

Book Reviews

Knowledge-in-Practice in the Caring Professions: Multidisciplinary Perspectives

D’Cruz, H., Jacobs, S. & Schoo, A. (eds.)
Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2009,
pp. 256,
ISBN: 978-0-754672-84-5, £19.99 (pbk.)

This is a very useful and interesting edited text from Australia. As the editors explain in their comprehensive introduction, and revisit in their concluding chapter, the book aims to answer several interrelated questions on knowledge and its place in professional practice, as well as recognising that there are differences within and between the professions. It does this admirably.

The book begins with a useful exploration of epistemology. The editors look at the philosophy of Karl Popper and the theories of knowledge of Polanyi, Ryle and Oakeshott. Thereafter, the main body of the book contains a series of chapters written by experts in particular fields. These cover medical practice, psychiatry, social work, disability, nursing, psychology, midwifery, physiotherapy and addiction studies. Each chapter offers individualised views on the place and types of knowledge in their specific practice areas. The aim is to offer professionals a structure on which to base their practices. For example, the chapter by Lawn and Battersby, from Flinders University Medical Centre in Australia (pp. 161-187), reports on their 2007 investigation into “training and information options to support chronic condition prevention and self-management” (p.162). They write:

Yet, arguably, the needs of service consumers are a common thread through all health service organizations [. . . and . . .] we professionals could do more to come together with the person and one another to know how we each contribute to the larger picture of care for the person. (p.163)

This is the central challenge of the book and one that the book goes a long way to beginning to answer. However, the experiences of service consumers are not really addressed in depth. Chaffey notes in her chapter that “a person with a disability brings their own personal lens [. . .] to the therapeutic encounter” (p.98) and, “[I]t is conceivable that the professional’s and the client’s personal lenses may clash” (p.99).

Later, the editors write:

While a reader from one profession is not expected to learn another profession’s paradigms and concepts, exposure to these differences in texts can serve to replicate the everyday experiences of practitioners working in multidisciplinary teams where each team member’s knowledge base is not fully known or appreciated, or is dismissed as irrelevant and strange. (p.238)

However, it is nowhere acknowledged that such difficulties are magnified for the service consumer. Notwithstanding this omission, this is an important and wide-ranging book. It would have been good to have had a chapter written by service users addressing the role of knowledge-in-practice for them, and their experiences of trying to fathom sometimes what on Earth the professionals are driving at.

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Enriched Care Planning for People with Dementia

May, H., Edwards, P. & Brooker, D.
London: Jessica Kingsley, 2009, pp. 175,
ISBN: 978-1-84310-405-6, £25.00 (pbk.)

The launch by the New Labour Government of the *National Dementia Strategy* in 2009 was specifically designed, amongst other things, to increase awareness of dementia and radically improve the quality of care that people with the condition receive. This both timely and easy to read book, which is part of the Bradford Dementia Group's *Good Practice Guides*, will, in its own way, help the strategy meet these goals.

The book emerges from a profiling approach said to have been piloted over five years in a range of different dementia care settings. It is this approach that is given the name 'enriched care planning'. Enriched care planning, itself, is said to be a "means to an end" (p.15) – which is to deliver person-centred care. 'Person-centred care' is the approach which everyone associated with health and social care claims to adopt without not always necessarily making it clear what processes are involved. It is often easier to adopt the value of person-centred care without being clear what it means in terms of day-to-day practice reality. This book excels at being very clear about exactly what the processes involve and gives suggestions for how they should be undertaken.

The book has twelve chapters which give a good idea of the scope of the book. The titles are: *What is Enriched Care Planning?*; *Life Story*; *Lifestyle and Future Wishes*; *Personality*; *Health*; *Capacity for Doing*; *Cognitive Ability*; *Life at the Moment* and *Implementing and Reviewing the Enriched Care Plan*. The book is then supplemented with a section on useful resources and a range of templates designed to assist with the enriched care planning process.

Chapter One begins by discussing the rationale for making care 'person-centred'. The authors tell us that:

A crucial aspect of being person-centred is helping each person to continue to engage with their world so that their sense of self, of personhood and their inner world is kept intact. (p.16)

suggesting that this is an approach that goes beyond simply 'safeguarding' and 'minimising risk' that informs much current care discourse. The profiling approach promoted by the book is designed to both establish and promote the personhood and individuality of the person with dementia. As much as anything, this is to combat the 'old' (but lingering) culture of dementia care, which the author's caution:

... arises from a one dimensional view of dementia which pre-judges all that the person says and does as a consequence of having a mind that no longer functions properly. (p.18)

However, in this respect, the book provides useful explanations about how the brain works and how the progression of dementia affects its functioning.

