

## EDITORIAL

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This is the first occasion that the BJCI has exclusively focused on the subject of training in the Community Justice Sector; a focus of particular bearing at a time when the anticipated cuts within the public sector are likely to erode any progress made in the development of qualifications and training across the sector.

There have been undoubted developments; some more robust than others. The Community Justice Sector is a complex web of agencies managing many of the processes of community justice but with no real evidence of any systematic coherence. This is reflected in the variations and differences in expectation of training and qualifications in the different agencies, as the articles in this issue reflect. Crucial questions abound: what is the educational level appropriate to professional training; what should be the core curriculum for any designated professional group; what should be the balance between academic learning and training for competence through identified occupational standards; how far is training increasingly a shared enterprise given the inter-agency aspirations for joined-up justice; and finally, how sure-footed are the arguments for a set of core educational principles for basic training when, in absentia, this exposes the lack of frameworks for post-qualifying inadvertently leading to a more agency-dominated and technically-defined operational practice as a career develops.

Probation training has been a graduate profession for many years, delivered by a number of different universities. It now embarks on yet another change with the introduction of the Probation Qualifications Framework (PQF) that offers an employment-based route to a full professional qualification via a foundation degree to an honours degree, delivered by just three main HEI providers, though one provider has a three-way HEI partnership. Much smaller numbers are expected to be recruited onto this new framework, although the inclusion of a previously neglected group, probation service officers, is to be welcomed. The former qualification the Diploma in Probation Studies, seen by some commentators as a 'Rolls Royce award', is being superseded by a more building block approach to training, though drawing on many elements which have been seen as successful over the past 12 years. It remains to be seen whether the introduction of specific training for probation service officers leads to a greater predominance of lower level outcomes or whether the routes to full probation officer status remain possible in this tightening fiscal climate.

The police service has established the 'Initial Police Learning and Development Programme' (IPLDP) for all new recruits, which is delivered through a range of schemes; some in-house and some in partnership with Higher Education providers as foundation degrees. Dominey and Hill in their article reflect on the role of Higher Education within this process and make comparisons with the employment-based route developed by the probation service. The ongoing tensions between practice demands and academic 'freedoms' are highlighted, including

how universities may 'bend' to the needs of employers whilst protecting the right to 'academic freedom', and enhancing the ability for critical thinking and reflection in its students. The article points to potential benefits for multi-agency education and this resonates with the increasingly integrated responses to offender management between key criminal justice agencies such as probation, police and prisons. The ways in which training can impact upon occupational cultures is explored. The fact that the police have had little exposure to higher education training in the past is also considered. The arguments in this article raise key questions about continuity in educational experiences and further point to the need for higher education to penetrate beyond basic training to post-qualifying.

Other developments, such as the one described in the article by Farrow, Hughes, Paris and Prior in this issue, have begun to address the qualification gap that the expansion of new occupations concerned with community safety and anti-social behaviour following the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 has created. The exploration of the balance in the curriculum between vocational and educational domains of knowledge that this article expounds is redolent of similar discussions that pre-dated the changes in probation training and education which are used as a contrast in their discussion. The return to a mixed mode assessment of the award at post-graduate and under-graduate level reignites the debate about the relationship between practice learning and academic learning, which was resolved in favour of a single graduate level qualification in probation training in 1998 but remains a rumbling issue between competing viewpoints.

Duke, in her article, reflects on the training needs of the drugs workforce and explores the process of 'criminalising' drugs work and the conflicts and contradictions this has created for those working in the field. The article suggests that there is still much contestation of where drug workers and drug policy sits to definitively locate the skills, competencies and educational requirements of any programme of training. What the article argues is that unless workers engage in training which develops their skills of reflection and critical appraisal in dealing with the challenging and often unpredictable personal and social circumstances of many drug misusers then, in such a contested policy and practice environment, workers will fail to provide the independence of thinking and self-defining actions for good quality informed practice. Regretting a criminal justice domination of drug treatment services in recent years may be as much about a failure to understand what should be the goals of intervention as any particular institutional location of service delivery. This article helpfully raises many dilemmas for multi-agency practice delivery.

The needs of the Youth Justice sector present perhaps the most complex challenge for a qualifications framework, employing as it does, within Youth Offending Teams (YOTs), a combination of multi-agency staff on secondment who hold professional qualifications from their own sector, working alongside direct entrants with no or few prior qualifications. Which skills and knowledge are common to all youth justice staff, and need a standardised qualification route and those specific to the particular professions contained within the YOTs, but where there may be potential for integration, is yet to be fully articulated and translated into a defensible framework. The article by Hester reflects on how the future

construction of a qualification framework might be conceptualised engaging in a critique of recent YJB inspired attempts at training. Hester points to the difficulties of balance in professional education between elements which are more geared to exposition by higher education and the needs for training and development to be located in the underpinning skills and knowledge of daily practice.

The extent to which working with offenders in the community requires a graduate workforce; with staff operating at sophisticated levels of thinking, analysis and planning may depend on the philosophy and objectives of the agency. However, given the scope for the exercise of power, the use of discretion and the potential for discrimination which many of these agencies hold, the argument for a common base line for training and qualification would seem compelling. The article by Stout and Canton on a European approach to probation training offers the first clear indication of a movement aimed at laying down the basic standards, skills and values required for working with offenders across Europe. Though they recognise that other agendas may make a full European core curriculum for probation a distant objective, they describe a Benchmarking project which would be a useful first step in this process. In this article too is a further hint about the needs of continuing professional development beyond basic training.

Creaton, in her article, provides a comprehensive overview of the development of professional doctorates in criminal justice, which sets the scene for a much closer collaboration between academia and practice, in research activity and knowledge creation at the highest level, and moving beyond the constraints of more traditional PhDs. Given the straitened times it is heartening to reflect on the potential for such collaborations that are already well embedded within the Health Sector and which offer a dynamic synergy between practice wisdom and development, and academic insight. Such awards offer a potential win-win-win for agency, individual and the academy alike. However, given the paucity of post-qualifying awards in the past 12 years, a feature alluded to throughout this collection of articles, it seems unlikely that funding from agency resources will help develop the potential of the professional doctorate, though we watch this space with interest.

If the crucial links between training and education implied in joint models of training throughout this edition are to be maintained, then this needs to be reflected at all levels of practice experience within agencies. If it is important for basic level training then it is no less needed as people take on more complex roles within their organisations. An increasing amount of in-service post-qualifying training with its prescriptive and tight delivery regimes, sometimes pejoratively referred to as 'sheep-dip training', does not augur well for a criminal justice profession which arguably needs the critical thinking and reflective practice celebrated at basic training to ensure innovative solutions are found to the problems facing our criminal justice institutions throughout the lifelong learning of practitioners. This collection of articles demonstrates that there remains some potential to ensure that basic training delivers not only a competent workforce but one which has the capacity for critical self-renewal in the face of changing social and political circumstances. We need to ensure that this is not lost as workers become embedded in their organisation.