

IN-2-THEORY:

interprofessional theory, scholarship and collaboration

Lack of theory: Educational  
Malpractice

DEVELOPING THEORETICAL RIGOUR  
IN INTERPROFESSIONAL  
EDUCATION

Theory is essential for intelligent practice.  
Theory and practice cannot (and should not)  
be separated and go as far as agreeing with  
Eraut, (2003) that: *practice without theory is  
tantamount to malpractice.*

Sarah Hean  
Bournemouth  
University, UK

# Content

- Meaning of theory, history and role in development of interprofessional education
- Current challenges in facing theory use in interprofessional education
- Emerging thinking in establishing theoretical quality



# What is theory and what is its utility?

Theory is a set of propositions/hypotheses linked by a rational argument (Jary & Jary 1995).

Theory gives us a new lens to see practice differently.

Use of theory is not simply an academic exercise. We are all theorists.

Theory helps us:

- articulate, reflect and potentially reinterpret our existing/habitual practices (Wackerhausen 2009).
- guide our future actions.
- help find solutions.
- ammunition.

# Where have we been?

- Decade ago, interprofessional education (IPE) theory-less (Hean et al., 2009).

BUT

- Educators/ practitioners use (often concepts of adult learning), implicitly in practice (Craddock et al., 2013).
- Growing number of researchers who have begun to search for and apply theories from other disciplines: sociology, psychology and education.
  - Theories now abound to the degree that various syntheses of this abundance have been attempted (Helme et al., 2005; Hean et al., 2012a; Barr, 2013; Reeves and Hean, 2013)
  - Special interest group set up to promote this area of interest (In-2-Theory network: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/IN2THEORY/>) (Hean et al., 2013).
  - Special Edition Journal of Interprofessional Care January 2013 (Reeves and Hean, 2013)
  - Association of Medical Educators Europe (AMEE) Guidelines (Hean et al., 2012, In-2-theory)
  - Best evidence Medical Education (BEME) Review on Contribution of theory to effective development of IPE (In-2-Theory);
  - CIHR funding to develop theory in IPE (In-2-theory)

# Two current challenges

## **1. A lack of frequency and rigour and theory application to:**

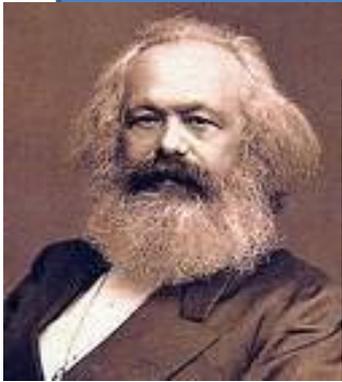
- IPE curriculum on paper,
  - IPE in action,
  - IPE in evaluation (Coles and Grant, 1984).
- 
- Failure to articulate why certain outcomes are being assessed and why and how these outcomes will be achieved.
  - Failure to articulate propositions clearly, means practitioners are unable to test, develop or follow alternative propositions, if original propositions prove false.
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- ## **2. Much theory still abstract with little pragmatic use to the IPE curriculum developer or educators.**



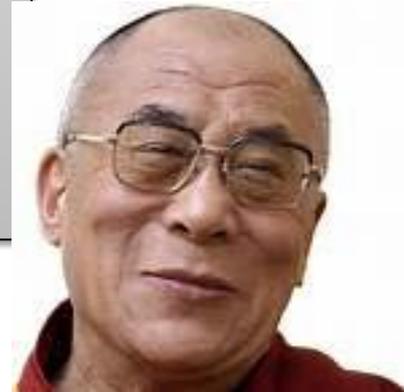
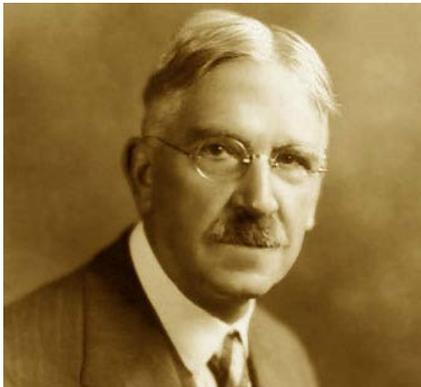
# Why are practitioners not using theory?

