

# SIG Practice Research

**Mutual learning in social  
work education with  
practitioner research**

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# A short introduction to myself



## Areas of expertise:

- teaching and curriculum development in higher education
- practitioner research
- strategies for research and innovation

## Profession:

- Program leader and lecturer for research methods and practice development in the Master's of Social Work program at HAN University of Applied Sciences
- Self employed author and curriculum developer

# The keynote's central question

**How can social work education institutions learn from practitioner research?**

Practitioner research is a form of practice research conducted by working or aspiring professionals who are practicing or about to practice.

# Subquestions

1. What are the characteristics of the practitioner research method?
2. How can the quality of practitioner research be determined?
3. How can social work education institutions learn from the processes and outcomes of practitioner research projects and the expertise of the (aspiring) practitioners they educate?

# Short Exercise (1)

Write down for yourself a number of standards or criteria that you think are decisive for making a statement about the quality of practice research conducted by students and/or professionals.

# Positioning practitioner research

<b>Fundamental research (basic research)</b>	<b>Intervention research (applied research)</b>	<b>Practitioner research</b>
Identify and understand the mechanisms underlying health and social problems at the individual, organizational and societal levels	Develop and evaluate ways to address the root causes of common health and social problems.	Improving professional practices and enhancing organizational capacity to address health and social problems in a specific setting
Generalizable knowledge	Problem-based knowledge	Context-specific knowledge

(Sheikhattari et al., 2022)



## **Practitioner research is defined as follows:**

Practitioner research consists of empirical studies conducted by social workers, nurses, and other health professionals [or practitioners in other fields such as education] to answer questions resulting from their practices. The research takes place as an interaction between the practitioner doing the research and his or her colleagues, patients, or clients. The primary goal of practitioner research is to improve one's own practice (Sheikhattari et al., 2022, p. 2).

# What can be the impact of practitioner research?



**improving services  
and quality of life**



**knowledge  
development**



**professional  
development**



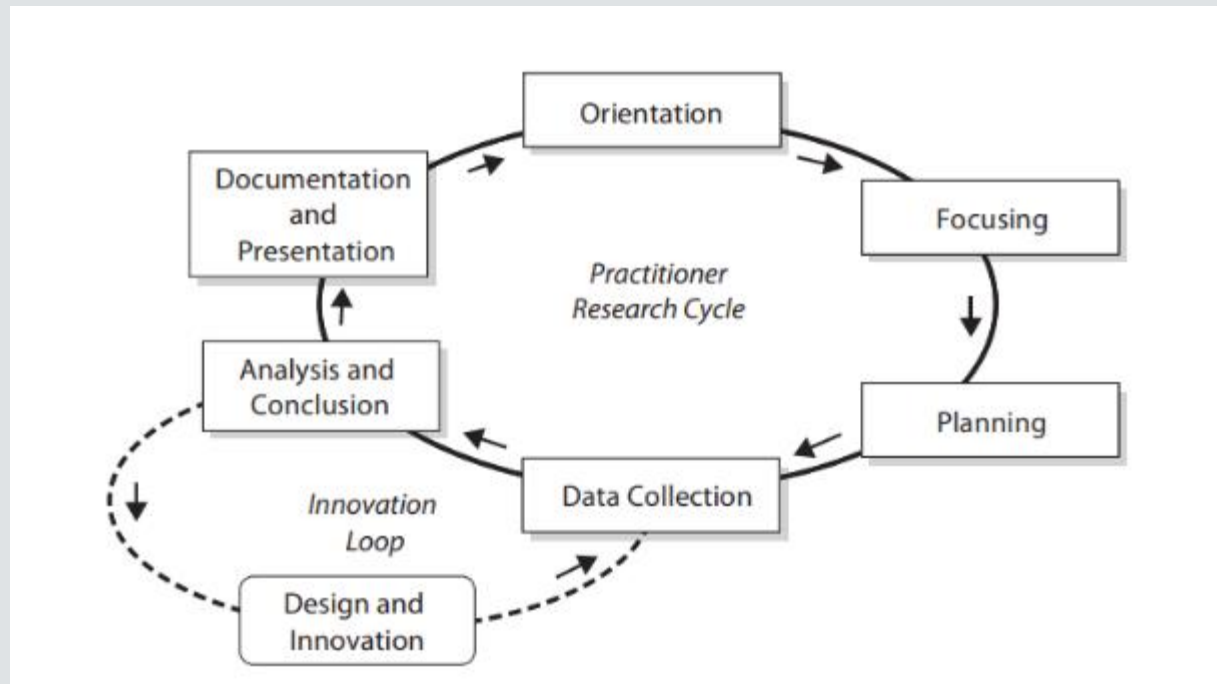
**organizational  
development**

# Evidence-based practice



(Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, n.d.)