These more 'medical' sections, as with the rest of the book, are written in language that anyone - health professional, care assistant or relative - could understand. Each chapter concludes with a summary of the main points covered. As suggested by the different chapter titles, each chapter tends to focus on a different aspect of how dementia might affect someone's ability to live independently. The chapters then provide suggestions on how to engage with the person about that aspect and develop strategies for maximising functioning in that area. The detail into which the authors go reveals both the strengths and the weaknesses of the book. On the positive side, anyone following the approach with someone living with dementia could not fail to gain a better sense of who they were/are and how their holistic well-being might be better promoted. However, the authors themselves explain that "enriched care planning is not a one-off event, it is a process that takes time and care" (p.18). This highlights a weakness

of the book. The authors pay little attention to the real life contexts in which much dementia care takes place – for example, in people’s own homes where paid-for, formal care might be tightly rationed or in care homes which are struggling to maintain national minimum standards. We know that current social care resources are stretched and likely to become more so. There is also a growing reliance on an immigrant work force which brings with it rapid staff turnover. All of these factors suggest that both the time and training required for enriched care planning to take place properly will continue to be significantly constrained.

Therefore, while I completely endorse the approach promoted by the authors, I also have my doubts about the extent to which the full programme might be able to be adopted as suggested in many cases of people requiring care. However, I would be very happy for my doubts on this to prove unfounded.

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**Law and the Social Work Practitioner
(2nd Edition)**

White, R., Broadbent, G. & Brown, K.
Exeter: Learning Matters, 2009, pp. 191,
ISBN: 978-1-84445-264-4, £22.00

Recent years have seen a proliferation of texts aiming to support social workers in understanding, interpreting and applying the legal rules that influence their practice. In addition to generic volumes which act as reliable, comprehensive critical texts (for example, Brammer, 2009), students and practitioners have access to a range of books, from those pitched at introductory level to highly specialist resources in the fields of child care, adult services or mental health. Critical analysis of the legal framework and of its application to practice is well developed (Braye & Preston-Shoot, 2009) and attention has been paid also to the need for learning

resources which assist social work students in what is perceived as a challenging learning task (<http://www.scie.org.uk/publications/elearning/law/index.asp>). The authors of the volume reviewed here have themselves contributed to these developments and we should particularly acknowledge the work of one of the authors, the late Rodger White, in helping to make the legal rules accessible to social work students.

In comparison with other areas of the core prescribed curriculum for initial training (DH, 2002), however, law remains under-resourced in the literature and any new text is to be welcomed. This volume stands out in that, although the first edition was written for students on social work degree programmes, this updated version is explicitly positioned as part of a series to support post-qualifying study. This could be a timely and important step, given we know that law knowledge is not reinforced or extended in some practice settings.

The content of this text is broken down into clearly defined and accessible sections; the pedagogic aims are clearly stated, and readers gain a clear indication of the learning objectives to be achieved. These are supported by practical exercises which stimulate reflection on practice examples to which the material may be applied. From the outset, the authors draw on the work of other commentators to locate law as a topic to be subjected to critical analysis and emphasise the importance of reflecting critically on its roles and functions in society, as well as on the values that it embodies.

The core content is supportive of students’ learning. There is a clear explanation of the principles and components of the English Legal System. The Children Act 1989 is given a high profile, its core mandates laid out in a structured and accessible way, with helpful rubrics to assist students to retain core principles (for example, “the six Ps” and “the three Cs”). Basic information is set out in a useful, tabulated form. Community care law, mental health law, administrative law, youth

justice, adoption, anti-discrimination legislation, domestic violence, housing and homelessness and human rights are all the subject of discrete chapters, following the same accessible style.

There are two concerns, however. The first relates to the depth of coverage and discussion of the issues addressed. Little use is made of case law, despite its importance in extending understanding and interpretation of the legal rules and its importance in guiding practice. The chapter on mental health is a welcome exception here and is the better for it. The coverage of topics is uneven and partial; insufficient attention is paid to the Children Act 2004 and to the development of outcomes-focused work in integrated children's services. In the context of community care, there are errors and omissions (the NHS Act 2006, eligibility criteria and more recent direct payments rules). Mental capacity is given very sketchy treatment, with little attention to best interests' interventions and deprivation of liberty. The English legal system chapter omits policy and practice guidance and codes of practice; whilst these are sometimes mentioned in later chapters on substantive law, there is a missed opportunity here to help students understand their status. Equally, it is difficult to understand why the Human Rights Act 1998 is left to a separate chapter at the end of the book, when it is so central to an understanding of the legal system. Two-page chapters on adoption and youth justice are insufficient.

