Is it possible to teach social research methods well today?

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In this paper I want to outline what seem to me to be major problems now involved in teaching social research methods in UK universities, problems of a severity that make me question whether this task can be done well.¹ Some of the issues are perennial ones, others are products of the ‘interesting’ times in which we live. In the conclusion I will discuss what can be done about the situation, though I will not be able to offer any simple remedies.

Perennial problems

The issues coming under this first heading take the form of what are sometimes referred to as ‘wicked’ problems (Rittel and Webber 1973; see also Byrne 2011:52-3 and Trowler 2012). In other words, they are closer to dilemmas than to well-defined problems to which entirely satisfactory and stable solutions can be expected. The best we can hope for are reasonable trade-offs in particular circumstances between competing needs and requirements. Of course, I am not denying that there are better and worse ways of dealing with these dilemmas, or that there may be thresholds marking the limits of what would be an acceptable ‘solution’.

Teaching phronesis

A first problem of this kind arises from the nature of what is to be taught. This is not a set of rules or techniques that can be transmitted and then applied; yet, at the same time, doing research is not a matter of ad hoc decision-making in which nothing can be learned from experience or from others.² There are general principles or considerations that researchers, and anyone assessing research findings, must take into account, but these require interpretation in the process of application, and do not apply in all circumstances. My argument here is that, as with many other complex activities, what is required, above all, for doing research, as well as in assessing it, is skilled judgement, what Aristotle referred to as phronesis (Dunne 1997).

¹ These doubts are based on many years’ involvement in the task, so any implied criticism of teachers in this field falls upon me as much as it does upon anyone else.

² There are some well-known statements that come close to suggesting this second position. One of these is Bridgman’s claim that scientific method is ‘[...] doing your damnedest, no holds barred’ (1955: 535). Similarly, Feyerabend’s (1971) anarchistic approach to science portrays standard methodological notions as not only based upon an inaccurate understanding of how successful natural scientists do their work but as also inevitably obstructing the process of inquiry.
The task of teaching research methods, then, is not the transmission of a body of knowledge, or the drilling of students in the use of techniques, but rather a matter of helping them to build up relevant knowledge and capabilities, and to develop the necessary intellectual virtues. This is a challenging and uncertain task.

Furthermore, it is a task that itself requires phronesis on the part of the teacher, since both the intelligibility of particular forms of methodological knowledge, and the perceived value of these and of particular skills, are context-dependent. This means that there will be occasions when teaching some of these to particular students will be very difficult and even counter-productive. This is partly a matter of students needing to learn some things before others, but it also arises because their learning is never under the control of the teacher, nor is it entirely under their own control: it is a semi-autonomous process; and it will, of course, vary in character, route, and speed among students.

**Method and substance**

This first perennial issue is closely related to a second: the question of whether we can teach methods in abstraction from students learning how to carry out or evaluate particular research projects. Are not methodological decisions or judgments always situated, in the sense that researchers must take account of particular circumstances, weigh up considerations specific to those circumstances, and so on? This is highlighted by an often-repeated criticism of methodological textbooks: that they present an idealised and misleading picture of the research process, one which ignores the messy and uncertain reality. The same might often be said of teaching on courses.

This was not so serious a problem in the past, when teaching research methods to PhD students: they were engaged in a research project from the beginning, and supervisors could introduce relevant methods and issues as appropriate, or students could gain knowledge of these for themselves as they went along. It has, however, always been an issue in teaching research methods at undergraduate and masters’ levels; and, of course, today ‘doctoral training’ has become front-loaded via the introduction of the MRes, generating this problem there too.

One strategy for dealing with this has been to discuss methodological issues in the context of particular examples of research. This can work, though students are not always very interested in the studies that their teachers find fascinating. Another frequently-adopted solution has been to include project-work components in courses, requiring students themselves to carry out small-scale pieces of research. This can certainly be of great value. However, in my experience, students often become caught up in the investigation of their chosen topic in such a way that the methodological agenda can get submerged. It is, of course, possible to structure and limit projects in order to foreground methodology, but in doing this there is a danger that the commitment of students is eroded: they become frustrated at not being able freely to explore substantive topics.

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3 For an early example of this criticism, see Bell and Newby 1977.

