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THE TEACHING OF RESEARCH METHODOLOGY IN INITIAL TRAINING IN SOCIAL WORK: BETWEEN THE REQUIRED TRANSVERSALITY AND THE PREDOMINANCE OF QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY

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Abstract: Social work is a profession recognized for its intervention with populations in situations of social vulnerability. But, it is not reduced to this dimension and the investigation has gained more and more space in the practice of professionals and prominence in the literature of the area. Therefore, it is important to understand how we train students and future professionals in this field. In this article, we present a part of a broader study on the teaching of research in initial training in social work, where we intend to know and understand the methodological guidelines for research taught in initial training in social work from the point of view of teachers. This is a multiple case study of a qualitative nature, whose units of analysis are three Degree courses in Social Work in Portugal, where 12 teachers were interviewed. The data revealed the concern that the universities (Higher Education Institutions) have shown in guaranteeing students a transversal knowledge of the different methodological approaches, regardless of the trends that currently mark the investigations produced by social workers, their interest or suitability for the disciplinary area and the methodologies preferably adopted by the teachers themselves as researchers. It is also concluded that, despite this transversality, there is a predominance of qualitative methodology in the work developed by social work students in association with the nature of the intervention of the profession.

Keywords: Social service, Graduated Training, Research Methodology, Qualitative Methodology.

INTRODUCTION

Social work is a profession of social intervention that has been asserting itself as an academic discipline, where the field of research gains more and more importance, namely for professional practice. However, the literature points to a lack of confidence on the part of social workers in carrying out investigations, which contributed to the low scientific production in the area (Harvey et al., 2013). The same can be seen in social work students in different cycles of higher education (Adam et al., 2004; Maschi et al., 2013) who, in addition to a lack of confidence, show anxiety in relation to the curricular units of Research Methods and Techniques (Bolin et al., 2012; Einbinder, 2014; Maschi et al., 2013) and a certain reluctance towards them (D'Cruz & Jones, 2004; Dodd & Epstein, 2012; Epstein, 2010; Harder, 2010; Royse, 2008)

Regarding the teaching of research in training in social work, we can find in the literature different and varied analyzes that cover a range of topics ranging from the study of methodologies for research taught in the training context and, in what way, they can contribute to research in professional practice, as well as for the interest of students and professionals in research (Knee, 2002; Lundahl, 2008; Macke & Tapp, 2012; McCoyd et al., 2009; Phillips et al., 2012); to the study of students' trust in research, or their own research orientation (Einbinder, 2014; Maschi et al., 2013; Morgenshtern et al., 2011; Stark & Cohen, 2007).

In this work, we essentially present the teachers' view of the curricular units of research methods and techniques in terms of the methodological approaches taught, as it is considered structuring to understand how students are trained, particularly in the field of research methodologies (qualitative and quantitative). Thus, among the competences for research is the need to provide students, and future social workers, with the set of research methods so that they can use them (also in their practice), and be able to recognize the potential/ advantages and limitations/ disadvantages of using qualitative and

quantitative methods, or their combination, in order to rule out possible "methodologies" or prevalence of the method over the object to be investigated. As Gambrill (1995) mentions, methods must be chosen according to the purpose or purpose of the investigation, because in teaching/learning the method the focus is on its knowledge rather than the "marketing" that can be done around a or on the other hand, avoiding possible confusion between personal preferences and what a method offers, so the author defends a greater harmonization between the purpose to be investigated and the method.

The issue of methodology or different methodological approaches in training is presented as a matter of great relevance when thinking about training and the applicability of the research field, as it contains the dimension of operationality in practice, but also the articulation that this has a theoretical and paradigmatic dimension.

