Building Bridges Not Pipelines: Promoting Two-Way Traffic Between Practice and Research

A Series of International Conferences on Practice Research

This conference is part of an on-going series designed to explore and generate innovative approaches to practice-research in social work, highlighting both the everyday architecture of practice and effective ways of integrating research into that architecture, the iterative nature of knowledge production processes and the implications for both knowledge development and social work education.

This conference series began in June 2008 in Salisbury, UK followed by the May/June 2012 conference at the University of Helsinki in Finland. The first conference brought together interested academics and professionals (organized by SPRING - the Southampton Practice Research Initiative Network Group) in Salisbury, UK, to formulate an international statement on principles of practice-research. Comprised of academic researchers and practitioners from Canada, Hong Kong, Israel, Italy, the Nordic countries, Singapore, the U.K. and the USA, a core group known as the "Salisbury Forum" authored The Salisbury Statement. The principles articulated in this document were intended for application to social work and more broadly in all professions where the integration of research of practice is important.

The organizing question driving the 2012 conference was how do we build a more "robust" practice research knowledge base in social work? Conference papers, workshops and posters gave considerable attention to what practice research is, to what the possibilities and barriers to practice research are and what 'robust' might mean in the context of practice research. Papers from the conference and a Helsinki statement summarizing core discussions will be published in a special issue of the journal Nordic Social Work Research.

The 2014 conference extends this work by recognizing gaps and stressors between practice organizations and research efforts, identifying innovative models for exchange, and examining strategies for building greater and more meaningful collaborations among practitioners, service users and researchers.