- Negative reaction to the word *theory*;
  - Action orientated, pragmatic individuals.
  - Theory of little practical relevance, overly complicated or highly reductionist (Brazil et al., 2005; D’Onofrio, 1992).
  - Theory seen as a a binary pair: not the opposite of practice. (Thistlethwaite et al., 2013).
- Interested and knowledgeable but constrained:
  - Time pressures.
  - Lack of incentive.
  - We have always done it this way.
- Works against theory and critical reflection.

# Interdependence of theory and practice old hat



- Theory encourages second order reflection , where common practices are “destabilized” and reexamined (Wackerhausen, 2009)
- The IPE curriculum developer is not acting without a theory. They design, deliver and evaluate a curriculum often using a range of learning theories implicitly.





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# Moving forward

## Key Philosophy of IN-2-THEORY

**Pragmatism: value of a theory lies in its practical consequences** (Dewey, 1923)

Challenges facing  
a BEME systematic review of  
***The contribution of theory to the  
effective development &  
delivery of interprofessional  
curricula***



Richard Pitt  
University  
of  
Nottingham,  
UK,  
Reviewer



Sarah Hean  
Bournemouth  
University,  
Lead



Cath  
O'Halloran  
University of  
Huddersfield,  
UK, Reviewer



Marilyn  
Hammick,  
CAIPE,  
Consultant  
UK, Advisor

**In-2-theory**  
Interprofessional  
Theory,  
Scholarship and  
Collaboration



Chris Green  
University of Essex,  
UK, Reviewer



Debra Morris  
University of  
Southampton, UK,  
Librarian

Jo Temple  
Bournemouth  
University , UK,  
Administrator



Carol John  
Anglo European  
Chiropractic  
College, UK.  
Reviewer

Liz Anderson,  
University of  
Leicester, UK,  
Reviewer



