SWAP
case studies

Using Social Policy Research in Teaching

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Contents

The Higher Education Academy
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Using Social Policy Research in Teaching

Overview and context
Julia Waldman and Rebecca Johnson, SWAP

In constructing links between research and teaching the discipline is an important mediator (Healey, 2005).

Background

Between 2005 and 2007 Alan Jenkins and Mick Healey directed the Supporting New Academic Staff project (SNAS). Funded by the Higher Education Academy, part of their brief was to work with the Academy's Subject Centres to examine the particular nature of teaching-research relations in disciplinary communities. In particular, they set out to gather examples of 'interesting practices' in the disciplines which brought teaching and research together. Review essays and materials produced by many of the Subject Centres are accessible on the Academy's website at www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/research/teaching/disciplines.

Jenkins, with Healey and Zetter, also produced a comprehensive paper in April 2007 'Linking Research and Teaching in Disciplines and Departments', which is available to view or download from http://www. heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/research/teaching.

In 2006 the Subject Centre for Social Policy and Social Work (SWAP) took the decision to invite academics from the social policy academic community to contribute case studies to the SNAS project. Professor David Gladstone was appointed as a consultant to the project and asked to write an introductory essay to support the case studies. SWAP also organised a one-day event in March 2007 for social policy academics to discuss the links between the teaching of social policy and research. Comments and issues identified by delegates at this event are included in this document.

Requests for case studies were made by:

- targeting specific authors
- inviting participants at the March 2007 event to submit examples
- approaching presenters at the Social Policy Association conference 2007 and conducting interviews with them at the conference to generate case studies.

It proved a challenge to generate the case study material and we are very grateful to the six authors for the case studies in this document. All the case studies come from established academics whose research actively informs their teaching.

Research/teaching matrix

Healey (2005) developed a matrix to articulate the ways in which the research-teaching nexus manifests itself in the relationship between teacher and student. Based on the work of Griffiths (2004) who identifies three ways in which the nexus may be achieved in teaching, Healey added his own category: 'research-tutored'.

STUDENT-FOCUSED
Students as participants

Research-tutored
Curriculum emphasises learning focused on students writing and discussing essays and pages.

Research-based
Curriculum emphasises students undertaking inquiry based learning.

EMPHASIS ON RESEARCH CONTENT

EMPHASIS ON RESEARCH PROCESS AND PROBLEMS

Research-led
Curriculum is structured around teaching current subject content.

Research-oriented
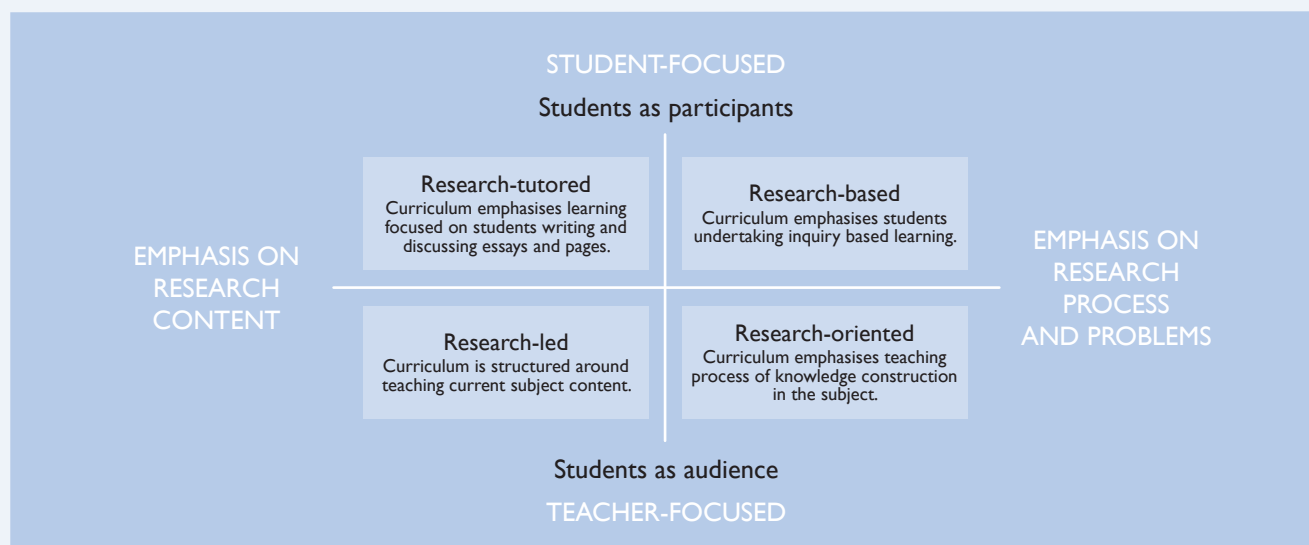Curriculum emphasises teaching process of knowledge construction in the subject.

Students as audience
TEACHER-FOCUSED

Diagram reproduced with permission from the CSAP website (www.csap-bham.ac.uk)

Gladstone's introductory essay discusses the various ways in which social policy research teaching may be situated within these categories. Each of the case studies included are illustrative of one or more parts of Healey's matrix.

Research-led and research-orientated

Arguably, research-led and research-oriented activities represent more traditional approaches to the use of research in teaching. A case study that offers a 'twist' on research-led teaching, for example, is Case Study 4 by Catherine Palmer. Palmer draws upon her own research in teaching within a module on sports policy in practice in a number of ways:

- using artefacts generated in the research (photographs, audio from interviews)
- using the experiences and challenges faced in conducting research to link to policy practice
- co-teaching with policy makers or practitioners.

Research-tutored activities

Case study 1. Margaret Arnott incorporates critiques of research reports within a module, with a particular emphasis on deconstructing methodology, and also asks students to develop a bibliography of current research linked to an essay question they are required to devise.