4 This could, of course, be a salutary experience: after all, the task facing researchers is not simply to answer substantive questions but to do so in ways that are reflexively attuned to the likely validity of candidate answers, and therefore to the strengths and weaknesses of the methods employed. This whole problem is an instance of the conflict between contrasting modes of research student preparation that Roth 2009 has discussed.
This problem partly reflects a more general issue. It has been argued that the teaching of quantitative method is ghettoised in many social science degrees (Payne and Williams 2011), in that students come into contact with it only in methodology courses. But I suspect that the same is true, to a large extent, of methodological thinking more generally. There is often only sporadic appeal to methodological issues in teaching substantive areas in my experience.  

The problem of selection

A third perennial problem is the sheer amount and difficulty of the material that could be considered relevant to research methods courses, and the resulting variation in what is covered. The crucial question here is: What range of data collection and analytic methods should be included, and in what depth? This problem is most obvious in connection with two parts of the research methods curriculum that students often find particularly challenging and/or that they dislike: those dealing with philosophical issues and those concerned with statistics. This third problem can be dramatised as follows: If everything is a footnote to Plato (Whitehead 1929:39), is that where we must begin? In the case of statistics, if, for example, students are to use the chi-squared test, should they not be taught the proof underpinning it? The obvious answer to both these questions is ‘no’, but the issue remains: what exactly do students need in the way of philosophy and mathematics? This is not an easy question to answer.

Moreover, it is not one about which there is consensus. For example, there can be disagreement about the priority that should be given to introducing students to regression analysis. While many see this as essential, for me it comes quite a long way down the list of priorities: because I believe that most data available to social scientists do not meet the measurement requirements it entails, and because I suspect that it does not capture very effectively the sorts of causal process that are to be found in the social world (Abbott 2001; Hammersley 2010; Byrne 2011). Of greater importance for me is that students come to understand more elementary forms of quantitative analysis, such as how to interpret and construct percentage tables, averages and rates of various kinds, and I believe that teaching these things is more demanding than is often recognised. Whether or not I am right in these judgments is immaterial here, the point is that many would take a different view.

There is no determinate answer to the question of how much knowledge of philosophy and statistics, or of anything else, any particular social researcher needs in order to practice the occupation well. Needless to say, some division of labour must be assumed here: researchers cannot be philosophers or statisticians and they can consult statisticians and philosophers, or materials produced by them, when this is necessary. But, of course, to do this they must know when to consult, and they must be able to understand the advice they are given or the information they find. The key issue is: what do they need to be taught for this to be possible? In my view, it is easy to underestimate this.
**Appropriate variation**

The final perennial question I will discuss follows on from this, it concerns what should be taught to whom, and when? For example, what should be the role of methods teaching within undergraduate social science degrees, as against in Masters’ courses concerned with substantive areas, or MRes and ‘postgraduate training'? One issue is whether the task should be to teach people how to do research or whether the priority ought to be to teach them to interpret and assess research reports. Most people would probably agree that there should be a difference in this respect across the three situations. But is it actually possible to teach students how to read and assess research reports without providing them with some understanding of how research is actually carried out? Does the one not turn into the other? The answer is yes, at least to some degree. So, the question is, what degree of difference in emphasis is appropriate across these different teaching situations? It is also worth noting that if one is preparing students to understand published research reports one may have to introduce them to more advanced statistical techniques than if one were simply preparing them to work on their own projects.

The four perennial problems I have discussed are difficult to deal with at the best of times, but it seems to me that they have become much more challenging as a result of recent changes in the environment within which methods teaching must now be carried out.

**Current sources of problems**

I will discuss three features of the contemporary scene that have worsened the perennial problems I have discussed and created new ones.

**Methodological division**

The first is the presence of deep methodological divisions among social researchers today, not just between quantitative and qualitative approaches but also within each of those camps, though especially amongst qualitative researchers. These divisions often extend beyond differences in view about how best to pursue research to include disagreement even about its goal and its value.

Some qualitative researchers still simply reject quantitative method, and certainly the ideas associated with it, on philosophical or political grounds. Most quantitative researchers do not reject qualitative work, but there are those who are highly skeptical about the value of its findings and wish to reduce its influence. Among qualitative researchers we can distinguish between those who are, effectively if not explicitly, engaged in the same task as quantitative research – seeking to identify causal processes in the social world – and those who at least claim to be doing something very different – whether this is formulated as producing ‘thick descriptions’, revealing the constitutive methods of social life, analysing discursive practices, or whatever. In addition, there are some who see their task as to challenge social scientific claims to knowledge or as to give voice to the perspectives of groups who have been marginalised. There are also those who believe that research is a weapon for challenging the socio-political status quo, and/or that it should be directly integrated into practical 'action' of one sort or another.