# BEME Protocol: The contribution of theory to the effective development & delivery of interprofessional curricula

A. Literature search (2730)

B. Paper selection (662)

C. Preliminary data extraction

Measuring theoretical quality

D. Quality of theory use

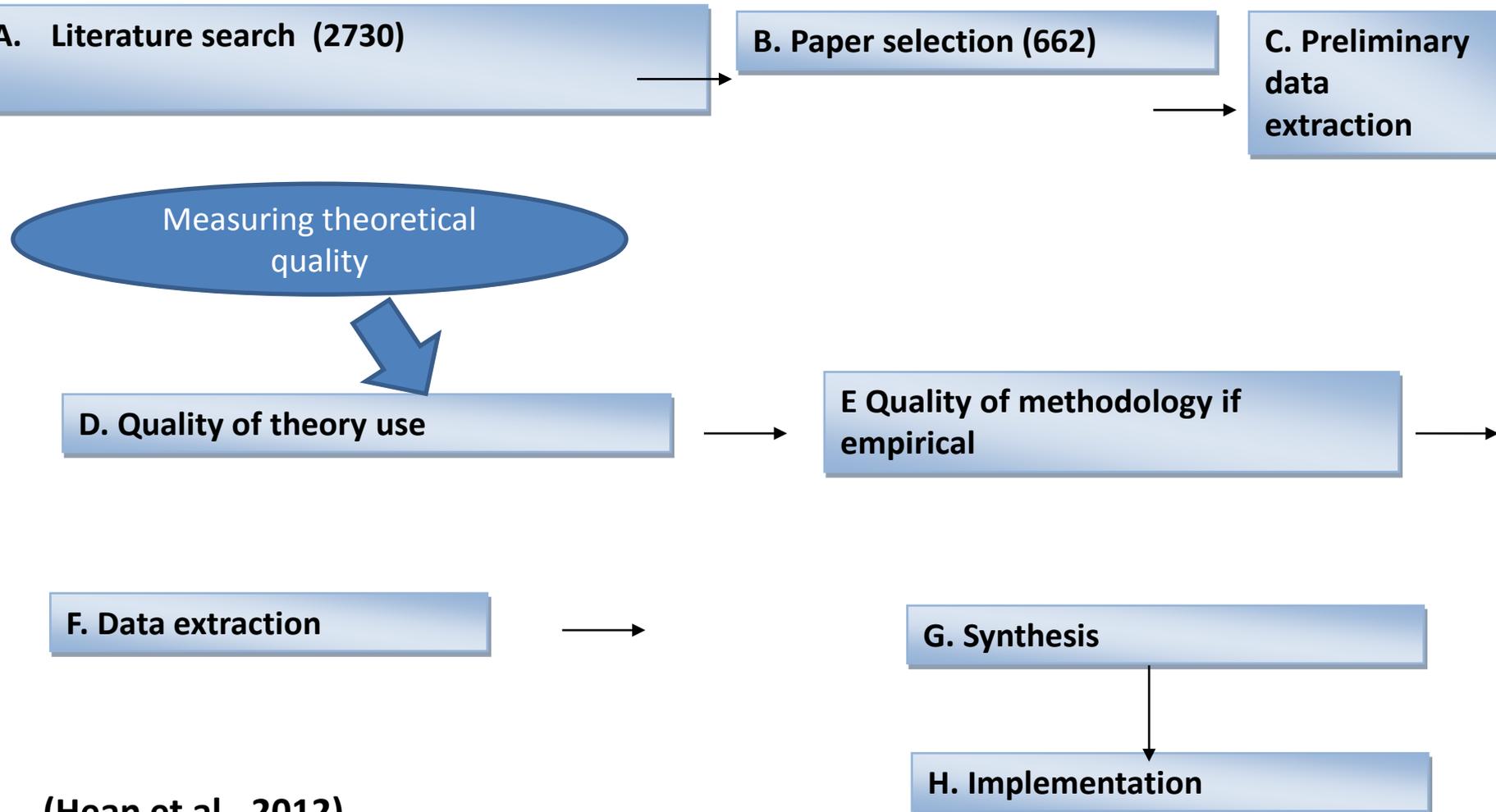
E. Quality of methodology if empirical

F. Data extraction

G. Synthesis

H. Implementation

(Hean et al., 2012)



# Theoretical Quality

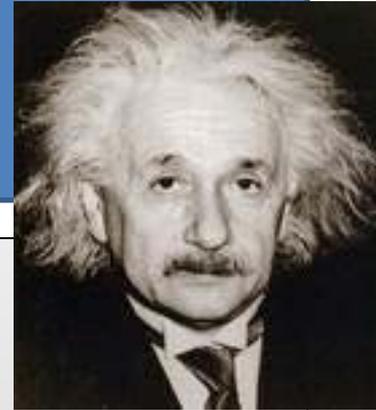
- Utility is a central attribute of theoretical quality;
- Dimensions originate from those criteria developed by Fawcett and Downes to assess the links between theory and research (Fawcett & Downes, 1992; Fawcett, 2005).

# Establishing Theoretical Quality

Framework assessing use of theory in research (Fawcett 2005):

- **Parsimony** (clear and concise)
  - **Pragmatic Adequacy** (can you see the end point)
  - Internal consistency (call a spade a spade)
  - Testability (propositions)
  - Operational adequacy (appropriate method)
  - Empirical adequacy (data available to prove or disprove theory)
- pragmatic adequacy → testability, operational and empirical adequacy
  - testability, operational and empirical adequacy → pragmatic adequacy

# Parsimony



**Make everything as simple as possible, but not simpler.**

- Express theories in as economic a way as possible, clearly and concisely
- Minimising number of concepts and propositions.
- The more complex a theory, the more likelihood there is for error being introduced into the claims made by the theory.
- Balanced against the danger of over simplifying the phenomenon especially where social processes are complicated (Fawcett & Downs, 1992; Fawcett, 2005).
- Achieving this balance and making theory as accessible to practitioners as possible is the daunting task of the academic.
- A good discipline for the academic in achieving this is attempting a “two minute sell” of their preferred theory.