Case study 2. Majella Kilkey outlines a comparative social policy module in which students are encouraged to develop skills and understanding that simulate those used in research processes, in particular those of project planning and use of effective search techniques.

Research-based activities

Case study 3. Rachel Forrester-Jones describes students acting as researchers within a course offered by the Tizard Centre, which engages with community organisations that support people with learning disabilities.

Case study 6. Mike McManus explores the role of student as researcher through the Active Learning and Citizenship project. Students are invited to add materials to a website and whilst for the first groups it was undertaken by choice the model is now being incorporated as part of a module.

Combined approaches

Case study 5. Diane Grant and Claire Hennessy operate within an action-research paradigm and not only utilise research findings in their teaching but also seek to convey the links between working and researching with community groups/projects. The authors developed training materials for use by community groups and also involved students in placements in the community project.

Conclusion

It is hoped that the six case studies will stimulate thinking and ideas for integrating research into teaching and learning activities. The case studies represent a snap shot of the tools and techniques employed by lecturers in social policy to illuminate their own and others' research within their teaching in ways that enhance students' learning experiences and equip them to become research minded and research active. They also show how engagement with what might be seen as 'dry' or 'difficult' policy can be highly enjoyable as well as rewarding.

Importantly for social policy as a discipline such practices also have the scope to nurture a new generation of curious and competent researchers equipped to critique and review.

'Using social policy research in teaching' (7 March 2007) SWAP event report

Rebecca Johnson and Julia Waldman, SWAP

SWAP organised a one-day event in March 2007 for social policy academics to discuss the links between the teaching of social policy and research. Summary comments and observations which emerged from the day are presented below.

Research contexts

Professor Pete Alcock began the event by focusing on the ways in which research is defined and articulated by multiple funding bodies as well as other agendas which often work against each other. Delegates agreed that any discussion about social policy research in teaching needed to include a perspective on the research production process. Concerns were expressed that policy makers and policy making often drives policy research, sometimes at the expense of critique. Research can appear to be determined by policy makers rather than researchers and this can make it narrow in scope. The growth of private sector organisations carrying out social policy research was a related topic. Comments included:

- wherever possible a synergy is needed between research-informed theory and theory-informed research
- more evaluative research would be useful in ascertaining whether outputs from research centres such as SPRU and CRISP actually lead to policy changes.
- private sector research can avoid overhead charges and can enable staff to focus solely on research without the addition of administrative and teaching workloads
- the private sector prioritises a market research model as opposed to an academic social policy model which automatically includes ethical analysis
- the academic de-contextualisation of private sector research can be detrimental.

Quality matters

Professor Saul Becker put forward the argument that lecturers need to ensure that the research they refer to in their teaching is of a 'quality' standard. He referred to a recent report *Defining 'Quality' in Social Policy Research: Views, Perceptions and a Framework for Discussion* (2006) to outline a definition of what 'quality' research might consist of. Delegates agreed the importance of reflecting on the quality of the research being cited in lectures and teaching.

Key messages
- quality is not dependent on the producer (i.e. academic practitioners cannot assume all research produced by private companies is bad and all academic research is good)
- there are dangers in using one piece of research to represent a whole
- there may be a need to use research more 'soberly'.

Who can research and who should teach?

The issue of who carries out research and how this may determine the type of research being referred to and used in teaching was raised, particularly with reference to recent trends towards research-only and teaching-only contracts (for example, whether credible research requires the researcher to hold a PhD or whether staff who teach students should be qualified to teach).

Delegates felt that there were tensions for those on teaching–only contracts, particularly the issue of how such teachers keep in touch with research and vice versa. It was also pointed out that students have high expectations of teachers as researchers and actively seek out teaching by top level researchers and 'big names' in social policy.

The separation of research centres from mainstream departmental activities was also noted as a concern, with more strategic action needed to utilise the research activities of these centres for students' benefit.

How research is used in teaching

Professor Alan Jenkins presented a set of case studies from a range of disciplines and invited delegates to consider how these might be translated into their own contexts. The following messages and ideas emerged from delegates' discussion of their own practices.

Undergraduate research methods teaching

Debate focused on how to avoid becoming over insistent on technical issues and tools – e.g. statistical tests. There was agreement that too much focus on these could make such modules seem boring and tedious when in fact they had the potential to be the most exciting parts of social policy degrees.

Ethical processes and procedures

The impact that some ethical review procedures can have on students undertaking empirical work was also discussed. Some universities actively discourage students from certain types of field work because of ethical constraints.

Key messages

- ethical reviews are a good thing, but practitioners need strategies for reducing bureaucracy and the time involved
- some universities are stricter than others
- universities are risk-averse. Strategies to challenge this risk-aversion are needed.

Curriculum diversity

Delegates noted that curricula focused on or including social policy vary greatly between universities. They also noted the diverse number of research-focused modules on social policy courses. It was felt that in the quest to include interesting topics and research studies the focus on critique may not always be central.

Student centredness

It was proposed that the experience of research needs to be more powerfully illustrated to students by reiterating the reasons for carrying out the research in the first place.

Ideas

Convey to students the pleasure and excitement of the process of investigation by rooting teaching in good examples (personal if appropriate).

Embed research methods teaching into other modules. (An example given was of a module on Housing Policy. The lecturer concerned spent the first half of the unit preparing the students to select, investigate and develop their own investigative analysis of problems/issues in the second half. In effect the teacher provided a clear guiding and supporting role, transferring the role of investigator to the student and in the process slowly building up student confidence).

Provide examples of bad research and invite students to critique them enabling them to recognise multiplicity of methods, and to make judgements about high and low quality research.

Introduce peer supervision and peer review, to encourage students to learn from each others' research experiences (e.g. commission one set of students to devise a questionnaire and another to test it out).

