

‘ACADEMIC ALCHEMY: A LITERATURE REVIEW UNPICKING IMPACT AND EVIDENCE-BASED POLICY IN ORDER TO BUILD IN THE LIVED EXPERIENCE, IN THE FIELD OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN.’

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Abstract

Increasingly, links between theory and practice are becoming formalised in policy. For researchers in Scotland, the Research Excellence Framework places great emphasis on academic impact out with their institutions (ESRC 2015).; Evidence-based models look to create links between practice and theory from within a practice context. However, academics have observed the lineal emphasis of the impact agenda (Holmwood 2011) and impact has divorced from context (Pardoe 2014). Reflecting on social work, Webb (2001: 64) notes a lack of compatibility with decision-making in the field and the ‘rationality assumed by the evidence-based approach’. Now, therefore, now seems like a pertinent time to draw some of these discussions together and explore alternative, qualitative, ways of conceptualising the dialogue between research and practice.

This PhD research project aims to critically reflect on the assumptions surrounding key policies that draw research and practice together, placing in the centre of the discussion the lived experience of those involved. To do this, in depth, a case study method is employed; research carried out with looked after children is followed, interviewing those organising and attending the research dissemination efforts. The analytical framework is guided by Bakhtin’s (1981) key concepts around relationships and language, whilst relating the findings to the context of looked after children. The paper reviews the literature around impact and evidence-based practice and by offering a critique of the current epistemological frameworks and methodologies, the space is then created to include broader literature to understand the different pushes and pulls on decision-making in social care such as economics, ethics, philosophy and social psychology.

Keywords: Bakhtin, Evidence-based Practice, Impact, Literature Review, Policy
