

# Research-Based Practicum in Social Work Field Education

An Annotated Bibliography 2021



Transforming the Field  
Education Landscape

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## PURPOSE OF THE ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

The Transforming the Field Education Landscape (TFEL) project, funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada's (SSHRC) partnership grant program, aims to better prepare the next generation of social workers in Canada by creating training and mentoring opportunities for students, developing and mobilizing innovative and promising field education practices, and improving the integration of research and practice in field education.

Research is an integral part of social work practice. The purpose of this annotated bibliography is to gain a better understanding of research-based practicum in social work field education. Through evidence-based practice social workers use both well-researched interventions and clinical experience to make informed treatments and services to clients. By incorporating a research practicum, it has shown to be an advanced means of fulfilling field education placements while increasing research development among social work students (Walsh et al., 2019).

## METHODS

This search was completed using the University of Calgary online database. After reviewing the literature by reading the title and abstract, there were 20 articles deemed relevant on research-based practicum in social work education for this annotated bibliography.

### Database Search, Keywords and Modifications

Database	Keywords	Search Modifications
Academic Search Complete	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Research” AND “Practicum*” AND “Social Work”</li> <li>• “Research” AND “Practicum experience or field experience or placement” AND “Social work”</li> <li>• “Research based practice” AND “Social work”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2011-2021</li> <li>• Peer Reviewed</li> </ul>
CINAHL Plus with full text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Research” AND “Practicum*” AND “Social Work”</li> <li>• “Research” AND “Practicum experience or field experience or placement” AND “Social work”</li> <li>• “Research based practice” AND “Social work”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2011-2021</li> <li>• Peer Reviewed</li> </ul>
Google Scholar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Research” “Practicum” “Social Work”</li> <li>• “Research based practice” “Social work”</li> <li>• "Research practicum in social work"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2000-2021</li> <li>• 2011-2021</li> </ul>
SocINDEX with Fulltext	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Research” AND “Practicum*” AND “Social Work”</li> <li>• “Research” AND “Practicum experience or field experience or placement” AND “Social work”</li> <li>• “Research based practice” AND “Social work”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2011-2021</li> <li>• Peer Reviewed</li> </ul>
Social Work Abstracts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Research” AND “Practicum*” AND “Social Work”</li> <li>• “Research” AND “Practicum experience or field experience or placement” AND “Social work”</li> <li>• “Research based practice” AND “Social work”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2011-2021</li> <li>• Peer Reviewed</li> </ul>
University of Calgary Quick Search	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Research" AND "social work*" AND practicum or field placement"</li> <li>• "Research based practicum" AND "social work*"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2010-2021</li> <li>• English language</li> <li>• Peer Reviewed</li> </ul>
Web of Science	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Research” AND “Practicum” AND “Social Work”</li> <li>• “Research based practice” AND “Social work”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2011-2021</li> <li>• Peer Reviewed</li> </ul>

## ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Auslander, G. K., & Rosenne, H. (2016). Data mining for social work students: Teaching practice-based research in conjunction with a field work placement. *Journal of Teaching in Social Work, 36*(1), 52–69. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08841233.2016.1125731>

Although research studies are important for social work students, the students rarely like research classes or see their value. At the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, one group of BSW students was encouraged to carry out the required research in their field work setting, the Hadassah University Medical Center. Students used data mining, that is, the analysis of existing data, to answer their research questions. As a preliminary step, the instructor and interested social workers selected a number of projects that were important to the department. After consulting with the instructor, the hospital's social work research coordinator and social workers in the hospital, the students selected 7 projects. By using data mining, students had access to the data relevant to their projects. Research tasks included coding and analyzing data and then interpreting findings. At the end of the course, they presented their findings in a clinical conference and prepared written reports for the seminar instructor and the social work department.

Austin, M. J., & Isokuortti, N. (2016). A framework for teaching practice-based Research with a focus on service users. *Journal of Teaching in Social Work, 36*(1), 11–32. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08841233.2016.1129931>

The integration of research and practice in social work education and agency practice is both complex and challenging. The analysis presented here builds upon the classic social work generalist framework (engagement, assessment, service planning and implementation, service evaluation evaluation, and termination) by developing a three-part framework to capture practice, research, and service user involvement. The article also includes a case vignette to

illustrate the application of the framework. The evolution of practice-based research provides a venue for these integration issues, with special attention to the role played by service users. The analysis concludes with a series of questions to guide evolving practice and future research.