Linking teaching with disciplinary research in social policy: an introductory essay

David Gladstone, University of Bristol

In common with many arts and social science disciplines, the connection between teaching and research is also central to the subject area of social policy.
This inter-relationship will be explored in three ways in this introductory essay by:

- reference to the traditions of social administration and social policy
- a discussion of the current synergy between teaching and research in this subject area
- locating some of the present tensions in the relationship.

The traditions of social administration and social policy

Social policy is a relative newcomer among the social sciences. It was not until 1950 that the first Professor of what was then called social administration, Richard Titmuss, was appointed at the London School of Economics (LSE). Presaging his appointment, however, was almost half a century of university teaching (at the LSE and some other 'civic' universities founded in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries) which was designed to prepare students to undertake work within the growing cadre of welfare agencies. In that tradition it was providing an education for practice that was based on both an ideological value system (predominantly Fabianism) and empirical investigation into social conditions, especially but not exclusively the problem of poverty.

The change of nomenclature from social administration to social policy occurred in many degree programmes from the late 1970s and led to the renaming of the professional association some years later. As Glennerster noted, it was by no means an uncontroversial development (Glennerster, 1988). But it was symbolic of a change of focus within the expanding subject area from 'what is done by policy action and how it is done' to 'why this is done or indeed whether it should be done' (Alcock, 2003, p3). This changing emphasis represented a move away from Fabianism as its ideological base and a broadening arena of research that explored the changing dynamic, as well as the impact, of a wider range of welfare services and activities both in the countries of the United Kingdom and elsewhere. The outcome was evident in teaching programmes that provided a more comprehensive theoretical foundation, a broader geographical spread of comparative welfare systems, and an enhanced evaluation of welfare policies in the United Kingdom in terms both of 'Who benefits?' and 'Who decides?'

The recent QAA benchmark statement (QAA, 2007) (www.qaa.ac.uk) presents the current central themes of social policy as 'the ways in which societies provide for the needs of their members through structures and systems of distribution, redistribution, regulation, provision and empowerment'. It contends that the subject is characterised by the following principles:

- the rigorous linking of theoretical analysis with empirical enquiry
- the identification and understanding of different value positions
- a willingness to engage with a range of intellectual traditions and social science disciplines
- the belief that students should acquire the skills and qualities which enable them to become active and informed citizens.

The current synergy between research and teaching

This section will highlight three dimensions of the synergy between research and teaching. These can be classified as follows:

- communicating research findings in teaching
- teaching about researching
- learning by doing.

It is possible to think of this classification as a variant of the research-led teaching, research-oriented teaching and research-based teaching that features in much discussion of the relationship between research and

teaching (Griffiths, 2004). The case studies presented later in this document, however, attest the veracity of the observation of Jenkins et al. (Jenkins, 2007, p4) that effective teaching/research links are not automatic and have to be constructed.

Communicating research findings in teaching

There are all sorts of ways in which by lectures, class or group discussion and seminars academic staff can share with students the results of their own research or that produced by others. In addition, student-led seminars may engage with individual research studies, presenting and critiquing their main findings. This kind of activity often takes place in special subject options, taken during the second and third years of an undergraduate degree programme. They may be built around the specific research interests of the staff member and may test their ability to communicate both the important messages as well as the detailed results of their research enquiry. By student discussion it may lead to some refinement or re-shaping in terms of presentation.

Such linkages can also happen earlier in first year modules, for example through an introductory unit which introduces students to the subject area of social policy by means of lectures or presentations given by members of staff on their current research interests. Such teaching may explore not only the mechanics of the research and its results, but also how it contributes to an understanding of the subject area.

There is also opportunity for staff to engage in pedagogic research with a cohort of students as a unit progresses. This is obviously different from, and goes beyond, conventional end of unit evaluation, and can impact both on content and the learning process.

Teaching about researching

Like other arts and social science subjects, social policy conventionally includes teaching about the processes of research in its undergraduate and taught Master's programmes. In terms of knowledge acquisition, the benchmark statement (www.qaa.ac.uk) includes 'some of the more significant sources of data about social welfare and the main research methods used to collect and analyse data'; whilst in terms of understanding it refers to 'the strengths, weaknesses and uses of social research and research methods' (QAA, 2007). In doing so, it preserves and perpetuates the tradition of empirical investigation into social conditions and the effectiveness of social policies in action, which has been the hallmark of both the social administration and social policy traditions referred to earlier.

The teaching of research methods in social policy needs to introduce students to both quantitative and qualitative techniques, to large scale data sets (for example, those produced by the ONS) as well as the ethical issues involved in gaining consent, and the interviewing of those who may be vulnerable or 'at risk'. This is a wide agenda, and it can helpfully be made more real for students by those academics who are themselves practically involved in using such different techniques; engaging with staff in some aspects of their research activity; or undertaking small scale group projects under supervision.

Learning by doing

Teaching about research methods and processes is often a precursor to individual research projects which are usually undertaken as part of a student's dissertation. As Dean (2003, p394) notes:

> The value of doing projects in social policy lies in the experience it offers in independent study, the application of theory to 'real world situations', the use of research methods, the development of skills of analysis, presentation and report writing. Projects put the student in the driving seat.

Working under supervision, group and individual research presents the student with opportunities to relate the teaching they have received to their tested experience of the 'real world', to own a particular project topic, and to discuss it with both their tutor and their peers. Such a process may take the student beyond information gathering. As a result of their investigation, they may 'also make their own original contributions to knowledge, or their own recommendations for changes in policy'(Dean, 2003, p390).

Whilst dissertation preparation and writing are most commonly associated with research methods work, an increasing emphasis on student-centredness is diversifying teaching methods in this area, as several of the case studies illustrate.

Tensions in the research-teaching relationship

Social policy is about more than narrative, explanation and evaluation. It is also concerned with locating policy developments and changes in their socio-political context. That applies as much to policies relating to higher education as to other sectors of welfare activity. This final section, therefore, will briefly outline some of the current, and often inter-related tensions in the research-teaching relationship from that perspective. In doing so, it will draw on a variety of recent research findings.

