DEMYSTIFYING ANALYSIS

What is analysis?

“...examining the elements [of an issue]; gaining a better understanding of it; and then selecting a course of action” (Wilkins and Boahen, 2013; p2).

Analysis is also a written account of the above process (The Concise Oxford Dictionary, 1995).
THE (ITERATIVE) STAGES OF ANALYSIS IN SOCIAL WORK

1. Breaking down information and (re)integrating it:
   ▪ thematically or chronologically; what I and others know; ‘silent’ data

2. Understanding, interpreting, articulating

3. Planning a course of action

4. Presenting the analysis
CRAFTING AN ANALYSIS

Stage 1 - Making sense of information to self and others
- Understanding the core issues
- Explaining ‘how’, ‘why’, ‘what’?
- Taking an inquisitive and critical approach to information: cross-checking sources, self-critiquing, listening to service users’ criticisms
- Organising the data

Stage 2 - Interpreting the data: formal and informal reasoning
- Contextualising the data: law, ethics, practice
- Gut feeling
- Practitioner wisdom
- Formal knowledge: national and local policies; theoretical and research knowledge, models of practice, analytic tools
CRAFTING AN ANALYSIS

Stage 3 - Planning and decision-making
- (R)evaluating the information
- Clarifying the purpose of actions
- Situating actions on the ‘evidence’ – for example research evidence, the available information, previous actions
- Examining implications or consequences

Stage 4 - Presenting the analysis effectively
- Evidencing the above
- Showing different voices and opinions
- Explaining or considering opposing viewpoints
- Carrying your readers and listeners with you
- Concluding and recommending a course of action
A MODEL OF ANALYSIS IN SOCIAL WORK

- Sense-making
- Interpreting
- Reviewing
- Decision-making
- Presentation
GROUP EXERCISE – THE TRIAL!

Imagine that in the High Court, someone is being trailed for a serious crime – each table in this room has a part to play in case.

1. prosecutor
2. defence barrister
3. alleged victim
4. alleged culprit
5. judge

In your respective groups, discuss the following questions:
- What would you accept as ‘valid’ evidence in this trial and why?
- What ‘quality standards’ would you set for the information?
- What would make you believe or be convinced by what the other parties involved in the trial say?
- How would you persuade others of your viewpoint?
IDENTIFYING KNOWLEDGE FOR CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Types and quality of knowledge in social care (Pawson et al, 2003)

- Organisational
  - What works in the local area?
  - Operationalisation of eligibility criteria
  - What services are effective relative to the population?
  - Local policies and procedures
- Practitioner
  - Tacit knowledge
  - Practice wisdom and experience
- User
  - Validity of personal experiences
  - Informal knowledge of the local area
  - Self-motivation
- Research
  - Formal theories and evaluations etc.
- Policy community
  - Statutory guidance and policy debates etc.

- Key issue: selecting knowledge ‘type’ and quality
THINKING BEYOND THE THEORY/PRAXIS DEBATE

Theory
- Proposes a model of ‘reality’ e.g. feminism, social constructionism, etc.
- Guidance for understanding and planning:
  - “[theories] shape practice by giving social workers a conceptual framework that can be used to explore the ‘presenting problem’ [...and] provide a framework for developing treatment or intervention plans...’ (Hanson and Patel, 2013; p2)
- Models of intervention
- Theory and social work complexity (Parton, 2000)
  - Drawing upon rather than using theory
  - ‘Take away’ knowledge (White, 2009)
  - ‘Paradigm proliferation as a good thing to think with’ (Lather, 2006)
CONCLUSION

- Analysis is an iterative process
- The importance of critiquing information (or knowledge)
- Setting aside time to analyse
- The necessity for good presentation of analysis
- Defensible versus defensive practice