

*Relationship between research and practice: a qualitative study with Portuguese social workers*

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This paper focuses on the relationship between research and practice in social work, particularly in the understanding the motivations and the place assigned by the social workers on this relationship. The main study shafts are: 1) constraints to investigate in daily work; 2) potentialities of such research; 3) motivations to research.

In this exploratory study we opted for qualitative methodology. Data collection was conducted in 2011, with the application of semi-structured interviews to eleven Portuguese social workers with BSW and MSW in Social Work and a minimum of three years of practice.

All interviewed social workers consider that research is one of the dimensions of Social Work, but the relationship established between research and practice was covered from different nuances, from those who claim to establish this relationship to those that punctually did (on the MSW).

Social workers pointed out more the constraints (i.e. paucity of time in daily work) than the potentialities of relationship between research and practice, but the potentiality repeatedly enunciated from all of interviewers is the key: improve practice. Improving practice, its the main reason and motivation that led the social workers to do research, but they highlight that it is necessary create a set of conditions that allow and encourage professionals to do itq, particularly in organizations where they work.

The interviewees pointed out reasons to explain the lack relationship between research and practice: 1) historical reasons; 2) the separation between scientists and practitioners; 3) small practitioner investment in postgraduate training, particularly in social work in order to contribute to increased knowledge in this area; 4) lack of critical thinking; 5) focus in daily work; 6) routinized practice.

It is fundamental in Portugal a higher investment in the discussion of the re

lationship between research and practice that includes more research about this theme, and an evaluation about the integration of research and practice in social work education. This preoccupation in the training was refer in the interviews like a key element in encouraging an effective relationship between research and practice, and this requires: 1) investing in postgraduate studies in Social Work; 2) encourage the importance of research in Social Work (since the BSW); 3) create or promote an investigative culture in students/practitioners; 4) break with the dichotomy between practitioners and academics; 5) bring together the academic and professional spaces (organizations).