

# Editorial

This is my last issue as my tenure as Editor comes to an end shortly. The Journal will remain in good hands as Jonathan Parker will be taking over the reins. Jonathan has been a major contributor to the Journals success in the last few years having written articles and worked on the editorial board. Jonathan is also a productive author, his books being enthusiastically appreciated by students and social work educators for their practicality and current relevance to practice learning.

I would like to thank Lynda Deacon, our founding editor for all her support and guidance, the same also applies to David Whiting our publisher and Adrian Black our current book editor. Finally, my wholehearted thanks go to all those colleagues who have submitted articles, the quality of which demonstrates a commitment to innovation and enthusiasm for practice teaching and adult learning principles.

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This issue starts with a contribution from Scotland. Linda Bruce describes a process of institutional change relating to the effects of late starting social work practice placements. There has been little attention paid to the social and economic repercussions on students when placements start late. Bruce therefore surveyed the student population and, as a result, her institution's programme was able to set up systems and processes to almost eliminate the unscheduled delays in placement starts. This is an excellent example of a learning organisation itself demonstrating a commitment to learn and grow.

Deborah Develin and Ian Mathews examine the motivation of practice assessors. Their research examines the intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors that encourage assessors to take up the role. Their findings underline a multiplicity of reasons for an individual's willingness to become involved in a crucial part of professional training. They postulate that practice assessment should be embedded within the

strategic thinking of organisations in order to develop a culture where it is included in job roles and becomes part of a practitioner's ongoing professional development.

Nessie Shia and Veronica Bankole's paper focuses on interdisciplinary learning in a community nurse context and the effectiveness of problem based learning (PBL) approaches. The majority of the learners regarded PBL as a positive strategy, being particularly effective at linking theory to practice. Using inter-disciplinary workshops the community nurses valued a process that enabled them to share and compare experiences with other nursing colleagues. They were also able to develop their problem solving and communication skills. The collaborative learning as described also has resonance and relevance for the training of other allied health and social care professionals.

Next is a contribution from Central Queensland, Australia. Sandra Taylor, Jo Mensinga, Jennifer Casey and Barbie Caldwell's pilot study suggests an alternative model for the training and support of fieldwork educators who are geographically isolated. Their model includes the creative use of email, telephone mentoring and telephone conferencing; overall the participants rated the training and support most positively. Flexibility and multi-faceted techniques enabled the supervisors to adapt the programme to their individual learning preferences and 'unique organisational contexts'. Although this pilot project was primarily designed to overcome difficulties of isolation, some of the learning resources and strategies employed surely have relevance to anyone who is responsible for supporting field educators who are near or far away!

Finally, this issue concludes with two reviews, both of books likely to be of great interest to those involved in practice teaching and learning.

**Steve Ambler**