oriented not only to universal and abstract questions but also to deal with concrete and specific problems which occur in specific situations); (iii) a return to the local (studies about knowledge systems, local and indigenous traditions, practices and experiences rooted in living contexts); and (iv) a return to the concept of opportunity (studies about problems and proposed solutions in its historical and symbolic

contexts). As Denzin and Lincoln (2008, p.4) refer, “qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena regarding the meanings people bring to them”.

In this perspective, qualitative research can be a prime instrument of professional action, combining two important processes: the systematization of practice-based data for the construction of a new theoretical knowledge, and the interpretation of interactive knowledge, lived and reflected, which implies and enhances the construction of sense from the narratives and the respective "worlds of life" of the citizens.

This way, qualitative research in social work cannot be reduced to a sort of methodological mechanism that intends merely to assemble fragments of information and experiential moments. It always has transformative and interpretative intentionality, intending to produce, by its processes and results, innovation and social transformation of social conditions and citizens' power. It also enhances the participatory development of target groups and communities by improving individual's awareness in decision-making processes, underlining their capacities to react and struggle for the intended changes and expectations (Dominelli, 2004; Healy, 2001).

Empowerment strategies are compatible with new social action tactics, as well as with increased forms of social and political participation which are grounded on reflexive social work ability (Gal & Weiss-Gal, 2013; Healy, 2001). Thus, the social worker is a fundamental element in social problems' analyses and in its theoretical formulation to assess and/or create new and efficient social policy responses to "societal transformation, contributing to the reframing of the profession in contemporary society" (Iamamoto, 2004, p. 148). Social workers play, this way, since the origins of the profession, an important role as policy practitioner and empowering agent. Under this scope it is possible to stress two analytical pillars for an empowering and transforming action:

1. *The subjective*: considering the conceptions, representations and experiences of individuals, considering that one statistical diagnosis about life conditions is not enough to a deep understanding of life experiences and symbolic constraints, especially considering the increase of complexity of people's contexts and current interactions. These are, therefore, essential elements of a reflective and empirically based practice understanding the subjective experiences. They correspond to the self-attributed meanings to the absences and achievements and the self-evaluation of results. Valuation of subjects' narratives and translations of their "lived world" constitute as essential elements for life pathways reconstructions, identifying and harnessing the strengths of individuals and contexts, revisited under an optical of recovery and potentialities and not from a deficit perspective (McPherson, 2011);

2. *The substantive pillar*: considering the individual's significant connections with their structures, identifying and analysing the structural features of everyday experiences, the political dimension of their actions and the interpretation of their strengths, limitations and power. In short, the factors associated with the individual's social experience according to their socio-economic and cultural position. As pointed out by Martinelli (1999, p. 22) the assumptions arising from the use of interpretative perspectives and qualitative methodologies are central at this level and allow to focus: (i) in the recognition of the subject's uniqueness and in the contextualization of their experience; (ii) in the recognition of their social experience, surpassing mere circumstantial and disconnected perceptions and highlighting their real living and everyday experiences, and finally (iii) in the recognition that knowing the way of life of the individuals facilitate, simultaneously, the knowledge of their social experience. In fact, for instance learning about how individuals live with uncertainty, expectations and lifecycle's precariousness is a cultural, social and political knowledge of greater importance to adjust and co-construct systematically social work practice and to assess policy impacts consistently.

The reflection-on-action and in-action (Schön, 1983) lead the professional to a greater understanding of the lived worlds and, consequently, to higher suitability of proposals and decisions. In this sense, the social worker must use, in the best way, professional discretion, bypassing bureaucratic moorings, and potentially perverse logics centred in the immediacy, in favour of a strategic intervention likely to produce concrete results and adapted assessment processes. In other words, the social worker should construct a practice-learning that rises from a daily intervention seemingly amorphous, heterogeneous and obscure — only this way the research can constitute as an intelligent and critical dialogue with reality (Demo, 2001).