Research and teaching: lecturers' perspectives

Social policy has not been immune from the distorting impact created by the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) or the pressure on academic workloads consequent on the 'massification' of higher education. Furthermore, there is more widespread use of 'teaching only' contracts. This is particularly significant for social policy which is often taught as a service subject to students majoring in other programmes. Each of these may impact on the research-teaching environment within individual institutions.

In her recently published study of social policy lecturers in both pre-and post-1992 HEIs, Young highlighted that for a majority of those she interviewed research as an activity was valued above teaching, especially in terms of promotion and career progression. There was equally 'remarkable consistency' on the 'low status and lack of reward for teaching.' (Young, 2006, p194).

Funding formulae help to explain this dichotomy. So too do management practices. As Young notes (2006, pp197-198):

> [whereas] research provides an easy means of assessment through the vehicle of peer review leading to publication…teaching is a largely private affair and assessment of its quality presents greater challenges for management.

Funded research opportunities

The Times Higher Education Supplement (THES, 24 August 2007, pp6-7) has recently shown in league table format the concentration of successful research bids into a small group of mainly pre-1992 universities, with ten universities securing forty per cent of the research grants allocated by five of the seven Research Councils in 2006/7.

Furthermore, within any subject area, the Research Councils and other funding organisations are determining priorities for the allocation of research funds. The Economic and Social Research Council (2007) identifies as its current research challenges:

- succeeding in the global economy
- population change
- environmental change
- understanding and shaping Individual decisions
- education and life chances
- religion, ethnicity and society
- international relations and security.

Such an agenda not only defines the present research opportunities. It may also impact on future curriculum content. As others have noted, such prioritisation tends to marginalise critical thinking and new theoretical developments.

In addition, there is also government pressure that funded research should have a commercial value. Such a requirement may have significantly adverse effects especially for subjects in the arts and social sciences, and may further undermine the link between research and teaching in relation to academic subject development.

Audiences for social policy research

Whereas the academic community may be construed as the principal 'users' of research in other social science disciplines, as an applied social science social policy research is located within a wider arena, in which politicians and policy makers are perceived as an important audience for its research findings.

This was highlighted in the recent multi-layered research project on 'Quality' in social policy research (Becker, Bryman and Sempik, 2006) which involved more than 250 social policy academics. One representative finding was that:

> As an applied discipline the significance of social policy research rests to some degree on its ability to change the way that policy is formed or delivered and its potential for influencing the actions or perceptions of policy makers (p14).

Such a wider audience is not a disadvantage in considering the links between research and teaching. On the contrary, it is a salutary reminder that fundamental to both activities in social policy are knowledge and understanding, analysis and prescription.

Case Study One
The politics of education policy in the UK

?

What are the links between teaching and research?

The lecturer develops students' appreciation of research/consultancy in the discipline by using teaching and learning processes which simulate research processes. She also develops student research/consultancy skills by using assignments which involve elements of research processes.

Dr. Margaret Arnott, Senior Lecturer in Political Science, School of Law and Social Sciences, Glasgow Caledonian University

Context:

Module title: Politics of Education Policy in the UK
Course title: BA Social Sciences (UG)
Year(s): 2&3

Students explore different representations of research output.

Module aims:

This twelve week unit is taught to a range of students registered for subject bases including history, sociology and politics. A pre-requisite is that all students on the module will have taken modules in political science in previous years.

The approach to the module is interdisciplinary from the outset. Indeed, every module these students will have taken previous to this will have been designed to underscore interdisciplinary study. The challenge faced by the tutor is to achieve a balance between the need to provide a structure for learning and to develop each student's individual study skills.

Module structure:

To provide a structure for learning the module begins with four weeks of overview lectures where current educational policy issues are flagged up. Tutors foreground research methodologies in the literature they recommend and materials they cite. A detailed module handbook outlines the core themes to be covered and also includes directed reading questions which can form the basis of seminar and tutorial discussion. There is also more one to one tutorial contact at the beginning of the module to help with the formative assessment tasks. Blackboard (a requirement under the School of Law and Social Science's teaching and learning strategy) is also well populated with bibliographies and reading lists.

Progression and development:

The opportunity to develop, practice and progress individual study skills primarily takes place via seminar and tutorials, two formative pieces of work and one piece of summative assessment. Everything is planned to encourage progression and development. For example, in week six the students are asked to devise their own essay question coupled with a bibliography which demonstrates their awareness of current research. Before this, students will have been asked to deconstruct examples of research in seminars to demonstrate the research methodologies underpinning publications. The tutor may select a policy document which relies on qualitative research methodologies (such as a current policy document published on the Scottish Executive website) and ask students to compare this with a press release from the Department for Education and Science where the focus is more frequently quantitative. In addition, students are encouraged to explore and link to the overarching themes laid out in the early lectures by

bringing related case studies to seminars. They are expected to chair and present these case studies to the group. Throughout the course guest speakers are invited to talk about current issues.

Assessment:

The end of module summative assessment is an unseen examination requiring answers to questions that have emerged from the year's seminar programme and core themes.

Student feedback:

Feedback from students demonstrates that they like the relevance of the course – particularly its focus on up to date current issues. This focus makes it easier for them to appreciate the theoretical and political implications of published research studies.

> **!**
>
> ### Hot tip
>
> When teaching such a range of students registered for different subject strands it is really important to make yourself aware of the workloads and assessment requirements they have in other modules.

Problems/issues:

There have been three main issues. The first is workload – the course is quite intensive. The second is the mixed ability nature of the groups. Some students who did not achieve highly earlier in their degree can struggle with Honours level courses. Thirdly, tutors have noticed a growing number of students juggling part time job commitments to fund their courses.

Additional information:

Recent Scottish Executive publications can be found at:
www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/Recent
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Case Study Two
Comparative social policy and policy transfer

What are the links between teaching and research?