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8 For discussion of many of these forms of qualitative research, see Hammersley 1995 and 2008.
It should be clear, first of all, that these methodological divisions worsen some of the perennial problems that I have mentioned, notably that of deciding what to teach, as well as to whom and when. The ground that must be covered has been increased considerably: for example diversification of the methodological field has drawn in philosophical ideas that would not previously have been regarded as relevant (for example, those of Gadamer, Foucault, and Derrida). Furthermore, in introducing students to what separates different approaches, one is forced to address some quite difficult philosophical issues that might otherwise be avoided. Thus, in discussing the difference between realist and constructionist versions of social research it is necessary to consider whether we can legitimately think about social institutions, or even particular social actions, as objects existing in the world which are generated by causal processes of some sort, perhaps including the mental processes of human beings; or whether, instead, we must see institutions and actions as themselves constituted through the linguistic and other categories that we all, including researchers, employ to structure our experience of the world or indeed the world itself (if there can be any such distinction). One of the philosophical sources of this dispute is the controversy over Kant's distinction between things-in-themselves and things-as-they-appear-to-us. Identifying this source, I hope, makes clear that there is deep philosophical water here. Moreover, while Kant is not regarded as the most easily intelligible of philosophical writers, he does at least attempt to be clear, by contrast with some more recent philosophers and social researchers who deny the possibility or desirability of clarity (among qualitative researchers, see Lather 1996 and MacLure 2003). Even if a teacher decides that, as far as possible, these philosophical difficulties, and the challenging literature discussing them, need to be skirted, students may still stumble or venture into them and need help.

Current methodological divisions also generate a relatively new problem: what attitude should the teacher take or display towards the plurality of approaches that now exist in the field? At one end of the spectrum are teachers of research methods who present a wide range of approaches and treat each as valid in its own terms, with a view to enabling students to understand them and make judgments about them for themselves (see, for example, Travers 2001). At the other extreme, are those who argue (with Lincoln 1990) that we should teach students just one paradigm, the one to which we are ourselves committed. From this point of view, different paradigms would be on offer in different research methods courses or in different institutions, so that students could choose amongst them in much the same way that clinical psychology students can choose whether to train as ‘Freudians, or Jungians, or Adlerians’ (Lincoln 1990:87; Hammersley 2004:557).

These are, of course, poles of a continuum, and most methods teaching will lie somewhere between the two. But what is the best or most appropriate mid-position? I suspect that many would argue that we should be closer to the first approach than the second. However, even this leaves considerable scope for significant variation in practice. After all, how many, and which, of the available approaches are we to include? Do we reduce these to a small number of styles (and, if so, at what cost), or do we provide potted accounts of a large number? Do we treat the approaches as incommensurable with one another, or as open to combination? Note too that this approach may require teaching some approaches that one regards as of little value or even as damaging. This points back to the question of how to decide what to include. What should be the criterion here?

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9 A rationale for this stance could be derived from MacIntyre's (1990:232–4) argument in Three Rival Versions of Moral Inquiry.
Should it be what we believe are valuable or viable approaches to social research, or what we think students need to know in order to be able to navigate the methodological field in its current state? The result may be very different depending upon which of these criteria we adopt. And if we adopt both criteria, how should we strike a balance between them?

The problem highlighted here is that, presumably, the task is not just to teach students what one personally thinks they need in order to be competent social researchers, but also to prepare them for a world of social research that is now very diverse and divided. It involves a huge methodological literature, some of which requires special skills to understand it, some of which is negligently if not willfully obscure, and some of which is inaccurate as well as misguided. In these conditions, deciding what to include and exclude is a problem that, to use a postmodernist term, verges on the undecidable.