Berger, R. (2013). Incorporating EBP in field education: Where we stand and what we need. *Journal of Evidence-Based Social Work, 10*(2), 127–135. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15433714.2012.663663>

To effectively provide social work students with the knowledge and skills necessary for practicing from an evidence-based practice (EBP) perspective, relevant training in the field internship component of the professional education is crucial. Based on previous research, practice experience, and anecdotal information, in this article the author outlines challenges to helping students integrate what they learn about EBP in class into their field education within the context of community agencies and offers detailed strategies to address these challenges as well as directions for future research.

Bledsoe-Mansori, S. E., Bellamy, J. L., Wike, T., Grady, M., Dinata, E., Killian-Farrell, C., & Rosenberg, K. (2013). Agency–university partnerships for evidence-based practice: A national survey of schools of social work. *Social Work Research, 37*(3), 179–193.

Efforts to disseminate and implement evidence-based practice (EBP) and empirically supported interventions (ESI) have been rapidly increasing in social work education, research, and practice. Nevertheless, the gap between research and practice remains substantial, reducing the opportunity for social work clients to benefit from the best available practices. Partnerships between schools of social work and community agencies to promote EBP, ESI, or both offer a promising solution to this problem. However, little is known about these partnership efforts. This article presents the results of a national, Web-based survey conducted with Council on Social Work Education-accredited schools of social work (N = 126)

designed to explore partnership efforts between schools of social work and community agencies to promote EBP in social work practice. Results indicate that the majority of respondents perceive EBP as beneficial. The most common EBP partnership efforts included individual faculty members conducting EBP research in partnership with agencies, partnerships with field placement agencies for student training, and provision of EBP related resources such as library access to agencies. Obstacles to agency–university EBP partnerships included time, funding, and limited agency resources. Addressing these barriers and building from schools’ current limited partnership efforts to develop more comprehensive partnership models may help to narrow the gap between research and practice.

Drolet, J. (2020). A new partnership: Transforming the field education landscape: Intersections of research and practice in Canadian social work field education. *Field Educator*, 10(1), 1-18.

The purpose of the study is to integrate research and practice in the preparation of the next generation of social workers by developing training initiatives, both within academia and across the public and not-for-profit sectors, that enhance student and trainee research practice knowledge and applied skill development. The results from the study will inform the development of sustainable models for field education.

Fisher, M., Austin, M. J., Julkunen, I., Sim, T., Uggerhoj, L. & Isokurtti, N. (2016). Practice research. *Oxford Bibliographies Online Database*. [http://doi: 10.1093/OBO/9780195389678-0232](http://doi:10.1093/OBO/9780195389678-0232)

Practice research focuses heavily on the roles of the service provider and service user who play a major role in defining the research questions and interpreting the findings. Compared to other knowledge production processes that are agency-based, service-focused, client-focused, theory-informed, highly interactive (multiple stakeholders), and designed to inform practice, policy, and future research, practice research makes a unique contribution to the research enterprise. Practice research in the field of social work plays an important role in a

continuing search for ways to improve social services that promote the well-being of service users. It often involves collaboration among multiple stakeholders in addition to service providers, researchers, service users, educators (funders, policymakers, agency directors, etc.), while taking into account the power dynamics between service users and service providers with respect to inclusiveness, transparency, ethical reflexivity, and critical reflection. In this relationship, agency practice that fully captures the perspectives of service users as well as providers can inform the education of future practitioners as well as influence research on agency practice and policies. The goal of practice research is to generate knowledge derived from agency-based practice (Salisbury Forum Group 2011, cited under General Overviews). The theoretical frameworks and methodological research tools for engaging in practice research often requires flexible and collaborative structures and organizations (Helsinki Forum Group 2014, cited under General Overviews). Practice research is often a negotiated process between practice (providers and users) and research (researchers and educators) within the context of cross-cultural dialogical communications needed to address the gap between research and practice. In essence, for practice and research to be shared, co-learning, respect, and curiosity are needed to support an inclusive inquiry and knowledge development process that captures the differences and tensions reflected in fundamentally different perspectives (e.g., service user and provider, service provider and researcher, and researcher and policymaker). In addition, practice research is often funder influenced, outcome focused, and change oriented.