The lecturer develops students' appreciation of research/consultancy in the discipline by using teaching and learning processes which simulate research processes. She also develops student research/consultancy skills by using assignments which involve elements of research processes.

Dr. Majella Kilkey - Criminology and Sociological Studies (CASS), University of Hull

Context:

Module title: Comparative Social Policy
Course title: BA Social Policy and Social Justice (UG)
Year: 3

Comparing social policy at home and abroad

Module aims:

The module aims for comparative social policy are to:

- encourage students to appreciate the rationale for a comparative approach to the study of social policy
- enable students to understand the main theoretical approaches to explaining the development and contemporary character of welfare states in other countries
- encourage students to apply such frameworks critically to an examination of the responses of other countries to some key contemporary social policy issues
- introduce students to the role of the European Union and other supranational organisations in the field of social policy.

Module structure:

The module comprises the following lectures, which have parallel tutorial sessions:

- introducing comparative social policy: why adopt a comparative approach?
- typologising western welfare states: 'mainstream' approaches
- gendering welfare states: feminist critiques of the 'mainstream' approaches
- the European Union and social policy: the emergence of a social dimension in the 'European Project'
- globalisation, global organisations and social policy: converging welfare states?
- 'race' and Immigration in Europe: a 'fortress Europe'?
- changing families and policy responses: a comparative perspective; responding to unemployment
- the reconciling work and family-life agenda in Europe and beyond
- combating poverty and social exclusion: policy responses.

Assessment:

A policy-transfer case-study report is the second of the module's two assessments, and is intended to assess students' understanding across a range of areas. In the report students are expected to:

- demonstrate knowledge of an area of social policy / or the policy response to a current social 'problem' in the United Kingdom and two other countries
- identify the main ways in which the policy area or response differs across the three countries

- demonstrate knowledge of the historical, social, economic and political context in which the policy or response has developed in each of the three countries, and knowledge of the differences in the three countries' contexts
- demonstrate an awareness of the outcomes or consequences of the policy area or response in each of the three countries, and an awareness of how outcomes/consequences differ across the three countries
- critically assess whether, and if so, which, lessons can be learned for the United Kingdom from the policy or policy response of the two other countries.

Support materials:

In addition to material presented in lectures and tutorials, support materials for the assessment include:

- the module booklet, with its detailed reading lists, list of relevant on-line resources, etc.
- a set of guidelines for the assessment which includes a statement on the aims of the report and advice on the focus and content of the report
- a pro-forma specifying both countries and topic of interest, which all students are expected to complete in advance of preparation for the assessment. This is designed to enable the lecturer to check on the feasibility and appropriateness of the focus, to provide a basis upon which to offer individual guidance on resources, etc. and to match students with shared interests in order to encourage peer support.

The assessment is also supported by:

- a set of two tutorials specifically given over to advice, consultation and discussion of the assessment, in which there is the opportunity for individual support, as well as peer support
- a library-based session, run jointly by the lecturer and an appropriately trained librarian, which is designed to make students aware of source relevant material (for example, the European Documentation Centre at the University of Hull and on-line resources for european and international material), as well as appropriate data-management techniques.

Feedback:

Student evaluation is positive. In particular, students highlight the confidence gained in information searching, which they then use to support their dissertations. Although initially daunting for some, they also express enthusiasm for having more freedom to define the focus of their work. Some say that it has encouraged them to think about spending time living in their 'preferred' country. Others have drawn on the experience to support future job applications, as well as applications for postgraduate study.

> ### Hot tips
>
> Students need to be made aware that this cannot be a 'last minute' assessment, it requires a long-lead in time in terms of deciding on focus and garnering the appropriate resources. Students can be facilitated to 'think early' about the assessment by use of the pro-forma (see above), the tutorial sessions and the library-based session.
>
> This is an assignment which works best with relatively small numbers (20-25), as it can be quite resource intensive in terms of lecturer's time.
>
> Something similar was tried on a level 5 module, but students found it too challenging. It seems to work well in level 6, when students are also doing a dissertation, so becoming more comfortable with independent learning of this kind.

Problems/issues:

Firstly, some of the class groups have been too large. Secondly, some students were leaving assessment to the 'last minute' and consequently having insufficient time to complete. Thirdly, keeping students' expectations realistic about the level and type of knowledge they can gain in the time available can be a challenge.

Case Study Three
Welfare policy

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What are the links between teaching and research?

The lecturer uses teaching and learning processes which simulate research processes. She also uses assignments which involve elements of research processes and gives students first hand experience of research based consultancy.
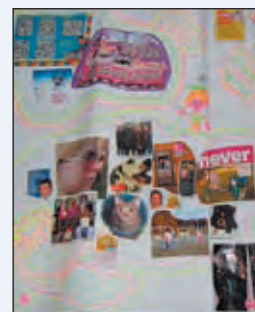
Dr. Rachel Forrester-Jones, Senior Lecturer in Community Care,
The Tizard Centre, University of Kent

Context:

Module title: **Researching people with learning disabilities**
Course title: **Available to final year students registered for a range of degree programmes (UG)**
Year: **3**

Poster produced by people with learning difficulties supported by students

This twelve week spring term unit is available to a range of final year students registered for different subject bases. To date, students registered for social policy, law, sociology, psychology and politics have taken the module. A pre-requisite for the module is completion of a winter term module entitled 'Understanding people with learning disabilities'. The course is offered by the Tizard Centre based at the University of Kent. The Tizard Centre is one of the leading UK academic groups working in learning disability and community care. Members of the Centre are selected both for their academic record and for their practical experience in services. The Centre provides short courses, degree and diploma programmes at the University, taught at both the Canterbury and Medway campuses, and also undertakes an extensive programme of consultancy and research - both nationally and internationally.

Module aims:

There are three guiding principles underpinning the teaching and learning in this module:

- to teach policy and theory with meaning and relevance i.e. to bring government policy on welfare alive
- to teach students a range of research strategies
- to enable students to learn actively through engagement with research.