1.2. The daily practice as a source of evidence: critical questions

The daily practice, which may be translated into “what happens every day” in an iterative way, must be understood as a relevant source of knowledge and an object of qualitative study. “Everyday life is a path of knowledge ... it's not an isolable portion of the social of individuals ... it's the bond that allows us to understand deeply the real social, giving intelligibility to the individuals “readings” of their daily life” (Pais, 2002, p. 33). The daily practice constitutes thus a portion of reality where the singular and the universal components, or the concrete and abstract ones, are connected. But, why the daily knowledge research is so important for strategic social work? How its findings may contribute to a political stance?

Research on the daily action underlines complexity as a source of knowledge. It allows framing, thereby, a political dimension by bringing together individuals and contexts, consolidating their personal and social experience in a complementary and collective construction of meanings. Qualitative research captures the (apparent)

diversity of daily problems, actions and responses to identify, systematise and interpret what is common, and sometimes “invisible” and “unreadable” in a first glance. But it allows, also, to identify, comprehend and explain what is different (extraordinary).

Without forgetting the particularities of each case, the identification of the “common” beneath the individual and apparently unrepeated, is a very important pillar of social workers’ “policy practice” that benefits enormously from daily practice qualitative studies. As an explicit framework and normative-axiological reference, the reflection and the research in/on daily practice allow “controlling” and assessing the fluidity and unpredictability, and to organise the apparent chaos taking advantage of its creator and subversive potential. Qualitative approaches allow a more flexible understanding of practice features and its variations, and at the same time, in-depth analysis and sensitive comprehension of human diversity (McCoy, 2012). Social workers are, in this context, weavers and constituents of the deliberative and transverse weft of everyday life, articulating diversity and building a coherent system of combination between the general/ the standard, the action and the different time frames.

Social workers don’t lead their practice by submitting fatefully to the circumstances. He/she ponders what constitutes an essential and as accidental. By doing this he/ she carries out the screening of relevant situational elements in the architecture of publicly acceptable arguments. In this perspective, it is evident the constitution of a subjectivity and complexity space resulting from the interaction of the professional with the contexts and the subjects of intervention. On this space, the social worker normally assumes an inductive knowledge, simultaneously product and foundation of the action; product of theoretical knowledge and academic and professional experience of the social worker.

Qualitative research is very connected with the researcher’s interpretations and conceptions. Most critics that are addressed to qualitative studies are associated with this “subjectivity” lens. All objectivity is inherently “subjective”. It is always the researcher that gives sense to data and who selects the variables under analysis. As Jootun, McGhee, and Marland (2009) underline, the assurance of rigour is associated with the perspicuity to identify and reveal the personal subjectivity inherent to action and not essentially with the ways to control it. In other words, it’s more an epistemological than a methodological question (Lietz & Zayas, 2010).

The presence of reflexivity can reduce the risks of bias by the professional’s values and personal experiences as a permanent pillar of professional practice (D’Cruz, Gillingham, & Melendez, 2007). Although considered unclear and ambiguous by several authors (Lynch, 2000; D’Cruz et al., 2007) the concept of “reflexivity” is generally associated to “circular” reflection triggered by actions, decisions and relationships, either associated with professional’s self-awareness, or the connection between subject and object, professional and clients.

“Reflexive engagement while planning, conducting, and writing about research promotes an ongoing, recursive relationship between the researcher’s subjective responses and the intersubjective dynamics of the research process itself” (Probst, 2015, p. 37).

Reflexivity can thus be understood, first as a process of critical analysis about the background and results of the practice and its constraints (both global - like clients’ power - and organizational), and second, as a process of professional’s self-examination (personal assumptions, values and cultural perceptions, emotions, attachments and use of discretion) and conscious-experience construction. It is “the eye” that simultaneously observes itself and the world around (Probst, 2015).

As Probst and Berenson (2014) pointed out, the awareness of one’s influences in the professional judgement and decision-making develops through internal processes supported by external strategies (for instance, team discussion and supervision). This is particularly important in the construction of a distanced analysis of daily practice unorganised data.