# The Practitioner Research Cycle and the Innovation Loop



(Sheikhattari et al., 2022, p. 11)

# Opportunities for mutual learning

## How knowledge flows?

from → to



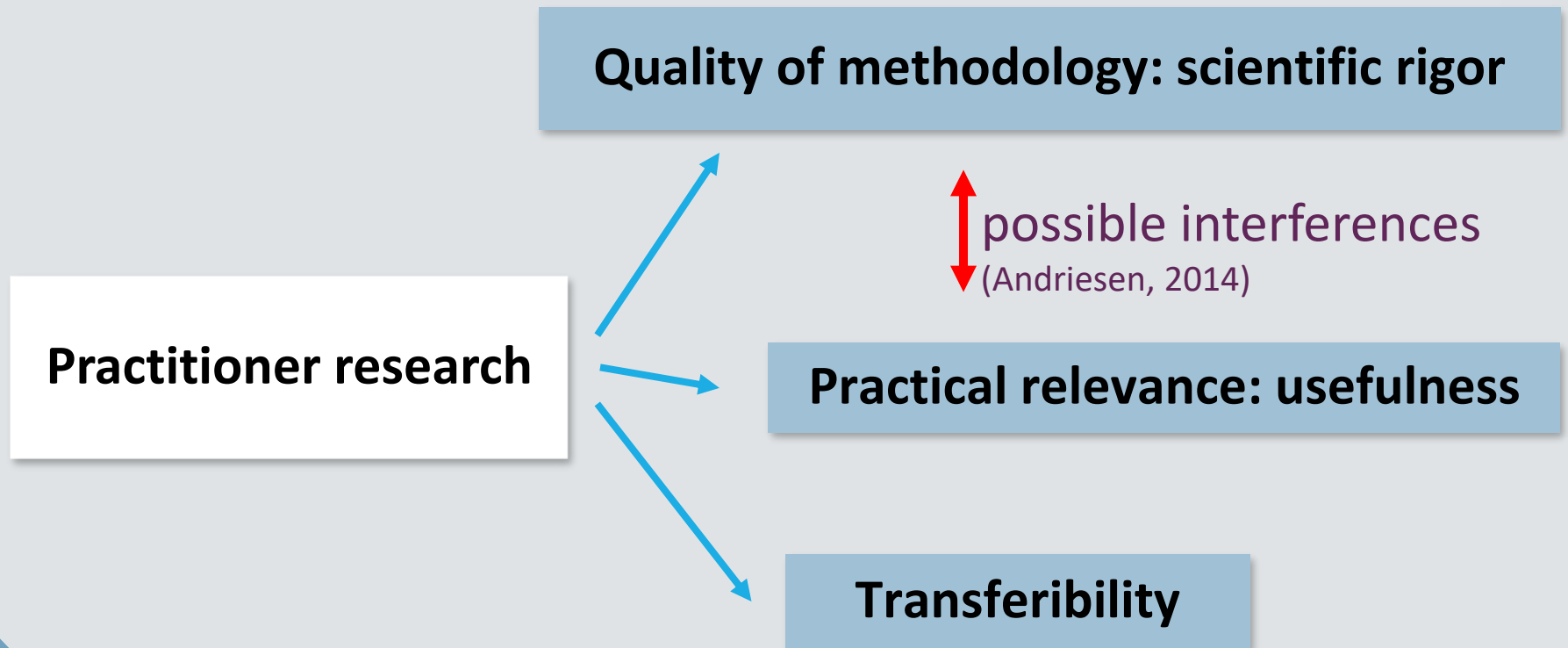
Learning from students and their research projects should be an important goal for social work educational institutions.

# Short Exercise (2)

Write down for yourself:

What kind of initiatives / activities have been set up in your institution when it comes to learning from students and their research projects?

# Perspectives on quality



# Quality dimensions for practitioner research

Conception of practitioner research

degree of importance

-	-/+	+	
			Catalytic dimension
			Democratic dimension
			Process dimension
			Dialogic dimension
			Outcome dimension
			Transferability dimension

# Catalytic dimension

The extent to which the research project ...