Flanagan, N., & Wilson, E. (2018). What makes a good placement? Findings of a social work student-to-student research study. *Social Work Education*, 37(5), 565–580.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/02615479.2018.1450373>



Social work fieldwork placements are recognised as a key component of social work education. This article analyses the experiences of students who have completed one social work placement and examines what they felt was most effective in aiding their learning. The innovative methodology used for the research enabled first year students to design an on-line survey which they administered to their second-year student colleagues. The first-year students gained experience in designing and administering a piece of research, but also gained a greater understanding of what previous students have found assisted their learning on placement. This cross-sectional research surveyed accessed the 2014/15 cohort of year 1 and year 2 Masters in Social Work (MSW) students. Students reported how prepared they felt for placement and also who or what facilitated their learning on placement. Students' perception of the volume of learning on placement was strongly correlated with satisfaction. It is argued that being able to clearly identify types of interaction that enhance students' learning, leads to more positive outcomes for all involved in the placement experience.

Hewson, J. A, Walsh, C. A, & Bradshaw, C. (2010). Enhancing social work research education through research field placements. *Contemporary Issues in Education Research (Littleton, Colo.)*, 3(9), 7. <https://doi.org/10.19030/cier.v3i9.230>

The increase focus on the role of research in the social service sector, pressure for practitioners to engage in research and the demand for integration of research and practice challenges faculties about ways in which to engage social work students in research. This paper evaluates a research-based practicum program within a social work faculty at one Canadian university aimed at meeting this need. The objectives of the practicum include providing opportunities to integrate research theory/methods with practice; develop a broad range of research knowledge and skills; reduce negative stereotypes; instill passion and

excitement for research; and connect students with agencies to engage in community-based research. The mixed methods evaluation of the practicum included semi-structured qualitative interviews with former and current directors (n=2); an online survey with past practicum students (n=15); and a pre- and post-test attitude/skills assessment, a self-reflection journal exercise, and a focus group with students currently in practicum (n=7). Findings suggest benefits of the research practicum across stakeholders as well as several challenges and opportunities for program enhancement. Research practicum is an innovative way of engaging students in applied research which can augment research capacity, mitigate negative stereotypes about research, and better prepare future social work practitioners.

Joubert, L. B., & Webber, M. (2020). *The Routledge handbook of social work practice research*.

Routledge. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/10.4324/9780429199486>

*The Routledge Handbook of Social Work Practice Research* is the first international handbook to focus on practice research for social work. Bringing together leading scholars in the field from Europe, the USA and the Asia Pacific region, it provides an up-to-the minute overview of the latest thinking in practice research whilst also providing practical advice on how to undertake practice research in the field. This book is divided into five sections: State of the art, methodologies, pedagogies, Applications and expanding the frontiers. The range of topics discussed will enhance student development as well as increase the capacity of practitioners to conduct research; develop coordinating and leadership roles; and liaise with multiple stakeholders who will strengthen the context base for practice research. As such, this handbook will be essential reading for all social work students, practitioners and academics as well as those working in other health and social care settings.

Lucero, J. L., Evers, J., Roark, J., & Parker, D. (2017). Using community-based research to improve

BSW students' learning in community practice: Bringing the macro into focus for traditional

and distance learners. *Journal of Teaching in Social Work*, 37(3), 260–279.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/08841233.2017.1320621>

This article describes community-university partnership building, course development/management, and evaluation outcomes related to an intensive community-based research project that was integrated in two sections of an undergraduate course on community practice. Pre- and post-test data were collected from 60 BSW students who were enrolled in community practice and who participated in a community-based research project with their state's fair housing office. The evaluation outcomes focus on changes in professional interest in macro practice, students' self-efficacy, and differences in students' learning experiences, based on traditional bricks-and-mortar or distance learning contexts. Results show that students experience increases in self-efficacy related to community assessment and intervention. Qualitative results show that students experienced shifts in their professional goals related to macro practice, increased competence and understanding, and personal transformation. A number of differences emerged between traditional and distance learners. Results are discussed in the context of curriculum development and next steps for institutionalizing CBR in community practice courses.

Maidment, J., Chilvers, D., Crichton-Hill, Y., & Meadows-Taurua, K. (2016). Promoting research literacy during the social work practicum. *Aotearoa New Zealand Social Work*, 23(4), 3–13.

<https://doi.org/10.11157/anzswj-vol23iss4id145>

Recent research in New Zealand and elsewhere has documented low levels of confidence amongst social work graduates in conducting applied social research. This article will examine the reasons why research literacy amongst students and graduates appears to be at a low ebb, and will report on the early developmental phases of a field education model being piloted in Christchurch, New Zealand, to promote knowledge and skill development in practice

research. The process used for planning a suite of practice research placements is outlined, together with examining the application of the communities of practice model for facilitating this intervention. Practical strategies for including research learning objectives and activities are provided, with the view to encouraging routine inclusion of different tasks associated with systematic inquiry into all field placements. The evaluation design for the group of practice research placements is outlined with considerations of the project limitations and potential for future development. A second article on how the project progressed will be submitted later in 2012.