To understand the complexities of social work practice, especially its micro and macro dimensions, can only be accomplished through the full use of the methodological repertoire (Greene et al., 2009). Thus, although we can trace this necessary vision of the scope of the methodologies, studies indicate (Fraser & Lewis, 1993; Ryan & Sheehan, 2000) that in this domain, the reality of training can find different nuances, in fact, they are also related to the training contexts. For example, in the American context, there is a prevalence of quantitative methodologies in social work, while in the European context, one can observe a prevalence of qualitative methodologies in social work research. Overall, the latter seem to have gained greater recognition in social work since the end of the 20th century (Padgett, 2016). Part of this recognition is associated with the alignment that qualitative methods have with the objectives of the profession, namely because they involve the dimension of active listening, observation and for showing a concern to give voice to people in situations of vulnerability (Munn, 2016), as well as, give more adequate answers to the complexity of the daily life and of the problem situations that the social workers face.

METHODOLOGY

This work has as its theme the investigation in the initial formation in social work and main objective to know and to understand the methodological orientations of investigation taught in the initial formation in social work from the point of view of the teachers. This is a multiple case study.[1], exploratory[2] and of a qualitative nature [3], covering 3 of the 17 existing 1st cycle (degree) courses in social work in Portugal. These represent objects, whose physical and social limits are clearly determined. But also, where the degree of focus is located at the present moment, since it is an empirical study of contemporary "phenomena" in its context[4] (Yin, 2001) and where control over behavioral events is not required (as e.g. in the experiment). Effectively, more than the description of how

1. The confidentiality requirements required a set of precautions that do not allow the identification of universities.

2. Yin (2001) defines case studies for research purposes in three types: explanatory, descriptive and exploratory. And, within these, he mentions two variations (in the sense that they are part of the same methodological structure of the case study): single and multiple case studies, the latter also called comparative or, according to Stake (2009), collective.

3. Case studies are often associated with qualitative methodologies, however, there may be case studies where quantitative methodologies are privileged (Yin, 2001). The association or equating of case studies with a specific type of data collection method does not express an understanding of the nature of the case study as a research strategy (Vaus, 2001).

4. The context is particularly fundamental for the case study (Ludwig, 2009). Although Yin (2001) emphasizes the importance of context in case studies, he assigns it greater relevance in descriptive case studies (due to the need for an exhaustive description of the phenomenon in context). Stake (2009), taking into account his division of intrinsic and instrumental case studies, states that the importance of context will always be greater in intrinsic case studies, while in instrumental case studies its importance will vary and, in some cases, cases, have little relevance. It must be noted that this study is in the field of instrumental studies.

the courses studied are organized, we try to explain why each one of them presents itself with a specific configuration (Bento, 2013). In guiding our investigation, we can identify two research logics with considerably different weights: the inductive logic, which allowed us to establish the starting point of the investigation and the abductive logic that guided us taking into account the objective of the study.

The inductive strategy was particularly present in the initial case selection process. In seeking to ascertain differences in training,[5] we tried to identify a possible structure and mechanism that would represent a regularity (Baikie, 2000) and this was done through the search for possible different training models (strategies) built from the design of the structure of the curricula taking into account the C.U.s (curricular units) of investigation. Thus, we sought to analyze the regularities between the various training projects, and understand how they could be grouped in order to obtain/capture the regularities/ patterns between the various training projects, which essentially constituted the initial methodological démarche.

MULTIPLE CASE STUDY: CASE SELECTION PROCESS

To bear in mind that we were looking for different cases, we intended to find, within the scope of the entire training offer in Portugal, universities that represented, from the outset, different models of teaching research in social work.

Determining which multiple case studies to choose is based on the logic of replication (and not on the logic of sampling), replication that can be literal or theoretical (Yin, 2001). The first search/predicts similar results (literal), the second search/predicts that, for predictable reasons, contrasting results will be produced (theoretical).[6]

The selection process of the universities involved several stages, starting from the following question: What criteria to use in the selection of the universities? That is, what potential distinct models of training, in the field of research, in 1st Cycle courses in Social Work can be identified? (inductive logic).

