

Editorial

It is with a great sense of pleasure and challenge that I write this, my first, editorial for the journal. I must extend my heartfelt thanks and gratitude to the previous editor, Steve Ambler, for steering a confident passage through some tumultuous times in health and social work. It is always good to start from a solid base, making it so much easier to promote, develop and enhance this important journal.

The journal is important to us all from whichever profession, discipline, country or state we come. Demographic changes are leading to an increasingly ageing society and workforce and stark differentials between younger and older people. In clinical or practice settings and amongst academic staff educating practitioners and researching new ways of practising effectively these shifts in age profiles are beginning to have an impact. It is crucial we remember that ageing in itself can be easily problematised in these circumstances and we must, as human professionals, guard against this, remembering that age alone does not result in demands for increased services, practitioners and expenditure at a rising proportion of countries' GDP. However, associated demands with an ageing population from rising health costs, people living longer with chronic illnesses and diseases, technological advances in medicine, health care and social support accompanied with a falling birth rate and, therefore, labour supply, skill mix and, potentially, tax revenue presents a challenge. This challenge is exacerbated in the contemporary global culture we have developed. Developed countries have, it may be said, yet again exerted a control over developing countries by tempting away their qualified and skilled human professionals to work for them, leaving those developing countries short of welfare and health care; part of a complex global migration phenomenon. We have a number of issues to address within the world. Are we able to educate our future health and social care workforces? As communities, groups and individuals migrate are we able to educate people effectively to work in culturally complex and fluid environments? How do we respond best to pressures

of globalisation in health and social work? Do we, can we or should we have effective global standards for health and social work education and are they sufficiently robust (see IASSW/IFSW global standards for social work, <http://www.ifsw.org/en/p38000255.html>)? Furthermore, do we have a research active academic community, practitioners who engage in applied research so that we can address some of the challenges the future poses or has the focus on immediate need and economic costs led to the privileging of purely instrumental approaches to health and social work rather than those built of social justice foundations? There are many more questions we can identify but perhaps some of these will be addressed, however tentatively, on these pages in future editions.

Perhaps some of these questions are made more acute given the global economic downturn and the search for solutions to this financial crisis, such as the G20 summit in London (on-going as I write this editorial). The impact of the current crisis on health and social work services across the world is as yet unknown but we may forecast that it will have an impact and, no doubt for many, a negative one. Even if we maintain provision for people the costs of educating the new workforce (and having people within the existing workforce to assist in this process) are high not to mention the need for on-going applied research that ensures services are appropriate, effective and meeting identified need.

The current state of affairs creates new demands for those involved in learning for, about and in practice and how this might be used effectively and efficiently to produce high quality practitioners, There is a greater need for practitioners, but a dwindling workforce, a need to cut expenditure and to prioritise in key, immediate areas, but a rising number of people requiring services.

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In this issue we have papers from Turkey, Finland, Ireland, Scotland and England covering such disciplines as social work, nursing and clinical psychology. These papers begin to address some of the questions raised above and to pose new ones for future exploration.

In the first paper, Karen McKenzie, Clara O'Shea, Paula Megson, Hamish Macleod and Michael Begg examine the potential that virtual gaming principles have for teaching and learning about challenging behaviour and people with learning disabilities. This exciting development of more traditional problem-based learning and case study

work is considered in respect of clinical psychology but transferability is clear.

Maria Dempsey, Marion Murphy and Carmel Halton continue an action-based approach to learning but focus on the development of reflection amongst social work practitioners in a hospital setting. Dempsey and her colleagues grapple with some of the complexities of reflection and the tensions between fostering such an approach and the immediate pressures and demands of practice. Helga Helland Finstad's paper extends the focus on reflection and critically reflective practice for busy practitioners; this time in management positions in health and social work. Using an analytic frame drawn from hermeneutic phenomenology, Finstad seeks to understand how critically reflective approaches can impact positively on practice within organizations.

Gul Pinar, Ziyafety Hanoglu and Lale Algier present a compelling insight into nurse education developments at one university in Turkey. Sexual and reproductive health issues represent a priority for Turkey, especially in rural areas. To address the needs of men and women, Pinar and her colleagues describe the development of a new sexual and reproductive health curriculum drawn from learning theories and technologies and attuned to other countries' approaches. The positive evaluation of these curricular adaptations are shown.

Issues of cultural competence are promoted as central to effective social work practice in the contemporary arena. Angie Bartoli, Sue Kennedy and Prospera Tedam consider cultural competence in the context of social work programmes themselves and how they promote the experience of Black African students whilst studying for a social work degree. The need for congruence between espoused principles and pedagogic practice is explored.

Finally in this issue, the topic of educating social work students in school settings in England concerns the paper from Liz Gregson and Julann Fielding. Whilst some countries have well-established social work in schools practice, notably the US, England still displays tensions between the education and social services perspectives, despite social policy driving greater integration between the two. Building on earlier projects of social work practice learning, Gregson and Fielding demonstrate the potential for learning that such experiences can afford.

A vision for this journal is to provide a forum for sharing international, national, local and regional practices and knowledge, to promote practice learning wherever it forms an integral part of professional

and academic education and to encourage high calibre research and theoretical debate about issues in and concerning practice learning. I am, as editor, therefore keen on expanding the parameters of debate and I welcome ideas and suggestions for the journal and particularly encourage suggestions for special editions. Please contact me with your views and help make this journal a central vehicle for policy and practice development throughout the world.

Jonathan Parker