

# Editorial

This is the first issue of my tenure and I would like to personally thank both Lynda Deacon and Graham Ixer for their past and continued contribution to the Journal. Perhaps a few words about myself would be in order; I spent the first 19 years of my working life as a musician in the British Army, I then went on to train as a Probation Officer in 1984. Having also worked as an instrumental music teacher it was almost a natural progression that led me to practice teaching and learning! In 1995 I became the Practice Learning Coordinator in a small voluntary sector project, after two years in this post I moved to the Anglia Ruskin (formerly Polytechnic) University in a similar role. In 2004 I retired early and I now work independently as a practice teacher, and a trainer and consultant in all things related to practice learning. One very enjoyable aspect of the latter part of my career has been the opportunity to travel and teach abroad, particularly in Eastern Europe, these experiences have been life changing to say the least!

This leads me in to some of my thoughts on how the *Journal* may develop in the future. I would like to see more contributions from students, so, let's start encouraging them to write for publication. The *Journal* can be an appropriate medium for debate and there will be a section in future that will encourage this. Please write to me with your personal thoughts on practice teaching; I will start the ball rolling with the term 'Practice Teacher'. Having been involved with four social work programmes this year I have been referred to as a Practice Assessor, a Practice Teacher, an Assessing Qualified Social Worker and a Practice Tutor. Confusing to say the least, particularly as I was doing exactly the same thing with each University, can we stick to just one title, please, any comments on this?

This issue has a true international flavour to it, with contributions from Northern Ireland, England, Australia and we start with a paper from Sweden.

Bolin's article examines in depth, two social work students' experience of learning during their practice (field placements), building on previous

work undertaken in this area in Scandinavia. The main thrust of the paper is the use of Critical Incidental Analysis (CIA) as a vehicle for reflection and learning. Unlike the more quantitative types of research, this paper concentrates on the student experience, and centres around the narrative and feelings of learners. It also emphasises the importance of prior learning and experiences and how these processes are crucial for further, perhaps deeper learning. Using a CIA approach is not new, but using it as a pivotal leaning tool as Bolin describes is most innovative.

McCafferty offers a very practical model of group supervision/learning for social work students. Having concluded from a literature review that little practical guidance was available on how to facilitate group supervision with trainee social workers, he (with others) developed a model. The strength of his model is in its ownership by all parties concerned in the practice learning process. He plans an evaluation, which I hope will form the subject of another stimulating and very pertinent paper.

In a learning climate which is increasingly inter-professional, Wilson and Hillison's study of how social work practice placements are organised in schools is most timely. From a system that has already accommodated many students they have acquired considerable knowledge and expertise in this area. Their paper highlights the strength and weaknesses of learning in settings where social work is not the primary activity of the organisation. I have myself recently practice taught in a school setting where unfortunately things went badly wrong, and it would have been very helpful to have been able to read this paper first. It should perhaps be 'essential' reading for those in inter-professional work-based learning.

Cooper's paper is somewhat different from our other contributions; in a very creative manner she has mirrored the narrative techniques of Montesquieu's *Persian Letters*, placing herself in the shoes of a present day student who reflects on their learning in letters written to the Baron across time *and cultures*. To enter into the spirit of Cooper's paper I took on the persona of Montesquieu in my editors' feedback to her and we have included this in the discourse. There is also a salutary lesson for me (and the Baron!) regarding the use of language.

Ambler and Black report on their experience training social work practice educators in the Chernihiv law College in northern Ukraine. The purpose of the visit was to examine where the UK values critical to UK social work training are able to transfer to other cultures. During a first visit in 2000 they taught a five-day module on practice learning

and used research tools of questionnaire, structural interviews and focus groups to collate and analyse data that sought to examine the transferability of values. Practice teachers have no formal training. The effects of their teaching and transferability of knowledge and values are evident in the positive changes to practice teaching brought about because of their visit.

Steve Ambler