To this end, we needed to define the criteria (or relevant characteristics) that would guarantee the diversity/heterogeneity (Guerra, 2008) of the cases. Thus, the following criteria were adopted: i. the weight in ECTS of the Research Initiation C.U.s (curricular units) in the PE (Study Plan); ii. curriculum design in universities Research; iii. the historical dimension and consolidation of the study plan.[7]

Thus, the establishment of models according to the structure of the PE/UC of research focused on the C.U.s (curricular units) that we call "Base" and which include the

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5. Although the initial approach could have been constructed in different ways, we started the approximation through the documentary analysis of the presentations of the courses on the universities web pages and their evaluations according to the various reports made available by the A3ES (Agency for Assessment and Accreditation of Higher Education). The first source of information represents the possible brand image and the second has an evaluative component.

6. However, the fact that we can make this distinction does not mean that we cannot use both in the same study.

7. There are, in Portugal, 17 universities with the 1st Cycle course in Social Work, which can be differentiated taking into account the type of education in which they fit (public, private and concordat university; public and private polytechnic) and their geographical location. These criteria, which are somehow distinctive, were not considered as criteria to be used, since, given the defined objectives, they are not structurally relevant for the establishment of different models in the teaching of research in initial training in Social Work. Although we could take into account other distinguishing characteristics, it was these three criteria for choosing universities that represented the most appropriate combination for the objectives set, taking into account that, as Stake (2009: 20) states, "it is likely that the relevant characteristics are as numerous that only a few combinations can be included.".

Criteria	Analyzed from:	Indicators / Verification Means
Weight in ECTS of Research Initiation C.U.s (curricular units) in PE	PE of the 17 degrees in Social Work	Number of ECTS of Research Initiation Units in PE. For its determination, the following were used: Files of C.U. Curricular Units with designations related to research and others that could be associated with them.
Curricular design in relation to the Research Units of the universities	Curricular Units Files (FUC) Division of C.U.s (curricular units) into four large groups	1) Basic UC in Research Methods and Techniques in Social Sciences (MTICS); 2) Research Seminars; 3) Research and Intervention Seminars and 4) UC Workshops.
Historical Dimension	History of the Degree in Social Work at each UNIVERSITY	Year of creation of the degree course.

Table 1. Criteria for choosing multiple cases.

C.U.s (curricular units) of Research Methods and Techniques in Social Sciences (MTICS)[8] and Statistics/Quantitative Methods, in articulation with two distinct configurations of Seminars, considered by their curricular structures and programmatic contents: the Research Seminars (SI) and the Research and Intervention Seminars (SII), as it was verified, after a a more in-depth analysis based on the FUC, that the studied Official C.U.s (curricular units) referred to the research dimension in a residual way.

From this analysis, we classify the universities into three main models, namely: i) the model organized around Research Base C.U., with 8 universities; ii) the model organized around Basic Research Units and Research Seminar(s), with 6 universities; iii) the model organized around Basic Research Units and Research and Intervention Seminar(s), with 3 universities. Thus, in terms of empirical research, one universities was selected from each of the training "models" (taking into account the three criteria mentioned in table 1).

MULTIPLE CASE STUDY PLANNING: PREPARATION AND TRAINING

The preparation phase for data collection involved the construction of a research protocol for each of the universities, where the ethical issues of research were addressed, namely, the presentation of the informed consent to be applied. After contacting the institutions, it was decided that their identity would not be revealed. Even before we started collecting data at the selected universities, we carried out a pilot case study in order to trigger research training processes (Pocinho, 2012; Yin, 2001). For the pilot study, we selected a 1st Cycle course in Social Work whose choice followed the criterion of convenience, either because of the ease of access to data/interviewees, or because of the geographical proximity of the universities in question.

In the process of developing the pilot study, it was possible to improve the data collection plan, as well as the collection instruments, so this integrative vision of the entire research process means that the pilot study cannot be confused with just pre -tests to instruments (Yin, 2001).

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8. The generic designation we assign is not necessarily the same as the designation of the C.U.s(curricular units) in each of the universities.