# TWO MINUTE HARD SELL

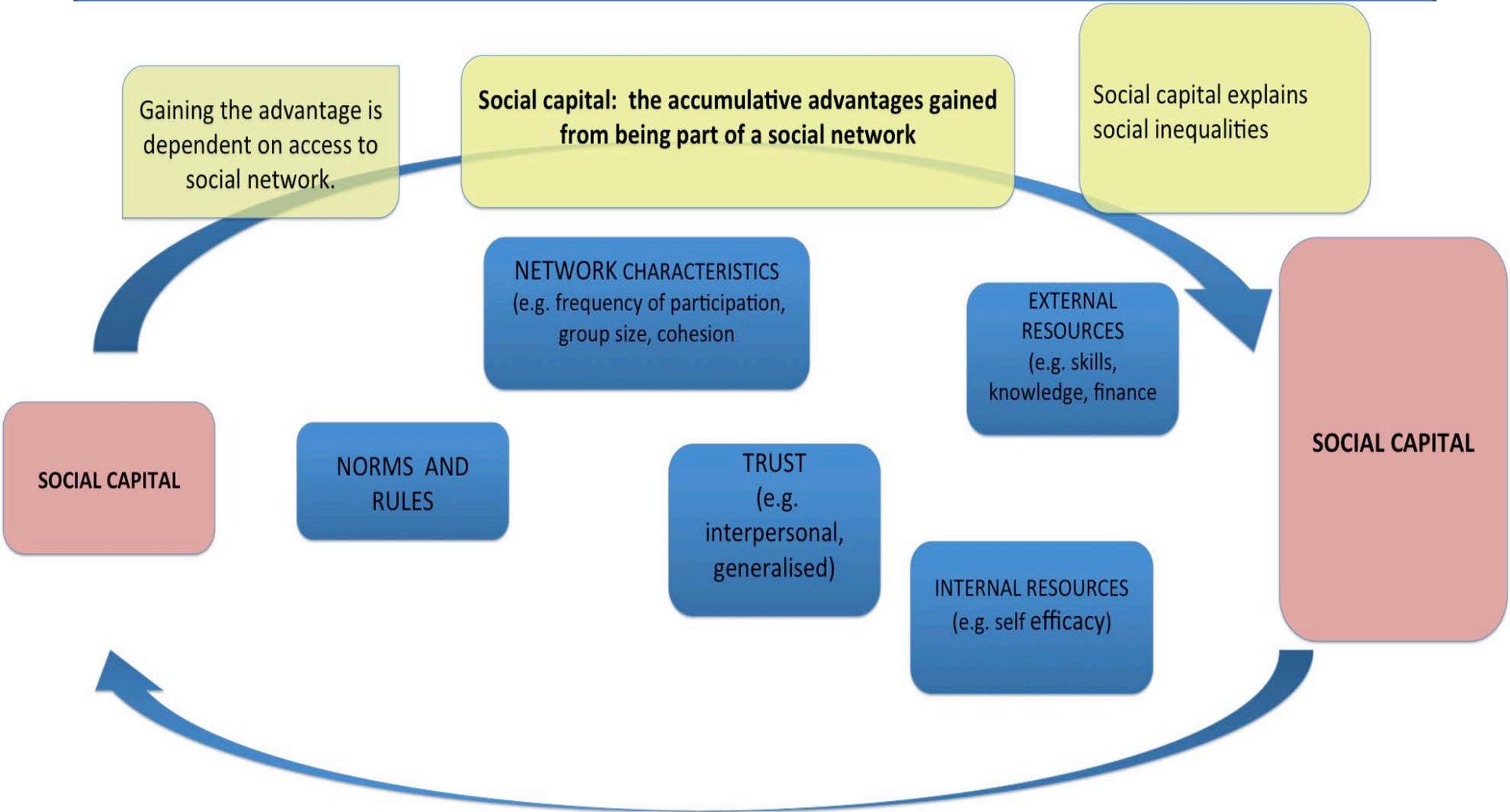


## **Two minute sell:**

Social capital theory applied to IPE explains and predicts the benefits (sometime unequally distributed) accumulated by students working within an IPE learning groups.

It addresses the value of building sustainable relationships and how to achieve this through manipulation of the norms/rules, network characteristics, internal and external resources and interpersonal trust between participants.

# Simple?



# Pragmatic Adequacy (Does Theory Have Utility?)

- For a theory to have pragmatic adequacy:
  - it must be used in practice or, at the very least, its potential use in practice must be made obvious.
  - By practice we mean the theory must have been used to underpin an interprofessional curriculum, the way it is delivered and/or the approach taken to its evaluation.
  - Pragmatic adequacy of contact hypothesis is high (Carpenter et al., 2006).
  - Pragmatic adequacy has yet to be achieved, however, for Derrida's concepts of deconstruction, to unpick the concept of collaboration (Thistlethwaite et al., 2013).

# Are these statements useful?

Social capital has application to the practical problem of developing an interprofessional student learning group.

Describes various dimensions (e.g., norms, levels of trust) might be manipulated to achieve quality relationships and knowledge exchange between students from different groups which might be sustained into the workplace (Hean et al., 2013).

