Evaluation of fieldwork practice in social work education at the University of Limpopo: (Turfloop campus) Aligning theory and practice

By

Peter Masibinyane Dimo

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DECLARATION

I, Peter Masibinyane Dimo, solemnly declare that this document is my own work and that all sources I have quoted have been acknowledged by means of complete references.

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Peter Masibinyane Dimo   Date

DEDICATIONS

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife, Tryphinah Mahlodi Dimo and my late younger brother, Aubrey Tate Dimo who passed away on the 1st September 2010.

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed at evaluating social work fieldwork practice at the University of Limpopo (Turfloop Campus) in relation to theory. The alignment of social work theory and practice is the goal of Social Work profession. Fieldwork practice in social work education forms the practical component of a social work curriculum. It is an essential bridge from classroom to service delivery settings as it provides an opportunity for social work students to connect theoretical education and fieldwork practice. However there is lack of integration between Social Work theory and Social Work fieldwork practice. There is indeed a continuing tension between theory and practice. With regard to the methodology, a combination of quantitative–qualitative research approach was used. Self-administered questionnaires, interview guide and focus group discussions were used to collect data from 3rd year and 4th year social work students as well as agency-based supervisors. The study revealed that social work fieldwork practice is essential for the integration of theory into practice. Therefore the department of Social Work at the University of Limpopo should organize workshops for agency-based supervisors to update their theoretical knowledge base. Fieldwork assessment tool should be reviewed and Social work students should also be involved in the assessment process and self-assessment should also be introduced.

CHAPTER ONE

General orientation of the study

1.1   introduction

The integration of learning into practice is a central goal for all professions. The question of how to bridge the gap between theory and practice, and between the classroom and fieldwork practice, is one which has preoccupied social work education since its very beginnings in universities (Clapton, Cree, Allen, Edwards, Irwin, MacGregor, Paterson & Perre, 2008:334). According to Parker (2007:764) Social Work education has always emphasised the importance of fieldwork experience within the curriculum for preparing students for practice with the purpose being to contextualing classroom learning.

The researcher thinks that Social Work theory is a formal base or the foundation for practice. Collingwood, Edmond and Woodward (2008:72) argue that a strong theoretical underpinning to practice is associated with professional credibility. The intention of this research project was to evaluate the current fieldwork practice in the Department of Social Work at the University of Limpopo. Like any educational process, Social Work training, both classroom-based and field practice at the University of Limpopo, has challenges with regard to integration.

1.2 Problem statement

Social Work classroom-based learning is inextricably linked to Social Work fieldwork practice. In support of this, Schiff and Katz (2007:794) state that fieldwork practice has been long acknowledged as a major component of Social Work. It is in fieldwork practice that the knowledge learnt in the classroom is assimilated in real life situation, which concurrently and eventually shape the professional identity of the student social worker. In Social Work fieldwork practice, students have the opportunity to put into practice what they learnt in the classroom which is to integrate theory with practice.

Parker (2007: 763) notes that there is a lack of integration between Social Work theory and Social Work fieldwork practice. In addition, Coulshed and Orme (2006:7) argue that there is indeed a continuing tension between theory and practice, pointing out that students and practitioners alike have protested that it was necessary to forget theory once in practice.

Amongst other problems related to integration of Social Work theory with fieldwork practice is the lack of standardised instruments for assessing fieldwork practice (learning and performance) (Bogo & Globerman, 2003:68). Hay and O'Donoghue (2009:42) emphasise that, assessment is a core feature of Social Work field education and enables both on-going formative processes of monitoring and feedback and summative assessment of a student's competence at the conclusion of a fieldwork placement. The purposes of assessments is manifold and includes enhancing and promoting student learning, ensuring competence, monitoring student work and development, instigating changes in policy, curriculum and practice, awarding qualifications and identifying further educational and practice needs. In Social Work fieldwork education, assessment includes both on-going formative processes of monitoring and providing feedback on student work and the formal process or summative assessment of a student's competence at the conclusion of fieldwork placement. Assessment processes in Social Work programmes usually draw upon a set of criteria or learning outcomes against which the work of a student is measured. Parker (2007:763) point out that there is a lack of coherent and agreed procedures for delivering effective practice learning experiences.

Another problem with integration of Social Work theory with fieldwork practice as argued by Redmond, Guerin and Devitt (2008:868) is the attitudes of Social Work students before they enter practice. They state that it can have a significant impact both on their approaches to study and their occupational choices as professionals. They further assert that there is a concern with the range of attitudes that may exist for Social Work students towards work in different areas of Social Work, recognising that such attitudes must impact on student motivation towards aspects of both academic and fieldwork

teaching. In support of the above, Fortune, Lee and Cavazes (2005:16) state that the student performance in fieldwork practicum as it relates to their attitudes is critical because the setting and the skills directly represent the real world of practice for which the student is being prepared.

There is dissatisfaction associated with lack of clear expectations, relationship difficulties between student and supervisor. According to White and Queener (2003: 203) all supervision takes place within the context of relationship. The supervisory relationship is important in that it affects and is affected by all factors within the realm of supervision.Bogo and Globerman (2003: 65) agree that the fieldwork supervisor and student relationship has the power to affect the student is learning positively or negatively and predicts satisfaction with fieldwork education. The clarity of guidelines and the expectations of learning and performance are also critical in fieldwork practice. The effectiveness of fieldwork practice is enhanced when the students, university-based educators and supervisors and agency-based supervisors work in harmony and continuously communicate goals and expectations with regard to Social Work students' integration of theory into practice. It has been observed that, the majority of agency-based supervisors are not on par with the current Social Work curriculum and knowledge base. In support of this view, Holtz-Deal and Clements (2006:291) argue that fieldwork instructors should provide students with arguably, the most sustained individualised educational experience of their Social Work education, yet they often receive little training for this vital role. In to curriculum development, an integration of theory into fieldwork practice should include continuous training of agency-based supervisors, especially in learning theories, as it has been identified as a major gap.

1.3 Assumptions of the study

The following were the assumptions of the study

- The attitudes of Social Work students towards fieldwork practice are clouded with negativity.

- There is a blurred relationship between the students and university-based supervisors.

- The current instruments for assessing fieldwork practice are outdated.

1.4 Motivation for the study

The alignment of theoretical learning into practice is a central goal for all professions. However, the researcher has observed that a number of Social Work students at the University of Limpopo fail to grasp the basic principles of theoretical application. They appear almost overwhelmed by the range of theory available and confused by where each concept or model should fit in practice. There seems to be a sense of theory being a university requirement rather than an aid to practice, a hindrance rather than a help. Social Work education rests on the assumption that competent Social Work practice is grounded in the intentional use of theory. Practice informed by theory distinguishes professional Social Work from informal forms of assistance.

Furthermore, the researcher has observed that attitudes of Social Work students towards fieldwork practice are viewed with dismay and negativity. Also, since taking up the job of fieldwork coordinator, the researcher has noticed that there is tension between students and university- based supervisors due to what students are expected to comply with regarding their practical work. Subsequently, the current assessments instruments for fieldwork practice are long overdue for review so that they are in line with the current trends. As the last motivation to undertake this study, the researcher is motivated to make assessment on theoretical knowledge-base of agency-based supervisors. This is prompted by the fact that when students are in block-placement, and a contact is made with agency-based supervisors and clarity is sought to find out which theoretical model or framework is used, more often than not, agency-based supervisors will indicate that classroom knowledge is not a requirement during practice.

1.5   Theoretical framework

A theory may be defined as a set of interrelated constructs (concepts), definitions, and propositions that presents a systematic view of a phenomena by specifying relations between variables, with the purpose of explaining and predicting the phenomena (De Vos, Delport, Fouche & Strydom, 2005:36). Selahu-Din (2003:13) define a theory as a group of related concepts and propositions, based on facts and observations, that attempt to define, and predict phenomenon such as behaviour, events, attitudes and situations. Social constructivism will be used as an overarching theoretical framework in conjunction with ecosystem theory and strengths-based perspective.

1.5.1 Social Constructivism theory

Social constructivism is an important theory in teaching and learning. It emphasises the active role students' play in acquiring knowledge and the knowledge-acquisition is active and strategic, focused on many factors, including problems of understanding, diversity of expertise, teaching and learning styles and interests. Also, curriculums used for students and teachers in relation to collaboration and reflection contribute to knowledge acquisition (Trevillion, 2008:195)

Payne (2005:164) contends that, social construction theory proposes that people describe, explain and account for the world around them as part of interchanges between people in their social, cultural and historical context. He goes further to point out that shared social constructions contribute to the socialisation of individuals into society and into groups within society. Social constructionism can be taken to present a broad movement within Social Science which asserts that understanding can only be achieved as a result of careful analysis of cultural and historical contexts of social life. Social constructionists emphasise the social aspect of reality (that is, reality is not static but socially constructed). In other words, the way of understanding should no longer be based on objective professional knowledge which is non-existent in the eyes of the social constructionists. To them, understanding of others is achieved through the daily interaction between people in the course of social life.

The following principles, derived from social constructionism can be applied to field instruction in social work: Cultivation of sceptical attitudes to knowledge, understanding of the assumptions of any way of understanding as well as emphasis on collaborative venture.

- **Cultivation of Sceptical Attitudes to Knowledge**

Lit and Shek (2007:361) assert that in the fieldwork practice, students are usually expected to apply the professional knowledge and theory they have learned. It is hoped that clients' problems can be eliminated if students intervene appropriately. Social Work students usually believe that it is easy to copy theories and apply them mechanically in direct practice without any question. However, social constructionists reject the idea that knowledge is developed from 'proven' or empirically-tested theory, and that knowledge does not reflect any objective truth, but is rather a product of social discourse that is shaped in contexts of relationships of power.

When adopting social constructivism principles, fieldwork supervisors must, therefore encourage students to question the value and assumptions of the theory used, to critically examine the applicability of the theory into the placement context, and to explore the alternative use of various theories. In fieldwork practice, the students are placed in a context that allows a lot of dialogues and interactions between students and their service users. Theory and techniques, then, becomes the backdrop against which the negotiation of meaning occurs ithereby, cultivating a sceptical attitude toward knowledge in the fieldwork context (Lit & Shek, 2007:361).

- **Understanding of the assumptions of any way of understanding**

Lit and Shek (2007:361) emphasise that, although field placement is the 'doing' component of Social Work education, it is primarily concerned with 'knowing'. In using the social constructionist approach, students are facilitated to learn the art of interviewing through questioning, aiming at generating experience and exploring the client's interpretation of the meaning of the situation. According to social constructionist ideas, students would participate in the dialogue with the clients so as to co-construct

the meaning and narrative with the clients together in the process. Hence, the instructor must increase the supervisees' awareness of the existence of their own values and assumptions and their effects in the meaning-making process.

- **Emphasis on collaborative venture**

Fieldwork supervisors are usually expected to play an expert role in training the students to become competent Social Workers after the fieldwork practice. However, in the view of social constructionists, the individual is the active meaning-maker and the Social Worker is involved in this meaning-making process through the discourse with the individual. In this sense, the fieldwork supervisor is the one who participates in the meaning-making process of the supervisees over their fieldwork experience. Hence, in the constructionist view, the status of the fieldwork supervisors and students is on a 'more' equal basis (Lit & Shek, 2007:362).

1.5.2 Strengths-based perspective

The idea of building on people's strengths is axiomatic. The strengths-based approach is guided by a carefully articulated philosophy that defines strengths as habits, attitudes, talents, abilities, ways of seeing the world and ways of interacting with people, and ideas that enable someone to do something particularly well. According to this philosophy, by capitalising on one's strength, motivation is increased, success is more likely, and obstacles are easily overcome.

According to Saleebey (2006:7), the philosophy of strength perspective is that liberation is founded on the idea of possibility, the opportunities for choice, commitment, and action whether pursued in relative tranquillity or in grievous circumstances. Strengths-based perspective is relevant for this approach because in fieldwork, the focus of practice is on how students approach their tasks, the knowledge, the skills, attitudes and resources that they bring in fieldwork training aspects which are vital for learning.

In fieldwork practice, learning takes place through constructive dialogue and collaboration. According to Bushfield (2005:215) fieldwork training is designed to assist students in this critical integrative process. Effective integration may be dependent on collaboration, reciprocity, resources, and relationships shared by field agencies and the Social Work programme. Dialogue and collaboration are the core lexicons of strength based perspective. Saleebey (2006:14) suggested that, humans can only come into being through a creative and emergent relationship with others. Without such transactions, there can be no discovery and knowledge. The present researcher is strongly convinced that fieldwork training will not be effective without dialogue and collaboration. This approach will assist the researcher to assess and analyse the supervision of Social Work students during their block placement and concurrent placements.

1.5.3 Eco-systems theory (life model)

Eco-systems theory is commonly known in the Social Work literature as a life model. According to Payne (2005:150), the life model is based on the metaphor of ecology in which people are interdependent on one another and their environment. The relationship between people and their environment is reciprocal in which each influences the other over time, through exchanges. People are seen as moving through their own unique life course and they also experience life stressors, transitions, events and issues that disturb their fit with the environment.

The aim of the life model is to improve the fit between people and their environment by alleviating life stressors, increasing people's personal and social resources to enable them to use more and better coping strategies and influencing environmental forces so that, they may respond to people's needs.

Learning takes place within the context of relationship. In fieldwork practice, several systems are involved: the university, which is the environment where learning takes place; Social Work educators, who are responsible for teaching Social Work students, and Social Work agencies, where Social Work students are placed during their block

placements and concurrent placement. The above mentioned systems are autonomous, and have boundaries. They are also interdependent. Davys and Beddoe (2000:437) state that to provide the student with an opportunity to put theory into practice is the primary focus of the `field' experience. It is, however, of semantic interest to examine whether they are supervised or educated, for it is in the tension between both those functions that the essence of the student supervisor/educator role lies. The focus of this study is bridging the gap between Social Work theory and fieldwork practice. The researcher argues that is, there should be a relationship between Social Work theory and practice because theory should inform practice. Exploring the links between research, theory and practice is an integral part of any education in Social Work, but the level of certainty about this relationship implied by government publications with their talk of using knowledge to develop 'standards' is in stark contrast to the views of many academics (Davys & Beddoe, 2000:438). One of the key goals of field education is to enable students to apply the theories and skills they have learned in the classroom to agency practice, and to use their practicum experiences to enhance classroom learning. However, there is often lack of connection between theories learned in the classroom and field experiences (Teigiser, 2009:139).

The environment where learning takes place should be taken into consideration when investigating the concept of fieldwork training. The eco-systems theory is appropriate for this research because it will assist the researcher explain and assess the environment in which learning takes place, which are social agencies where Social Work students are placed during their block placement and the university where they acquire their theoretical knowledge. The environment, in which Social Work students learn, such as Social Work agencies, is constantly changing. This affects fieldwork training in a number of ways. Rapid changes in Social Work, shrinking agency funding, managed care, and increased workloads for agency staff have affected field education. Less time is available than was the case to guide and develop students' learning. The nature of Social Work has also changed, with more severe problems presented while less time is allotted for working on those problems (Teigiser, 2009:139).

1.6   AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1.6.1 Aim

The aim of the study was to evaluate University of Limpopo Social Work fieldwork practice in relation to theory.

1.6.2 Objectives of the study

The objectives of the proposed study were as follows;

- To assess the attitudes of Social Work students towards fieldwork practice.

- To explore factors which hinder supervisor-supervisee relationship and expectations.

- To assess the current instruments for assessing fieldwork practice.

- To assess the theoretical knowledge base of agency- based supervisors.

1.7 Methodology

For the purposes of this research, research methodology included research design, research approach, sampling methods and procedure, methods of data collection and data presentation and analysis.

1.7.1 Research design

The nature of the research design for this study was evaluative, contextual research design. De Vos *et al.,* (2005:108) define evaluative research as a form of applied research that can be conducted from the qualitative, quantitative or combined approach. Sarantakos (2002:107) contends that evaluation research is a type of research which is usually conducted by Social Workers, psychologists, and economists. The aim of evaluative research is to search solutions to problems, assess the significance of existing policies and practices and evaluate a need for new approaches, plans and programmes.

1.7.2 Research approach

The researcher employed a combination of quantitative–qualitative research approach. Mixed-model studies are studies that are the products of the pragmatist paradigm and that combine the qualitative and quantitative approaches in different phases of the research project. According to Salahu-Din (2003:12) quantitative research methods, also known as positivist methods, study a phenomenon by collecting data using surveys (questionnaires) containing closed- ended questions. Qualitative research is also known as interpretative, whereby in-depth face- to- face interviews are used using open- ended questions and direct observation of participants

1.7.2 Sampling

Simple random sampling was used to select respondents from Social Work students. According to Sarantakos (2002:141) this type of sampling gives all units of the targeted population an equal chance of being selected. The researcher will use class lists or students' records to select the sample. Three hundred students were selected from third year and fourth year classes. The tenth students from the class list were sampled. Simple random sampling was employed to select samples from Social Work practitioners who are supervising student Social Workers during block placements. Fifty (50) Social Work practitioners who supervise social work students were selected.

1.7.3 Data collection

The researcher triangulated when it comes to data collection. Questionnaires and focus groups were used to collect data. According to Creswell as cited by De Vos, *et al.,* (2005:361), the concept of triangulation is based on the assumptions that bias inherent in a particular data source, investigator and the method would be neutralised when used in conjunction with other data sources.