Under this scope, reflexivity informs responsible decision-making that will affect citizen’s lives and eventually influence policies and intervention settings. Like this, social workers must have reliable data allowing the construction of strategic action and the respective theoretical foundations and being able to use this knowledge in a political perspective, using the pertinent arguments founded in concrete practice evidence. Thus, the professional should act not as an observer, but as an actor on the social and organisational scenery, taking, by his action or inaction, a political stance.

2. Daily practice and qualitative studies: potential for “policy practice.”

Currently Social Work is corseted between two different demands: on the one hand, an intervention capable of initiating, near people without references and recognisable sources of meaning, a work of rebuilding capacities of relationship, security and hope, focusing on creating or strengthen personal and social skills. This work emphasises the importance of the relationship with the lived-world of the clients as a source of meaning and recognition in public and private settings. On the other hand, the social workers must develop skills that allow them to exercise power and the authority to present proposals, stimulate and innovate social offer under renewed pressures of more efficiency and effectiveness.

In the current context, it is up to citizens to prove the value of their actions, show their initiatives based in a thought strategy of socio-economic integration, making good use of the “last resort” left: their own experiences of life and work. These experiences constitute today as important assets towards the inability of the State and the society to respond to all problematic situations. In this manner, evaluations of life trajectories and performances are increased, as well as the balance sheets and

detailed analysis of the socio-professional curricula. It is necessary that the person involved in the journey of self-transformation and social integration validate the steps of this journey, testing the consistency of his speech, based on his experience, from a perspective of truth (the conformity to the “objective” world), justice (the adequacy to the accepted social rules) and sincerity (proving the correspondence between what he says and what he is actually experiencing).

Qualitative research plays an important role in systematising, into concrete knowledge, the client’s difficulties in this self-implication process and the multiple pathways in this journey, as well as in identifying the shared social and economic factors underlying individual distress experiences and explaining integration difficulties of certain groups.

The discursive dimension of the daily practice

² and the narratives produced are, in this perspective, essential mechanisms of construction, deconstruction and interconnection between the clients’ and the world. The comprehension of the conceptions of power and structural inequalities and injustices through personal narratives (McPherson, 2011) is a fundamental instrument to comprehend the general behind the particular, so, an essential pillar of a policy practice anchored in daily practice.

If communication imposes itself as a constitutive dimension of professional action, it is particularly relevant to develop actions that enable the restoration of the client’s interiority and life possibilities. Priority is, in this sense, given to forms of intervention based on mutual understanding and negotiation. Moreover, the conditions required to assure that the one who speaks bears an identity socially recognised must be reflected. Identity is not just a matter of name, position, genealogy or generational destiny; it is, also, a matter of “seeing” who we are and how we and others perceive ourselves. It takes shape in relation to others. It is, therefore, developed in an intersubjective dimension, related to the lived world of social agents (whether excluded) and with society. In this context, professionals demonstrate their skills to be producers of social links.

The singularity of the self is revealed as a key resource. The biographical account becomes the fulcrum of current social intervention, establishing the terms of diagnosis centred in an integrative contract between the individual and the society, less opaque, yet more demanding. This requires a subjective approach, strongly substantiated in qualitative research, to deeply understand client-citizens and

² A structural characteristic of social work which is, paradoxically, its fragility and ambiguity, but also, a vector, not negligible, of power. The speeches in social work practices seem to correspond to what Lévy-Strauss has called (in a different analytical perspective) of “intellectual bricolage” or “science of the concrete”, close to intuition, engaging a certain “humanity density” and giving more relevance to the perceived and lived events than to the discursive structure.

contribute for the efficiency of social policies, programs, projects and organisations in representing their rights, their interests and their possibilities.

