

# Editorial

This edition, as always is international in scope. We have contributions from the USA, India and the UK. The authors, represent nursing and social work educators, as well as teachers of post graduate management studies. A theme to emerge from all the articles is that of how to promote and facilitate optimum learning in students, in the classroom, in service learning situations and the assessed placement, all of which contribute to learners' developing the skills, knowledge and competences required for safe professional practice.

In many professions with assessed practice learning requirements, the practicum is seen as an important space for what is learnt in the classroom setting to be tried out, assessed and tested in the real world (Finch, 2017). Such real-world situations are often, complex and fraught, and the concrete answers students from many professional backgrounds initially need, do not always capture, or adequately account for the complexities, challenges and nuances of practice. This process of enculturation and adaptation can be a challenge for students of many disciplines.

The first article focuses on learning style inventories, in the context of an Indian post graduate management training programme. Indeed, learning style inventories or questionnaires, was something I was taught on my Practice Teachers course. Learning styles inventories therefore make the claim that adult learners have preferences, or distinct ways of learning. Educators therefore have the responsibility to understand the students preferred learning style and promote teaching activities that will meet this learning style. Hence, activists may enjoy (and learn) from role play type activities and a reflector, may enjoy more thoughtful and reflective approaches to learning. Indeed, when I undertook this activity some years ago, my preferred learning style was identified as a 'reflector'.

Going back to the first article, the authors attempted to consider the

reliability of an adapted learning style questionnaire inventory. Like many studies it concluded that the LSQ was not a reliable measure and lacked validity, although it noted that the students on the programme tended towards theorist styles of learning. The authors therefore raise the question about the validity of the model itself, and its applicability in an Asian context. The article raises further the question of the usefulness of such LSQs and inventories. Indeed, (Maclean et al, 2018) raise the issue of the validity of such approaches, and the lack of empirical evidence to back up these theories.

What is important however, is to consider the learning needs of the students as well as developing interesting and creative learning techniques to aid students professional and academic development. The Journal is interested to continue this debate and would welcome full length articles, or indeed, practice notes, exploring the contentious topic of learning style inventories or questionnaires and their usefulness, or not, in field settings.

The second article, by Pelligrino and Lee, focuses on pre-service learning by foundation nursing students. This is a fascinating article that compares the experiences of a classroom-based learning activity and the same learning activity carried out in conjunction with a charity (service learning). Aside from a creative learning technique to supports students developing competences in literacy and research, the study explored the learning gained by students in the classroom compared with those doing the in-service learning. The authors claimed therefore that by involving foundation level students in service learning, was an important step in helping students prepare for later placement learning in terms of what they gained from the task. The authors conclude with some implications for practice learning more generally and term this process 'vertical integration'.

The third article by Lawson, focuses on what practice educators (field educators) can do to promote critical reflection in social work students on placement. Whilst the context is English social work, the article has wide applicability internationally and across disciplines. The work of Kolb is influential in the development of critical reflection, again, another well-used theory that perhaps has not received the critical attention it may deserve. This practical yet highly theoretical article, helpfully offers a clear definition of what is critical reflection, and the contentious issue of what is critically reflection. Lawson argues strongly for the need for practice educators to manage and contain the inevitable 'perspective

transformations' that students will necessarily undergo in practice learning settings. Lawson then goes on to offer a range of models that practice educators can utilise to help a student develop critical reflection skills on placement.

The last article by Domakin focuses on what she terms 'integrated learning', an attempt to bridge the divide between classroom learning and placement learning in the UK social work context. As it can be seen this has resonance with Pelligrino's and Lee's notion of vertical learning discussed earlier. Domakin's fascinating approach to addressing the somewhat artificial divide between classroom and placement learning was inspired by Laurillard's Conversational Framework

This edition contains two books reviews, of *Relationship-Based Social work: Getting to the Heart of Practice* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition) by Ruch et al and *Helping Your Transgender Teen: A Guide for Parents* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition) by Krieger.

As always, the Journal is looking for new submissions, either longer articles or shorter practice notes. Please do contact me if you have an idea or even a germ of an idea. The Journal supports new and aspiring writers as well as more experienced writers. We always need reviewers, so again, please do contact us. If you have come across a good book which helped you as a field educator, supervisor, mentor or trainer, again, do let us know.

Dr Jo Finch  
Editor  
J.Finch@uel.ac.uk

## References

- Finch, J. (2017) *Supporting Struggling Students on Placement: A practice guide*. Bristol: Policy Press
- Maclean, S., Finch, J. & Tedam, P (2018) *SHARE: A New Model for Social Work*. Litchfield: Kirwin Maclean