1.7.4 Self-administered questionnaires

The New Dictionary of Social Work (1995:51) defines a questionnaire as a set of questions on a form which is completed by the respondent in respect of a research project. Self-administered questionnaires will be used. Salahu-Din (2003:158) states that, face-to-face interviews involve participants completing the questionnaires in the presence of an interviewer. The rationale for using self-administered questionnaires was based on the fact that the researcher will be in a position to respond to any challenge which might arise. Respondents were requested to complete the questionnaires in the presence of the researcher. However, the researcher limited his contribution to the completion of the questionnaire to the absolute minimum.

1.7.5 Focus group discussions

According to David and Sutton (2004:92) focus group is described as group interview rather than the stereotypical one-to-one interview. The purpose of the focus group is to use the interaction between groups of interviewees to generate discussions about a topic. The researcher had ten groups consisting of eight members per group so that he wouldl be in a position to manage the group. Three sessions were held for all the groups. The reason for using focus group discussion was to confirm the information provided in the self-administered questionnaires.

1.8 Data analysis

Data analysis is defined by De Vos *et al.,* (2005:339) as the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data.

1.8.1 Quantitative data analysis

Qualitative data analysis is based on the theoretical and methodological principles of interpretative science. Sarantakos (2002:213) states that qualitative analysis contains a minimum of quantitative measurements, standardisation and mathematical techniques.

Qualified statisticians were requested to assist the researcher with data analysis. A computer programme, version 10 of the SPSS, was used to analyse quantitative data.

1.8.2 Qualitative data analysis

According Salahu-Din (2003:230), qualitative analysis transforms data into findings. Qualitative data analysis involves recording, transcribing, and organising information collected from interviews, observations, documents and audio-visual materials in order to derive meaning from it. With regard to qualitative interview, the researcher transcribed recorded information and arranged them thematically for analysis.

The following steps were followed as indicated by Sarantakos (2002:315-316):

- **Transcription of data**

The researcher thematically transcribed data from tape onto paper thematically. The manuscripts were edited in order to eliminate typing errors and contradictions in the text.

- **Checking and editing**

The researcher scrutinised and edited transcripts. The researcher also related parts of the data in an attempt to prepare them for further analysis.

- **Analysis and interpretation**

This step entails data reduction and analysis. The researcher then developed categories of data. Codes and categories were used as tools of analysing data. Symbols were assigned to specific sections of the text.

- **Generalization**

The findings of individual interview were then generalised. The researcher identified the similarities and differences in order to develop the typologies of data.

1   Ethical considerations

Richard and Grinnell (1998:58) state that ethical acceptability is a primary issue in any research. According to De Vos, *et al.*, (2003:63), ethics is a set of moral principles that are suggested by an individual or group, are widely accepted and offer rules and behavioral expectations about the most correct conduct towards research subjects, other researchers, and research assistants.

▪ **Informed consent**

The researcher as a professional Social Worker took into consideration the rights of the respondents as he was guided by the values and principles of the Social Work profession. To demonstrate this element, all participants were requested to sign the consent form. Informed consent refers to the process of informing potential research participating about all aspects of the research (Monette, Sullivan & De Jong, 1994:48). De Vos *et al.*, (2003:65) argues that participants must be legally and psychologically competent to consent and that they would be free to withdraw from the investigation at any time. The participants signed a consent form which will explain the purpose of the research.

The respondents had the right to refuse to be interviewed and the right to refuse to answer any question. Certain aspects of the research will be published through a mini-dissertation or article which will be accessible to the general public. The researcher also obtained ethical clearance certificate from the University of Limpopo.

▪ **Deception of subjects**

Deception is the misleading of subjects about the real purpose of the research or other knowledge that might contaminate the results. Subjects who are unaware of the real purpose of the research will behave more naturally (Burns, 2000:19). Deception

includes withholding information. The researcher explained in writing the purpose of the research writing. This included possible advantages and disadvantages. None of the research participants were coerced to participate in the study. Rather voluntary participation was encouraged with informed consent.

1.10 Reliability, validity and objectivity

According to De Vos *et al.*, (2005:160), validity refers to the extent to which an empirical measure accurately reflects the concept it is intended to measure. The researcher employed research assistants in order to maintain objectivity. Respondents were given the same questionnaires with the same contents. Experts in the field of research were consulted to scrutinise instruments meant for collecting data.

1.11 Significance of the study

The research project will made a positive contribution in three broad areas. The study also highlighted the significance of Social Work intervention and Social Work theory. Social Work is the professional activity of helping individuals, groups and communities to restore their capacity for social functioning. The research will assist Social Work practitioners, university based supervisors, and agency based supervisors and Social Work educators to identify the challenges in respect of standardised instruments for assessing Social Work students learning and performance. The research will assist the Department of Social Work at the University of Limpopo to develop policies with regard to fieldwork practice. Of great importance is the identification of challenges in respect of standardised instruments for assessing learning and performance. Fieldwork programme at the University of Limpopo and Social Work agencies, where Social Work students do their practical work will also be positively affected because the intention of the study is also to assess the theoretical knowledge base of agency-based supervisors. If there are gaps this will necessitate a need to retrain agency-based supervisors with the intention of updating their Social Work theoretical knowledge. The target population of this research are Social Work students, agency-based supervisors

and University based supervisors and Social Work practitioners who render services to the community.

1.12 Limitation of the study

The current research study had its own limitations and the researcher is mindful of them.

- Resources for this study were a major problem as the study was not financed. A resource is any physical or virtual entity of limited availability, or anything to help on earns a living. Transport to distribute questionnaires to agency-based supervisors was a struggle.

- The researcher distributed 100 questionnaires to the 3rd and 4th year social work students and only 75 questionnaires were returned.

- 50 questionnaires were distributed to agency-based supervisors but only 42 questionnaires were returned.

- Ethical clearance for conducting this study was delayed though the researcher applied on time.

CHAPTER TWO

Fundamentals in Social Work fieldwork practice: Aligning theory and practice.

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present literature review about the social work fieldwork practice. David and Sutton (2004:7) define literature review as, the selection of all available documents both published and unpublished on the topic, which contain information, ideas, data, and evidence written from a particular standpoint to fulfil certain aims or express certain views on the nature of the topic to be investigated and the effective evaluation of these documents in relation to the research being proposed. This chapter will cover the following aspects, background information of fieldwork practice, and the purpose of fieldwork practice, student-supervisor relationship, and assessment of social work students during their concurrent and block placement, the attitudes of social work students towards supervision and the theoretical knowledge base of agency based supervisors.

2.2 Background information of Social Work fieldwork practice

Fieldwork practice may be defined as a learning process whereby students are instructed by field instructors to develop their professional expertise in accordance with the objective and aims of the institution (New Social Work Dictionary, 1995:26). According to Kirke, Layton and Sim (2007:15) fieldwork practice in social work education forms the practical component of a social work curriculum. It is an integral part of the education of social work students and is instrumental in developing professional behaviour and acculturating students into the profession. Fieldwork training has been described as an essential bridge from classroom to service delivery settings. According to Kirke *et al.,* (2007:15) fieldwork practice provides an opportunity for students to connect theoretical education and fieldwork practice.

Since social work fieldwork practice is an integral component of social work education, it is anchored in the vision, mission, goals and educational level of the social work training programme. It occurs in settings or agencies that reinforce students' identification with the purposes, values and ethics of the social work profession. Also, fieldwork practice fosters the integration of empirical and practice-based knowledge as well as the promotion of the development of professional competences. As a result of that, quality fieldwork practice occurs where learning is optimal and can be individualised to the student's learning needs. In support of that, social work fieldwork practice is systematically designed, supervised, coordinated and evaluated on the basis of criteria by which students demonstrate the achievement of program objectives (Pardeck, 2005:116).

2.3 The purpose of Social Work fieldwork practice

Fieldwork practice has been recognised as a core component of social work education ever since its inception. Fieldwork education provides opportunities to try out first hand social work practice roles, to develop curiosity and a critical approach to theory and practice and to examine one's professional identity (Savaya, Peleg-Oren, Stance and Geron, 2003:298). In support of that assersion Fortune, Muccarthy and Abramson (2001:111) agree that fieldwork practice is an essential part of education for social work practice.

Fieldwork practice is designed to help students integrate theoretical concepts learned in the classroom into actual client situations within an agency setting (Panos, Panos, Cox, Roby & Matheson 2002:421). In Social Work fieldwork practice, students develop practice skills, translate theory from the classroom into the reality of practice, and test their ability to be professional social workers. In support of the above Schiff and Katz (2007:789) state that fieldwork training has been long acknowledged as a major component of social work education.

Theory, ethics, and skills studied in classroom courses come together to shape the professional identity of the student social worker In the field, students have the opportunity to put into practice what they learn in the classroom which to integrate theory with practice by helping people with deprivations such struggling with unmet material and psycho-social needs. This allows the students to build a professional identity.

Fieldwork practice constitutes a condition for and basic training of the student to be a professional social worker. In support of this belief, Sherer and Peleg-Oren (2005:3119) state that the fieldwork experience promotes a synthesis between academic forces and practical work in the field via investigation and the performance of interventions in a guided process with the aim of ensuring proper and controlled development of the student. Hicks and Swain (2007:69) concur with Zastrow by emphasizing that fieldwork training is an essential component of professional education, not just an extra-curricular activity where students' abilities and competencies for professional practice become evident and where the integration of theoretical concepts into actual client situations and exposure to the core values of the profession occurs.

Teigiser (2009:139) agree that one of the key goals of fieldwork training is to enable students to apply the theories and skills they have learned in the classroom to agency practice and to use their practicum experiences to enhance classroom learning. Furthermore Allison and Turpin (2003:125) maintain that fieldwork experience is the major avenue through which integration of theory into fieldwork practice occurs. Fieldwork training contributes to student development in a number of ways. It provides unique opportunities to apply and test the theories and facts learnt in formal settings and to acquire new knowledge. It also allows students to learn and refine practical skills by working with actual clients. Many practical and procedural skills, such as assessing are best learnt through direct experience. The following areas of development should be observed by students during fieldwork practice (Valentine,2004:3):

▪ Have the opportunity to test what they learn in the classroom,

- Integrate theory with practice,

- Evaluate the effectiveness of interventions,

- Contend with the realities of social, political and economic injustice,

- Strive for cultural sensitivity and competence,

- Deliberate on the choices posed by ethical dilemmas,

- Develop a sense of self in practice; and

- Build a connection to and identity with the profession

2.4 The knowledge base of agency-based supervisors

According to Maxwell (1999:88) quality fieldwork practice is a critical component of social work education; however, the ability to provide quality fieldwork practice does not necessarily develop naturally from social work training or from subsequent years of practice. It requires the learning of new skills. This knowledge base will include roles, tasks and modelling.

Agency-based supervisors provide students with arguably the most sustained individualised educational experience of their social work education, yet they often receive little training for this vital role. According to Holtz -Deal and Clements (2006:291) social work experts in fieldwork education continue to mention training for fieldwork supervisors, especially in learning theories, as a major gap. Although social work agency based supervisors can transfer some of their practice knowledge and skills to the new role of fieldwork supervisor, the responsibility also requires specialised knowledge and skills, such as how to structure supervision, provide effective feedback, establish learning objectives, and help students develop a professional identity. Schools and/or Departments of social work typically offer new fieldwork supervisors an orientation that addresses such areas as learning contracts, evaluations, the schools' and/or departments' curriculum, and the transition from practitioner to educator.

2.5 Modelling into social work professional culture

According to Allison and Turpin (2003:125) fieldwork practice also contributes to the socialisation of students into the culture of the profession. Opportunities to observe and model from experienced professionals expose students to the subtle, unspoken social mores of the profession and the practice environment. Professional socialisation contributes to the development of relevant professional values and attitudes and the skills of working cooperatively with clients and other staff. The role of fieldwork practice in social work education is recognised as an integral part of the student's professional preparation, with significant structured practice experiences being provided in field agencies under the supervision of a qualified social work practitioner. It is the primary means by which the next generation of social workers is prepared, who will engage and assist people who live in a complicated ever-changing and problematic world (Maxwell, 1999:85).

Only in the integration of knowledge into practice, acquired both in class and in the field, does social workers achieve professional justification. In its earliest beginnings, social work practice has been the place where theory, ethics, and skills came together to inform the professional judgments social work practitioners make.

Spitzer, Holden, Cuzzi, Rutter, Chernack and Rosenberg (2001:79) emphasise that fieldwork practice plays a critical role in modelling professional culture of social work by providing initial opportunities to engage the student social worker in applied use of their newly acquired knowledge, skills, and abilities. As such, the experience should be systematically patterned and modelled to allow for progressive exposure to the characteristics and demands of contemporary practice. Beyond its substantive importance, fieldwork practice is worthy of sustained attention because it affects so many individuals in social work

Fieldwork education in social work has traditionally relied on fieldwork supervisors' having sufficient time to assist students in developing skills for practice and in the hope that direct practice in a single agency adequately reflects social work practice (Teigiser,

2009: 141). According to Abram as cited in Peleg-Oren, McGowan and Even-Zahav (2007:685) fieldwork supervisors act both as guides and as evaluators, imparting theory and skills and assessing students' progress. Fieldwork supervisors serve as models to students and serve a critical role in students' learning during fieldwork practice.

Sherer and Peleg-Oren (2005:316) point out that, agency-based supervisors play in socializing students to the profession and in transmitting key knowledge, values, and skills. Aside from their responsibilities, they are responsible for coordinating student involvement in fieldwork practice, between the university and their local agency.

Knight (2001:357) purports that, attention must be devoted to examining the processes and outcomes of fieldwork practice, particularly those related to helping students integrate theory with practice. Clearly, the fieldwork supervisor has a critical role to play in preparing students for contemporary social work practice. They link the student, the agency and the University and in particular the Department of Social Work. They teach practice, knowledge and skills and serve as mentors and role models.

Before a student arrives at a social work agency there are two key areas of preparation for the fieldwork supervisor: self-preparation and preparation which relates to the agency. Before assisting a student to develop his or her identity as a social worker, the fieldwork supervisor must first be able to articulate his or her own professional identity, beliefs, methods of work and particular skills and expertise as a practitioner. It is also important for the agency based supervisor to take this opportunity for preparation of him/herself for the experience of the placement, preparation which will affect the future supervision relationship with the student. The supervisor needs to review his/her personal strengths and limitations, openness to change and challenge, willingness to debate the perennial issues of social work and tolerance of the dependency as well as autonomy swings of students.

2.6 The application of theory into practice

Collingwood, Emond and Woodward (2008:71) state that, theory in social work, understood here as a formal knowledge base for practice, may be seen as important for a myriad reasons. For example, a strong theoretical underpinning to practice is associated with professional credibility. Social workers have the power to intervene in the complex lives of some of the most vulnerable and excluded members of society, and arguably should not rely on intuition to do so. Rather, practitioners ought to be clear about what they are doing and why they are doing it.

Teigiser (2009:139) says that, the integration of theory and practice is an old idea in social work practice and education. Practice should be theory-based and theory should develop in accordance with practice realities. This means that fieldwork practice should provide opportunities for the execution of knowledge base (values, skills, principles, techniques, theories, models, approaches and ethics etc) discussed in the classroom and conversely, classroom discussions should relate to the fieldwork experiences of students. Boisen and Syers (2004:205) agree that social work education rests on the assumption that a competent social work practice is grounded in the intentional use of theory. Practice informed by theory distinguishes professional social work from informal forms of helping. Theory expands the conceptualization of client problems, helps to organize large amounts of complex data, and provides direction for intervention.

2.7 Challenges on integrating theory into practice

According to Collingwood, Edmond and Woodward (2008:72) integrating theory and practice may be deemed central to effective social work, yet it is a process fraught with tension and one with which many social workers, and students in particular, appear to complain about. As indicated by Howe (1987:15) that some social workers when asked about integrating theory into practice they stated that they did not have a clue, they often felt that they were acting far more from instinct than from knowledge base acquired during their classroom practice.

Furthermore Collingwood, Edmond and Woodward (2008:72) state that a vision of knowledge-guided practice which could be regarded as on a continuum; from social workers who believe that theory is not required and that the best decisions are based on pragmatism on one extreme end and common sense to others who feel uncomfortable about the place of theory in practice. They cannot see that what they do has any kind of theoretical underpinning and finally to those fluent' practitioners who regard the use of theory as central to their work. What appears to be agreed is that social workers' understanding of the work they do can never be 'theory-free. Theory may not be explicitly articulated, and it may not be used well, but there is no such thing as 'theory-less' practice.

2.8 The gap between social work theory and practice

Since the integration of learning into practice is a central goal for all professions, the question of how to bridge the gap between theory and practice and between the classroom and the fieldwork practice, is one which has preoccupied social work education since its very beginnings in universities (Clapton, Cree, Allen, Edwards, Irwin, MacGregor, Paterson & Perre 2008:334). According to Parker (2007:764) social work education has always emphasised the importance of fieldwork experience within the curriculum for preparing students for practice, the purpose being to contextualise classroom learning. Fieldwork practice is the central mechanism for transmitting theoretical knowledge into the practical level of work. Conversely, what social work students do during their fieldwork practice is a crucial issue for social work education.

Lewis and Bolzan (2007:137) are of the idea that social work education aims to prepare students for social work practice, which is not necessarily reflected in the daily activity or experiences of social workers. This disjunction between the goals of social work and its practice is reflected in the findings of some social work educators. Studies that have examined students' views on the relevance of social work theory to field placements reveal that students have experienced conflict between progressive university curricula and conservative agency policies and missions.

Social work educators are particularly concerned with the kinds of teaching that can promote students' learning of different approaches to address the widening gap between theory and practice (Sung-Chan & Yuen-Tsang, 2008:52). According to Collingwood, Edmond and Woodward (2008:71) though it is commonly accepted that theory plays a central role in competent practice, social work education programmes have struggled to identify the means to assist students in linking theory taught in the classroom to apply in the fieldwork practice.