DATA COLLECTION: SOURCES OF EVIDENCE AND PARTICIPANTS

In each of the units of analysis (the three universities that are part of our study), we used sources of evidence such as interviews and documentary sources. The more diversified these sources of evidence are, the more robust analysis of the results is guaranteed through the use of methodological triangulation (Bechhofer & Paterson, 2000), which also helps to respond to the complexity associated with case studies (Alves-Mazzotti, 2006). In this part of the investigation that we present, there is essentially the data collected in the interviews carried out with the teachers of the Research C.U.s (curricular units) and coordinators of the degrees. Despite the fact that a set of documentation per case was also analyzed, the interviews carried out with the various professors linked to the Research Units are the main source of evidence for this investigation.

The number of interviewees depended on the number of professors associated with each UC, observing, as a rule, that in the case of UC with the same designation between the first and second semester (eg Research Seminar I and II) the professors are the same, reducing the number of teachers to be interviewed. In total, in the C.U. (curricular units) domain under analysis, 12 teachers were interviewed (Case A: 2; Case B: 3; Case C: 4) and the coordinators. In table 2 we present in greater detail the sources of evidence according to the units of analysis.

COLLECTION, PROCESSING AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Qualitative data analysis appears in our investigation as the technique used to understand and analyze the interviews and documents collected, as this is a technique for processing information that allows the deconstruction of discourse and the production of a new discourse through a process of location-attribution of traces of meaning, that is, it allows us to deal with information and testimonies in a methodical way (Guerra, 2008). As software to support qualitative data analysis, we used MAXQDA, whose use greatly enhances the research work. Although, as mentioned by Guerra (2008), it does not dispense with the traditional categorical and typological analysis. Some of the analysis categories and subcategories were established a priori and others a posteriori, emerging in this case from the analysis of the interviews with teachers and in order to account for their rationalities and practices, presented in table 2.

In order to carry out the qualitative analysis of data, we chose to make the full transcription of the interviews that were recorded in audio, since we consider it an important step in the data analysis phase (Alcock & Iphofen, 2007). This transcription process followed a reflection on the protocol to be followed and the type of transcription to be carried out.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
METHODOLOGICAL GUIDELINES AND TEACHERS' CONCEPTIONS

In the cases studied, regarding research methodologies, universities are positioned in the broad field of quantitative and qualitative research approaches. In this domain, there was a convergence between the three cases, which was unanimously expressed as: students must have a transversal knowledge of research methodologies, that is, know the quantitative and qualitative approaches. Guidance highlighted as fundamental, insofar as a professional whose profile includes the possibility of developing investigations in his practice needs that these result from the relevance of the issues/objectives that emerge from the practice and not from methods

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Analysis Units	Sources of evidence
A Case (MTICS Base UC)	Interviews (3 teachers): - Course coordinator - Professor of MTICS I and II - Professor of Statistics/Quantitative Methods Documentation: - C.U. (curricular units) sheets - Student work available (MTICS and Statistics). - Article written by university professors - University documentation
B Case (MTICS Base Course & Research Seminar)	Interviews (4 teachers): - Course coordinator - Professor of MTICS II - Professor of the Research Seminar I and II - Professor of Statistics/Quantitative Methods Documentation: - C.U. (curricular units) sheets - Document with the themes of the Research Seminar works / Research projects developed by students at the UC of Research in Social Work - University documentation
C Case MTICS Base Course & Research Seminar)	Interviews (5 teachers): - Course coordinator - MTICS teachers - Professor of Statistics/Quantitative Methods - Professors of Research and Intervention Seminars I and II (they are also internship supervisors). Documentation: - C.U. (curricular units) sheets - Final course/internship work - University documentation

Table 2. Sources of Evidence by Units of Analysis.

Categories under review	Sub-categories
Research methodologies guidelines taught	Qualitative methodology Quantitative methodology Mixed methodology Transversality of the methodologies taught Predominance of certain methodologies in student work
Teachers' Conceptions	Profile of the teacher as a researcher Teacher's methodological preferences Overview of student preferences Vision on methodologies and usefulness for social work
Research and support software (taught and used)	Qualitative research software Quantitative research software Bibliographic managers Online questionnaire construction tools

Table 3. Analysis Categories and Subcategories.

established as relevant a priori in training (Greene et al., 2009; McCoyd et al., 2009).

