

## International Practice Development Journal

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### EDITORIAL

#### Investing in learning about practice development as a critical response

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Learning about practice development is best achieved in and through work. Learning how to 'be' a practice developer and not just to 'do' practice development takes many years of learning based on self-inquiry, among other things. Maybe, once in a while, it can help to stand back and have a burst of learning away from work and with others who share one's passions and dreams. It is increasingly hard for practice developers to find learning opportunities that are embedded in practice development and where new and creative learning is offered. In many health and social care provider organisations, the emphasis is on training and on knowing how to meet targets and 'comply'. Compliance is necessary for minimum safety standards but it is not enough; people need to be creative and feel inspired in different ways and most training simply doesn't do that. Further, short term bans on education and travel, which prevent networking and learning between peers, are shortsighted, while long term bans are dangerous as they carry the risk of teams becoming insular and of services developing with little exposure to external challenge. Economic concerns will always have an impact on the value placed on learning but they should not be the only or even the most important factor (Johnson 2011, p 457).

Those of us in roles with strategic influence need to work more closely with our colleagues in learning and development and workforce planning towards a 'critical response' (Johnson, 2011, p 459) that can influence how resources are allocated to education, including continuing professional development, and towards gradually extending the role of practice development. Not all education and learning should be explicitly focused on practice development but it should play a part. Employers have a social responsibility in regard to learning and it is one that is often overlooked. As Dewey argued so well, investment in workers' education and learning brings the energy and skills needed for organisational growth and increased success (Butler, 2000).

Among other learning opportunities, International Practice Development Collaborative (IPDC) members in several countries provide practice development schools that bring diverse groups of people together to learn more about practice development and innovation. Schools can be at three levels: introductory, foundation and advanced and all have a common curriculum, programme and criteria to support quality and consistency. A few schools also offer optional academic accreditation. People who come to these schools are lucky, either in that they work with an IPDC member or know about their work, or because they have convinced their employer to let them attend. These schools represent a good start but similar opportunities are rare and more are needed.

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And so to this issue, which contains a wide range of papers on different aspects of practice development. Each of them highlight just how much it is possible to learn, no matter what the focus of scholarship or research, and that there is still much to be learned to ensure better practice and care for service users. In particular, each paper demonstrates the significance of personal inquiry as a driver for creating new knowledge. We are delighted that the Open University has sponsored a paper in this issue; thank you to Josie Tetley for her paper, which raises questions about how to engage successfully with patients. Josie and Jan Draper have also contributed a guest editorial on the vital role of learning and development in enabling staff to provide person-centred care.

Finally, a huge thank you to everyone who has contributed, in whatever way, to enabling us to produce the journal throughout 2013, including our IPDC colleagues for their support. We look forward to continuing our work on the journal in 2014.

### References

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