- leads to professional development of the practitioner.
- leads to collective development of stakeholders involved.
- has further impact on the social work profession, the social work body of knowledge and/or influenced policy makers.



# Democratic dimension

The extent to which ...

- **different perspectives were included.**
- **different stakeholders have been involved.**

# Process dimension

The extent to which ...

- the process is carried out in a systematic and transparent way.
- the process does justice to reality (e.g., avoid bias, ensure triangulation, validate instruments).
- the research design is appropriate to the specifics of the setting.
- the research links to social work theory.

# Dialogic dimension

The extent to which ...

- an internal critical dialogue (self-reflection) takes place.
- an external critical dialogue is organized.



# Outcome dimension

The extent to which ...


- **questions are answered.**
- **practice problems, issues or challenges encountered are addressed.**

# Transferability dimension

The extent to which ...

- the practice context and circumstances are specified to determine the applicability of the research findings to other social work practices.
- different audiences have been considered in reporting and presentation.
- research findings are integrated into tools and resources for social practice.

# A framework for assessing the quality of practitioner research

Dimensions	Possible quality criteria The extent to which...  <a href="https://practitionerresearch.com/resources/">https://practitionerresearch.com/resources/</a>
<b>Catalytic</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the research project leads to professional development of the practitioner.</li> <li>the research project leads to collective development of stakeholders involved.</li> <li>the research project has further impact on the social work profession, the social work body of knowledge and/or influenced policy makers.</li> </ul>
<b>Democratic</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>different perspectives were included.</li> <li>different stakeholders have been involved</li> </ul>
<b>Process</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the process is carried out in a systematic and transparent way.</li> <li>the process does justice to reality (e.g., avoid bias, ensure triangulation, validate instruments).</li> <li>the research design is appropriate to the specifics of the setting.</li> <li>the research links to social work theory.</li> </ul>
<b>Dialogic</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>an internal critical dialogue (self-reflection) takes place.</li> <li>an external critical dialogue is organized.</li> </ul>
<b>Outcome</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>questions are answered.</li> <li>practice problems, issues or challenges encountered are addressed.</li> </ul>
<b>Transferability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the practice context and circumstances are specified to determine the applicability of the research findings to other social work practices.</li> <li>different audiences have been considered in reporting and presentation.</li> <li>research findings are integrated into tools and resources for social practice.</li> </ul>

# Share your thoughts

Consider how the standards or criteria you wrote down earlier relate to the framework presented. What dimensions of quality do you think are important when it comes to practice research or practitioner research? Share your ideas with others.



## **A critical note in conclusion**

How can social work education institutions learn from the processes and outcomes of practitioner research projects and the expertise of the students and professionals we educate?

# A framework for Institutes of Social Work Education to explore learning opportunities from students and their research projects.

Dimensions	Learning opportunities  <a href="https://practitionerresearch.com/resources/">https://practitionerresearch.com/resources/</a>
<b>Catalytic</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build the Institute's research agenda around research findings from practitioner research (e.g. interventions, recommendations and questions for follow-up research).</li> <li>• Support (aspiring) practitioners to build on their research findings and collectively make a greater impact in the field of social work.</li> </ul>
<b>Democratic</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhance social work education programs by incorporating practitioner research findings that resembles the perspectives of professionals and marginalized individuals.</li> <li>• Invite participants of practitioner research projects to take part in relevant institutional research and development projects.</li> </ul>
<b>Process</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn how to customize research methods for specific practices and populations by evaluating the research methods used in (aspiring) practitioners' research projects.</li> <li>• Collaborate with (aspiring) practitioners to further validate and develop research tools and methods resulting from their research project.</li> </ul>
<b>Dialogic</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build collaborative networks of (aspiring) practitioners and Institutional staff to engage in open, critical dialogue focused on the various research and development projects in which participants are engaged.</li> </ul>
<b>Outcome</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify issues or problems that arise in educational practice to which the results of (aspiring) practitioners' research projects may be relevant and assess how the results can be incorporated into educational practice.</li> <li>• Specify and validate the set of professional competencies (knowledge, skills and attitudes) that institutions teach to students, using research evidence provided by (aspiring) practitioners.</li> </ul>
<b>Transferability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bring together the results of (aspiring) practitioners' research projects and institutional research projects to increase the transferability of research findings, tools, and resources.</li> </ul>

# Sources

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# More information

[www.practitionerresearch.com](http://www.practitionerresearch.com)

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