This general position does not mean, however, that universities do not favor specific methodological approaches arising either from the methodological preferences of teachers, or from their views on the methodologies that tend to be more relevant for social workers in relation to the training context.

Regarding the methodological preferences of teachers, two aspects of convergence between the cases studied were identified in the testimonies:

1. In general (for example: UC of MTICS and Seminars) the inclination of the interviewed professors, in relation to research methodologies, lean towards qualitative methodologies, a trend related to the research they develop in their areas of specialization as researchers in Social Sciences. What is pointed out is that, aware of this preference, they try to ensure that it is not inducing or determining the choice of methodologies that students will have to adopt in their work.

2. Only professors in the C.U. (curricular units) areas of statistics or quantitative methods are turned (by their areas of training and as researchers) to quantitative approaches, highlighting the advantages and importance of enhancing these approaches for Social Work students (in research and intervention), however, they mention that they observe a tendency to be attributed to qualitative approaches (although they also mention the possibility that mixed approaches are an asset to be reinforced in practice).

Regarding the perspective defended by the teachers on the methodologies tending to be more relevant to social workers, convergent views were identified between cases B and C, differently from Case A, taking into account the perspectives of the teachers of the MTICS base C.U.s (curricular units).

In Case B, as mentioned, qualitative methodologies are "privileged" (most used) in projects developed by students. This predominance arises either associated with its relevance to Social Work (even given the nature of the data collected in its practice) (EP2_CB), or, in a training context, due to the erroneous view of students when associating qualitative methodologies with procedures of more easy to use (EP2_CB), and that cannot be dissociated, either, from difficulties and resistance to the domain of statistics/mathematics, or even from the objects of study in Social Work (EP3_CB).

In this same sense, case C highlights qualitative methodologies as being among the most used by students, however, as mentioned by one of the teachers: "[qualitative methodologies] predominate, although they do not dominate" (EP2_CC). This "predominance" of qualitative methodologies is related, according to the Teachers, to the connection between the profession and the subjectivity of phenomena (EP5_CC); the prevalence of the comprehensive paradigm (EP4_CC); for the privileged contact with people and the interest in obtaining in-depth information. Bearing these questions in mind, one of the Professors (EP2_CC) recognizes that, perhaps, this vision of the interests of Social Work in terms of research is transmitted explicitly or implicitly to the students. The methodological options of the students' projects, as mentioned in Case B, are sometimes also related to the students' own "illusion" about the analysis of qualitative data as being easier to implement than the analysis of quantitative data.

In case A, the reflection carried out by the teachers essentially focused on the resurgence of quantitative methodologies in the field of practices and research in general. In the case of the statistics teacher (EP2_CA) whose involvement in the university also involves

promoting and supporting projects that the school develops together with the community (support for municipal plans and municipal diagnoses) and an overview of international publications and the need for publication by the teachers, for which the use of quantitative methodologies can be a facilitating element, as well as the monitoring of students who use quantitative methodologies in their projects and academic work, is at the base of their vision of changing the trends of the university itself, once that, in the past, there was a clearer prevalence of qualitative methodologies at various levels.

This professor considers, without devaluation of qualitative methodologies, that quantitative methodologies can be potentiators of research in the practice of social workers, namely using databases that already exist in organizations. In the same line of thought, there is the professor responsible for the C.U.s (curricular units) of MTICS (EP3_CA), who, although he has reinforced his critical position whenever there are tendencies of "appreciation" of certain methodologies in relation to others, insofar as, "each one has its potential and its limits" (Ea3). This professor considers that this resurgence of quantitative methodologies is currently observed, perhaps for two reasons. The first is related to the influence of Evidence Based Practice (EBP) and the second is related to the interest of the organizations themselves in the analysis of their databases, in the analysis of the degrees of customer satisfaction (centered on the quality management models).

The coordination of the course (case A) also points to the prevalence of qualitative methodologies as closer to the interests of investigation and the actions of professionals, but also because the requirements of some types of quantitative investigations are more extensive, according to the interviewee, do not favor its applicability in professional daily life.

