



From the Editor's Desk

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Author(s):	<i>Michael Kelly, Michael Lauderdale, Noel Landuyt</i>
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From the Editor's Desk

Michael Lauderdale, PhD, Michael Kelly, PhD and Noel Landuyt, PhD

Some History

The history of the modern social work continuing education and the intellectual and program antecedents' of this Journal dates back to the 1970's. The National Institute of Mental Health sponsored a continuing series of training sessions for new directors of social work continuing professional education. Several that were part of the NIMH group formed the National Association of Continuing Education Directors, which although not long lived, continued to emphasize social work continuing education. Several members went on to create large and active CE programs.

But most importantly, during that decade a new source of funding for social work education came from the passage of Title XX of the Social Security Act that made it possible for state government entities including universities to provide faculty salaries as a match into a state's request to the Federal government for Social Security funds. The match would earn Federal funds that could be used to support the intents of the legislation. These new funds made it possible for many Schools of Social Work to establish continuing education programs. The funds provided an infrastructure to create a variety of educational activities. Several state supported universities including the State University of New York at Albany, the University of Michigan, the University of Missouri, The University of Tennessee, and the University of Texas at Austin created large continuing education programs that provided educational offerings during the summer, the regular academic school year and contracted programs with specific agencies to produce some desired organizational change.

The Creation of the Journal

This burst of creative activities in social work gave rise to the Journal under the leadership of Thomas Kinney and William Reid in the late 1980s at the State University of New York at Albany. During those years the Journal established itself as the foremost voice of this rapidly grow-

ing dimension of social work and as a means of communication among scholars in colleges across the nation concerned with extending knowledge from social work and related disciplines and professions. Among the original Policy Board and Editorial Advisory Committee are people active with the Journal today, including Ronald Green, Seymour "Cy" Rosenthal, Paul Campbell, and Michael Kelly. After a decade at Albany, the Journal's leadership was passed to Temple University with Seymour Rosenthal serving as editor. Like the Albany era the Journal was housed in a complex structure of research and service, the Center for Social Policy and Community Development that provided continuing education, training, research and technical assistance to individual practitioners, communities and social agencies. During Professor Rosenthal's tenure the Journal expanded its scope to scholarship in other countries and changed the title from the Journal of Continuing Social Work Education to Professional Development-The International Journal of Continuing Social Work Education.

The Mission

Now with the Journal moving to its third academic home it is a time to review the mission it serves and examine any changes that might be needed. The Journal has always reported on three broad themes. One is information about specific programs of continuing education. Thirty years ago these tended to be workshops often less than a day long and were directed to refreshing skills and knowledge for social workers or introducing a new topic such as work with refugee communities or a therapy modality. Today, licensing authorities stress continuing education as a requirement and professional associations have become the major providers of clinically oriented CE. However many Schools of Social Work continue to offer short courses and topical workshops.

A second theme was research about different means of delivering education. Continuing education has always been a laboratory for academic programs to try new modalities and structures of

delivering education degree related content and in the last two decades it has also been a means of helping initiate new ways to deliver social work degrees. Many of today's weekend programs, extension and internet-based offerings, and summer variants of the traditional semesters on campus programs were first piloted in practice and print through continuing education. Off-campus and part-time program were once controversial but have become a standard method of reaching rural and place bound students. Continuing education has always been the best laboratory to explore new ways of providing classroom content as well as agency setting content.

The third theme is using education in the service of organizational and community change. Educational interventions, often from professional CE programs, have led the way in helping organizations and communities respond to change in their environments. In these instances the audience will include degreed professionals in social work but also in other professions such as education, law, business, corrections, etc. It may also include persons without degrees and persons that describe themselves as lay men and women.

Trends in Social Work Employment and Challenges to Social Work Education

When the Journal came into being the times were heady. The Kennedy and then the Johnson Presidencies brought major new program and program changes. Prominent initiatives were Medicare, Medicaid, Community Action, Headstart, and Model Cities. These initiatives and other programs stimulated research funding for higher education, mental health and substance abuse. The program expansion in turn called for the rapid growth of social work to lead and staff in these new national programs. Amendments to the Social Security Act provided greater resources to assist the disabled, those in poverty, the aged and the dependent.