Parker (2007: 763) contends that there is lack of integration between social work theory and social work fieldwork practice. In addition, Veronica and Joan (2006:7) argue that there is indeed a continuing tension between theory and practice, pointing out that students and practitioners alike have protested that it was necessary to forget theory once in practice. In support of this fieldwork practice is considered a crucial component of social work education, a bridge between the theoretical knowledge acquired by students and the specific unique situations that they encounter in the field (Peleg-Oren, Macgowan and Even-Zahaw, 2007: 684). Lewis and Bolzan (2007:136) agree that social work has always been characterised by atension between the theoretical understandings that underpin its knowledge base and the daily practice of social work, which is heavily influenced by the context in which it is situated.

Boisen and Syers (2004:2005) contends that, social work education rests on the assumption that competent social work practice is grounded in the intentional use of theory. According to Knight (2001:357), there is a consensus among social work educators that more attention must be devoted to examining the processes and outcomes of fieldwork instruction, particularly those related to helping students integrate theory into practice. Fieldwork practice has been a central element in social work education from its inception. One of the key goals of fieldwork practice is to enable students to apply the theories and skills they have learned in the classroom to agency practice and to use their practicum experiences to enhance classroom learning.

However, there is often a lack of connection between theories learned in the classroom and field experiences (Teigiser, 2009:139).

2.9 Learning strategies

Sankaran, Sankaran and Bui (2000:67) emphasise that learning strategies refer to the activities by which learning is achieved. For example, reading aloud, copying notes, consulting peers, asking the supervisor for clarification are all learning strategies. The use of learning strategies allows students to actively process information, thereby influencing their mastery of material and subsequent academic achievement. Sankaran, Sankaran and Bui (2000:67) proposed two types of learning strategies: deep and surface. A deep learning strategy is directed at understanding the meaning of a task and to satisfy curiosity. A student using the deep strategy will put in longer study hours, make detailed notes from the text and class, do extra exercises and assignments with corresponding good results in performance. It may be considered the highest form of learning. While a surface learning strategy, on the other hand, is directed to memorising facts, disjointed pieces of data, examples and illustrations, a student using the surface strategy will have a reproducing orientation, memorizing pieces of information and more interested in getting good grades without having to fully master the material. In practice, many students using the surface strategy have been found to be successful because deep level learning is just not required to satisfy many examination requirements.

2.10 How social work students learn in fieldwork practice

Bogo, Regehr, Woodford, Hughes, Power and Regehr (2006:579) emphasise that, professional educational programmes are entrusted by society to ensure that graduating students have mastered the knowledge and skills necessary for ethical and effective practice. In meeting this obligation, programmes identify the components of professional performance that are associated with effective entry-level practice, operationalize these professional components in the form of learning objectives, provide opportunities for students to achieve these operationalized objectives in the curriculum, and ensure the mastery of these objectives through evaluations of students.

- Fieldwork education is based on the principle of progression that is the ordering of the learning experience in increasing levels of knowledge, skills, and practice. Sheafor and Jenkins as cited in Savaya, Peleg-oren, Stange and Geron (2003:298) describe three basic models to fieldwork education: the apprenticeship, academic and articulated models as well as teaching centre model/ field setting model

- **Apprenticeship model**

Savaya *et al.,* (2003:298) highlight that, the apprenticeship model was the first approach used in professional social work education. This model stresses observation of an experienced social worker and an inductive approach to learning in which the students deduce theory from practice. Fieldwork experience is provided as early as possible in the educational program, even before the student has acquired theoretical knowledge.

- **The academic model**

The academic approach emphasises the student's cognitive development. The student is expected to induce a practice approach from classroom learning. A knowledge base rather than practice experience is stressed. The university lecturer assumes the main responsibility for the learning process, while the fieldwork supervisor only facilitates the testing of the knowledge acquired in the classroom. The student is responsible for the translation of the knowledge into practice, Savaya *et al.,* and (2003:298).

- **The articulated model**

The articulated model promotes a close relationship between classroom instruction and fieldwork experience in order to achieve clear integration between the two. The programme progresses from simpler to more complex theory and tasks, taught in tandem in the classroom and fieldwork practice. The more complex the theoretical

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material that the student learns in class, the more complex the practical tasks that the student is asked to do.

- **Teaching centre model / the field setting model**

Nevertheless, other models have been developed. Bogo and Globerman (2003:298) describe two different ways of applying the model: the teaching centre model and the field setting model. In the teaching centre model the field supervisor takes responsibility for teaching both theory and practice, while providing the opportunity to apply knowledge to direct practice. In the field setting model, theory is taught by the academic teacher at the university, while practice knowledge is acquired within a social service agency under the supervision of an experienced social worker.

Fortune, Lee and Cavazes (2005:115) are the opinion that student performance in fieldwork practice is critical because the setting and the skills directly represent the real world of practice for which the student is preparing. Maidment (2000:145) state that, field practice is readily acknowledged for its centrality in professional education. In keeping with its fundamental position in social work education, some aspects of the practicum have been well documented. These include teaching-type manuals for fieldwork supervisors outlining techniques for teaching students and material on how to integrate theory with practice. Through teaching - type manuals for field supervisors, students learning is improved when relevant learning opportunities are available for the student to access. The students' practice is observed and feedback is given to the student about performance; the fieldwork supervisor is accessible to the student and able to assist the student with integrating theoretical concepts with practice responses.

Bogo, Regehr, Woodford, Hughes, Power and Regehr (2006:579) agree that, professional educational programs are entrusted by society to ensure that graduating social work students have mastered the knowledge and skills necessary for ethical and effective practice. In meeting this obligation, programs should identify the components of professional performance that are associated with effective entry-level practice, operationalize these professional components in the form of learning objectives, provide

opportunities for students to achieve these operationalzed objectives in the curriculum, and ensure the mastery of these objectives through evaluations of the students

The role of fieldwork practice in social work education programmes is recognised as an integral part of the student's professional preparation, with significant structured practice experiences being provided in field agencies under the supervision of a qualified social work practitioner. It is important to evaluate not only the students' performance, but also the process of the fieldwork learning experience to ensure that they are being given optimum opportunity to develop professional knowledge and skills (Maxwell, 1999:86).

2.11   Key players or stakeholders in social work fieldwork practice

There are three key players in social work fieldwork practice. Each side of the learning triangle that is university social work educators, fieldwork supervisors and students plays its own part in developing the professional social worker. The university educators are at the top of the triangle. They teach intervention areas and play a major role in advancing theory. They convey skills and attitudes, teaching and learning styles in the classroom and as well as concurrent fieldwork. University social work educators are expected to direct and monitor student fieldwork training. They work in coordination with agency based supervisors in developing students study habits and the desired form of learning. The agency-based supervisors are entrusted with the duty of developing students' practice on placement.

They assist students with developing practice skills as well as integrating social work theory into practice. Agency based supervisors also act both as guides and as evaluators, imparting theory and skills and assessing students' progress Together, university educators and field supervisors rate and evaluate students' professional development (Sherer &Peleg-Oren, 2005:317).

2.12 Supervision during fieldwork placements

Cheon, Blumer Murphy and Sato (2009:53) define social work supervision as, a continuous relationship in which a qualified supervisor monitors the professional development and competency of social work students as he or she gains practical experience. Munson (1993:19) states that Social Work students need assistance to integrate the may practice demands that are marginally covered in their academic programme. Supervision can be different; however all the definitions should highlight similarities in respect of supervisor, supervisee and the interaction between the two. .Supervision is an important part of the training of competent and effective professional social workers. The researcher is of the idea that supervision in social work fieldwork training, is critical to the quality of service delivery.

Morrison (1993:13) defines supervision as a process in which one worker is given the responsibility to work with another worker in order to meet organisational, professional and personal objectives. Skidmore (1995:246) has a different view; He defines supervision as an oversight, control and surveillance. Horrocks and smaby (2010:173) state that, supervision is considered as a primary method for imparting knowledge to trainees. According to Bernard and Goodyear (2010:173) , supervision is an intervention in which a more senior member of the profession assists a more junior member of the profession to enhance professional functioning and ensure client welfare. The nature of supervision is evaluative and extends over time. According to Mboniswa (2007:13), supervision in social work is used to describe the function of the supervisor in relation to the supervisee.

Kadushin (1992:20) outlined the objectives of supervision as follows:

- To assist professional development and growth.
- To ensure that the worker has the capacity to render quality services to clients.
- To ensure that the worker is given work context and resources to do his or her job.
- To reduce stress and help the worker feel good about his job.
- To ensure that the worker meets the agency's objectives.

- To ensure that the worker meets the agency's objectives.

2.13 Supervisory relationship

White and Queener (2003:203), state that all supervision takes place within the context of a relationship. The supervisory relationship is most important in that it affects and is affected by all factors within the realm of supervision. It is evident then that the supervisory relationship is of great importance to the profession as a whole. The main intention of social work fieldwork practice is to assist social work students to integrate theoretical concepts learned in the classroom into practice. The outcomes of fieldwork training are determined by student-supervisor relationship. The supervisory relationship influences and is also influenced by all factors within the realm of supervision. It plays an important role in the learning process of supervision and it also contributes towards the professional development and the growth of the supervisee. The supervisory relationship predicts the social work students' relationship with their clients.

Social Work education relies on agency-based fieldwork supervisors to assist social work students in developing skills, and in integrating theory and practice. Field supervisors are essential both in gate-keeping for the profession, and in assisting the student's development of professional skills, values, and knowledge. Effective integration may be dependent on collaboration, reciprocity, resources, and relationships shared by field agencies and social work programmes. According to Bushfield (2005:216) there is evidence that a "good field placement" is one which contains quality supervision, relevant learning, careful communication and monitoring, as well as accessibility and responsiveness

The crucial role of supervision in the development of social workers in their work with clientele cannot be overemphasized. Indeed, supervision affects not only the supervisee, but it also affects the clients that they work with as well. Cheon, Murphy and Sato (2009:53) says that supervisors act as gatekeepers of the profession and therefore need to be sure that they provide supervision that is tailored to the key critical areas that affect the supervisory relationship. The quality of the interaction between the supervisor

and the supervisee is rooted in the supervisory relationship. Fostering a quality supervisory relationship is of great importance to the welfare of the supervisee and ultimately that of clients. The interaction between the supervisee and the supervisor seems to be the vehicle through which the variables lead to satisfaction in supervision.

2.14 Student-Supervisor relationship

The supervisory relationship is defined by White and Queener (2003:203), as the collaboration between the supervisor and the supervisee for change in the supervisee base on mutual agreement on the goals and tasks of supervision as well as a strong emotional bond. The process of fieldwork training involves many distinctive characteristics that are not typical of a classroom and the most distinctive are the supervisory relationship between the fieldwork supervisor and the social work students. Davys and Beddoe (2000:422), state that, fieldwork practice placement is the learning environment in which social work students realise their goals of integrating theory with the realities of practice and where they experience and absorb the contradictions and conflicts of social work practice. It is, however within the context of the supervision relationship, however, that students are assisted to reflect upon and understand these experiences and where they are encouraged to face contradictions and inconsistencies within themselves and between themselves and other aspects of the field environment. The fieldwork supervision relationship is thus pivotal in assisting the emergent social work persona of the student. The scarcity of fieldwork placements, however, means that this relationship is seldom chosen by either party. It becomes a relationship founded on availability rather than suitability. More significantly, this relationship, caught within the expectations of student, agency and social work school, constrained by time and stretched by the hopes and fears of students.

The quality of the student-supervisor relationship is an important factor mediating outcomes of social work fieldwork practice. Student-supervisor relationship is the cornerstone and the heart of fieldwork training in social work education. The significance and the quality of student-supervisor relationship is paramount in achieving

the goals of fieldwork practice. Fieldwork practice in social work takes place within the context of relationship.

Davys and Beddoe (2000:437) state that student supervision has traditionally been regarded as a developmental step in the career path of social work practitioners. Bennett, Mohr, Szoc and Saks (2008:75) state that historically, the student-supervisor relationship has been considered central to social work field education. A basic assumption of professional social work is that significant learning can take place during fieldwork training.

2.15 Supervisory relationship challenges

Ford and Jones (1987:75) state that any learning requires change, and change creates anxiety. The supervisory relationship generates a number of anxieties for students. There is a thread to their independence and autonomy.
The anxiety of exposing their ignorance and vulnerability and risk of not meeting the supervisor's expectation. The following are the variables that threatens the supervisory relationship

- Environmental variables.

- Contextual variables.

2.15.1 Environmental variables

Environmental characteristics are the critical variables that affect the supervisory relationship. The characteristics of the environment in which the supervisory relationship occurs comprise the environmental variables. Examples include the setting in which supervision occurs, length of time in the supervisory relationship, and practice of the people involved in this relationship. In addition, the methodological variables of supervision also affect the relationship between the supervisee and supervisor (Cheon et al., 2009:55).

It is necessary to consider how the aforementioned variables can lead to conflict in the supervisory relationship. Conflict can arise due to the synchrony or lack thereof between the supervisor and the supervisee on contextual, environmental, and methodological variables. This conflict can, in turn, affect supervisee satisfaction with supervision. According to Cheon *et al.,* (2009:55). Conflict can be problematic in any relationship. Indeed, just the thought of conflict can create discomfort, anxiety, and dissonance with the actual experience of conflict. These feelings can become even more intense. Conflict can be viewed as a struggle between at least two interdependent parties where the attainment of goals and rewards are perceived as incompatible. Conflict and disagreement between supervisors and supervisees are inevitable. Unresolved conflict and conflict that is not resolved in a satisfactory manner can be damaging and destructive, both to those in the supervisory relationship and to clients.

2.15.2 Contextual variables

Contextual variables can set the stage for creating conflict. For instance, conflict may arise through issues of ''fit'' between supervisor and supervisee in terms of goals, learning styles, personality, theoretical orientation, case conceptualization, therapeutic intervention, case management, hierarchy/power, gender, and diversity issues. However, at the opposite extreme, similarities on these variables between the supervisor and supervisee can also be problematic. When this occurs, it is typically conceptualized as collusion, or the experience of too few differences between the supervisor and supervisee. Some of the factors leading to collusion emerge when both the supervisor and supervisee share common beliefs in a particular therapy model, have similar academic or clinical experience, or may share strong contextual similarities, such as religion, ethnic background, age, or gender.

2.16 Assessment of social work students during fieldwork training

Brown and Knight (1995:13) define assessment as a process of defining, selecting, collecting, analysing information to increase learning and development. In terms of social work education, assessment of practice is the process of making a judgement of a student's knowledge, skills and values (Cowburn, Nelson & Williams, 2000:630). Academic institutions need to develop ways of teaching and assessing a student's practical skills to protect people and to facilitate change and, thus, to ensure a student's readiness for practice. Brown and Knight (1995:9) define assessment as the basis for making systematic inferences about the learning and development of students. It is also seen as the process of defining, selecting, designing, collecting, analysing and interpreting and using information to increase student learning and development.

Assessment is a fundamental component of social work fieldwork education. It is a systematic basis for making inferences about learning and development of students. Its significance is based on the fact that it gives platform for both on-going formative processes of monitoring, summative and feedback of students 'competence at the conclusion of fieldwork practice. Proper assessment determines the performance of a student as a qualified social work practitioner. This brings issues such as objectivity and standpoint in assessment. Assessment of social work students during their block placement by the university-based supervisors, fieldwork practice supervisors and by the social work students themselves safeguard the professional standard of social work. Brown and Knight (1995:12) are of the idea that, as training programmes and practice evolve, systems for assessing students need to be reviewed and updated constantly.

2.17 The process of assessment

The typical social work program is based on the premise that preparation for professional practice requires core knowledge and practical experience that is achieved through supervised training in the field. University based teachers, along with university based fieldwork supervisors as well as agency based fieldwork supervisors, ensure that

social work students will successfully integrate theory into their practice. In social work, field experience has largely been studied as it relates to the level of practice methodology, the description of relationships with clients, the supervision process, or the agency (Sherer and Peleg-Oren, 2005:315).

Assessment occurs throughout the practice placement and as such, it is a dynamic process, interconnects practice teaching and learning elements of the placement. Students and practice teachers are required to meet for formal practice teaching sessions of at least one and a half hours each week of the placement. Cowburn, Nelson and Williams (2000:630) emphasise that, this provides a mechanism for the student' practice to be regularly monitored and discussed. Areas where the student' s practice is weak or in need of development can be identified jointly by both practice teacher and student with reference to the modules and units of the curriculum (competencies). The practice teacher will suggest ways for the student to improve. However, in cases where improvement is not apparent over a number of weeks, the practice teacher may have acquired a substantial body of evidence to support an assessment of the student as being either marginal or failing certain parts of the curriculum.

2.18 Assessment and strong objectivity

The main means by which social work students are assessed is via positivistic methods and the use of competencies. This approach to assessment considers that the assessor is effectively an intellect, divorced from identity, gender, race, class and culture, which can provide a `value-free' assessment of the student's performance. Yet both social work student and agency based supervisors as well as University

Normally, the University regulations assume that the assessment of social work students should be the responsibility of the University-based supervisors and agency-based or fieldwork practice supervisors only. It is important to evaluate not only the students' performance, but also the process of the fieldwork learning experience to ensure that they are being given optimum opportunity to develop professional

knowledge and skills. However, it is very imperative to involve students in their assessment (self-assessment) to complete the circle of assessment.