My second concern relates to the level at which the text is pitched. After the early focus on conflicting imperatives in Chapter One, little reference is made to the tensions and conflicts that are inherent within the legal rules themselves, or triggered in their application to practice. This lack of critical analysis is a serious limitation in relation to the book's target market and does not really constitute Post-Qualifying (PQ) level learning. To address the needs of PQ students, many of whom are studying at Master's level, the text would need to support

students in developing their level of critical analysis. Equally, it would be important to ensure that the stated learning outcomes go beyond those of the National Occupational Standards (which are listed) and are mapped to the PQ standards for the various specialist awards that students using this book might be pursuing. Qualified practitioners will wish to build on their core legal knowledge and understanding to develop more sophisticated understandings and engage in development and expansion of themes, issues and debates.

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Values and Ethics in Social Work Practice (2nd Edition)

Parrott, L.

Exeter: Learning Matters, 2010, pp. 173, ISBN: 978-1-84445-370-2, £16.00 (pbk.)

This revised edition of *Values and Ethics in Social Work Practice* sits within Learning Matters' Transforming Social Work Practice series. The series is intended to support students on the social work degree. The introduction to this volume states that it is targeted primarily at first year students but likely to be of use more widely. It is, it says, designed to encourage critical thinking among its readership. The volume, first published in 2006, underwent two reprints in 2007 and is now out in its second edition. It is

obviously catering for a need or demand in the market. The book draws upon a breadth of sources, and ideas, and subjects these to some critical and, at times, insightful thinking, especially regarding the respective impact that managerialist dogma and ideas of risk have on social work practice. Chapter Six also contains some good discussion of advocacy. In that sense it, perhaps, does begin to model the kind of critical thinking it hopes for in its readership.

Against such a backdrop it feels somewhat churlish to record a number of reservations about the book. These are largely to do with its structure. Basically, I struggled to discern what, if anything, holds the book together. It claims as its central theme, “the importance of a commitment to social justice through anti-oppressive practice as the bedrock upon which social work values and ethics are set” (p.xiii). Anti-Oppressive Practice, somewhat uncritically, is claimed to have positively influenced social work practice. This privileging of Anti-Oppressive Practice as foundational in social work values and ethics can have the effect of underplaying the profession’s historical context. Biestek scarcely warrants a mention, far less some of the earlier (or indeed contemporary) religious, political or philosophical thinkers who might claim strands of a tradition of social work values or ethics.

The conflation of values and ethics in the book’s title might, in fact, be problematic. While there is some discussion in Chapter One as to what social work values might be, ethics receives no such treatment. This leads to a failure to differentiate between major ethical theories such as deontology, consequentialism virtue or care ethics and social work mood music such as AOP. Indeed, AOP merits a chapter (Chapter Two) of its own while the aforementioned ethical theories are all dealt with in Chapter Three, ‘Principles and Consequences’. Inevitably, they cannot be done justice in the resultant discussion. Thus, Kant is located within the Enlightenment but the Enlightenment is not then linked with modernity and its quest for

scientific rationality. This makes the introduction of Bauman’s critique of modernist ethics in Chapter Eight feel rather decontextualised.

The other structural problem is one of overcrowding. Too many ideas are thrown together while their associations are rarely developed meaningfully. In Chapter Eight, in his discussion of bureaucracy, the author introduces Kafka, *Catch 22*, Foucault in respect of Bentham’s Panopticon and Bauman. I am not sure how many undergraduate students would manage to make the connections required to make sense of this. Similar conceptual overload is evident in a number of places in the book. The resultant sense of bittiness isn’t helped by the series’ attempt to link texts to National Occupational Standards, the General Social Care Council’s Code of Practice and academic benchmark statements. Attempting to consider ethics within such a framework is, perhaps, particularly troublesome in light of their aporetic nature.

Before concluding, I feel I need to question the book’s suggestion that Alison Taylor, the ‘whistleblower’ at the heart of the North Wales child abuse inquiry, “upheld the highest standards of ethical social work practice” (p.13). An authoritative counter narrative of the North Wales case (Webster, 2005) paints a very different picture of Taylor. Indeed, this example might provide copious food for ethical thought around aspects of consequence or virtue regarding Taylor’s actions. It is at best simplistic and, arguably, exceedingly questionable to accord her such elevated status in the annals of social work ethics.

A final gripe concerns the book’s idiosyncratic indexing. Biestek does not feature, nor does Bauman, whereas Habermas does. So too does Alison Taylor but she is only linked with one page whereas she features again elsewhere later in the book.

