
School of Health & Social Services
Massey University
Private Bag 11-222
Palmerston North 4442
New Zealand

E-mail: H.Simmons@massey.ac.nz

Tovey, W. (Ed.) (2007). *The post-qualifying handbook for social workers*. London, Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley. 208 pages. Published 15/07/2007. Cost £18.99. ISBN 9781843104285

Post-qualifying education and training is developing momentum wherever there is legislation for social work registration accompanied by requirements for acquiring professional qualifications in social work and maintaining current practice standards. New Zealand is no exception as one can see from previous editions of our Notice Board.

It is therefore timely to be reviewing Tovey's *Post-qualifying handbook for social workers*, which presents four important aspects of the post-qualifying approach in social work: contexts, practices, issues and 'doing PQ'. Coming from a British context, this is comparatively new thinking and makes for interesting and challenging reading. We also have post-qualifying training in Aotearoa New Zealand, and this book will enable readers to compare the British system with what we are providing within the ANZASW for our members. Readers may also become more discerning as to what they should be aiming for, or conversely, what might improve PQ frameworks overseas.

The first section in this handbook introduces the post-qualifying system in England and puts it in context. My first impression on trying to come to grips with the conceptual framework for post-qualifying practice as described by Preston-Shoot in Chapter 1 was that the PQ awards and requirements seemed somehow a bit vague. My feelings were endorsed in the following chapter by Adams, speculating on how we can make sense of the differences between basic, specialist, higher specialist and advanced practice in social work. The important point, he reflects, is that it the PQ framework encourages social workers to move from basic practice (where perhaps technical expertise has been the main focus) to increasingly complex professional practice characterised by 'situations of uncertainty, instability, uniqueness and value conflict' (Schon, 1983: 49). He relates reflective practice to specialist practice, critical practice to higher specialist practice and transformative practice to advanced practice in the PQ framework.

In doing so Adams makes an interesting and thought-provoking case and concludes his chapter noting that 'The most promising and exciting aspect of the [PQ] agenda is that it is, and probably always will be, contested, provisional and incomplete. This maximises the potential for creative practice in the future' (Adams, 2007, p42). This sense of fluidity in the framework implies no criticism of the contributors, who provide useful historical and contextual overviews and analyses of how the PQ system has developed and why social workers and those with an interest in their standards of practice should get involved. Other chapters in the contextualising section cover ethics and values, the social context, integrating theory and practice and the international context.

The second section provides a range of critical reflective studies of different fields of practice, and follows a categorisation of these which fits the English scene. Thus we have five chapters which look at practice in children and families social work, community care and its management, mental health social work, learning disabilities today and integrated ways of working in this field, and finally a chapter on working with young offenders. Each chapter contains a helpful case study to illustrate the points being made, and there are useful references and resources to assist the PQ candidate.

A range of issues is covered in the third section, starting with assessment and moving on to sexuality in social work education, thinking about loss and grief and what this means to us on a personal level, practice learning and finally users' and carers' involvement in education and service delivery. These issues have been chosen for their broad applicability to a wide range of social work practice, and to encourage PQ social workers to reflect ever more deeply and critically on their own practice and values in relation to them.

The fourth and final section is called 'doing PQ'. It '...provides a set of resources for the busy practitioner and those employing, managing, supporting and mentoring them' (Tovey, 2007: 203). Here is the strong handbook component of this volume, containing lists and charts, instructions on how to prepare and present portfolios of evidence to meet the criteria for the PQ level being sought. A set of appendices is included for educators, trainers and others working alongside the PQ candidate. It includes useful websites for locating further resources and information. I strongly recommend this one: <http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/view.asp?id=854>.

Perhaps the one surprising and rather disappointing aspect in this collection of fascinating articles would be the dearth of references to the important place that professional supervision has for post-qualifying social work. In Aotearoa New Zealand I think we can claim to be using professional supervision in the best ways possible to enhance our potential for reflective, critical and transformative practice. We are publishing and training in this field (O'Donoghue, 2003; Wepa, 2007; Baxter and Mayor, 2008) and we see professional supervision is an essential ingredient for competency assessment and recertification.

I would unhesitatingly recommend this book to our readers, to those managing social work staff and to all who desire to see social workers grow in professional expertise. The book comes as a bright-looking paperback, and is well indexed and referenced.

Dr. Mary Nash, Senior Lecturer, Massey University, Palmerston North

References

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