Having taken the winter term module in 'Understanding people with learning disabilities' the students embark on more student focused learning in the spring term. Students choose the titles of the spring term lectures by submitting questions they would like answered. Questions have included: 'what does work mean for people with learning disabilities?'; 'how do I interview someone with a learning disability?'.

Progression and development:

Prior to the course the tutor contacts a range of bodies to see whether they are interested in commissioning short research surveys from the students (free of charge). Local Authorities have proved keen to be involved. This year's students, for example, will be looking to conduct research into the understanding and format of employment contracts that people with learning disabilities have.

Having identified organisations and small groups to work with, the tutor then matches each student with a person with a learning disability. Each student has three meetings with participants in the study. The first is a

semi-structured interview. The second is a session where the student works with the person with learning disabilities to produce a poster of what is important to them. The third is a meeting on campus where all participants are invited to a workshop, poster display and certificate presentation to participants, hosted by the University.

Before conducting interviews each student creates an ethical proposal and throughout the module they are required to reflect on issues which arise using a reflective diary. In addition, the group meets weekly to share their experiences.

After conducting their interviews the students undertake a quantitative analysis using SPSS and a qualitative thematic analysis of transcribed interview data. They also select ways to disseminate their findings. This year's students chose to disseminate using posters, power-point presentations and reports as well as by sending newsletters to the local services who had been supporting their work.

The tutor also found funds for a research dissemination trip to Lille where students presented their findings to their French counterparts.

Assessment:

Assessment breaks down as 20% for a literature review (students must refer to two policies), ethical checklist and research protocol and 80% for a final project. The project has to include a 10 point guide/protocol of what to do when in the field as well as a reflective component and a piece of analysis.

Two students produced end of module projects of publishable standards and five achieved first class marks.

> **Hot tips**
>
> Act quickly and decisively when networking across university and supporting bodies. There are pockets of money sitting unused in various university funds e.g. inclusivity funds; outreach funds.
>
> Capitalise on links you already have when looking for student research projects.
>
> Look for research opportunities in the communities you work with. Present the idea of free student research positively to these bodies.

Feedback:

There has been 100% attendance by students throughout this module. Student comments include:

'Before I came to this year I thought I really knew it all … I had an understanding of people, but doing this module I have realised that I didn't really know and I have learnt so much not only about people with learning disabilities but also about inequalities, race and gender – and my attitude to people around me has completely changed about things like accepting people and helping them participate in life …it sounds cheesy but doing this course has changed my life …and I will be able to use it in future employment'

Students also learned a lot from presenting their research findings to another culture:

'The trip [to Lille] was a really good opportunity to mix with another culture and receive their views on people with learning disabilities as well as provide ours. It was a really important dissemination process as it was clear that their views weren't the same as ours. Presenting the findings was a fulfilling experience to show other people what we had done, what we had found and what we had achieved'

Problems/issues:

Having to think creatively year on year is challenging. Third years have enthused second years and this increases the pressure to deliver as good an experience. The module has grown in popularity and numbers are increasing. Larger groups will make it harder to sustain tutor/student relationships. There are also always issues associated with the ongoing developments of research governance.

Case Study Four
Sports policy and practice

? **What are the links between teaching and research?**
The lecturer is developing student appreciation of research/consultancy in the discipline by bringing data/findings from staff research/consultancy into the curriculum.

Dr. Catherine Palmer, Reader, Sport & Social Policy, School of Applied Social Sciences, Durham University

Using images which challenge policy initiatives (e.g. responsible drinking)

Context:

Module title: **Sports Policy in Practice**
Course title: **BA (Hons) Sport, Durham University (UG)**
Year: **2**

Module aims:

This second year module sets out to make policy (particularly as it relates to sport) relevant and accessible to undergraduate students.

Teaching and learning:

I routinely includes examples and case studies from my own research to inform my teaching. This provides students with a wide range of examples to 'ground' or to bring to life the theoretical and conceptual material covered in the curriculum, and it exposes students to the wealth of possibilities that 'research' (sometimes perceived as dry and boring!) can open up. Examples include:

- teaching notions of social inclusion/exclusion through the exploration of soccer and refugee women and sport in communities of disadvantage
- exploring theories of risk as seen through the lens of extreme sport
- investigating constructions of policy problems through the stigma of public housing.

As a teaching strategy, photographs and other visual aids taken as part of my research are used, as well as sound bytes from interviews where relevant and appropriate, to bring to life the links between teaching and research.

Much of my research has been conducted in Australia and France, which provides students with an international and comparative perspective. In addition, some of my other research has involved working directly with policy makers (sport and alcohol, sport and social inclusion, problem gambling). This has enabled me to draw on these experiences to provide first-hand examples of other issues and challenges that relate to social policy (ethics, research transfer, iterative research, dissemination). For example, I co-teach interactive sessions on this module with policy makers /practitioners. We role play some of the more thorny problems that applied social and policy research can bring up for junior researchers, and suggest strategies for students to overcome these challenges.

Assessment:

The need to graduate students who are 'job-ready' is addressed by making explicit the links between curriculum, teaching and learning styles and career opportunities. After the main periods of assessment and towards the end of the module, I provide students with numerous job advertisements from a broad range

of areas (policy, journalism, marketing, sports development etc). Students are asked to note the person specifications, skills and knowledge that the job requires (i.e. good written communication skills, knowledge of policy, project management, data analysis etc). They are then reminded of the various pieces of work that they've submitted, and how these directly link to the sorts of skills and knowledge that employers are looking for.

!

Hot tips

Ensure there are lots of visual examples and links to publications that have arisen from research to support classroom content.

Being able to draw on a wide range of examples from real life research also facilitates the teaching of research methods, as well as policy based ones.

Feedback:

Student evaluations consistently rate the relevance of the material covered to their own interests and career aspirations.

