Editorial: Continuing to Develop the Evidence Base for Practice-Based Education

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There are many unanswered questions in practice-based education, which continue to require evidence to inform quality education practices. This issue contains articles which address some of these important questions, including: how do educators and students understand the processes of learning on placement?; what strategies do students actually use to effectively learn and manage challenges on placement?; how can educators help students be ready for practice as graduates and manage the many challenges they will face?; can effective learning packages be developed to support learning for practice?; do placements benefit placement settings and clients as well as student learning? The articles in this issue describe research undertaken in the UK or Australia with students and educators from a range of disciplines, including, speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, exercise physiology, psychology and nursing. In line with increasing trends to use mixed methods approaches to answering complex questions, mixed methods were used in a number of the studies, with the qualitative components using interviews of different types, or open-ended questions on surveys, to yield data which was analysed by IPA, thematic analysis or content analysis.

Johnson, and Davies and colleagues both consider the perceptions of educators, important to understand as these implicitly as well as explicitly impact on student learning. Davies and colleagues, and Clarke and colleagues consider what makes for successful placements in different contexts, and strategies students use to ensure success on role-emerging placements. Understanding the various factors that contribute to successful placements, client safety and effective student learning is ever more critical as traditional placement sources and types (e.g., directly supervised) become more difficult to obtain and other placement approaches are implemented. Articles by Kenny and colleagues, and Leigh and Darvill focus on ensuring readiness in graduates, through the development, implementation, evaluation and refinement of learning resources to assist students develop their ethical reasoning skills, and transition to practice resilience respectively. Johnson reports on staff perceptions of the value of screening students' communication skills to identify students who need assistance to develop this critical skill. Frigo and colleagues write about using an assessment tool to assist students' clinical reasoning about interventions with clients. Expectations of employers for readiness for practice in new graduates are increasing and universities are being asked to do more of the work towards ensuring ''work readiness'' at the point of graduation, not just assuming work readiness will develop on placements. Similarly, as the provision of placements comes under increasing pressure, employers and placement sites are asking what benefits they obtain from hosting student placements. Price and colleagues consider this question in terms of the impact of service evaluations conducted by students on placements, showing benefits to processes, knowledge and resources in the sites in which they were placed.

The range of topics and research methods used in the articles in this issue can inform future research across disciplines.