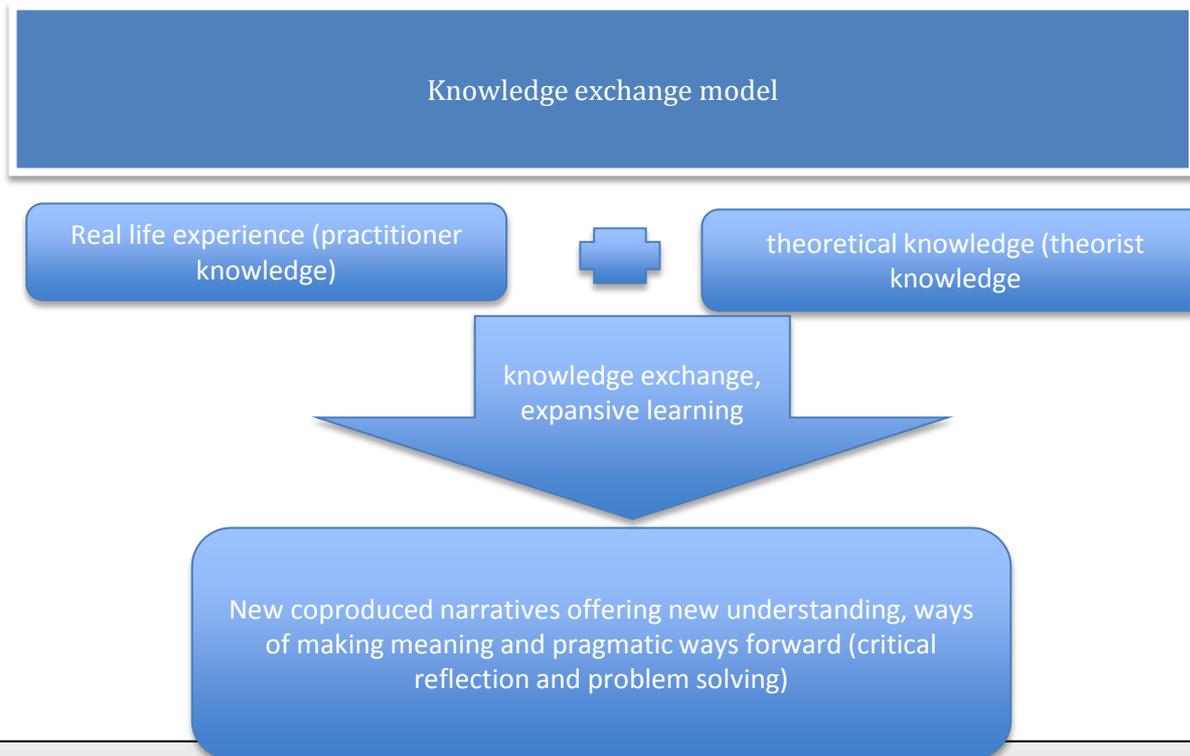
The social advantages gained by students are the direct, facilitated exchange of knowledge, an understanding of each other's professions and the building sustainable relationships with other professionals that transfer into the workplace.

The key components of social capital (e.g. network characteristics, levels of trust) dictate the social capital generated in the IPSG. It is the optimal combination of these dimensions that delivers the most effective IPE

# Almost but not quite

- Propositions offer social capital a degree of pragmatic adequacy within the context of curriculum development and delivery.
- Fall short of suggesting concrete tasks and approaches to achieving this.
- This is largely because other dimensions of theoretical quality have yet to be established (operationability and empirical adequacy):

# Theory is about coproduction



- Theoretical framework to knowledge exchange (creating terrains of knowledge –Bernstein, 1971, Hammick,1998-, Narrative, PBL)
- Workshops apply dimensions of theoretical quality and findings of BEME review.
- Aims to maximise pragmatic adequacy of theory .

# Take home messages

- The importance of theory in articulating and developing interprofessional education.
- IPE no longer theory less.
- Still not clearly articulated by practitioner.
- Theorist still has head in the clouds.
- Need to concentrate efforts on pragmatic adequacy (and other related dimensions of theoretical quality).
- Start by
  - clear simple communication of theory.
  - Develop academic-practitioner partnerships.

Sarah Hean

[shean@bournemouth.ac.uk](mailto:shean@bournemouth.ac.uk)

Bournemouth University, United Kingdom

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/IN2THEORY/>

**THANK YOU**

**QUESTIONS**



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