RESEARCH SUPPORT SOFTWARE

Research software is understood as an important resource, not being an exception in the field of Social Work training, since it facilitates, in different ways, the work and time required for some of the tasks that a researcher will have to fulfill, the same applying to a researcher-interventor whose time demands of their professional practice can reinforce the need to use these technologies, even to enhance collaborative work with other researchers. However, the success in using this resource depends on the previous learning of the underlying methodological and technical aspects.

Software for qualitative research is fundamental for the potentialization and optimization of the study to be developed. However, as software it does not dispense with the expertise of the researcher who has to master the processes theoretically and methodologically. It can be seen, in the case of qualitative data analysis, that it is a cognitive exercise of thinking, imagining, and having creative capacity. Thus, it is not the software that does the data analysis, but the peopleware (Jennings, 2007). However, this same process can be more easily grasped or learned by students using these software.

Through the teachers' testimonies, it is also clear that the use of quantitative data analysis software, which teachers understand as a fundamental tool with potential since it allows students not to need to master the entire mathematical theorem underlying certain calculations to analyze the data, which is of special interest to students in the areas of social sciences, as the literature underlines "the two areas in which students most need to acquire skills are, in the first place, how to decide which statistical procedures that must

be used to respond to each need and, secondly, how to interpret the results obtained" (Bryman & Cramer, 2003, p. xxi).

All universities reported using data analysis programs, in which quantitative analysis programs stand out, which are more strongly rooted, compared to qualitative research software. Regarding Qualitative research software, the situation seems different, insofar as they are less referenced. In case A, there was no indication of use. In case B, there is an indication that they teach and encourage the use of qualitative research software in the UC MTICS and Research Seminar II. In case C, although they do not use it, they recognize that it is important for students to start using these software, an aspect that has been reflected among teachers, with the provision of additional training for students.

Within the scope of research support software, Case B and C also mentioned the use of bibliographic managers. And, in Case A, the tools for carrying out and sending online questionnaires were highlighted as important resources for academic work and research.

CONCLUSIONS

Of the cases analyzed, whose configuration in terms of the structure of the Study Plans, gave rise to the selection of cases to be studied, it was possible to understand that, in the domain of the research methodology taught, there were no significant differences. The concern reported by teachers was to contribute to the development of competences in the field of research, a view defended by authors who consider social work students' knowledge of a broad spectrum of research methodologies important (Gambrill, 1995; Greene et al. al., 2009). Thus, the main orientation lies in the concern that universities have shown to

guarantee students a transversal knowledge of the different methodological approaches, regardless of the trends that currently mark the investigations produced by social workers, their interest or suitability for the disciplinary area, and, the methodologies preferably adopted by the teachers themselves as researchers.

Despite this transversality detected, there seems to be a predominance of qualitative methodologies, or the valorization of them in the teaching of research in social work in Portugal, due to the proximity that these methodologies have with the objectives and interests of research in professional action, in in line with the views of Munn (2016) and Padgett (2016).

The methodological approach we adopted in this investigation is different from two reference studies in this field, that of Fraser and Lewis (1993) in the USA and that of Ryan and Sheehan (2000) in Australia, both using quantitative methodologies from the application of of questionnaires. These studies essentially looked for the types of investigations and methodologies taught in order to map the teaching of investigation in social work. The adoption of another methodological approach of a qualitative nature, such as the multiple case study that we present, allowed us to understand, from the teachers' discourses, their view on the teaching of methodology, their preferences and how they associate, or see, the integration of knowledge learned by students, future professionals, in their practice. In this logic, and for future studies, we consider that it would be useful, after studying the cases presented (defined through a logic of theoretical replication) to be able, within each one of them, to define new cases in a logic of literal replication. It may, however, be relevant in future studies to also adopt methodologies that allow a greater understanding of the

nuances and particularities of research in the training of students, which may involve a more ethnographic approach to training practices and/or other important training processes. in this field, listening not only to teachers, but also to students.

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