Cree, Doyle, Lough, Mercandante, Peat and Robertson (2006:189) emphasise that assessment is one of the principal drivers of student learning. It is the systematic basis for making inferences about learning and development of students. Rapid changes in social work—shrinking agency funding, managed care, and increased workloads for agency staff have affected field practice. Less time is available than formerly to guide and develop students' learning, using the traditional approaches to field instruction. The nature of social work has also changed, with more severe problems presented while less time is allotted for working (Teigiser, 2006:139).Valentine (2004:6), agrees that, Institutional pressures experienced by social work programs and faculty have a direct impact on the structure and delivery of field education to students. These sweeping changes compel social work educators to reassess their underlying assumptions and take calculated risks in changing the face of fieldwork education to fit the current practice environment.

2.19 Systems of assessment

Assessment involves the presentation of one's best work, of putting a good case forward, emphasising what one knows, not what one does not yet know. Reflection, on the other hand, is about exploration, focusing on a lack of understanding, questioning, probing discrepancies and so on. There is always a danger that assessment will obliterate the very practices of reflection which courses aim to promote. The assessment discourse celebrates certainty; reflection thrives on doubt (Boud, 1999:123).

 According to Allison and Turpin (2004:51) as training programs and practice evolve, systems for assessing students need to be reviewed and updated constantly. Significant changes to both practice and educational environments have challenged the relevance of traditional models of fieldwork education. It is important to evaluate not only the students' performance, but also the process of the field learning experience to ensure

that students are being given optimum opportunity to develop professional knowledge and skills. To achieve this, the students' assessment of the roles and functions of the agency supervisors'/instructors' and the educational institutions' practical coordinators or liaisons is of major importance (Maxwell, 1999:86). Furness and Gilligan (2004:467) emphasise that the knowledge, values and skills of students have to be assessed by suitably experienced and qualified practitioners, both within practice agencies and academic institutions.

2.19.1 Self-assessment and peer assessment

Self-assessment and peer assessment among fieldwork practice coordinators and with their agency-based supervisors should be encouraged. Peer assessment and self-assessment have been proposed as strategies for enhancing learning which fits with the development of reflective learning and critical thinking. According to Crisp, Lister and Dutton (2006:727) state that self and peer assessments focus on the students' capacities to assess themselves, to make judgements about their learning (and that of their peers) and to evaluate what has been learnt. It is further claimed that benefits would include redressing the balance of power between staff and students, developing antioppressive practice and the process of life-long learning, and facilitating students to take specific responsibility for monitoring and making judgements about their own learning.

2.20 Purposes of assessment

Potentially, assessment of social work students can safeguard both professional standards and the general public. The researcher is of the view that, if assessment can be properly done before students are released for practice, some of these students will not be able to meet the required level of practice (Cowburn, Nelson & Williams 2000:631).The prime purpose of assessment is to measure academic quality or potential, the focus may be on designing a set of tests and assignments which will

demonstrate the quality of mind required for entrance into the profession, (Miller, Imrie & Cox, 1998:23).

The knowledge, values and skills of students have to be assessed by suitably experienced and qualified practitioners, both within practice agencies and academic institutions,(Furness & Gilligan 2004:467). Hay and O'Donoghue(2009: 43) are of the opinion that, the purposes of assessment are manifold and include enhancing and promoting student learning, ensuring competence, monitoring student work and development, instigating changes in policy, curriculum and practice, awarding qualifications and identifying further educational and practice needs.

2.21 Objectives of Assessment

According to Furness and Gilligan (2004:467) the objectives of assessment is to:

- Assessments of social work students serve as a gatekeeper for entry into the profession and safeguard the interests of service users and employers alike.

- To identify the progress and achievements of a student.

- To enable student progression.

- To ensure competency and monitoring of student work and development.

- To provide feedback on student work.

- To assist students in sharing experiences and integrate classroom-based learning with fieldwork practice

2.22   Forms of assessments

There are more than two forms of assessment. This study discusses the following forms of assessment:

2.22.1 Formative assessment

Good-quality supervisor feedback is paramount in the pursuit of these skills and is especially valuable in helping learners internalize standards and actively respond to areas for individual enhancement thus improving the quality of assessed work prior to its submission. Exercises, assignments and progress tests given to students throughout an academic semester may serve as formative assessment. The main purpose of formative assessment is to provide regular feedback to students in order to stimulate learning and to provide students with information which will help them judge the effectiveness of their learning. What constitutes good-quality feedback and how this is delivered to student's remains a key point. It also alerts teachers of any section of the course where students have difficulties (Miller, Imrie & Cox, 1998:32).

Parker (2007: 766) contends that there must be recognition, then, from any supervisor giving feedback, that not all learners will easily decode and translate the feedback received, since feedback must go beyond transmission of information. External feedback from supervisors influences learners' self-efficacy and motivational beliefs both positively and negatively whilst the tone and insightfulness of supervisors comments relating to assessed work is certainly a key factor in the success of any feedback message. It is what learners actually do with this guidance that will genuinely develop their ability to take control of their goal setting, planning for learning and time management – the key components of a self-regulated' learner.

Parker (2007: 766)) has also observed that student frustration with assessment feedback can create an immediate impediment to effective learning that, in turn, affects personal confidence. Supervisors and social work students are partners in the feedback process and that dialogue is a key technique and component of good feedback practice. University based supervisors and agency based supervisors need good data about how students are progressing in order to aid reflection before taking action to help further support the development of greater critical skill and independence. This may seem reasonable, but moving from an acceptance that good feedback practice is paramount

to the application of change is hugely complex as many academic staff will be wary of change and reluctant to embrace innovation

2.22.2 Principles to be observed when assessing formative tasks

- The work should be marked and students informed of the results as quick as possible.

- Supervisors should provide detailed and constructive criticisms so that students know what is expected of them and how they might improve their performance.

- Models of good performance (behaviour, essays reports) should also be provided so that good practice can be disseminated.

2.22.3 Summative assessment

Summative assessment may be defined as, measure of a student's performance or level of a student performance or level of achievements at the end of sequence of study. According to Miller, Imrie and Cox (1998:33) the main purpose of summative assessment is to make a judgement regarding each student's performance. The results of summative assessment are expressed as marks.

2.22.4 Purposes of Summative assessment

According to Miller, Imrie and Cox (1998:33) the purpose of summative assessment entail among others the following:

- It signifies fitness to proceed to higher level.

- It is important in all professions. Success in the final examination signifies that the graduate is qualified to enter the profession after success in the field examination.

2.23 Current Assessment Processes

Hay and O'Donoghue (2009:44) state that all of the institutions require written documentation for summative assessment purposes at the completion of the fieldwork training. These documents (generally referred to as 'the assessment document') addressed the achievement of the specified learning outcomes, the areas of strength and future development of the student. Other methods of assessment include reflective journals, essays or written assignments, compulsory tutorials, workbooks, presentations, fieldwork observations, a supervision log, a closure interview and participation in a social service expo. Either four or five methods of assessment are required from the fieldwork student. While some institutions encourage their students and their fieldwork educators to do midassessments review.

2.24 Quality fieldwork practice: Student perspectives

Kirke *et al.,* (2007:16) state that student factors that are crucial to quality placements are the provision of regular and balanced feedback, knowledge and approachability of fieldwork educators, clear communication of expectations, as well as fieldwork educator's interest, support and belief in the students and their abilities. These include fieldwork educators' competence in the practice and their enthusiasm for the profession, their ability to offer effective teaching and learning through knowledge of the university curriculum and provision of an orientation, assistance classes and opportunities for graded active participation and discussion. Kirke *et al.,* (2007:16) highlight inconsistency as a problem in fieldwork practice, whereby fieldwork educator expectations of students differ between educators, agencies and educational institutions in regard to required student performance. The importance of having both university and fieldwork educators clearly specify student characteristics and behaviours that will lead to excellence at each year level and is essential in facilitating and enhancing students' performance.

2.25 Quality fieldwork education: University perspectives

Kirke *et al.,* (2007:16) state that the university and the Department of Social Work in particular has a fundamental responsibility to determine the fieldwork training requirements of social work program that will develop a student to a point of fitness to practise in current and future practice. The university also needs to ensure that social work education uses sound educational methodology to deliver required learning outcomes.

Agency-based supervisors, with their practical knowledge, require a model of fieldwork practice that will assist them in sharing their practical expertise with the students. The developmental stages and characteristics of the practitioner along the novice–expert continuum is one such model, Kirke et al, (2007:16).

According to Kirke *et al,* (2007:18), competent fieldwork supervisors enjoy the student experience and are well prepared when the student commences. Orientation is planned and the educator is in tune with the requirements of the placement, the competent fieldwork supervisor understands the student's learning needs and has 'the ability to give positive feedback and constructive criticism so that the student can learn. They hold clear expectations and promote the profession in a positive light. Regular time is set aside for the student to ask questions and to receive feedback remembering to recognise when extra time is needed. Competent fieldwork supervisors communicate well, are able to grade challenges and expectations for students of different levels, and to offer a flexible learning environment around individual student needs. They acknowledge that competent practitioners are not 'one size fits all' but exemplify a diversity of styles and therapeutic approaches. Thus, where possible, students have the opportunity to observe and therefore model from a variety of practitioners.

2.26 Who assess social work students during fieldwork training?

Sherer and Peleg-Oren (2005:316) emphasize that, each side of the learning triangle, lecturers, University fieldwork supervisors, agency based fieldwork supervisors and social work students plays its own part in developing the professional social worker.

The academic teachers are at the centre of the triangle. They teach intervention areas and play a major role in advancing theory: They convey skills and attitudes, teaching and learning styles in the classroom and in the field, and the goals of supervision in the field. University based teachers are expected to direct and monitor student's fieldwork training. They work in coordination with agency based supervisors instructors in developing student study habits and the desired form of instruction. Together university based teachers, agency based fieldwork supervisors, university based fieldwork supervisor's rate and evaluate students' professional development. 1987).Fieldwork supervisors act as fieldwork teachers and evaluators, imparting theory and skills and assessing student progress.Aside from their academic responsibilities, they are responsible for coordinating student involvement in fieldwork training between the university and their local agency.

Sherer and Peleg-Oren (2005:316) argue that the fieldwork experience promotes a synthesis between academic forces and practical work in the field via investigation and the performance of interventions in a guided process with the aim of ensuring proper and controlled development of the student. Crisp, Lister and Dutton (2006:726) concur with Sherer and Peleg-Oren (2005:316) by pointing out that, agency-based supervisors play an essential key role in the assessment of fieldwork practice in conjunction with university- based supervisor. Lack of, or minimal, involvement in the assessment process might be interpreted as reflecting a belief that practice teachers do not have sufficient expertise to assess students. Assessment of practice learning often includes a combination of an assessment of student performance and of submissions made by the student in the form of reports or seminar presentations as well as oral examination, Where practice teachers are involved in assessing students, it is usual for there to be some input or discussion with university staff prior to completion of the process. According to Crisp, Lister and Dutton (2006:727) this typically involves visits by agency-based supervisors to practice agencies and video conferencing has to be used effectively for placement meetings to plan and review practice learning.

2.27 Tools for assessing competence

Taylor, Thomas and Sage (1999:385).have observed that notions of competence and competency-based training do not emanate from a theoretical framework, but rather they reflect an approach to accountability to the public for the practice of professionals. Competency has been defined as a description of the essential skills, knowledge, and attitudes required for effective performance in a work situation. The competence of a professional rests in the adequate possession of these attributes to meet a standard that enables effective or successful performance. Bogo as cited in Parker (2007:766) recognise the centrality of fieldwork practice in the formation of social workers but acknowledge and identified the lack of standardised outcome measures for assessing learning and performance. It is acknowledged that some students fail their fieldwork practice because of unclear reasons. The outcome measures used to evaluate fieldwork practice include student performance and, more commonly, student satisfaction or perceptions of helpfulness

Parker (2007:766) is concerned that the reliability and validity of measurement tools of competence based education for fieldwork practice and, therefore, open to measurement. However, they recognised the difficulties involved in developing measures of competence because of the difficulties in identifying core social work skills and learning objectives beyond the micro level interviewing skills and how multiple dimensions could be incorporated; the need for scaling techniques measuring the quality of performance; and determining what data provide evidence.

Parker (2007:766) recognise and point out the practical and conceptual differences in assessing competence and see it inextricably linked with the methods of learning and teaching used. Due to the complex nature of fieldwork practice learning should be done t in a climate in which it is safe to take risks and learning is facilitated by doing, by live teaching and simulated practice based supervisors are also required to embody anti-oppressive perspectives in their work with each other and with service users

2.28 Attitudes of social work towards fieldwork training

Students arrive to undertake the practical component of their work carrying a range of beliefs, fears and attitudes. Some are older, experienced in life if not in the area of social work, whilst others are younger, naive and filled with an idealistic zeal to cure the world. All those intent on a career in social work will be bent on developing their persona as `the social worker, (Davys & Beddoe, 2000:244).

Social work classroom-based learning is inextricably linked to social work fieldwork practice. In support of that, Katz and Schiff (2007:794) state that fieldwork practice has been long acknowledged as a major component of social work. It is in fieldwork practice that the knowledge learnt in classroom is assimilated in real life situation which concurrently and eventually shape the professional identity of the student social worker. In social work fieldwork practice, students have the opportunity to put into practice what they learnt in the classroom and that is to integrate theory with practice. However, Parker (2007: 763) contends that there is lack of integration between social work theory and social work fieldwork practice. In addition, Veronica and Joan (2006:7) argue that there is a continuing tension between theory and practice. They argue that students and practitioners alike have protested that it was necessary to forget theory once in practice.

Schiff and Katz (2007:80) state that students' learning experience in the field instruction is a dynamic process, changing over the period of their fieldwork training. Their satisfaction with their fieldwork practice on may also change. The attitudes of social work students before they enter practice can have a significant impact both on their approaches to study and their occupational choices as professionals. Redmond, Guerin and Devitt (2008:869) believe that the motives, concerns, incentives and disincentives of social work students have a profound effect on the 'specific opportunities for, as well as barriers to, their learning. Sherer and Peleg-Oren (2005:315) state that fieldwork practice in social work practice is the central mechanism for transmitting theoretical knowledge into the practical level of work.

Fieldwork practice constitutes a condition for and basic training of the student to be a professional. Some differences in perceptions of the fieldwork training k experience, however, may exist. According to Knight and Maidment (2005:18) students and agency based supervisors report that, most teaching methods as being effective they rate the actual teaching methods of fieldwork practice and those of the classroom differently. Students indicate that they are most likely to have access to teaching and learning methods in the fieldwork practice that offer the opportunity to directly observe a supervisor in practice.

2.29 Cooperation and competition attitudes

Parker (2007:767) suggests that while feedback-seeking behaviours are important in the learning environment, they should be seen as expressions of underlying attitudes towards learning. Two attitudes that have been highlighted as possible premises for students' learning performance are cooperation. In support of cooperation is the argument of the goal similarity principle where common goals of knowledge acquisition and good grades are shared among students and which, in turn, and drive students to cooperate and help each other in the learning environment.

2.29.1 Positive attitudes towards feedback

Parker (2007:766) state that feedback information 'facilitates metacognition in interactive instructional systems' and is an important part of the self-regulated learning process. In other words, feedback information from others helps an individual to develop a better overview of how one is performing with respect to different aspects of a task, and enables that individual to see areas of inadequate performance for the next round of improvement. Within the learning context, this feedback process would involve students iteratively gathering information from others and checking for understanding of knowledge through questions, so as to eventually reach in-depth comprehension of a topical area of interest.

Student performance in fieldwork practice is critical because the setting and the skills directly represent the real world of practice for which the student is preparing. Alperin, Fortune, Fortune, Lee and Cavazes (2005:115) state that, many factors influence student performance. Student motivation may be particularly important because it can be assessed and changed. If motivation is related to student performance in field, it is possible to predict who will do well and to provide interventions to improve motivation. Kirke, Layton and Sim (2007:18) purport that, there is consensus as to the qualities of a capable student on fieldwork the good students are the ones who understand what they can learn, are interested in what you have to offer, have good expectations and clear goal setting, and are active in the learning experience. Capable students are self-directed learners and knowledge seekers. These students are able to apply theory to practice, demonstrate initiative, are flexible with their learning and adaptable to the agency environment It's so important to have a variety of experience. Capable students have good metacognition abilities. They actively seek feedback and take this on board, display insight into their strengths and weaknesses and demonstrate a solid grounding by the university in professional behaviour. They know what they don't know (where) the supervisor doesn't necessarily know what they don't know unless they ask.

Fortune, Lee, Cavazes (2005:115) emphasise that individuals with high motivation to achieve are more likely to succeed in school and in careers. One approach to investigating achievement motivation is expectancy-value theory, which suggests several important determinants of achievement: the value placed on the task to be done, the motivation or desire to accomplish the task, perception of the difficulty of the task, and confidence in one's ability to accomplish the task.

They also display generic professional behaviours such as timeliness and dress code, capable students are aware of the impact of self in varying environments, for example the use of appropriate handwriting when working with children. They are well organised, enthusiastic, interact well with staff and clients and are able to recognise educator needs as well as their own. Capable students enjoy a challenge, feel comfortable in

acknowledging their limitations and mistakes and can construct meaning out of available opportunities, (Kirke, *et al.,* 2007:18).

2.30 Learning areas for social work students during fieldwork practice

According to Davys and Beddoe (2000:422), the learning or educational plan identifies the particular learning needs of the student, the ways in which these needs will be met and how the student' s work will be evaluated. The supervision contract specifies how the student's work will be supervised. Both these tasks need time and care in their formulation and provide an opportunity for the supervisor and the student to explore and share expectations, ideals and differences and to consider the possible.