If we want to outline solutions and appropriate answers to the singularity of each, it is unavoidable a systematic analysis of his way of life, his experiences, his skills and his limits and failures. By making public his narrative, the subject comes into existence in the eyes of others. It is up to social interveners to help individuals to take their interiority/interior life at the public "arena", without diluting the private dimension of their experiences, and to chart a consistent project for a possible future.

The qualitative studies that intend to identify, within daily practices and client's narratives, the part of generality and transversally elements under the cases, are, thus, fundamental, not only to give individuals "social visibility", but also to find arguments to influence policies and transform life contexts.

2.1. Qualitative research as a vector of political and strategic intervention: the connection between meanings and levels of intervention

The first challenge of social professionals is thus to know how to recognise the client-citizen, his potential and his difficulties, and to bring out his identity, his lived world, the significance and meanings of his options and perspectives. The second challenge is the capacity to identify what is common in diversity, transforming the unique experience on links of more complex chains interpreted collectively.

Qualitative research is an essential strategy to achieve these two challenges by producing supra-circumstantial knowledge, then, with political potential. Critical reflection and the overshoot of approaches centred in the present time and in individualizing readings of contemporary social problems seem to be truly essential to the foundation of an effective political and social intervention.

The social worker is positioned as a "word craftsman/artisan". He/she makes a work of translation of an entire set of rules, concepts and experiences, not directly accessible to all levels of action, linking client-citizens, managers, peers, other professionals and contexts of action. Similarly, the possibility of renegotiation and influence of values, norms and agreements (tacit or explicit), if in one hand makes the practice apparently more *ad hoc* and unsystematic, it creates, on the other hand, potential for re-assess and coproduce social policies less standardized, more oriented to social justice principles and more appropriate to the balance between protection and empowerment.

The political skills associated to "know-how-to-say" and "what" are very connected with the pertinent use of data collected and reflected in daily practice and concrete contexts. The determination and justification of the "just measure", the consideration of a "relational ecology of helped people" (Ion, Laval, & Ravon, 2007) and the plausible (re)inscription of the evidences of injustice in a "public space", puts in advance the policy practice potential of social worker's practices in current

polyphonic and syncretic societies. Thus, the great professional asset of social workers as frontier professionals consists in the use and improvement of mediation skills between action levels (micro, mezzo and macro), agents (front-line professionals, managers, politicians, etc.), existences, speeches, projects and temporalities. The relevance of qualitative research is, at this level, unequivocal to build connections and networks of sense circulation. Consequently, the currently required competencies of social workers derive less from strict technical qualification skills, and more from the ability to understand and foresee the different coexisting socio-political parameters.

From this viewpoint, qualitative research consecrates the possibility of a social practice politically consistent, when providing:

- a) The access to differentiated life-universes and its “hidden” meanings and daily life as a space of action and complementarity;
- b) The skills to translate discourses, problems and contexts, from a micro level to mezzo and macro level, and vice versa, by endowing intelligibility to concepts, perspectives and ways of living;
- c) The access to assessment and validation processes of policies, projects and services from the perspective of the various subject and recipients;
- d) The understanding of the action built contextually;
- e) The connection between the uniqueness of situations and the regularity of shared social experience factors.

Final Considerations

Qualitative research uses a range of guidelines, techniques and assumptions that might promote a high level of combinations, making it difficult concerning methodological systematisation. Qualitative research isn’t based on a single theoretical or methodological design. It fits, instead, into various approaches such as ethnography, symbolic interactionism, phenomenology, social constructivism, critical theory, among others (Lietz & Zayas, 2010; Morrow, 2007). Whatever its guidelines are deductive or inductive there are analytical limitations (explanatory or comprehensive) regarding methodologies and empirical research tools which have guided many of the criticisms that have been directed to qualitative research. Without wishing to explore this debate, we argued that understanding the complexity of social reality must imply the use of different reading grids (comprehensive and explanatory) and their combination coherently. Qualitative research allows to introduce, in these grids, the perception and the meaning attributed by citizens to their experiences and their contexts and to put the research “lens” in the heart of social worker’s daily practice.