So, to conclude, the book may have some merit in providing a Cook’s tour of a range of

ideas influencing contemporary social work but I am not sure if all the discussion could best be thought of as being about values and ethics. As a way into values and ethics, I think it would need to be augmented by some of the other texts on this subject.

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Reference

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Death, Dying and Bereavement - Issues for Practice

Watts, J. H.

Scotland: Dunedin Academic Press Ltd, 2010, ISBN: 978-1-906716-08-0, £13.99 (pbk.)

Jacqueline Watts has written this book as part of a series looking at Policy and Practice in Health and Social Care. The book aims to explore issues around death and dying in the UK with an emphasis on what is happening in Scotland.

The first chapter considers death and dying in modern Britain looking at how and where people die, together with how we as a society, view death. There are some interesting statistics given which demonstrate where people would like to die and where they actually die. There are also contrasts between life expectancy in areas of the UK, with Scotland given particular mention. Attitudes towards death and dying are discussed together with the influence of major religions. The chapter finishes by considering what is a 'good death'. Several definitions are explored but I was surprised that patient choice was only alluded to and not discussed more explicitly. Although this book is looking at practices in Scotland, I felt that the *End of Life Strategy* (DH, 2008) could also have been given a mention at this stage.

The second and third chapters look at the philosophy and practice of palliative care, together with the rise of the hospice movement in the UK. The concept of palliative care is explored and the holistic approach to care is recognised and discussed. Ethical principles are defined and the importance of good communication skills in end of life care is addressed. I would have liked a little more about this, especially in relation to advanced care planning which is not mentioned. The challenge of widening access to palliative care is explored, although no mention was made of initiatives that have helped to do this. The author gives a good overview of the history of the hospice movement and day therapy services but I think does not make the distinction between specialist palliative care services and palliative care provided by generalist practitioners. Although patients may die in hospital, they spend much of their last year of life at home supported by community services but this is not acknowledged. What is also not acknowledged is that many patients come into a hospice for short periods of time before going back home but the impression given was that most people come to a hospice in-patient unit to die.

Chapter Four is, in my opinion, one of the best chapters of the book, focusing on spirituality. Definitions of spirituality are offered together with an overview of spiritual care. The author asks the question "whose job is spiritual care?" and, while indicating that it is the job of any health care worker, also acknowledges that time constraints can make this difficult. The author also speculates that while attentive listening to the patient story can be important, is it possible to give spiritual care in relation to their life review if the health professional has only known the patient a short time? In my experience, listening to a patient tell their life story when facing death is one of the most moving experiences I have had as a health professional. I would like to think that I was able to offer a little spiritual support by doing so. The chapter concludes with an overview of spiritual care policy in Scotland but fails to

mention the Spiritual Care Competencies developed by Marie Curie Cancer Care in Scotland.

The fifth and sixth chapters focus on understanding grief and supporting bereaved people. Models of grief are explored and there is also a section on anticipatory grieving which was refreshing as this is often an aspect that is overlooked. I would have liked a little about the factors that influence grieving such as the relationship with the person who died as well as the models of grief. The author argues that, as the experience of grief has become essentially private in Western Society, there is uncertainty about the 'normal' feeling of grief, which has led to the development of "professional skills and services aimed principally at providing reassurance to the bereaved person". While there may well be some truth in this, I am not sure it is quite so straightforward. The demise of the nuclear family and migration from relatives, often leaving people alone and unsupported, may well contribute to people needing support during bereavement. Support for bereaved people is explored in terms of counselling and mutual support groups. Bereavement services in the UK are explored and there is an interesting section on the needs of bereaved children and young adults. However, no mention was made of the work that Julie Stokes and Winston's Wish (the charity for bereaved children) have undertaken which has contributed greatly in terms of understanding the needs of this particular group and providing services to meet those needs - which was surprising.

The last chapter looks at issues for policy and practice. The author touches on issues such as legislation and assisted suicide and

euthanasia. I would have liked the author to have explored this in more depth – especially assisted suicide and euthanasia given the Assisted Dying Bill out for consultation in Scotland. The author then focuses on the report from NHS Scotland (2008) *Living and Dying Well: A National Action Plan for Palliative and End of Life Care in Scotland* and emphasises the importance of a cohesive approach to planning and delivering end of life care. The National End of Life Tools are defined and the action plan is discussed.

Overall, this book gives an interesting overview of death, dying and bereavement although I feel it has missed out on some of the aspects that would have given it a fuller perspective. It is very readable and will have relevance for those working in other parts of the UK as well as Scotland. It provides a stepping stone to more in-depth reading and has a really useful list of references.

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