There is also the issue of how we should encourage students to relate to the various approaches on offer. In crude terms we can contrast a strategy designed to nurture collegial tolerance as against one promoting resolute partisanship. One could, after all, teach a range of approaches but make very clear which of these one believes to be worthwhile and which are not. It should be noted that tolerance is not necessarily underpinned by a belief in the value of pluralism (see Hodkinson 2004; Hammersley 2005), it may just be a matter of expediency. But should we be tolerant of everything? Is all methodological policing of disciplines to be dismissed as totalitarian? What if some approaches effectively amount to playing a different game from research, whether this is a game that is judged to be legitimate in its own right or one that is beyond the pale? It seems to me that some policing is essential and that those teaching research methods are necessarily part of the thin blue line. At the same time, while one may have strong views about particular approaches and express them to one’s colleagues, but just how far should these shape one’s teaching?

There are additional practical dilemmas involved here. If one collaborates with others in teaching, how should differences in approach be accommodated? Should these be expressed openly and debated in front of students, or should a common front of apparent agreement be presented? Perhaps even more difficult is how to deal with students who adopt a stance with which one has little sympathy, or to which one is opposed? In particular, how can their work be assessed fairly? For instance, if a student presents an assignment in the form of a play, in the manner of Denzin and others (see for example 2009; Hammersley 2010a), what should be our response? Here, the issue of criteria for assessing social research becomes relevant, yet this is one of the main points at which fundamental disagreement arises (Hammersley 2008).

**More diverse clientele and changing remit**

Another current source of problems can be seen as stemming from the move to a more diverse clientele. One aspect of this is that the range of backgrounds and localities from which students now come is much broader than in the past. This means that there are rather more who, for one reason or another, do not possess the knowledge and skills that were previously assumed to be a precondition for doing university courses.

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10 Many years ago, meeting an ethnomethodological colleague on his return from giving a talk entitled ‘One sociology or many?’, I asked him what was his answer to this question. The reply came ‘Preferably one, but if necessary many’. Those who see themselves as marginalized tend to be tolerant, but only because they have no other option!
An example is international students for whom English is not a first language and who – often despite great linguistic capabilities – struggle with academic English, as well as with other aspects of what is demanded of them, for example with critically assessing the literature. Of course, these problems do not apply only to international students, and they do not apply to all of them either.

One consequence of this change in clientele is that things need to be taught that one might have hoped would already be known. This is an issue that has been raised in relation to quantitative method (see Payne and Williams 2011), but the problem extends well beyond numeracy: it includes the skills required to read and comprehend complex texts, and to write essays or longer reports. The problem here is not simply the time it takes to teach these skills but that, in my experience, they are very difficult to teach effectively in the context of research methods courses.

There is a difficult tension underpinning this issue. For instance, on the one hand, it is impossible not to be sympathetic to students who are struggling to write well, and it is important to recognise that they may understand the issues, and have worthwhile ideas about them, even though they cannot express these very effectively. On the other hand, should not the award of a HE qualification in a UK university signify that those obtaining it can, amongst other things, write a clear and effective report in good English? Many years ago, Jean Martin, then at the UK Office for National Statistics, was an external examiner on a methods course in which I was involved, and she remarked that she was a potential employer for our students, and that she regarded the ability to write clearly and effectively as an essential requirement for a pass. This is surely not unreasonable.

There is another aspect to this problem. In the past, to a considerable degree, even at undergraduate level the task of teaching was seen as inducting students into a particular social science discipline, and, in the case of methods teaching, introducing them to how research in this discipline is and should be carried out. However, not only are there more disciplines, but each one has fragmented into specialities of various kinds. Indeed, it is now frequently argued that social science is in a post-disciplinary state. A result is that neither within nor across disciplines is there a canon of work with which one can presume students to be familiar. For instance, one cannot safely refer to Durkheim’s Suicide or to psychological behaviourism or to Freud’s notion of the unconscious or to the significance of Plato’s cave, on the assumption that students will have sufficient knowledge to understand the reference; yet this knowledge may be essential to becoming a competent researcher in some contexts. My point is not that students today know nothing, it is that what they know, as an aggregate, is very diverse and (from the point of view of the teacher) uncertain.