Through those decades of the 70's, 80's and 90's, it was largely assumed that the knowledge base of the profession could meet the challenge. But late in the 90's as new funding became more

difficult to secure, social work began to return to an epistemological puzzle that had been relatively quiet for decades. It was epistemological in that it asked how we could be assured if the tools and actions of social workers were effective.

From the beginnings of the profession it was assumed that what social workers did had a basic efficacy. However there were two very separate camps with different conclusions of what worked. One characterized by the settlement home movement viewed crime, poverty, troubled families, social disorder, homelessness and most of the common concerns of the profession caused by structural inequalities in neighborhoods and communities. The logical action of social work was to address the inequalities. The second camp understood the locus of causation to be internal to the individual. Weak morals, thinking errors, inadequate impulse control, and unresolved internal emotional conflicts led to crime, poverty, troubled families and homelessness. The logical action of this theoretical orientation was to correct problems within individuals.

When the adherent of either camp was pushed for the epistemological basis of knowing, what was the truth, it came down to "practice wisdom." Such an epistemology is familiar to medicine prior to the 20 Century and true for all professions and trades in antiquity. A master developed a skill through trial and error and also through direct instruction from an older, more experienced practitioner. This approach to developing professionals was time consuming and had the important flaw of having little basis for examining the procedures of the professional to see if a technique truly worked or comparing the relative efficacy of similar techniques. The development of the epistemology of science with its emphasis on sense data and replicability was slowly changing social work. While some have argued that the 1910's Flexner Report, directed toward medical education, motivated social work to establish a firm scientific footing, that argument does not appear to be valid when we look at corrective movements in social work education and research of recent years. One aspect of this corrective

movement is the relatively recent call by several social work academics to substantiate the claims of social work practice with empirical findings rather than resorting to a belief in the wisdom of skilled practitioners. Its popular term is "evidence-based practice" and is an implied declaration that social work has overlooked or not resolved fundamental epistemological questions and, in the case of selecting scientific empiricism, has not done the hard work of creating measures, gathering data and establishing relative efficacy of theories and methods.

This summer and fall the academic programs of social work have been visited by harsh criticism from groups called the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE), the National Association of Scholars (NAS), and the American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA) and in October by a column from a nationally syndicated writer appearing in the Washington Post. In the case of the criticism of groups like the National Academy of Scholars the charge may not be the lack of efficacy of social work theory and methods but its likely effectiveness. If poverty or crime is not best explained by resorting to intrapsychic causes but rather to environmental arrangements, then effective social workers will alter the community status quo and that efficacy may be the reason for these criticisms. Or perhaps the criticism refers not to the efficacy of social work but to its choices of unpopular clients. But inarguably one reading of these criticisms is that social work educators are imposing views on students rather than imparting knowledge.

Apart from these controversies of the moment, great advantage accrues to the social work program and to the social work professor of moving beyond the immediate classroom of the undergraduate or graduate student to the community to work with persons charged with addressing needs. Stepping away from this debate around teaching or indoctrinating that seems focused upon undergraduate and masters programs, the existence of continuing education programs in schools of social work requires faculty to teach independently employed professionals and lay

persons. We think each of us and the general public can rest assured that participants in continuing education programs are not indoctrinated nor coerced in these educational programs. Indeed one of the more salutary impacts of continuing education is the fact that it demands that faculty relate to the views, power and needs of professionals and citizens active in careers and with vital concerns for their communities. When you teach in a continuing education program in social work you may be teaching a protective services worker who has had twenty years of experience working in troubled homes and providing testimony in court, a lawyer in an agency that may be the administrator and is wrestling with budgets, demands from staff and a vocal and powerful constituency, a police officer that is faced with neighborhood demands on police for enforcement, service and often concerns about racial profiling, a correctional officer that has served in a juvenile court and worked with troubled youth or adults in crowded, depressing and often dangerous settings, of a gang worker who knows what it means to come between threatening youth and work to lower tempers and forestall violence. Faculties do not intimidate and indoctrinate such students and through participating in continuing education learn a style of teaching that builds on critical thinking and genuine give and take between professor and learner. Faculties take these skills and orientations into the traditional classroom and treat students as persons soon to be professionals that must know and think, not cite some memorized cant.