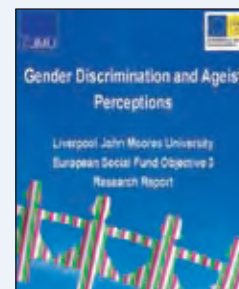# Case Study Five
Age and gender discrimination

?

What are the links between teaching and research?

This initiative develops learner appreciation of research/consultancy in the discipline by bringing data/findings from staff research/consultancy into a community training environment.

Dr. Diane Grant and Dr. Claire Hennessy, Faculty of Education, Community and Leisure, Liverpool John Moore's University

Research that led to the creation of a training programme

Context:

Informing, Empowering and Enabling Women is a training programme for women in local communities. The materials accompanying the day workshop are designed for a range of abilities and learning styles.

Background:

Tutors received funds from the European Social Fund (ESF) to explore gender discrimination and ageist perceptions. Information was gathered from men and women over 50, and 178 employer representatives from private and public voluntary organisations on issues concerning age and gendered stereotypes. The study found that negative and discriminatory experiences of both women and men had resulted in lower levels of self efficacy and life satisfaction.

Traditional methods of research dissemination including academic peer reviewed journals, conference presentations and research reports were used to disseminate the project's findings. However it was felt that in order to be of practical use the research findings should be targeted and disseminated to the women affected by these issues. To this end the tutors applied for and were awarded further funding from the ESF to develop a set of training resources.

Development of workshops:

The research findings from the original project and the expertise gained were used to create a series of workshops designed to inform and assist women in recognising how gender and age disadvantage occurs. These workshops were also designed to help participants develop ways to overcome some of the barriers faced, with a view to widening access to employment and education.

Initial research revealed that there were few good quality affordable teaching or training packs on the issues of gender and age discrimination. To address this resource gap the tutors created a resource pack of 10 sessions.

To ensure that these sessions were inclusive they designed a range of activities to match a range of learning styles (as identified in Honey, P. and Mumford, A. (1992) *The Manual of Learning Styles*. Maidenhead: Peter Honey Publications).

Session structure:

A session on age discrimination, for example, would typically start with a short explanation of stereotyping; prejudice and discrimination. Workshop leaders then introduce the specific form of discrimination being explored. A related activity might be inviting participants to amend or highlight (depending on level) job adverts to make then more age friendly. This activity could then be supported by video clips of women

interviewed about the topic as part of the ESF funded project. Following this, participants would then be invited to discuss the changes they have made to their job adverts and to feed back to the group.

A key outcome of a session like the one described above is that participants become aware of regulations outlawing ageism and become attuned to recognising the potential for ageism in the recruitment and application processes.

Further developments:

Following on from the success of the training workshops the key idea of both researching and working with the community is referred to in a number of undergraduate modules. Students at Liverpool John Moore's University undertaking the Applied Community and Social Science degree programme are encouraged to think about the links between research and the community at all three levels of their degree. Two students have been able to undertake work based placements with the gender discrimination project and one ex student is now employed by the project.

> **Hot tips**
>
> Developing a quality DVD takes longer than you think. Ascertaining copyright positions and permissions is time consuming. Build in time to ensure that all materials meet accessibility and disability requirements.
>
> Work with the organisations you are going into to ascertain levels of learners and the nature of the space you will be working in.

Feedback:

The end of the first ESF funded project on gender discrimination and ageist perceptions was marked by a conference. Tutors invited all the groups they had worked with to the conference and disseminated the findings. The evaluation form asked delegates whether they would be interested in training days and the response indicated a strong demand for training in the area of gender and age discrimination.

Feedback from participants at the training days indicated that the deployment of a variety of learning styles had been successful with over 90% of women reporting that they found the workshop training either excellent or very good.

Comments included:
'Variety made it really interactive'
'resource pack and DVD really useful … I can see that I can use them in my current employment'

Feedback from trainers in the voluntary sector included:
'the materials were useful to us in moving forward … as a small charity we don't have the resources to produce quality materials that you were able to provide'.

Problems/issues:

The logistics of delivering workshops in other organisations is a challenge – do not assume that rooms will be set up for learning.

Additional information:

The resource pack is designed to be used by participants to train colleagues in their own organisations. It provides participant notes and notes for training and is accompanied by a DVD which includes a range of resources on the subject of age and gender.

Case Study Six
Students as researchers

> **What are the links between teaching and research?**
>
> The initiative develops student appreciation of research/consultancy in the discipline and brings findings from staff research into teaching and learning into the curriculum.

Dr. Mike McManus Senior Lecturer in Social Policy, School of Social Science and Law, Sheffield Hallam University.

Students as researchers

Context:

An increasing number of students are being given the opportunity to become involved in research whilst undergraduates. This case study details the involvement of students as researchers in an FDTL 5 project ALAC (Active Learning Active Citizenship) at Sheffield Hallam University.

Background:

The idea of using students as researchers came from a previous collaborative project between Sheffield Hallam University (SHU) and Lincoln University. In that instance students from SHU produced annotated lists of websites for a variety of topics being studied (including democracy, extremism and citizenship). These lists were edited by tutors in SHU and used as seminar materials by a tutor in Lincoln.

ALAC project:

A selected group of second and third year students were invited to contribute materials (literature reviews and in some cases case studies) for an e-media website being created as part of the ALAC project.

ALAC is a collaborative project which aims to enhance the teaching and learning of citizenship and political literacy in education studies, social policy, politics and teacher training by developing resources and approaches that integrate the use of ICT and multimedia by using virtual learning environments and flexible approaches to learning.

Having identified case studies for the website (e.g. the meaning of democracy in active citizenship, the environment, pressure groups, and religious fundamentalism) project leaders identified the accompanying literature reviews and text resources they wanted to accompany the case studies.

Tutor role:

The main role for the tutor in this initiative was to select the second and third year students to complete the literature reviews. Having selected the students the tutor then briefed them about the task, agreed a deadline for submission and arranged payment via the FDTL project funding structure. Students then went away to research and produce a 2-3,000 word literature review. Once the piece had been submitted it was then edited and proofed before being loaded onto the ALAC website.