Finally in this section, there has been a major shift in the definition of the task of teaching research methods, partly reflecting the more diverse clientele: it is no longer seen as simply concerned with enabling students to understand, and in some cases to carry out, academic research. It is now regarded – by students, by university authorities, by funders, and by national governments – as part of the process of preparing students for higher-level occupations.

\[11\] The converse problem of students being too readily dismissive of what is at odds with their existing beliefs is also common.

\[12\] Like many colleagues, I currently review a lot of papers for academic journals, and the quality of writing is frequently poor; indeed, the same is true of some that get published.
Thus, it is demanded that research methods courses prepare students for a range of occupational destinations to which ‘research skills’ are judged relevant, those located in: government departments, journalism, marketing, think tanks, charities, political parties, and commercial organisations of various kinds. This exacerbates considerably the perennial problems mentioned earlier. Not only is the ground to be covered increased but also issues are raised about what does and does not count as research — the notion of research-related occupations tends to blur this boundary considerably. Also, many teachers of research methods do not know much about the various occupations that they are now supposed to be training students for, nor is it clear that this is an appropriate role for them.

**Over-administration**

The final source of contemporary problems I will mention is what might be called the over-administration of research and ‘research training’.\(^\text{13}\) I will mention just a couple of points here. First, in relation to doctoral training especially, there is the growing degree of specification of what students should be taught. Relevant here are the ESRC’s ventures, over many years, into specifying what should be included in research methods courses, these most recently being incorporated into the process by which proposals for doctoral training centres were evaluated.

One element of this, but by no means the only one that generates problems, is the demand for increased emphasis on quantitative method. While I am broadly in favour of this, for reasons that will be clear from what I said earlier, some of the specific requirements frequently laid down seem to me to be misconceived, with too much emphasis on advanced techniques and too little on the basics (see Gorard 2003).

But there is a more fundamental issue here, to do with who is best placed to decide what particular students need to be taught, and when. While, as I argued earlier, this is a perennial problem for teachers, those who seek to lay down general policies are in an even worse position to make sound judgments about this. Yet, today, teachers’ judgements are increasingly constrained by external policy prescriptions.

Another aspect of over-administration is the preoccupation with ensuring student progress, and its consequences. At doctoral level, the major source of pressure here has been the long-running requirement that students complete within 3, or at most 4, years. There are good reasons for trying to facilitate student progress, but there are no guarantees in doing this, not least because students and their PhD projects vary considerably, and the attempt to do this can have negative consequences. I have had one student complete in two and a half years, immediately get a job, and within a few years become a professor. So why can’t they all do this? If we took her as a model, maybe they could, at least as far as the PhD is concerned. What would be required is this: no collection of new data, reliance instead on what is already immediately accessible; and the student must start the PhD already having most of the analytic resources that are required. My student came trained in discourse analysis, applied this to an already published text, and produced an excellent piece of work. But this is clearly not a model that can or should always be followed. Instead, very often, I have to make clear to new students that doing a lengthy ethnographic study for their PhD is unlikely to be possible.

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\(^{13}\) Perhaps this is an aspect of what Horkheimer and Adorno (2002:232 and passim) refer to as ‘the administered world’, or the ‘totally administered society’.
They will not get into the field very quickly, for a variety of reasons, including the growing difficulties in negotiating access to some sorts of setting, along with the time it takes for them to clarify their research topic, read the literature, prepare for their probationary review, and so on. Furthermore, I tell them that they will need to allow at least a year and a half for completing the analysis and writing their thesis. A further effect of the pressure on completion rates is that, increasingly, doing a PhD is no longer a matter of producing an original contribution to knowledge, it has become instead a much more instrumental task of doing a (large) piece of course work in order to obtain a qualification. And this tendency has been reinforced by, and is reflected in, the profusion of books now available in the spirit of ‘how to get your PhD’.  

The progress-monitoring that pressure on completion rates has generated within many universities exacerbates this instrumental tendency, requiring at least the pretence that doing research amounts to following a schedule and implementing a set of procedures. Closely associated, often, is a regime of ‘busyness’ where students must demonstrate that they have attended courses, completed skills training, and so on, perhaps keeping a portfolio to provide evidence of their ‘progress’. These developments are, to a considerable extent, at odds with the necessarily uncertain and meandering character of the research process, if pursued properly. So, while an emphasis on completion rates may have had beneficial consequences in some respects, it has also had negative ones. And, in my judgment, these extend to the quality and value of what is now produced in much PhD work.

