



Editor's Introduction

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Author(s):	<i>Seymour J. Rosenthal</i>
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Editor's Introduction

Seymour J. Rosenthal, MSSW

It is clear that this planet is not only becoming physically challenged, but also its social and economic changes are challenging us in like measure. This is largely due to the almost instantaneous consequences of technology. As we learn about the rest of the world, be it via the Internet or via the pages of this issue of *Professional Development: The International Journal of Continuing Social Work Education*, we learn more about ourselves.

The movie *The Russians Are Coming, The Russians are Coming* (1966), presents a satirical view of the then-hot Cold War. Now, with the hostile era behind us, the new Russians are here, the new Russians are here! A fortuitous meeting at the exhibit booth of Professional Development followed by an engaging conversation with Russian educator, Dr. Tatiana Tregoubova, led to this issue's commissioned lead article (CSWE-APM, 2000). Dr. Tatiana Tregoubova, of the Research Institute of Professional Education in Moscow, shares a forthright impression of her country's emerging social work practice. She is articulate and adamant in her views that social work in Russia is both in its infancy and at the same time, meeting its greatest challenge. She holds a great deal of promise for the future impact of the profession on a political and social environment which still has not settled on its form and direction.

The goal of this issue's lead article, "Challenges for Modern Social Work in Russia: Problems and Prospects," is to depict current practice in Russia. Regardless of one's political and professional perspective, the article will present the reader with a much needed account of the current realities of social work practice in Russia. A follow-up article will present suggestions for continuing education needs of Russian social work professionals. This process of introspective need determination should lead to an effective prescription for an authentic educational agenda. In the past, emerging cultures have

too readily adopted the popular US practice without considering cultural ramifications of doing so.

In keeping with our international mission is the article, "Creating Social Work Virtual Learning Communities in Africa," by Dr. Osei Darkwa and Mr. Fikile Mazibuko, both of the Jane Addams School of Social Work, University of Illinois in Chicago. The article offers the clear need for technological competencies to enhance the social work profession through continuing education in Africa. This is an illuminating and helpful perspective on the extraordinary potential of social work practice.

Other articles of a timely nature in this Journal include "Educational Challenges Facing Health Care Social Workers in the Twenty-First Century" by Dr. Claire Rudolph, "Professional Social Work Education in Child Welfare: Assessing Practice Knowledge and Skills," by Dr. Scannapieco, Dr. Bolen and Ms. Connell, and "Recipient's Opinion About Welfare Reform" by Dr. McClellan, Ms. Matto, and Dr. Orlin. Health care will be a critical topic in the years ahead because it affects all populations. Dr. Rudolph's article raises pertinent social work issues, and is particularly applicable in the role of Continuing Social Work Education for practitioners for whom the changing field of health care has been inadequately dealt with in their professional training.

Drs. Scannapieco, Bolen and Ms. Connell's article on the impact of professional social work education in child welfare presents a critical concern for social work practice. The article deals with the very important issue which spans the boundary between social work education, professional development and organizational development.

Finally, Drs. McClellan and Orlin and Ms. Matto's article is in keeping with social work practice of hearing the clients' perspectives of the services provided them. "Only occasionally, in all that has been written since the devolution of welfare,

Seymour J. Rosenthal is former Director of the Center for Social Policy and Community Development, Associate Dean for Research and Community Development, and Professor, School of Social Administration, Temple University, Philadelphia, PA 19122.

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have we asked the recipients themselves what they think", the authors state. The authors have performed an important service to the profession by sharing the perspective of participants as they relate

to welfare reform. This article should be of value to practitioners and continuing education professionals as they consider the implications of the new welfare system.

Professional Development is pleased to welcome Dr. Tatiana Tregoubova, author of this issue's lead article, to its Editorial Advisory Board. Dr. Tregoubova sees this opportunity as a way to encourage her colleagues in Russia to develop manuscripts for review as a practice experience in that country emerges with greater clarity. She will also encourage them to subscribe to the Journal.

All of our readers and colleagues are encouraged to recommend additions to our Editorial Advisory Board, and likewise, to urge subscription to Professional Development. We are similarly pleased to announce that Katherine M. Bezak will join our Journal Editorial Staff as Articles Editor—a warm welcome to each of you.