

# Editorial

Welcome to another issue of the *Journal of Practice Teaching and Learning*, a multi-disciplinary and international journal which publishes articles and practice notes on all things practice learning. Practice learning is a catch-all term to describe learning in the field, either as student practitioners, who are often required to be assessed on placements or practicum, or, in the case of those already established in their careers, through continuous professional development activities and work-based learning more generally. The journal also publishes articles on how universities can better prepare students for the realities of their clinical or practice placements. This edition is a thoroughly social work affair, with three articles written from an English social work perspective and the remaining two from an American perspective. We are keen to ensure other professions are represented fully in this journal, so please do make contact with us.

This issue kicks off with an American social work education article by Simon and Grossman, who focus on how social work students can be assisted to develop better links with professional associations. The article explores the decline of professional association membership for a range of professions, not just social work. The authors argue that it is vital for the continued professionalisation, and growth and development of social work, that students engage with professional associations and maintain their links, despite the challenges. This article clearly has resonance for a wide range of professions in many countries. If you have been encouraging students to make links or join professional associations, we would like to hear from you.

The next article by Higgins, explores the social work degree in England, which was introduced in 2002. Higgin's qualitative research focused on the relationship between the university and the field, and considered students learning within the university and the HEI. His findings were interesting but stark, suggesting there was a still felt to be a perceived 'gap' between the university teaching and the placement learning. Newly qualified social workers also experienced a struggle between the narrow realities of the agency work, and their broader ideals of what social work should be.

The next article by Squillace and Cassel, explores study abroad programmes for American social work students. This article explores some useful practical tips for organising study tours abroad, recognising the demographics of a particular student cohort. What is clear is that students need emotional support, containment as well as opportunities to reflect on their experiences of contexts and environments which are often very different from those that they are used to.

Debra Lavender-Bratcher and her colleagues, explore American social work students in service learning in a clinic offering free medical care. The authors, argue for a model of structural social work, which locates poverty, as arising from societal structures and institutions rather than an individualistic model. The placement provided great learning opportunities for the social work students, not least working inter-professionally, helping service users with meeting their basic needs and interacting with people in distress. More importantly, the study noted positive changes in student's attitudes towards people living in poverty – the placement helped students understand structural factors that impact on poverty and accessing medical services.

Our last article, by Caroline Bald and Aisha Howells, covers some of the themes developed in the Higgins's article discussed earlier, namely the intersection between the university learning and placement learning and again considers the tensions and dilemmas, not least what are students learning, why and whose needs?

We have one paper in our Practice Notes section, by Barry Fearnley and three of his students. It describes work undertaken at a UK university to support social work students with additional needs on field placement, and considers some areas for further development.

The issue concludes with two book reviews. Our book review section is expanding. We are always pleased to receive relevant books and other materials for review.

As it can be seen, this is an interesting issue, which focuses on the many ways in which students learn about their professions, taking up a professional role, and changing attitudes towards vulnerable and oppressed groups.

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