Further developments:

Following the ALAC student researcher initiative, tutors at SHU have decided to embed the role into a core module in 2007/08. One stream of a core module 'Social Policy Work Experience' will offer 20 second year students the opportunity to become research assistants to academics across the division (including academics in social policy, psychology, criminology). Tutors will be asked to identify topics and persuade other academics to take part, as well as brief the students through regular meetings.

Hot tips

Select your students carefully if you have set deadlines. Mature students who had already completed two years of research methodologies proved reliable and produced work of a high quality.

Consider employing students who have recently completed high quality dissertations. It provides positive alumni impact.

Reserve editing rights to materials produced.

Provide clear conventions for referencing.

Ensure beforehand the best ways of making payments to students. It may be easier to achieve this via a project than other university departments.

Provide payment on completion and submission.

Feedback:

Several students have asked to be involved again. Involvement provides an income and a positive alumni impact. All literature reviews were completed on time and will be added to the website. One student is providing a case study based on his own experiences of higher education and working in the voluntary sector.

Problems/issues:

It is not always easy to arrange payment to students for commissioned work. The FDTL 5 project provided a good opportunity and route to do so.

Additional information:

Details of the ALAC project can be found at: http://alac.escalate.ac.uk/

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www.glos.ac.uk/ceal/resources/litreview.cfm

Latest research commissioned by the Higher Education Academy in this area
www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/research/teaching

Scottish Executive publications
www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/Recent

The Reinvention Centre for Undergraduate Research
www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/sociology/research/cetl/

ESRC
www.esrc.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/about/delivery_plan

FDTL 5 project ALAC (Active Learning Active Citizenship)
http://alac.escalate.ac.uk

Gender discrimination and ageist perceptions project
www.ljmu.ac.uk/gdap/

QAA
www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/benchmark/honours

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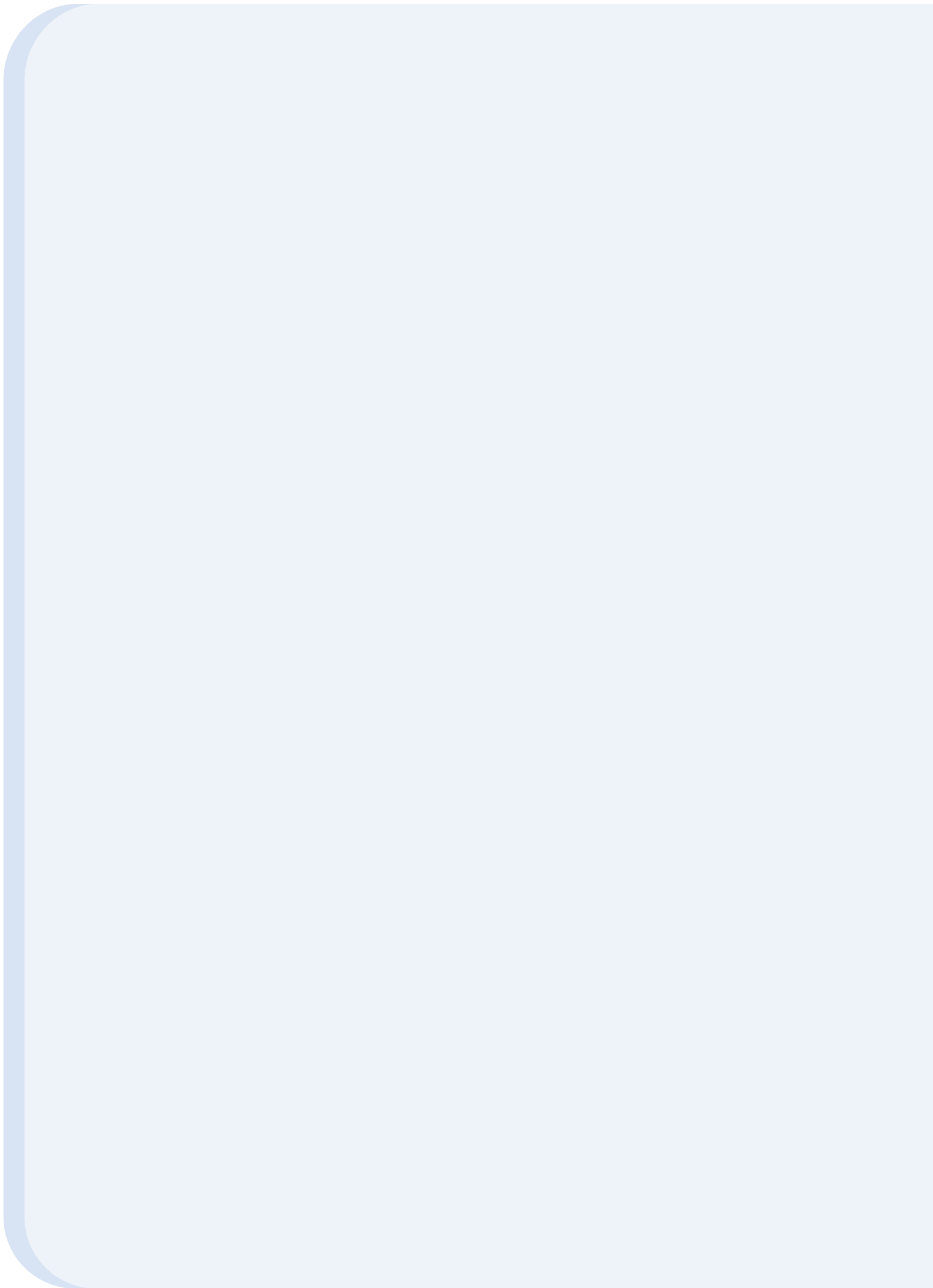
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