

Epistemology & Beyond (3)

Knowledge & Social Work Practice

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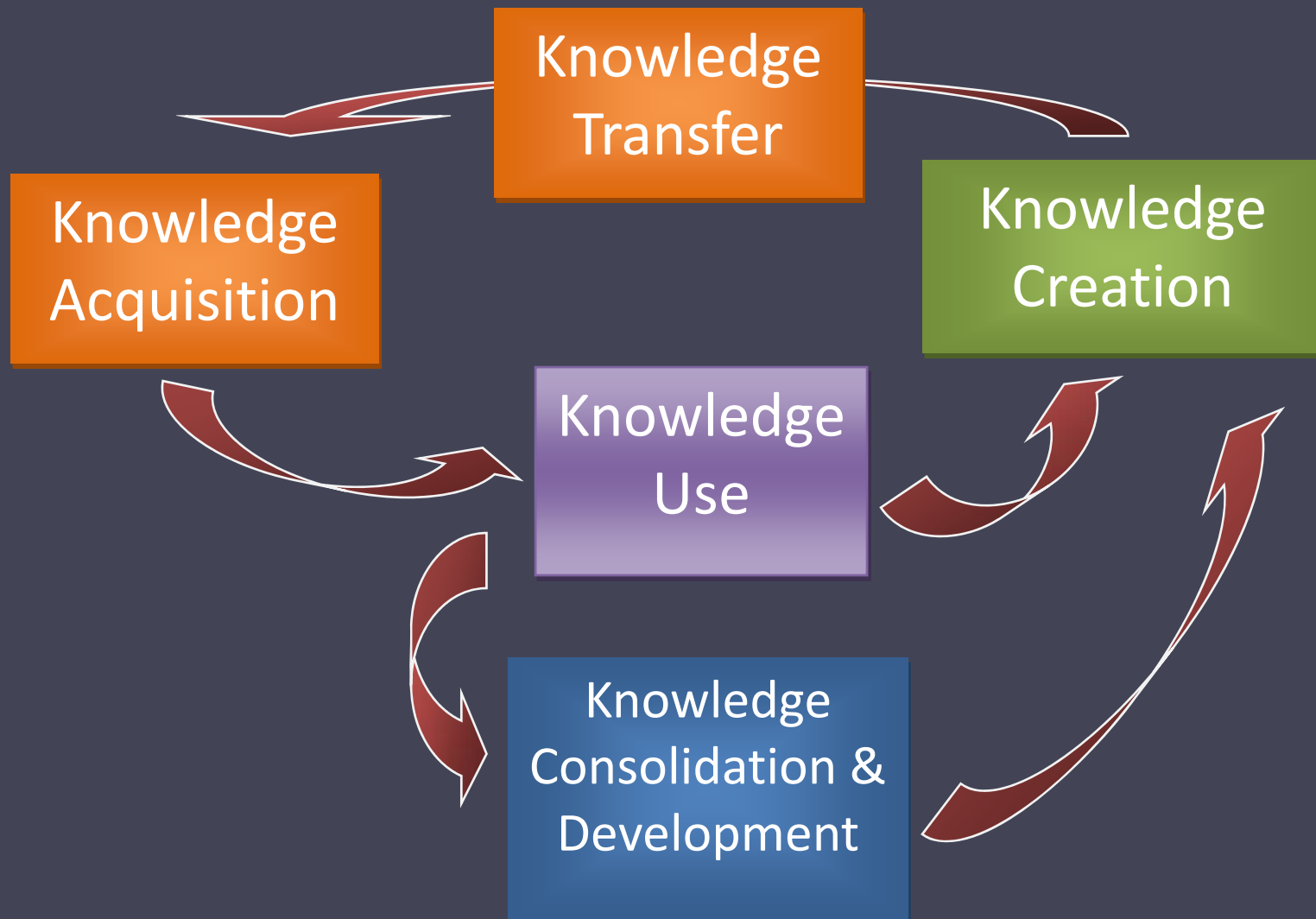
Trevithick's (2008) Model

Theoretical Knowledge	Theories for understanding of people, situations, and events Theories that analyze the role, task and purpose of social work Theories that relate directly to practice
Factual Knowledge	Law/legislation Social policy Agency policies, procedures and systems Knowledge of specific groups of people Knowledge of specific problems
Practice Knowledge	Knowledge acquisition Knowledge use Knowledge creation

Modification of Trevithick's (2008) Model

Practice Knowledge	Skills Strategies, procedures Embodied action schemas: Automatic/naturalized responses
Theoretical Knowledge	Theories for understanding of people, situations, and events Theories that analyze the role, task and purpose of social work Theories that relate directly to practice Self understanding, self concept
Factual Knowledge	Law/legislation Social policy Agency policies, procedures and systems Knowledge of specific groups of people Knowledge of specific problems Self-knowledge

The Knowledge Cycle



Knowledge and Social Work Practice

- Social work is a practice profession founded on
 1. Values
 2. Knowledge
 3. Social sanction
- Social workers as knowledge users and knowledge producers
 - As indebted borrowers from other disciplines (inferior users)
 - As creative users who bring different knowledge system to deal with real life challenges
 - As knowledge producers operating from privileged sites

The Age of Knowledge Management

- Knowledge and power in the late capitalist period
- The knowledge economy and the economics of knowledge
- The post-professional era: What you can do, not what you are
- The marginalization of academia, the market takes over the centre
- The political economy of human and social services (e.g., housing, healthcare, education)

The New Professional Knowledge Worker

- Accesses and utilizes knowledge effectively (achieving goals)
- Responds to changing environment
- Promotes learning and development instead of training
- Ensure effective knowledge mobilization by clients
- Takes an active role in knowledge production (R&D, documentation, articulation)
- Understands the inherent limitation of the individual, interfaces effectively with knowledge systems and networks of knowledge workers

Practitioners, Clients, and Academics

- Knowledge, power, and authority
- Multiple sites of knowledge production and mobilization/utilization: Everyday life, practice, and research
- Clients and practitioners as knowledge producers
- Knowledge production and learning through social work processes
- Practice wisdom in need of explication, articulation, and documentation
- Multiple forms of knowledge: Definite and contingent knowledge

Evaluating Knowledge: Knowledge and Empirical/Lived Experience

- Correspondence: relevance, validity, reliability, trustworthiness
- Empirical Research
- Practice experience
- Personal experience

First Things First: Why Am I Doing This?

- To confirm something that I already know or believe, but just that it can pass as research knowledge
- To explore something that I am interested in, hoping that I will discover something interesting
- I have questions that I want to get answered
- I want to find a better way to understand something
- I want to find a better way to do something

Research & the Quest for Knowledge

- Exploring the unknown, and what is not well-understood (e.g., sex among seniors)
- Accessing indigenous perspectives or original voices, often subdued (e.g., gay men, immigrants)
- Making sense of unusual phenomena (e.g., calendar savant, satellite kids)
- Identifying patterns and processes in practice (e.g., psychotherapy process)
- Elucidating complex relationships (e.g., oocyte donation)
- Theory building (e.g., sexuality)
- Model building (e.g., cross-cultural psychotherapy, SSLD, MCM)

Back to the Basics

Researchers beware!

The question determines the method, not the other way around.

1. What do I want to find out?
2. What is the best way to do it?
3. Why is this method better than the other methods?
4. What do I need to learn in order to do it well?
5. Why am I avoiding certain methods and procedures?

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