

Editorial

I have to admit to some reluctance and resistance initially to using information technology effectively. With me personally it was probably generational or age related issues that made me resistant. However, I have now embraced *some* of the systems wholeheartedly. As an independent 'off-site' practice teacher I feel that creative use of e-mail has enhanced my teacher/learner relationships considerably. I still feel though, that I have lot to learn and our first article in this edition has given me much food for thought regarding the creative use of the internet.

Moira Dunworth and Non Scantlebury have developed the use of 'Blogging' as a most effective learning tool. They describe the benefits of this approach to both learner and teacher. The authors avoid 'tecky' jargon and also provide some 'practice pointers'. For those readers who are inclined to experiment an example of a reflective journal has been posted on the Internet; why not have a go yourselves!

Anette Bolin and Elsebeth Fog have developed a very innovative practice learning approach by using 'story telling' and 'narrative' with student social workers. Their article describes how they have used this method to create the deeper learning that occurs when students participate in practice (fieldwork) placements. Given the current emphasis on pragmatic competency based social work learning systems the authors refreshingly highlight how the 'storytelling method' can evidence a student's learning.

In their short report Janis Greig and Rhona Mackenzie describe how one university has successfully recruited non-traditional entrants into higher education health and social work courses. Their programme has focussed on the positive aspects of diversity amongst student groups. They conclude with some interesting and helpful practice implications.

In recent years, social work training in England has undergone considerable change. Students must now 'shadow' an experienced and qualified social worker as preparation for practice learning. Jonathan

Parker, Mel Hughes and Lynne Rutter's article examines how university programme providers have addressed this requirement of learning. The authors highlight considerable variations in approaches to this new type of learning in the social work degree.

They have also undertaken a study regarding the monitoring of the confidence of social work students prior to and after their period of shadowing. Finally they recommend a more rigorous and more consistent approach to the whole process.

Clare Seymour's article offers a very practical model to support the development of a student social worker's courtroom skills. She suggests observing and shadowing courtroom proceedings as a method of reducing anxiety and developing self-awareness in what can be a most daunting and unfamiliar experience. She also covers three other crucial areas: report writing, giving evidence, and cross-examination. Regarding the latter, she provides a very useful and practical list of suggestions to enable social workers to prepare for this process more effectively. Finally she argues that post-hearing supervision is vital to the learning process.

Steve Ambler

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for
Practice Learning and Field Education
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