Parker (2007:764) stresses that goal setting, expectations of the student social worker, agency-based supervisor, the university and clarity to be very important in the process of establishing the content for practice learning. Bogo as cited in Parker (2007:766) is of the idea that important to an effective practice learning experience is student satisfaction, which appears to be associated with regular feedback about performance, feeling empowered as a learner with a degree of autonomy, and opportunities to observe work with constructive role models. Dissatisfaction is associated with a lack of clear expectations; relationship difficulties between student and supervisor, and a lack of integration between theory and practice.

According to Sherer and Peleg-Oren (2005:317), job analysis is a process that entails a description of the work, identifies and the details of the components, characteristics, duties, and requirements of the particular job, and ranks the relative importance of these duties for a given job. The product of job analysis is a description of the job activities and their relative significance. The clarity of guidelines and the expectations of learning and performance are also critical in social work fieldwork practice. The effectiveness of fieldwork learning is enhanced when the triad of students, teachers, and instructors work in harmony and continuously communicate goals and expectations. Abel (2004:109) states that, Supervision of students is associated with the expectation that

the practitioner will provide monitoring, guidance, and feedback to the student on matters of personal, professional, and educational development.

2.31 Challenges experienced by Social work students during their fieldwork training

Fieldwork practice has been traditionally incorporated into social work education, the adequacy of current work place settings to provide quality education has recently been questioned. It is not surprising that, where organisations are operating under a climate of economic restraint, workers frequently experience work-related stress and overload. This is the context in which social work students undertake their placements and it is therefore essential that they are equipped to both manage their learning and the pragmatic challenges inherent in working within contemporary human services environments, (Maidment, 2003:50).

It has been customary for the university social work programs to place emphasis on teaching social work students the skills of interviewing and conducting client assessments prior to going out on placement. However, equal emphasis needs to be given to teaching students how to survive and negotiate in workplace cultures. Preparation of this kind would be less discipline specific to social work and more related to learning how to learn and manage self in the current workplace context. Colford and Maidment (2003:51), hold the view that, the existence of stress among students during their fieldwork training is not a new issue. Students feel stressed where there is a lack of clear expectations and role clarification, where relationship difficulties exist between the student and supervisor and where there lack of integration between theory and practice. Students who are on placement and human service workers are exposed to significant levels of verbal and physical harassment and assault.

2.32 The Changing Components of Fieldwork practice

Social work programmes report increased difficulty in recruiting and maintaining high quality field settings and instructors for all their students, (Bogo and Raskin, 2006:162).

social workers rarely receive workload reduction for serving as supervisors and those who assume the role usually do so for intrinsic rewards. They find satisfaction in contributing to the next generation of social work professionals, staying current with practice, and value their connection to the academy.

According to Wayne, Bogo and Raskin (2006:163) the proliferation of social work programs is yet another factor in the challenge to place students. In many areas, field placement personnel rush to contact agencies to take their students before a particular setting gets full with students from other schools. The competitive feelings that this situation creates serve as yet another unproductive pressure for those connected with fieldwork education. In the face of diminishing resources, it is understandable that fieldwork coordinators could yield to the pressures they face by changing their expectations of who could serve as field supervisors, including their credentials.

2.33 Changes in the composition of social work students

The time required to fulfil field education requirements presents a great challenge to most of today's students. In addition, there are efforts to increase the diversity of the student body radical change in fieldwork practice and to accommodate students with family responsibilities. All of these factors have resulted in a student body who needs more financial aid, accommodation for special situations, and classroom and fieldwork experiences in the evenings and weekends, (Bogo & Raskin, 2006:164).

CHAPTER THREE

Presentation, analysis and interpretation of data

3.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to present, analyse and interpret data collected from social work students at the University of Limpopo (turf loop campus) and agency-based supervisors. De vos (2002:339) defines data analysis as the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data. The study was aimed at evaluating fieldwork practice at the University of Limpopo (Turfloop campus) in order to aligne theory and practice. Qualitative data and quantitative data were collected from agency based supervisors and social work students through the use of questionnaires. Out of 100 sent to social work students,seventy nine (71%) questionares were returned. Two focus group sessions were held for thirty minutes per session with the fourth and third year level social work students. The motive behind focus group discussions was to gather qualitative data and also to confirm or dispute quantitative data. According to David and Sutton (2004:92) focus group is described as group interview rather than the stereotypical one-to-one interview. Data was collected was be analysed and interpreted in relation to the main aim of the study aimed of evaluating fieldwork practice at the University of Limpopo (Turfloop campus), so as to align theory and practice.

3.2 Research methodology

Research design may be seen as the arrangement of conditions for collecting and analysing data in a manner that aims to combine relevance of the research purpose. Its intention is to plan and to provide structure to a given research project. For the purpose of this study the researcher has employed a combination of both quantitative and qualitative research approach and the research design was evaluative. The findings will be used to evaluate and assess fieldwork practice in the Department of Social Work.

3.3 Interpretation of data

Quantitative data collected was presented in the forms of tables, graphs and charts and qualitative data

3.4 Demographic factors of Social work students

Demographic factors focuses on data relating to the demographic factors of Social work students (3rd and the 4th year students). Factors considered ages, sex and their gender The participants were from the University of Limpopo (Turfloop campus) in the Department of Social Work.The respondents were selected on the basis of their involvement both in concurrent and block placements.

3.5 Responses on the ages of the respondents

Figure 1: Ages of the students
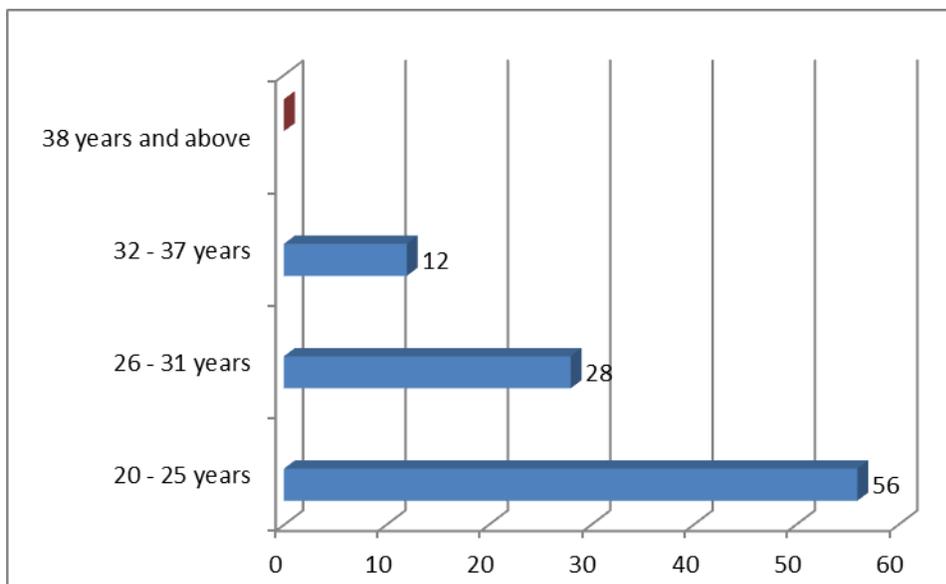
Figure 1 above gives an indication that respondents whose age was between 20-25 years were 56% while those who are between the ages of 26-31 years were 28%. Students whose ages were between 32-37 years were 12% and those whose ages

were between 38 years and made only 4%. Analysis of the above data shows that a high percentage of the respondents' ages ranged from 20-25 years which signifies the adult stage of development. Thus from the above, it can be speculated that people in this age group are in a process of acquiring their first qualifications and some are in the field. The study also reveals that there is an alarming rate (12%) of respondents whose age's ranges from 32-37 years. It can also be speculated that, people of this age have completed their qualifications and some are in the field.

3.6 Responses on the gender of respondents (social work students)

Figure 2: Gender of the students
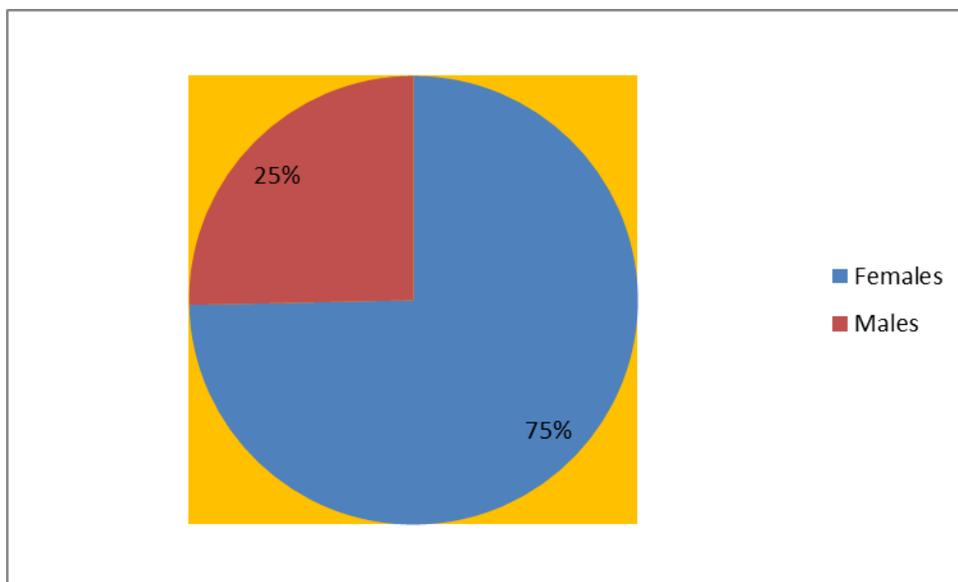
Figure 2 indicates that 75% of social work students at the University of Limpopo are females while 25% are males. The researcher is of the view that the above figure is in line or correlates with the national social workers' demographics in terms of gender distribution whereby the majority of Social Workers are females. The researcher believes that men have a perception that Social Work is a female dominated profession hence they enrol for programmes such as Law.

3.7 Responses on the existence of theory-less practice in Social Work

Figure 3: Theory- less in social work
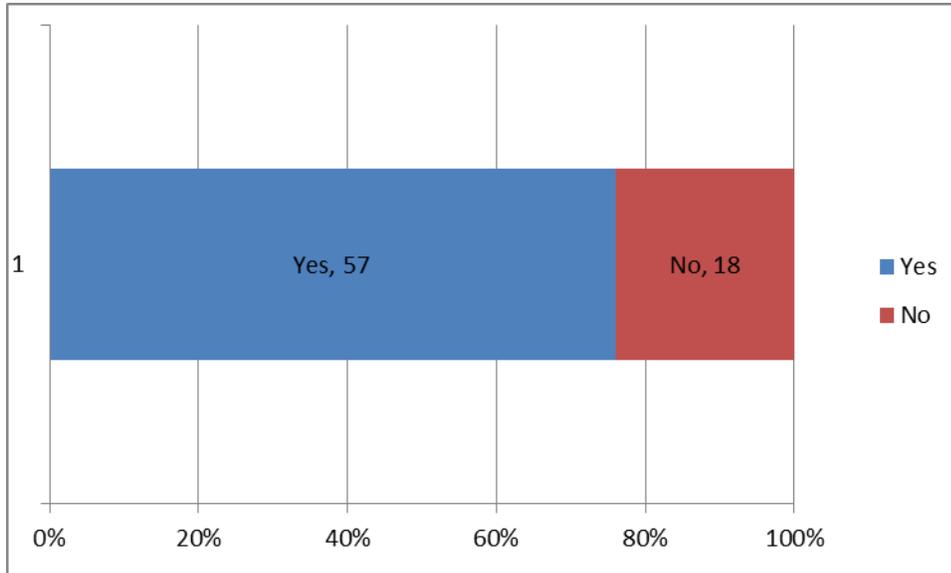
Figure 3 represents the views of the respondents regarding the existence of theory-less practice in social work practice. The high number (76%) of respondents holds the view that there is theory-less practice. Parker (2007: 763) contends that there is a lack of integration between social work theory and social work fieldwork practice. In addition, Veronica and Joan (2006:7) argue that there is indeed a continuing tension between theory and practice, pointing out that students and practitioners have protested that it was necessary to forget theory once in practice. 24% of the respondents did not agree with the existence of theory-less social work practice. The researcher has noticed conflict of opinion regarding the existence of theory-less practice in social work. Lewis and Bolzan (2007:136) agree that social work has always been characterized by a tension between the theoretical understandings that underpin its knowledge base and the daily practice of social work.

3.8 Responses on the alignment between Social Work theory and practice

Figure 3: Alignment between Social Work theory and practice

Yes	48	Percentage	64%
No	27	Percentage	36%
Total number of respondents	75	100%	100%

The above figure represents the views of social work students regarding the connection between social work theory and practice. Figure 3 also indicates that 64% of the respondents indicated that, there is a strong connection between social work theory and practice. According to Teigiser (2009:139) Practice should be theory-based and theory should develop in accordance with practice realities. Berlin, Marsh and Beder as cited in Boisen and Syers (2004:205) concur with Teigiser (2009:139) that social work education rests on the assumption that competent social work practice is grounded in the intentional use of theory. 36% of the respondents stated that there is no connection between social work theory and practice. The researcher argues that 36% of social work students cannot align social work theory with practice. The two are viewed as two different components. Edmond and Woodward (2008:72) state that a vision of knowledge-guided practice which could be regarded as on a continuum; from social workers who believe that theory is not required and that the best decisions are based on pragmatism on one extreme end and common sense to others who feel uncomfortable about the place of theory in practice.

3.9 Responses on theory or theories applied in working with clients.

Figure 4: Theory or theories applied in working with clients.
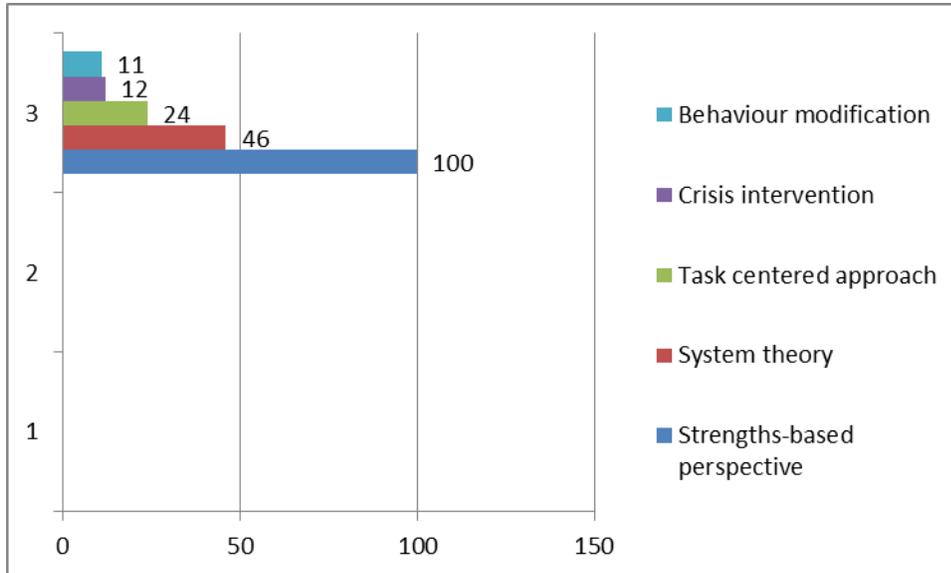
Figure 4 gives an indication of theory and theories that Social work students apply in working with their clients during their concurrent placement and block placement.100% of social work students indicated that, they apply strengths-based perspective in their interventions while 46% apply system theory.24% apply task centred model and 12% apply crisis intervention and 11% use behaviour modification. The Department of Social Work at the University of Limpopo operates from strengths-based perspective hence 100% of social work students are in favour of strengths-based perspective. According to Saleebey (2006:7) the philosophy of strength perspective is that liberation is founded on the idea of possibility, the opportunities for choice, commitment, and action whether pursued in relative tranquillity or in grievous circumstances.

3.10 Responses on how the theory or theories are applied

75% of students indicated that social work cases are unique. The application of a theory or theories will be determined by the nature of a case presented to a social worker. Some theories used by social workers explain growth, development, and change, other

theories explain the interrelationships among a set of variables at a given point in time. 19 students indicated that, they do not have sufficient knowledge on how to use social work theories. The researcher arrived at a conclusion that 25% of social work students at the University of Limpopo cannot apply social work theories in their interventions. According to Collingwood, Edmond and Woodward (2008:71) suggest though it is commonly accepted that theory plays a central role in competent practice, social work education programmes have struggled to identify the means to assist students in linking theory taught in the classroom to apply in the fieldwork practice.

3.11 Responses on factors that hinder the translation of theory into practice

Table 2: Factors hindering translation of theory into practice

Factors that hinders the translation of theory into practice	Number of respondents	Percentage
Not conducive fieldwork practice environment	19	25%
Lack of resources such as computers and stationery	38	51%
Lack of sufficient supervision	11	15%
Inexperienced fieldwork supervisors	5	6%
Lack of clear expectations	2	3%
Total	75	100

Table two indicates factors that hinder the translation of theory into practice among social work students. 25% of the students highlighted uncondusive learning environment as having a negative impact towards the translation of theory into practice. An alarming rate of 51% indicated lack of resources as a major hindrance.15% of the respondents pointed lack of supervision as an impediment while 6% complained about inexperienced agency-based supervisors. Agency-based supervisors are entrusted with the duty of developing students' practice on placement however Social work

programmes report increased difficulty in recruiting and maintaining high quality field settings and instructors for all their students, Wayne, Bogo and Raskin (2006:162). According to Miller, Kavacs, Wright, Corcoran and Rosenblum (2005:131) quality fieldwork practice is a critical component of social work education. However, the ability to provide quality fieldwork practice does not necessarily develop naturally from social work training or from subsequent years of practice. It requires the learning of new skills (Bogo, 1981; Larsen & Hepworth, 1982). 3% of the respondents aired their views, stating lack of clear expectations as an obstacle.