Pack, M. J. (2013). A tale of two programmes: Developing communities of learning with practice partners in social work and humanitarian studies at Charles Darwin University, Northern Territory, Australia. *Social Work Education*, 32(8), 1011–1020.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/02615479.2012.745846>

Online engagement is difficult when teaching complex clinical reasoning skills which are central to developing professionalism in the health and welfare workforce. This paper explores how our team has engaged students in online discussion by introducing research projects brought by our practice partners to the mix of activities completed by students. At Charles Darwin University in the Northern Territory, Australia, the social work and humanitarian studies degree-level programmes are delivered in blended mode involving a combination of face-to-face and online learning. Within these modes of delivery students are presented with questions and activities drawn from our practice partners to bring ‘real world relevance’ to learning. Drawing from examples provided by the practice settings in which the students wish to work after they graduate, we have found that this relationship between the academy and practice agency effectively bridges the gap between the worlds of theory and practice for our students. In a community of learning model, students elect to work on local

practice partners' projects throughout the semester. This mix of academia working in partnership with frontline social and humanitarian workers brings immediacy to the learning. Opportunities for 'deep learning' are facilitated by this partnership approach. The implications for using communities of learning models for engaging students from two professions in online activities are discussed.

Sperling, R. (2017). Community-based research as graduate practicum: Preparing students for roles in program evaluation and academia. In *SAGE Research Methods Cases*.

<https://www.doi.org/10.4135/9781473981034>

In this case study, I explain how community-based research an effective means of engaging graduate students in an applied practicum that can be challenges them to apply their knowledge of statistics, psychometrics, and research design in addressing important social problems. Students in our industrial/organizational psychology master's program use the practicum to satisfy their internship requirement. However, unlike traditional internships, students in the community-based research practicum work alongside a faculty mentor rather than being supervised by staff at a placement site. The practicum also places more emphasis on research and formal methods of evaluation than most internships do, which means that students and faculty not only learn how to function as evaluators, they are also more likely to produce publishable work as well.

Svoboda, D. V., Williams, C. D., Jones, A. L., & Powell, K. H. (2013). Teaching social work research through practicum: What the students learned. *Journal of Social Work Education, 49*(4), 661–673. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10437797.2013.812889>

Social work research is an essential component of a doctoral education. Students' perspectives need to be considered when determining how social work research is taught. Students enrolled in a social work doctoral program conducted a single case study that took a

retrospective look at the student experience in a two-semester research practicum at the University of Maryland, Baltimore. A description of the research practicum course was drawn from key contact interviews and course materials. A review of archived records located 17 practicum publications and presentations. Cohort members' reflections on the research practicum course were analyzed, using thematic content analysis. The case study informs the future design of doctoral research practicum courses and the socialization of social work educators and researchers.

Traube, D. E., Pohle, C. E., & Barley, M. (2012). Teaching evidence-based social work in foundation practice courses: Learning from pedagogical choices of allied fields. *Journal of Evidence-Based Social Work*, 9(3), 241–259. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15433714.2010.525417>

The field of social work is attuned to the need to incorporate evidence-based practice education into masters-level curriculum. One question remaining is how to integrate evidence-based practice in the foundation practice courses. Integration of evidence-based practice across the foundation-level curriculum coincides with the Council on Social Work Education's mandate that students engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research. Through a discussion of definitions, criticisms, and pedagogy across the allied fields of medicine, nursing, and social work the authors address the current status of evidence-based practice curriculum in foundation-level education. The authors incorporate the lessons learned from allied fields and a Masters of Social Work student's analyses of their experience of evidence-based practice learning to propose an adult-learner model to improve evidence-based practice pedagogy in Social Work.

Uggerhoj, L. (2011). What is practice research in social work- definitions, barriers, and possibilities. *Social Work & Society* 9(1)45-59.