Another aspect of over-administration arises from the way in which all research and research training are increasingly being incorporated into strategic management processes within universities. Thus, it is now often required that students’ research be related to specified strategic objectives of a research centre or university. But research projects evolve over their course, and this may well require a re-specification of the focus, sometimes even a major transformation, which could take the research outside of the area specified by institutional objectives. There are good reasons why this may occur: the original plan could be discovered to be non-viable, or an unanticipated and better research opportunity may be discovered. Of course, strategic management requirements are not always enforced very tightly: there is a gap here, as elsewhere, between what is on paper and what happens in reality. Nevertheless, this aspect of over-administration can be problematic for PhD students, and is a source of anxiety for them, especially when they are dependent for continued funding on the institution, and their ‘progress’ is being continually monitored.

Finally under this heading, let me mention ethical regulation. Students’ research proposals, at all levels, are now virtually all supposed to go through an ethics committee, as a result of ESRC policy (ESRC 2010). This can introduce even more delay in starting the data collection process. More importantly, it often distorts the research that is being planned, either because students and their supervisors anticipate that investigation of some topic or use of some method will cause problems with the ethics committee, and avoid these, or because an ethics committee effectively prohibits the investigation of some topic or the use of some method.

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14 Bell (1987, now in its fifth edition, 2010) and Phillips and Pugh 1987 (now in its fourth edition, 2005) were amongst the first of these, but there are now many other examples.

15 Here too there is often a gap between policy and reality: whether this occurs, and how it is handled, varies considerably.
There is now a growing body of anecdotal accounts of researchers’ experiences of this kind with ethics committees. While there have been few accounts of students’ experiences, if anything they are in a weaker position to deal with these problems.

In the context of a discussion of the teaching of research methods, it is also worth noting the way in which ethical regulation has a tendency to reduce research ethics to ‘what is required to get the approval of an ethics committee’, with great emphasis placed upon securing written informed consent from participants. Here, again, a process of proceduralisation is involved. While ethics committees’ responses to students’ proposals can sometimes usefully stimulate reflection, not just on the part of students but also of supervisors, generally speaking I suspect that, in the context of the pressured process that pursuing a PhD has now become, reinforcing a procedural orientation is the more common consequence. Furthermore, in this context, the role of supervisor, as regards ethics, can increasingly amount to giving advice about how to hoodwink ethics committees. Is this ethical? Probably not, but then we might also ask whether the operation of ethics committees is ethical (Hammersley 2006 and 2009).

Conclusion

I have identified some serious problems facing methods teaching today. Some of these are exacerbations of perennial ones, others have a more recent origin. The key point is that contemporary conditions make it very difficult to teach social research methods well. More than this, there is now actually little agreement about what this would mean.

So, ‘What is to be done?’. How might teachers of research methods be assisted in dealing with these problems? This is not an easy question to answer, not least because any improvement depends, in part, upon external preconditions. One is that the range and depth of methodological disagreement about the nature of research, and how it should be pursued, be reduced. And this has to be done in a way that is true to the genuinely difficult methodological issues that face social scientists. The mixed methods movement might be seen as playing a key role here. But I think this is a false hope because, in practice, that movement tends to gloss over fundamental conflicts in perspective and orientation, or simply to incorporate them into conflicting underpinning rationales for mixed methods itself (see, for example, Tashakkori and Teddlie 2010). There are writers who have argued that the quantitative-qualitative distinction is by no means as clear-cut or as fixed as is often assumed, and have also criticised the idea that we must simply tolerate diverse approaches (see Hammersley 1996 and 2005). But this seems to have had no significant effect.

The other precondition is even less likely to be achieved. This requires changes that are external to the research community, in particular some rowing back against the influence of the currently prevalent economic model of higher education (Hammersley 1995:ch8; Collini 2012), and against the ‘new public management’ which has spawned increased strategic management of research and the growth of ethical regulation (Hammersley 2011; Hammersley and Traianou 2012b: Introduction). This is clearly part of a larger political problem which, despite the recent economic collapse, is far from being resolved.

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16 See the section on ethical regulation in Hammersley and Traianou 2012a.
We are still stuck with managerialism at national level, and within universities, and with an economistic outlook that erodes research, education, and much else. Resistance to these tendencies is required wherever they occur, but it is hard to be optimistic about the likely success of this, in the short and medium term at least.

The only other recommendation I can frame, necessarily vague, is that even in these unpropitious circumstances we must find ways of encouraging the sort of professional attitude that is required on the part of teachers of research methods if they are to be able to negotiate the serious problems they currently face. But this must be done in ways that do not involve over-administration, and do not deny the necessarily phronetic character of the enterprise.

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