

2009 International Campbell Collaboration (C2) Colloquium

Submitter Information

Tracy Wharton
Email: twharton@ua.edu

Abstract Information

Abstract Title:

An international perspective on the literature concerning the operationalization of evidence

Format:

Poster

Themes:

Systematic reviews: relevant and reliable evidence

Authors:

Tracy Wharton, MEd Doctoral Student, School of Social Work University of Alabama, USA MSc Student, Dept of Social Policy & Social Work Oxford University, UK

Abstract:

The International Federation of Social Workers defines evidence as “knowledge derived from research and practice evaluation, including local and indigenous knowledge specific to its context” (IFSW, 2006). However, despite this seemingly clear definition, there continues to be debate about the what should be considered as evidence for practice and policy making. The issue seems to be fueled not only by the professionals themselves, but by the external culture pressuring for increased value relative to the money spent on interventions. In a managed care culture that is increasingly regulated by both policy and disciplinary guidelines, education, research and practice are operating in an environment where terms are used without clear operationalization of what is meant. A comprehensive (english-language limited) literature review focusing on the operationalization of evidence in the field of social work was done. Although many more were initially identified, eighty-five sources were selected that directly spoke to this topic. Annotations of these sources were done, and content analysis of the information considered social work and non-social work literature, as well as content identified by profession and geographic location (policy context) of the writers. Two major directions in the approach to evidence were identified in the field of social work (identified practices and critical thinking orientations), and 8 themes were identified in the overall literature: politics, global implications, common practice definitions, educational models, trends in evidentiary standards, policy level debates, contextualization of research evidence, and limited practitioner voice. IFSW. (2006). IFSW 50 year jubilee: Making a world of difference. Berne, Switzerland: International Federation of Social Workers. Accessed at the IFSW website: (www.ifsw.org/en).