3.12 Personal attitudes towards fieldwork practice

When responding to the above question, the students indicated positive interest in social work fieldwork practice. An indication was made that, it provides them with a platform to test what they learn in their theory classes in real life situation. Having said that the researcher is in a good position to assume that social work students have positive attitudes towards fieldwork practice and this will contribute towards the production of quality social workers. According to Kirke, Layton and Sim (2007:15), fieldwork practice in social work education forms the practical component of a social work curriculum. It is an integral part of the education of social work students and is instrumental in developing professional behaviour and acculturating students into the profession. Fieldwork training has been described as an essential bridge from classroom to service delivery settings. Kirke *et al.,* (2007:15) fieldwork practice provides an opportunity for students to connect theoretical education and fieldwork practice.

3.13 Responses on the significance of fieldwork practice in social work

Figure 5: significance of fieldwork practice in social work
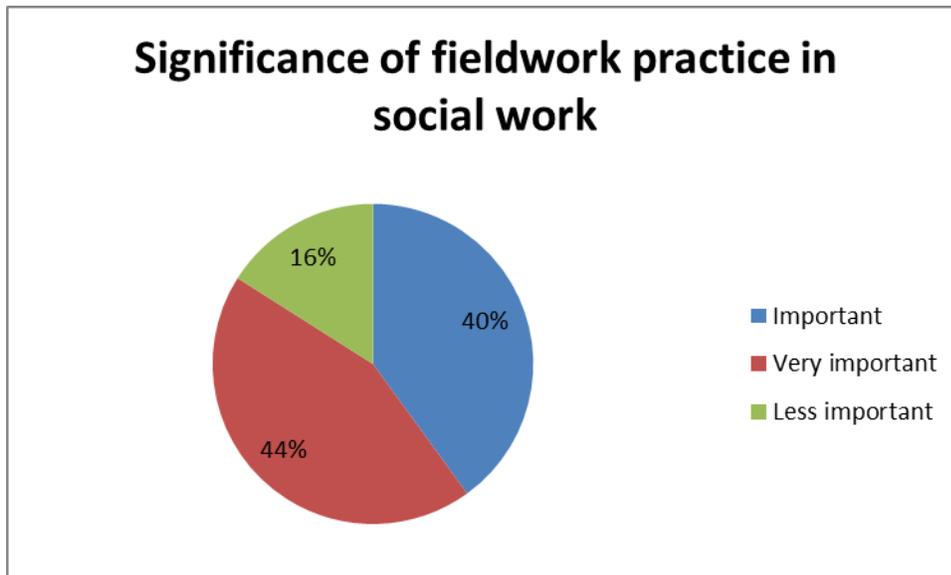
Figure 5 indicates the views of the students regarding the importance of Social Work fieldwork practice. 30 (40%) respondents indicated that fieldwork practice is less important while 16 % or 12 respondents felt that it is important. 33 (44%) respondents indicated that Social Work fieldwork practice is very imortant. This study shows that 44% of the students population value the importance of fieldwork practice which is a good indicator that social work students have positive attitudes towards fieldwork practice. Fieldwork education provides opportunities to try out first hand social work practice roles, to develop curiosity and a critical approach to theory and practice and to examine closely one's professional identity (Savaya, Peleg-Oren, Stance and Geron, 2003:298). However 40% of the respondents view fieldwork practice as less important. According to Collingwood, Edmond and Woodward (2008:72) point out that integrating theory and practice may be deemed central to effective social work, yet it is a process fraught with tension and one with which many social workers, and students in particular, appear to complain about.

Howe (1987:15) mentions that some social workers when asked about integrating theory into practice they indicated they do not have a clue, they often feel that they are acting far more from instinct than from knowledge base acquired during their classroom practice.

3.14 Responses on whether social work students get sufficient supervision during your block placement period?

Table 2: Supervision during your block placement period?

No	48	Percentage	64%
Yes	27	Percentage	36%
Total number of respondents	75	100%	100%

Table 2 above indicate the opinions of the research population regarding the sufficiency of supervision the get during their fieldwork practice. Majority of the students which 64% indicated that they don't get sufficient supervision while 36% of students complained by insufficient supervision during fieldwork placement. . Munson (1993:19) states that Social Work students need assistance to integrate the may practice demands that are marginally covered in their academic the researcher is of the idea that, this situation might be due to high case load of agency-based supervisors because their focus is not only on social work students. This is also determined by the motivation of the agency-based supervisor to be a student supervisor and the persistency of social work students in seeking feedback and supervision. Supervision is an important part of the training of competent and effective professional social workers. The researcher believes that supervision in social work fieldwork training is critical to the quality of service delivery.

3.15 Responses on views about supervision

Table 3: Views about supervision

Views about supervision	Number of respondents	Percentages
It is intended for guidance	37	49%
It provides learning opportunity	28	37%
It is not important	10	13%
It is aimed at policing students	0	0%
Total	75	100%

Table 3 above reflects the views of the respondents regarding the usefulness of supervision. 49% of the respondents indicated that, supervision is intended for guidance as Munson (1993:19) states that Social Work students need assistance to integrate the may practice demands that are marginally covered in their academic programme. 37% felt that it provides learning opportunity while only 13% of the respondents felt that supervision is not important. 13% of the research population felt that supervision is not important; the researcher is of the view that some of the contributory factors might be high load of theoretical work, fieldwork practice is therefore less important. The University does not emphasise equilibrium between theory and practice.

3.16 Responses on whether social work students think that, agency- based supervisors update themselves with the latest information as the Social Work curriculum constantly changes?

Figure 6: Social work curriculum developments
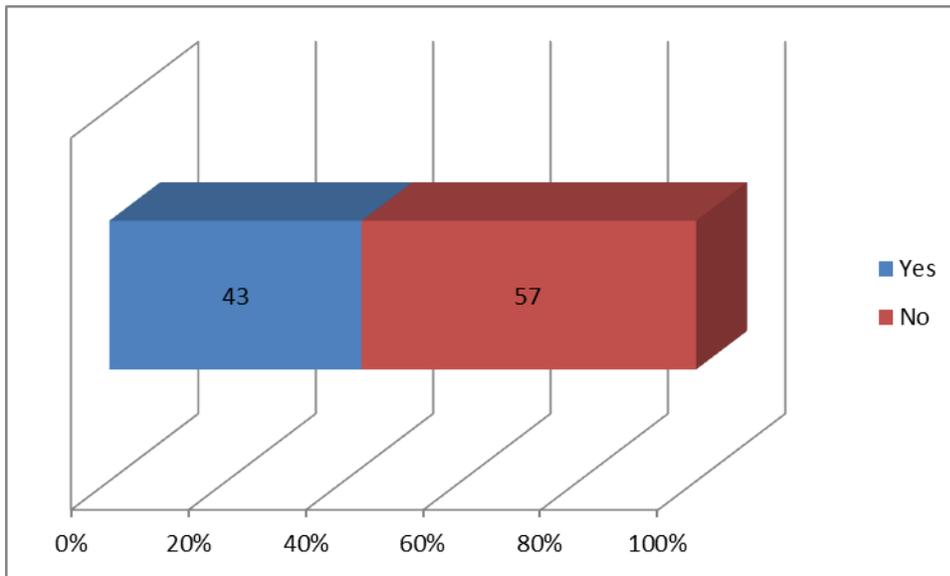
Figure 6 shows that, 43% of the students think that ageny-based supervisors do not update their theoretical knowledge base while 57% believe that agency-based supervisors update their theoretical knoeledge base. The researcher believes that social work students are supervised and placed at different social work agencies hence they ventilate different views about their supervisors. However,according Raskin as cited in Holtz -Deal and Clements (2006:291) social work experts in fieldwork education continue to mention training for fieldwork supervisors, especially in learning theories, as a major gap. Agency-based supervisors provide students with arguably the most sustained individualized educational experience of their social work education, yet they often receive little training for this vital role.

3.17 Responses on the views about the significance of assessment duringl during fieldwork training,what are your views?

Figure 7: **The significance of assessment duringl during fieldwork training**
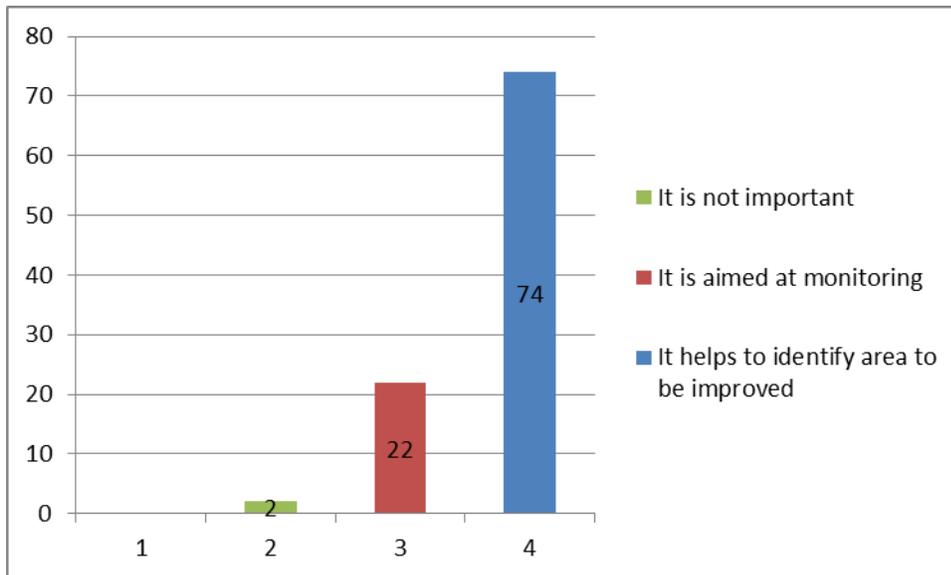
The above figure represents the views of social work students regarding the significance of assessment during fieldwork training. 74% of social work students indicated that assessment in fieldwork training assist to identify learning areas to be improved. Cowburn, Nelson and Williams (2000:630) emphasise that, this provides a mechanism for the student' practice to be regularly monitored and discussed. Areas where the student' s practice is weak or in need of development can be identified jointly by both practice teacher and student with reference to the modules and units of the curriculum (competencies). 22% felt that the main intention of assessment is to monitor students while 2% felt that assessment is not important at all. The researcher has observed that generally students have negative attitudes towards assessment due to lack of clarity or explanation about what is being assessed, methods of assessment and their involvement in the process.

3.18 Responses on whether the respondents understand the measuring tool that is used to assess social work students during their fieldwork training?

Figure 8: Assessment tool during fieldwork practice
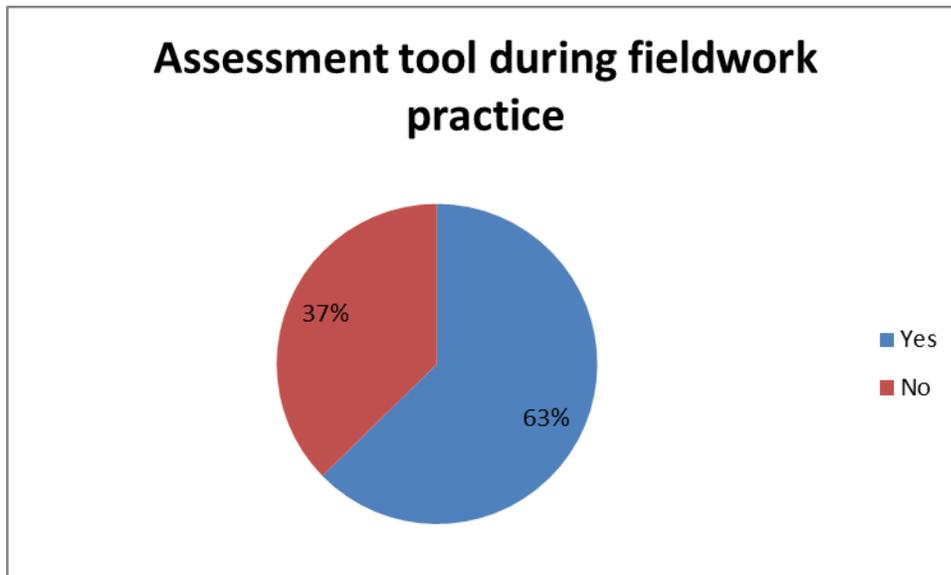
Figure 8 above indicates that 37% of social work students do not understand the measuring tool that is used to assess social work students during their fieldwork training while 63 % indicates that they understand the measuring tool. The above figures also raises a major concern about the involvement of social work students in their assessment. Normally, the University regulations assume that the assessment of social work students should be the responsibility of the University-based supervisors and agency-based or fieldwork practice supervisors only. Self-assessment and peer assessment among fieldwork practice coordinators and with their agency-based supervisors should be encouraged. According to Crisp, Lister and Dutton (2006:727), proponents of self and peer assessments claim that they focus on the students' capacities to assess themselves, to make judgements about their learning (and that of their peers) and to evaluate what has been learnt.

3.19 Responses on whether fieldwork practice takes place within the context of supervisory relationship.

Figure 9: Supervisory relationship during fieldwork practice
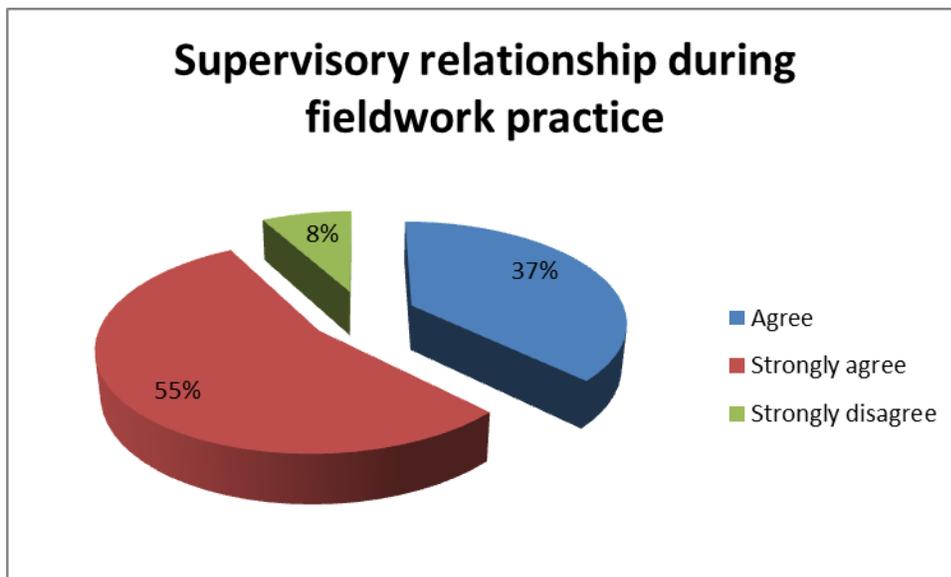
Figure 9 above represents views of the students regarding the impact of a supervisory relationship on fieldwork training. 54% of the strongly felt that fieldwork practice takes place within the context of supervisory relationship and 37 % of the also agree that supervisory relationship is of great importance in fieldwork training. However 8% of social work students strongly disagree. Davys and Beddoe (2000:422) state that, fieldwork practice placement is the learning environment in which social work students realise their goals of integrating theory with the realities of practice and where they experience and absorb the contradictions and conflicts of social work practice. It is, howeverwithin the context of the supervision relationship, however, that students are assisted to reflect upon and understand these experiences and where they are encouraged to face contradictions and inconsistencies within themselves and between themselves and other aspects of the field environment. It is only 8% of the research population which strongly disagree.

3.20 Responses on the extent to which the respondents think that a bad supervisory relationship can affect the student learning

Figure 10: The impact of poor supervisory relationship.
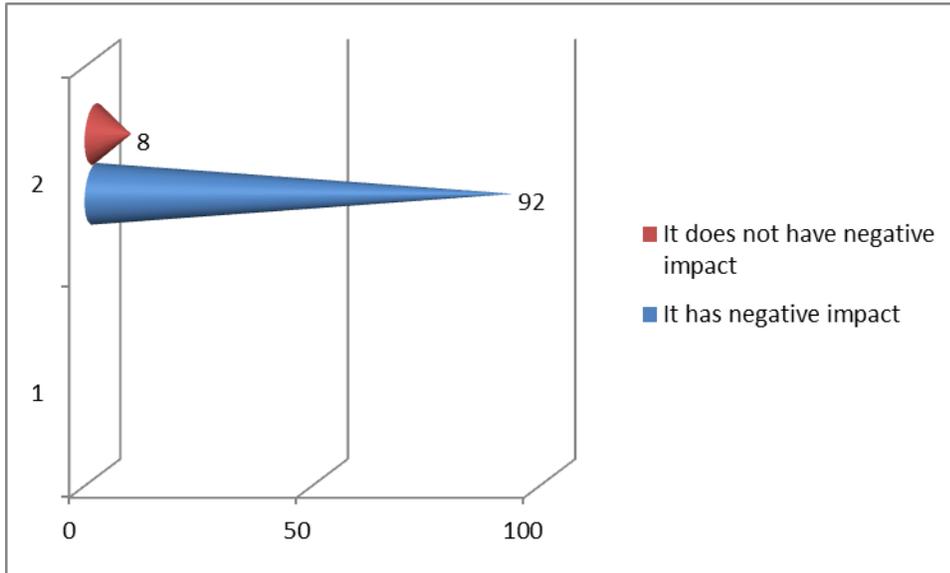
The above figure represents the views of the students regarding the impact of a bad supervisory relationship on student learning. It could be seen from the above figure that almost 92% of the entire research population indicated that an unhealthy relationship has a negative impact on student learning and only 8% viewed it as less important however White and Queener (2003:203) state that all supervision takes place within the context of a relationship. The supervisory relationship is most important in that it affects and is affected by all factors within the realm of supervision. It is evident that the supervisory relationship is of great importance to the profession as a whole.