The Cutting Edge of Change

We have learned in these three decades plus that Continuing Education is where many if not most innovations in social work education begin. Change in systems comes from the margin and Continuing Education sits at the margins between the academic institution, the world of agencies and the community. It rightfully so continues to be the "cutting edge" of innovation in the profession and in the academe.

Today social work is a far larger social and institutional enterprise than when it began its rapid growth in the 1960's and 70's. There are roughly 670 bsw/msw programs and about 40 doctoral programs. If one includes lay people and allied professions such as law, medicine, education, public administration, counseling, corrections, law enforcement, community planning, etc., then the audience of persons active in human services and consumers and contributors to continuing education in our field runs to several million in the United States alone. While the Journal cannot seek to be a vehicle that will touch all of these areas, it does suggest that the journal must respond by increasing the breadth of topics to be considered. There is much to continue but there are many new topics that the Journal will address in the coming years.

In This Issue

The topics in this issue, Vol. 10, No. 2, reflect the diversity of our field. It opens with a commissioned paper by Karl Ensign and Jaymee Metzenthin looking at the State of Kansas's pioneering and innovative efforts in the privatization of public child welfare services. Similar experiments are now underway in many states. The Kansas's experience provides findings from one of the nation's fullest experiments with full privatization, and Ensign and Metzenthin provide an up-close and personal first hand report of the effort.

In the issue, Lisa McGuire focuses upon the efficacy of social work education in providing child welfare services. Marie-Antoinette Sossou examines gender-related services in the cultural context of Ghana, Nancy Chavkin looks at what survey research might provide about the impact of Title IV-E programs and Donna Cox considers a tool, the internet, unknown at the origin of the Journal and yet a common resource today, to see how it might serve the education of field instructors.

The volume's commissioned article also serves as a prelude to Vol. 10, No. 3. That Special Issue with Crystal Collins-Camargo and Michael Kelly as issue editors provides three additional

experiments related to child welfare privatization. This issue focuses on the current research in privatization and continuing education conducted by the National Quality Improvement Center on the Privatization of Public Child Welfare Services and the Children's Bureau, US Department of Health and Human Services.

Vol. 11, No. 1, will provide another focused issue dealing the development and application of instruments from the Organizational Excellence Group. Articles in that volume will examine empirical and theoretical research focused upon organizational change and improvement. We think it will contribute to the dialogue about efforts to increase quality and innovations in organizations.

We are welcoming four new members to the Editorial Board. Terry Shaw is an Assistant Professor at the University of Maryland at Baltimore. Terry recently completed his Ph.D. at the University of California at Berkeley and brings strong skills in quantitative methods and research interests in child welfare. Salvador Montana is an Assistant Professor at California State University at Fresno. Sal brings substantial experience in working with agencies and communities in the "Central Valley" region of California with strikingly different demographic and cultural features from California's coastal regions. Sal publishes in areas concerned with organizational development and social capital. Katherine Selber is Professor of Social Work at Texas State University in San Marcos, Texas. Katherine has directed field programs, created a number of innovative field structures and taught for five years at Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. She has conducted field and organizational research in Mexico during the 80's. Crystal Collins-Carmargo is Clinical Assistant Professor, University of Kentucky College of Social Work, Training Resource Center and brings strong experience in child welfare. We are joined as well by Frankie Westbrook who serves as Editor for Manuscript Development. Frankie brings strong editing and manuscript development skills having edited two journals for the University of Texas at Austin and many years of services at the University of Texas Press.