Practice is subject to increasing pressure to demonstrate its ability to achieve outcomes required by public policy makers. As part of this process social work practice has to engage with issues around advancing knowledge-based learning processes in a close collaboration with education and research-based perspectives. This has given rise to approaches seeking to combine research methodology, field research and practical experience. Practice research is connected to both “the science of the concrete” – a field of research oriented towards subjects more than objects and “mode 2 knowledge production” – an application-oriented research where frameworks and findings are discussed by a number of partners. Practice research is defined into two approaches: *practice research* – collaboration between practice and research – and *practitioner research* – processes controlled and accomplished by practitioners. The basic stakeholders in practice research are social workers, service users, administrators, management, organisations, politicians and researchers. Accordingly, practice research is necessarily collaborative, involving a meeting point for different views, interests and needs, where complexity and dilemmas are inherent. Instead of attempting to balance or reconcile these differences, it is important to respect the differences if collaboration is to be established. The strength of both practice and research in practice research is to address these difficult challenges. The danger for both fields is to avoid and reject them.

Uggerhøj, L. (2012). Theorizing practice research in social work. *Social Work and Social Sciences Review*, 15(1), 49-73. <https://doi.org/10.1921/swssr.v15i1.510>

The article focuses on theories, definitions, interests, possibilities and barriers in practice research in social work. It points out that both practice and research will be influenced by participating in and developing practice research. – and that both parts must and will learn

from the process. To elaborate and define practice research in social work, it is necessary to consider connected approaches and theories. The article will show that practice research is both connected to and can use the theoretical frames of Actual science and Mode 2 knowledge production. To understand and develop research closely connected to practice it is necessary to define it in three different ways: practice research, practitioner research and user-controlled research. Examples from different Nordic approaches connected to these definitions will be presented. Although practice and research both need to develop practice research, they do at the same time have different interests which will challenge both parts. Practice research must be looked upon as both an area of collaboration and a meeting point for different stakeholders: users, social workers, administrative management/organizers, politicians and researchers. It is stated that practice research at the same time need to break down barriers between the stakeholders, and to be aware not to combine them totally as differences and dilemmas are a part of practice research and should remain so.

Walsh, C. A., Casselman, P. J., Hickey, J., Lee, N., & Pliszka, H. (2015). Engaged in research/achieving balance: A case example of teaching research to masters of social work students.

*Contemporary Issues in Education Research*, 8(2), 93–102.

<https://doi.org/10.19030/cier.v8i2.9142>

This article considers the use of participatory action research and Photovoice as a tool for engaging graduate level social work students in research education. Photovoice is an investigative tool that assists people in critically reflecting on the everyday social and political realities of their lives, enriching their understanding of their communities and the issues pertinent to them, while at the same time, giving them a voice from which to educate others on these issues. In the context of a group assignment, 26 social work students, enrolled in an introductory graduate research course, were asked to reflect upon the question, “What does



balance look like for you in the MSW program?” Thirty-two photographs with captions were submitted and analyzed by class members for relevant themes. Balance was described as existing along a continuum from balanced to unbalanced and was comprised of four major themes: connection, nurturance, keeping perspective, and disengagement. Although this teaching strategy was not formally assessed, preliminary impressions are that students benefited from participating in the Photovoice activity.

Walsh, C. A., Gulbrandsen, C., & Lorenzetti, L. (2019). Research practicum: An experiential model for social work research. *SAGE Open*, 9(2), 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244019841922>

Research training is a key area of social work education and integral to the success of future practitioners. Innovative pedagogical models for teaching research have been proposed, including those based on experiential approaches. This exploratory study evaluated a research practicum (RP) model for social work students. The intended outcome of the study was to develop, implement, and evaluate a comprehensive model for RP that encompasses experiential, cognitive, relational, and affective dimensions of learning. In total, 16 students and 14 instructors completed an online survey and open-ended questions about their experiences. Mentorship was identified as a key component facilitating student learning during the RP across cognitive, affective, behavioral, and relational dimensions. Mentoring provided students in this study with modeling, guidance, and scaffolding; offering a secure foundation for developing their research skills; and envisioning themselves as researchers. The findings suggest that a RP can provide students the setting in which to develop a broad range of skills and competencies in social work research.

Walsh, C. A., & Hewson, J. (2012). A comparison of two methods of teaching research to master of social work students. *International Journal of Higher Education*, 1(1), 14-21.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.11575/PRISM/35484>

While various curriculum strategies have been presented for teaching research, little is known about the effectiveness of different teaching approaches. This study compared two models for teaching research to MSW students: a mentorship model (TM1) and a more structured, didactic model (TM2). Students (n=23) self-completed the Research Self Efficacy questionnaire on the first and last day of class. Repeated measures ANOVA showed that both groups improved over time; however, TM2 students improved significantly more than TM1 students. This study provides preliminary insights and suggestions for further research on different models for enhancing research skills and confidence of social work students.

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