3.21 Responses on factors that the respondents dislike about their supervisor

Figure 11: Factors that the respondents dislike about their supervisor
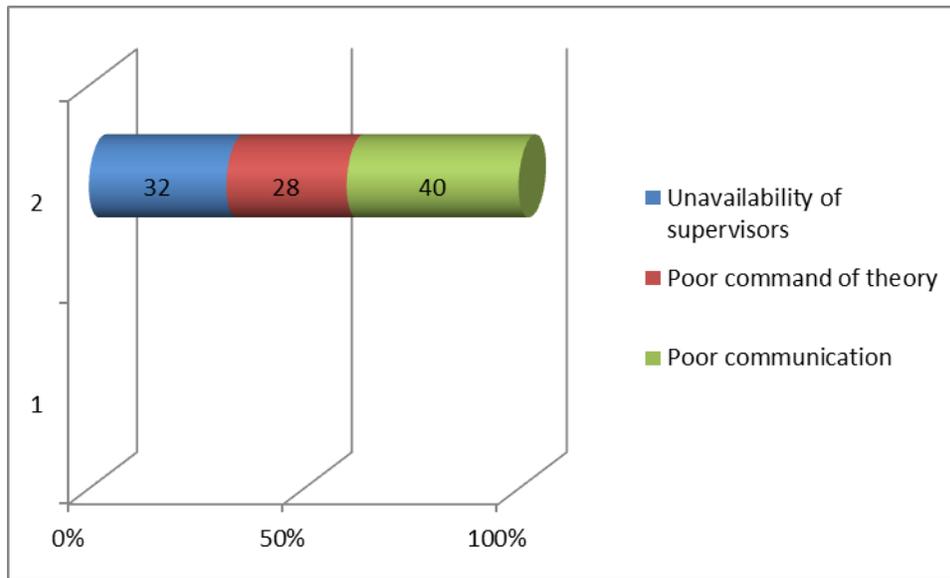
Figure 10 indicates factors that research participants dislike about their agency-based supervisors. 32% of the students indicated the unavailability of supervisors as very unhealthy for their fieldwork practice. 40% of students emphasised poor communication as a major problem from their supervisors. It can be assumed that, this might be due to the high case load of agency-based supervisors, conference and meeting attendance. The researcher argues also of the idea that there is no proper planning and commitment for supervision between the supervisor and the supervisee. According to Bernard and Horrocks and Smaby (2010:173) supervision is an intervention in which a more senior member of the profession assists a more junior member of the profession to enhance professional functioning and ensure client welfare. 28% of the respondents highlighted poor command of social work theory as undesirable and unfair.

'' It is not good to be supervised by a person who is trapped in the old syllabus. You fail to draw the line between a student and a supervisor''

Agency-based supervisors provide students with arguably the most sustained individualized educational experience of their social work education, yet they often receive little training for this vital role however Holtz -Deal and Clements (2006:291) state that social work experts in fieldwork education continue to mention training for fieldwork supervisors, especially in learning theories, as a major gap. 40% of the research population mentioned poor communication as one of the factors that they dislike about their supervisors.

3.22 Responses from agency-based supervisors

Responses on the demographic information of agency-based supervisors

Figure 12: Gender of agency-based supervisors
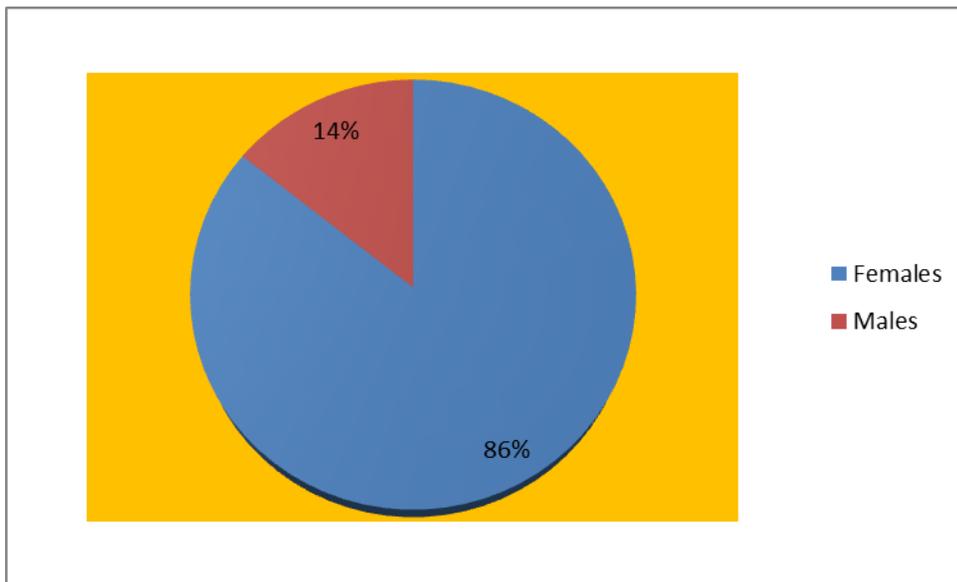
Figure 12 indicates that 86% of agency-based supervisors are females and only 14% are males. The researcher believes that the above correlates with the national social worker's demographics in terms of gender distribution, whereby the majority of social workers are females. It is also caused by the tendency of males to choose well-paying jobs.

3.23 Responses on the ages of agency-based supervised

Figure 13: **Ages of agency-based supervisors**
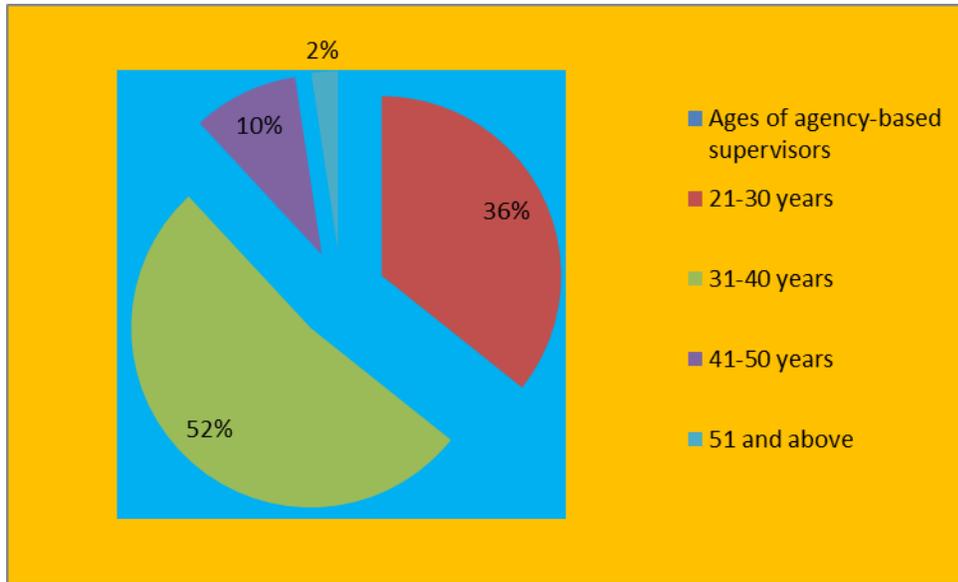
Figure 13 gives an indication of the age groups of agency-based social workers supervising social work students during fieldwork practice. About 52% were between the ages of between 31-40 and 36 % fell between the ages of 21-30 years while 10% was between the ages of 41-50. Only 2% fell between the age range of 51 and above. In analysing the above data, it shows that the high percentage of the respondents 'age ranged between 31-40 years and between 21-30 years which signifies the adult stage of development and mental maturity.

3.24 Responses regarding the qualifications of agency-based supervisors

Figure 14: Qualifications of agency-based supervisors
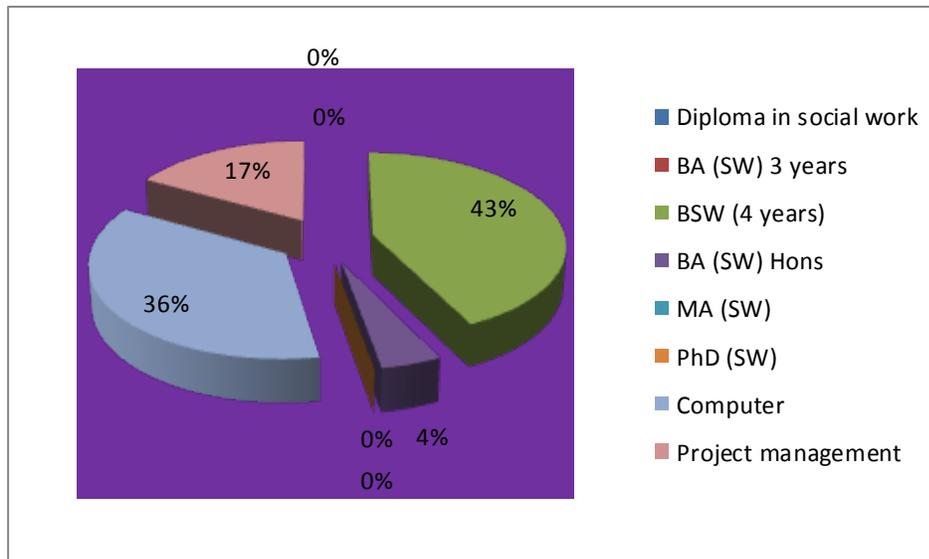
The above figure indicates that that 43% of the respondents have BSW degree and 4% have BA (S) Hons. They do not have diplomas in social work and a three year BA (SW). None of them has a post graduate qualification in social work (Master's Degree either in clinical, research or a PhD in social work). The researcher can, therefore assume that lack of qualification can have a negative impact on fieldwork training or student supervision. Though agency- based do not have interest of pursuing or furthering their qualifications in social work almost 36% of them have computer certificates and 17% of the respondents have certificates in project management. The researcher believes that the majority of social workers do not further their qualifications in social work but they rather start a new career in order to leave the social work profession.

3.25 Responses on the number of years in social work practice

Figure 15: Number of years in social work practice
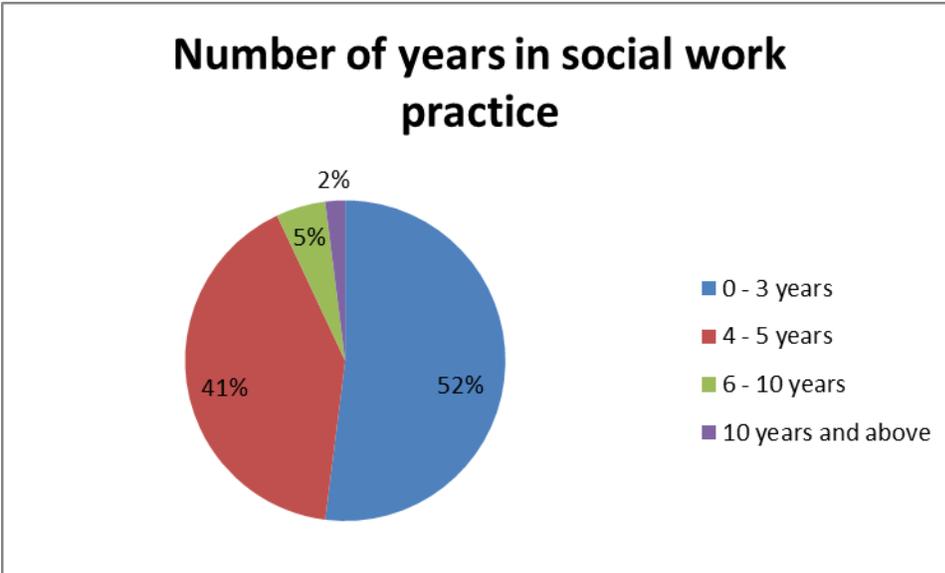
The figure above indicates that 52% of the respondents have been practising social work for three years and 41% have been in practice for five years. It is also notable that only 5% of the respondents have between 6-10 years practice experience and 2% of the respondents indicated that they have 10 years and more of social work practice. The above figure shows that the majority of agency-based are well experienced in the field of social work and therefore suitable candidates for supervising social work students.

3.26 Responses regarding the roles of agency-based supervisors during fieldwork practice

In responding to this question, the majority agency-based indicated that the roles of supervisors are to mark the reports of student social workers, canalize the reports of students and assessment of their work and general supervision. It was also brought to light that their duty is also to model good behaviour that promote the good image of social work profession. Taking the above responses into consideration the researcher

may assume that agency-based supervisors know and understand their roles though what they have mentioned is a tip of an iceberg tip. Agency-based supervisors should provide learning environment, a learning contract, conduct supervisory conferences and establish expectations for student performance and evaluation.

According to Peleg-Oren, Macgowan and Even-Zahav (2007:687), agency-based supervisors play an important role of socializing students to the profession and in transmitting key knowledge, values and skills. They act both as guides and as evaluators, imparting theory and skills and assessing students' progress and also serve as models to students and serve a critical role in students' learning during field work trainin).

3.27 Responses on whether the respondents think that, there is a link between fieldwork practice and theory

Figure 16: A link between fieldwork practice and theory
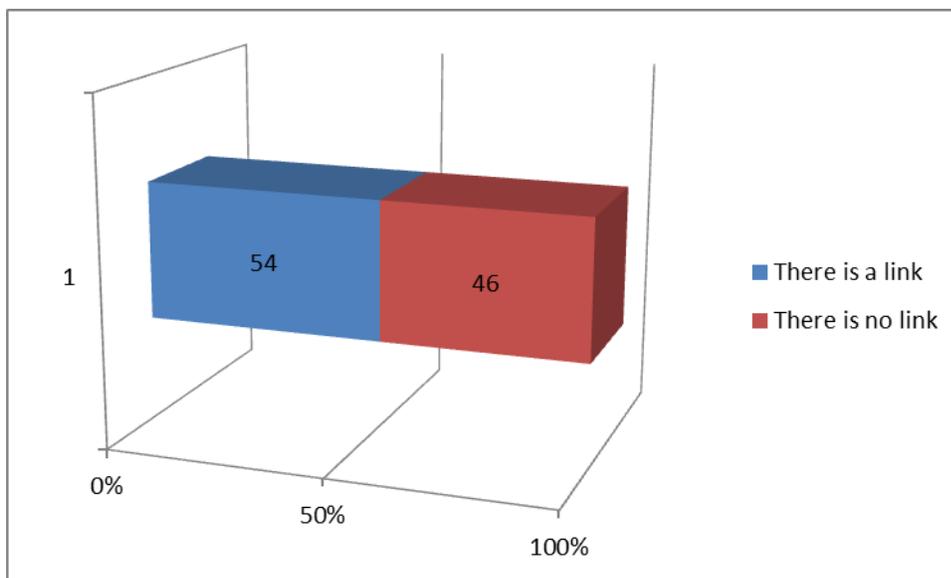
The above figure indicates the views of agency-based supervisors regarding the connection between fieldwork practice and social work theory.54% of the respondents stated that there is a link between fieldwork practice and social work theory. However

46% of the respondents mentioned that there is no connection between fieldwork practice and theory. According to Collingwood, Edmond and Woodward (2008:72) integrating theory and practice may be deemed central to effective social work, yet it is a process fraught with tension and one with which many social workers, and students in particular, appear to complain with. Howe (1987:15) indicated that some social workers when asked about integrating theory into practice they indicated they do not have a clue, they often feel that they are acting far more from instinct than from knowledge base acquired during their classroom practice. The researcher believes that once social workers are in practice, they begin to ignore the latest developments in social work curriculum. According to Lewis (2007:15), fieldwork practice provides an opportunity for students to connect theoretical education and fieldwork practice. In support of that Fortune, Muccarthy and Abramson (2001:111) agree that fieldwork practice is an essential part of education for social work practice. Fieldwork practice is designed to help students integrate theoretical concepts learned in the classroom into actual client situations within an agency setting (Panos, Panos, Cox, Roby & Matheson, and 2002:421).

3.28 Responses on factors that hinder the integration of theory into practice

When responding to this question, agency-based supervisors had mixed feelings and emotions. Among the issues that were indicated by the majority of agency- based supervisors were lack of resources such as computers, office space, furniture and the high number of social work students for supervision per supervisor. Lack of computers for report writing is a major challenge as report writing helps the supervisor to measure the progress of the students. It was also interesting to note that agency-based supervisors also cited poor command of social work theory which might be caused by lack of workshops and conferences. Lack of motivation among social work student to learn was also highlighted as one of the obstacles towards the integration of learning into practice. The researcher can, based on the information that was provided assume that integration of theory into practice is not achieved due to lack of motivation to learn and unavailability of resources.