By being anchored in an explanatory understanding of social reality, qualitative research allows to transform in “strange” what is “familiar” and in “familiar” what is

“strange”. Everyday life is sometimes “invisible” and escapes to our understanding because it is “too close” and it occurs in a spatial and temporal dimension where routine seems to impose as a rule. Qualitative research, through its various languages and methods, allows to build, or identify, the “intelligibility nucleus” of social reality supra immediate, considering the contextual influence on the construction and analysis of situations and turning them into links of collective and socio-political complex processes.

At a time that values essentially quantitative and generalised evidence and measurement, it should not be forgotten the usefulness of qualitative research in explaining how life in society will always be omitted and incomplete if we are not able to integrate the component of the “living world”. Only approaches of proximity and participation allow giving internal coherence to knowledge produced, encouraging the development of projects more fair, efficient and effective and more appropriate to the subjects’ reality.

Scientific knowledge, whatever the epistemological paradigm used, does not escape from the problems’ settings, the common-knowledge, the economic, social and political contexts and the actor’s values and choices. Qualitative information is grounded in existent social dynamics, and in the processes and logic that govern the subject’s life. It is in this context that daily life is a source of knowledge, an argumentative interconnection between people, spaces and times. The inter-subjectivity which characterises the knowledge produced is the basis of righteousness decisions and more political judgement of situations.

Qualitative research is not, in this sense, only a critical and reflective dialogue with the subjects and their reality. It is also a fundamental dimension of social work’s policy and polity practice which engages, yet overtakes, social advocacy, implying a more large and disseminated influence of policies and its impact on social and economic disadvantages. Although still limited the influence of social workers in the arenas of social policy formulation, various studies identify the claims and the recognised importance of larger participation (Gal & Weiss-Gal, 2013; Haynes & Mickelson, 2003). The production of sharing data and more transversal evidence that go beyond the particular contexts of practice, putting the research as a professional skill to develop in social worker’s daily practice is, in our conception, the fundamental step to conquest the claimed political role. An essential role to effectively vindicate and achieve the goals and principles of social justice.

REFERÊNCIAS

Albuquerque, C. P. (2011). Legitimidade e reconhecimento da prática de Serviço Social: abordagem construtivista. *Serviço Social em Revista*, 13(2), 104-118.

- Banks, S. (2006). *Ethics and Values in Social Work*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Berk-Clark, C. van den, & Pyles, L. (2012). Deconstructing neoliberal community development approaches and a case for the solidarity economy. *Journal of Progressive Human Services*, 23 (1), 1-17
- D’Cruz, H., Gillingham, P. & Melendez, S. (2007). Reflexivity: A Concept and its Meanings for Practitioners Working with Children and Families. *Critical Social Work*, 8(1). Retrieved from:
<http://www1.uwindsor.ca/criticalsocialwork/reflexivity-a-concept-and-its-meanings-for-practitioners-working-with-children-and-families>
- Demo, P. (2001). *Pesquisa e Informação Qualitativa. Aportes metodológicos*. São Paulo: Papirus.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2008). *Collecting and interpreting qualitative materials*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.
- Dominelli, L. (2004). *Social Work: Theory and Practice for a Changing Profession*. Cambridge: Polity Press,
- Drisko, J. W. (2008). How is qualitative research taught at the master’s level? *Journal of Social Work Education*, 44(1), 85-101.
- Fick, P. (2010). *Métodos Qualitativos na Investigação Científica*. Lisboa: Monitor.
- Gal, J. & Weiss-Gal, I. (eds) (2013). *Social Workers affecting Social Policy. An international perspective*. Bristol: The Polity Press.
- Gambrill, E. (2007). Social workers’ code of ethics and accreditation standards as guides for choice. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 43(3), 447-462.
- Haynes, K.S. & Mickelson, J.S. (2003). *Affecting change: Social Workers in the Political Arena*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Healy, K. (2001). Participatory action research and social work. *A critical appraisal. International Social work*, 44(1), 93-105.
- Høgsbro, K. & Shaw, I. (Eds.) (2017). *Social Work and Research in Advanced Welfare States*. Routledge.

