

# Editorial

Welcome to issue 1 of this volume. We are pleased to offer a range of perspectives from around the world concerning core aspects of professional learning in practice settings within this issue, with contributions from Canada, Scotland, England, Hong Kong and Australia. One of the pleasures of editing a volume such as this relates to the spread of experience that permeates the contributions. The hope is that reflections on learning from across the world and replication of the research will help to ensure we have the best professional workers in each of our countries, drawing on local initiatives and indigenizing those that work for our own setting.

In the first of our articles, Barbara Muskat, Marion Bogo and Illana Perlman from Canada describes a successful pilot of rotational placements by a social work faculty of a large Canadian university. They describe the process and develop a modified approach that can be used in recruiting settings to take part in the rotational placements, enlisting field instructors and students, developing new field materials, training field instructors in the model and developing an evaluation tool used by field instructors and students. Give the resource challenges in field education/practice learning that are experienced in many countries Muskat et al. offer a model that has potential for wide translation.

Jane Fenton and Linda Walker from Scotland offer a perspective from a small scale study which examined social work students' attitudes to undertaking personal care tasks whilst involved in practice learning opportunities (PLOs) in private sector residential care. They provide a rationale for placing students in residential settings something that may raise some controversies from educators and students if they do not look beneath the surface at the potential learning offered. This links directly to the requirements of social work education in Scotland – something important for all settings. Importantly, they raise the question why should students be involved in personal care tasks. This is a fundamental question that adds to the complex literature relating to social work and what she is – a contested and perhaps unfathomable question globally,

but one that will engender debate for many years.

In our third paper, Sally Riggall from England returns to an old chestnut, somewhat sidelined within contemporary helping professions in the West as a performance-management culture exerts its grip. She seeks to assess the value of Egan's Skilled Helper model as a means of helping social work students enhance their communication, finding that students were able to transfer the skills learned in the classroom into practice and to be better placed for placing those who use social work services at the centre of the decision-making process.

In our fourth research paper, Grace Leung, Debbie Lam, Amy Chow, Daniel Wong, Catherine Chung, Bobo Chan from Hong Kong relate their research concerning how best to equip social work students with the ability to self-reflect. Their study employed both quantitative and qualitative techniques to evaluate an undergraduate course which set out to develop reflexivity. Leung and her colleagues found that students in the experimental group gained more insight and a deeper ability to reflect. The implications of this for social work education were drawn out.

We have two practice focused papers in our special practice section. Firstly, Nina Sivertsen a PhD student from Australia uses Wenger's concept of 'communities of learning' to explore how reflection and review is central to developing the skills and knowledge to develop as an educator in higher education settings. In our final paper in this issue, Jenny Peddar and Cher Brazier from England explore the growing use of student presentations and do so within the context of students who are struggling in, or have failed a practice placement. The paper examines the use of presentations as a means of gauging learning and knowledge and readiness, something that can be transferred to a range of settings and professions using practice learning or field education as a staple in professional education.

**Professor Jonathan Parker**