- Holloway, S., Black, P., Hoffman, K., & Pierce, D. (2009). *Some Considerations of the Import of the 2008 EPAS for Curriculum Design*. Retrieved from <http://www.cswe.org/CSWE/accreditation/2009-06+CompetencyPractice+Behavior.htm>.
- Iamamoto, M. (2004). *O Serviço Social na Contemporaneidade: trabalho e formação profissional*. São Paulo: Editora Cortez.
- Ion, J; Laval, C., & Ravon, B. (2007). Politiques de l'individu et psychologies d'intervention : transformations des cadres d'action dans le travail social. In F. Cantelli & J.L. Genard (coord.), *Droit et Société «Action Publique et Subjectivité»*. Paris: Maison des Droits de l'Homme.
- Jenson, J. (2005). Connecting science to intervention: Advances, challenges, and the promise of evidence-based practice. *Social Work Research*, 29(3), 131-135.
- Jooton, D., McGhee, G., & Marland, G. (2009). Reflexivity: promoting rigour in qualitative research. *Nursing Standard*, 11-17; 23(23), 42-6.
- Kysh, L. (2013): *Difference between a systematic review and a literature review*. Poster presentation from Medical Library Group of Southern California & Arizona (MLGSCA) and the Northern California and Nevada Medical Library Group (NCNMLG) Joint Meeting in July 2013 <https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.766364.v1> Retrieved dec 21, 2017
- Lietz, C. A. & Zayas, L. E. (2010). Evaluating Qualitative Research for Social Work Practitioners. *Advances in Social Work*, 11(2), 188-202.
- Lynch, M. (2000). Against reflexivity as an academic virtue and source of privileged knowledge. *Theory, Culture and Society*, 17(3), 26–54.
- Martinelli, M. (1999), *Pesquisa Qualitativa. Um instigante desafio*. São Paulo: Veras.
- McCoy, K. (2012). Toward a Methodology of Encounters: Opening to Complexity in Qualitative Research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 18(9) 762–772
- McNeece, C. A., & Thyer, B. (2004). Evidence-based practice and social work. *Journal of Evidence-Based Social Work*, 1(1), 7-25.
- McPherson, J. (2011). Does Narrative Exposure Therapy Reduce PTSD in Survivors of Mass Violence? *Research on Social Work Practice*, 22(1), 29-42.

- Morrow, S. (2007). Qualitative research in counseling psychology: Conceptual foundations. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 35(2), 209-235.
- Pais, J. M. (2002). *Sociologia da Vida Quotidiana. Teorias, Métodos e Estudo de Caso*. Lisboa: Imprensa do Instituto de Ciências Sociais.
- Probst, B. (2015). The Eye Regards Itself: Benefits and Challenges of Reflexivity in Qualitative Social Work Research. *Social Work Research*, 39(1), 37-48.
- Probst, B., & Berenson, L. (2014). The double arrow: How qualitative social work researchers use reflexivity. *Qualitative Social Work*, 13, 813–827.
- Schön, D. (1983). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action*. New York: Basic Books.
- Sena, B.; Fontes, F. & Hespanha, P. (2017). Spinal Cord Injury in Portugal: Institutional and Personal Challenges. *Journal of Disability Policy Studies*, 28(2), 119-128 <https://doi.org/10.1177/1044207317710702>.
- Shaw, I. & Holland, S. (2014). *Doing Qualitative Research in Social Work*. London: Sage Publications.
- Shaw, I. (2016). *Social Work Science*. NY: Columbia University Press.
- Valles, M. (2003). *Técnicas Cualitativas de Investigación Social. Reflexión Metodológica y Prática Profesional*. Madrid: Editorial Síntesis.
- Weiss-Gal, I. & Gal, J. (2011). *Policy Practice in Social Work*. Jerusalem: Magnes.