3.29 Responses on the Method (s) that are used in social work agency and how students are taught to apply them

Figure 17: Social work methods
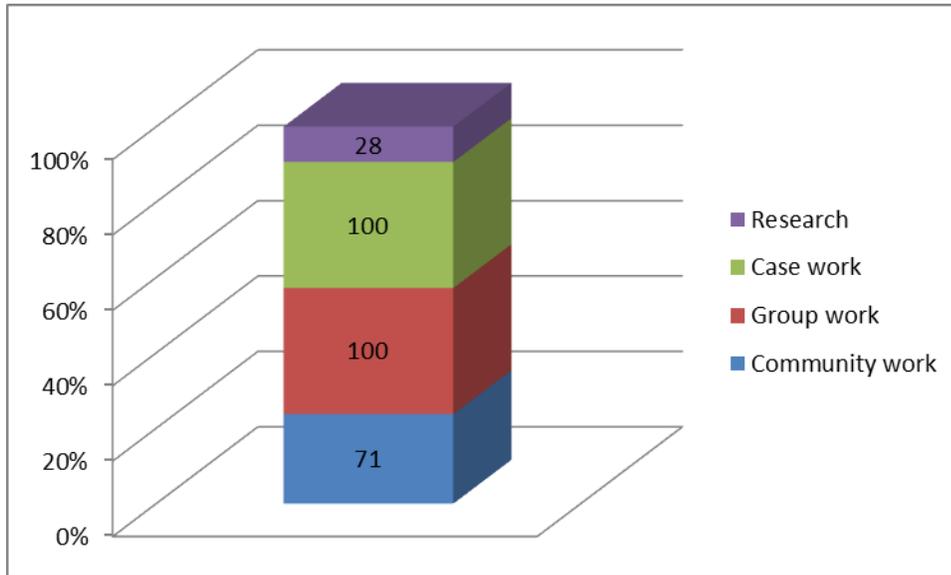
Social work students are placed in different social work agencies during their block-placements which also differ in terms of their area of specialisation. The above figure indicates the methods that are used in social work agencies were social work students are placed during their concurrent and block placement. It can be noted, in the above figure, that 100% of social work agencies use case work and group work as their major methods. IT is only 71% of the agency-based supervisors that indicated that, they also use community work while 28% use research as a method. From the above, it can be seen that methods of social work are not used equally in social work agencies. The researcher is believes that this might be due to the nature and the focus or the nature of services that are offered by a particular agency. However, the researcher also assumes that other students are deprived of the opportunity to apply other methods of social work in their fieldwork training.

3.30 Responses on theory/theories that agency-based supervisors frequently teach students whilst under their supervision?

100% of agency-based supervisors teach social work students theories. It was also highlighted by agency-based supervisors that theories assist social work practitioners to understand the problems of their clients, groups and communities. Amongst the theories that were mentioned are;

- Systems and ecological perspectives

- Theories of empowerment

- Behaviour modification

- Learning theory

- Psychodynamic theory

The above mentioned social work theories give an indication that agency-based supervisors do apply social work theories though they mentioned very few of them. It can also be assumed that, agency-based social workers don't update themselves with the current information of social work curriculum. Theories refer to the structured set of assumptions, observations and statements that direct our understanding of the world. In social work, theories help illuminate social structures, human behaviour, crisis and conflict, and provides insight into how to alleviate social and personal hardships.

3.31 Responses on techniques that agency-based supervisors frequently teach social work students whilst under their supervision?

100% of agency-based supervisors revealed that they teach social work students the following techniques when they deal with their cases and also apply them within the group work as well as community work contexts.

- Confrontation

- Behavioral rehearsal

- Positive reinforcement

- Reassurance

- Encouragement

- Role reversal

- Empty chair

A technique is viewed as a "circumscribed, goal-oriented behavior performed in a practice situation by the social worker (Hicks & swain, 2007:68). It is a planned action deliberately taken by the practitioner. According to Hicks and Swain (2007:80) techniques are used to assist in the implementation of intervention models. Without techniques, implementation of any theory or model is awkward, at best, and wholly impossible, at worst. Techniques are where the rubber meets the road, where theory is translated into practice. The utilization of tools and techniques are the beginning of a practice continuum, leading to a greater and greater degree of competency.

3.32 Responses on social work skills that the agency-based supervisors frequently teach their students whilst under their supervision and how they should apply them

100% of agency-based supervisors teach their students communication skills which can be used with any of the social work methods such as community work, group work as well as case work. Agency-based supervisors mentioned numerous skills which they teach social work students during their fieldwork training. Among the skills that were mentioned by majority of agency-based supervisors were communication skills which include the following:

- Listening skills

- Observational skills

- Attending skills

- Questioning and probing skills

- Focusing skills

- Summarizing skills

- Partializing skill

- Responding

- Expressive skills

- Recording skills

It was highlighted by the majority of agency-based supervisors that they provide a platform were social work students observe them when they interview their clients and in turn they are also given opportunities to apply their communication skills in the presence of supervisors. This is supported by Gillingham (2008:474) who state that practice skills, such as communication and interviewing skills, are an integral part of every undergraduate course that aims to provide professional qualification for social workers. While there is substantial literature about the skills required to be a proficient social work practitioner, there is, as the following account will demonstrate, a dearth of literature about how to teach such skills and particularly how students experience such a course.

The researcher has observed that, though the training manual for fieldwork training at the University of Limpopo does not clearly state the skills which should be taught social work students during their fieldwork practice, agency-based supervisors rely on what they were taught during their times of fieldwork training.

3.33 Responses about the attitudes that social work students display towards fieldwork practice

100% of agency-based supervisors are in one accord when they state that different attitudes which are displayed by students are also determined by the personalities and personal characters of each student. However they also felt that the Department of social work does not dwell much on issues of values and code of conduct because they can positively sharpen the attitudes of social work students.

Students arrive to undertake the practical component of their work carrying a range of beliefs, fears and attitudes. Some are older, experienced in life if not in the area of social work, whilst others are younger, naive and filled with an idealistic zeal to cure the world. All those intent on a career in social work will be bent on developing their persona as `the social worker, (Davys & Beddoe, 2000:244).

3.34 Responses on the significance of social work supervision during fieldwork training

Figure 17: Supervision during fieldwork practice
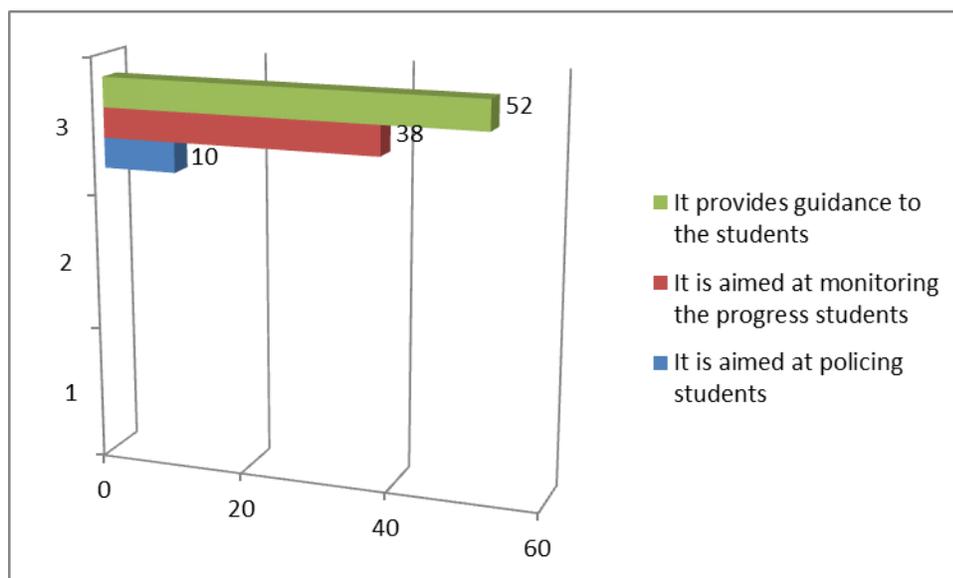
Figure 17 indicates the significance of supervision during fieldwork practice. 52% of agency-based supervisors view supervision as tool which can be used to provide guidance to while 38% of agency-based supervisors view supervision as a tool for monitoring the progress of. 10% regard supervision as a mechanism for policing the student. The researcher has observed that agency-based supervisors have a clear understanding of supervision and its intentions. Horrocks and Smaby (2010:173) supervision is an intervention in which a more senior member of the profession assists a more junior member of the profession to enhance professional functioning and ensure client welfare. According to Mboniswa (2007:13) supervision in social work is used to describe the function of the supervisor in relation to the supervisee.

Kadushin (1992:20) outlined the objectives of supervision, which are ensuring that, the worker is clear about roles and responsibilities.

- To assist professional development and growth.

- To ensure that, the worker has the capacity to render quality services to clients.

- To ensure that, the worker is given work context and resources to do his or her job.

- To reduce stress and help the worker feel good about his job.

- To ensure that, the worker meets the agency's objectives.

3.35 Responses on how the agency-based supervisors update themselves with the current information as far as social work curriculum is concerned.

In responding to the above question 92% agency-based supervisors indicated that they are not improving their qualifications in social work, however they do attend workshops in their work settings. They indicated that most trainings do not focus on the latest developments in social work curriculum. It is only 8% of agency-based supervisors which further their qualifications in social work.

The researcher is of the idea that, agency-based supervisors do not update their knowledge base regularly. They are not in good positions to supervise social work students. According to Miller, Kavacs, Wright, Corcoran and Rosenblum (2005:131) quality fieldwork practice is a critical component of social work education; however, the ability to provide quality fieldwork practice does not necessarily develop naturally from social work training or from subsequent years of practice. It requires the learning of new skills This knowledge base will include roles, tasks and modelling.

3.36 Responses on whether the respondents have an assessment tool that guides them in their assessment

Figure 18: Assessment tool that guides agency-based supervisors in assessment
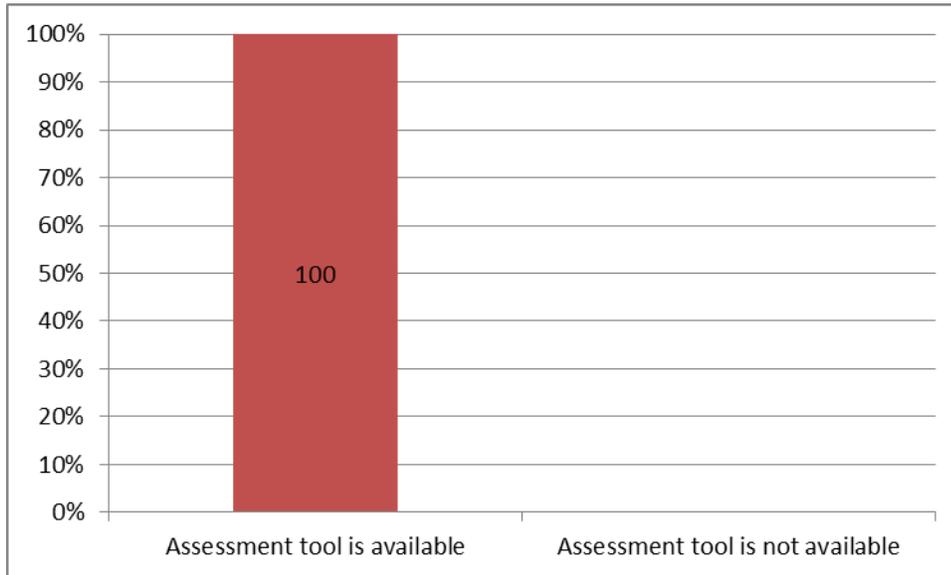
The above figure represents the views of agency-based supervisors regarding the availability of an assessment tool for assessing social work students. 100% of the agency-based indicated that, they do have an assessment tool. The researcher can assume that the availability of an assessment tool is an indication that the decisions of agency-based supervisors are guided. It provides them with focus areas during assessments. Hay and O'Donoghue (2009:44) state that all of the institutions require written documentation for summative assessment purposes at the completion of the fieldwork practice. These documents (generally referred to as 'the assessment document') addressed the achievement of the specified learning outcomes, the areas of strength and future development of the student. Other methods of assessment include reflective journals, essays or written assignments, compulsory tutorials, workbooks, presentations, fieldwork observations, a supervision log sheet and interview closure.

3.37 Responses on whether the agency-based supervisors involve University-based supervisors when they assess social work students

Figure 19: Involvement of University-based supervisors in assessment
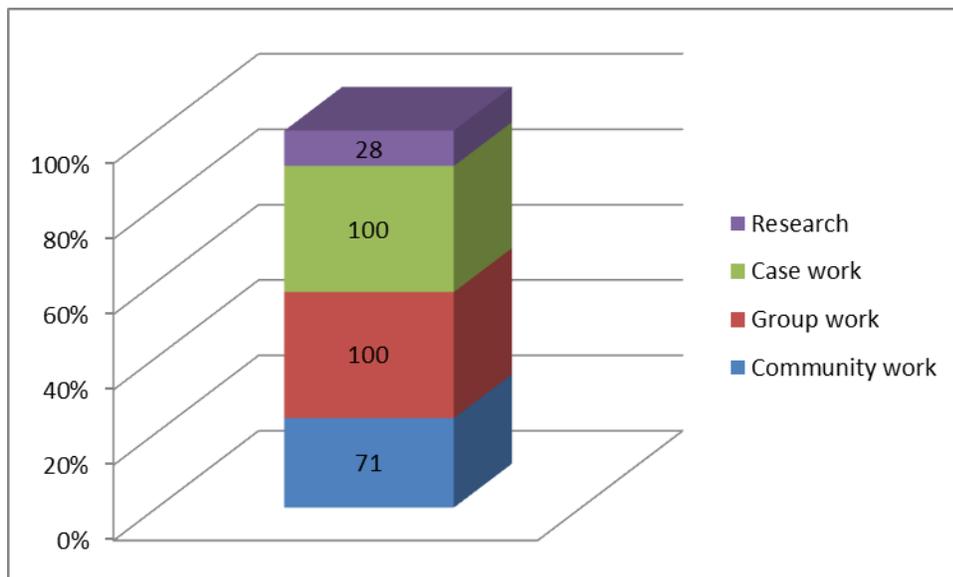
The above figure indicates the involvement of university-based supervisors in assessing social work students during their fieldwork practice. 93% of the agency-based indicated that they do not involve university-based supervisors in assessing social work students. It is only 7% of the agency-based supervisors who indicated that they do not involve or consult University-based supervisors.

"I don't involve University-based supervisors because the assessment forms are very clear and beside the University has entrusted us with this task"

The knowledge, values and skills of students have to be assessed by suitably experienced and qualified practitioners, both within practice agencies and academic institutions (Furness & Gilligan, 2004:467). Hay and O'Donoghue (2009: 43) are of the opinion that, the purposes of assessment are manifold and include enhancing and promoting student learning, ensuring competence, monitoring student work and

development, instigating changes in policy, curriculum and practice, awarding qualifications and identifying further educational and practice needs.

The researcher is employed as a fieldwork supervisor for the Department of Social Work at the University of Limpopo,notwithstanding this 93%of the respondents indicated that they involve university-based supervisors and it has never happened.

3.38 focus group's discussions with social work students

3.38.1 Responses on theory or theories that have been applied in working with clients

Respondents were asked to indicate the theory or theories in working with their clients. They mentioned several theories such as strengths-based perspective, ecosystems theory, life model, behaviour modification, task centred model, learning theory and crisis intervention. When asked to motivate their reasons for utilizing the theories that they have indicated, the majority of them stated that they are compelled by the Department of Social Work to use theories in their intervention though they had a concern that agency based supervisors do not apply theories in their daily practice. The researcher believes thatsocial work students are aware of the fact their intervention should be informed by theory. Collingwood, Emond and Woodward (2008:71) state that, theory in social work, understood here as a formal knowledge base for practice, may be seen as important for myriad reasons. For example, a strong theoretical underpinning to practice is associated with professional credibility Social workers have the power to intervene in the complex lives of some of the most vulnerable and excluded members of society, and arguably should not rely on intuition to do so. Rather, practitioners ought to be clear about what they are doing and why they are doing it.

3.38.2 Responses on how the respondents applied theory or theories

In response to this question, the research participants that the application of theories is determined by a number of factors such as the nature of a case you are dealing with, the agency in which a student social worker is placed, and the urgency of the case as well as they type of a person one is dealing with. The respondents also raised a concern in practice that it is extremely hard to apply the theories as some of the cases require a sense of urgency when they are assigned to them. However the researcher feels that the respondents know the theories that can be applied but they do not have the expertise which might be caused by the supervisors who are not emphasising the need to apply theories in social work intervention. It is the view of the researcher that those social workers in the field and social work students on placement are applying theory every day. However, they may not realize it, and they may not be able to describe the theory or name it. Theories in social work are nothing more than an attempt to explain situations and social relationships.

3.38.3 Responses on whether the respondents integrate their social work theory and theories in their intervention

When responding to this question, majority of the respondents stated that they do consult and refer to their theoretical information however two respondents indicated that once in fieldwork practice it is not important to link theory and practice. Parker (2007: 163) contends that there is a lack of integration between social work theory and social work fieldwork practice. In addition, Veronica and Joan (2006:7) argue that there is indeed a continuing tension between theory and practice, pointing out that students and practitioners alike have protested that it was necessary to forget theory once in practice. The researcher has realized that theory and practice are treated as two separate entities which are too different but the ideal situation is that fieldwork training about relating the ideas learned in University to the practice setting. in order to link theoretical knowledge to practice, student's need a firm grasp of the fact that theory is something everybody uses every day in social work and that theory has a clear link to common

sense/what works/real life or whatever the phrase of choice is. Without this, theory can become something which seems abstract and this develops the idea that theory is something you learn at University and then forget when you enter the real world of work.

3.38.4 Responses on factors that hinder the translation of theory into practice

When asked for their opinions on what might be hindrances of the application of theory into practice, the researcher observed that the responses of the participants were charged with emotions.

One of the students said

"With the work load that you assigned to us during our fieldwork training do you expect us to do the right job? Our focus is on meeting the requirements of the university"

Among the factors that were pointed out as hindrances towards the application of theory into practice were lack of resources such as computers and office space, lack of supervision as supervisors are always attending meetings and workshops. There was also an indication that agencies were social work students are placed also contribute. "We were only using one method of social work where I was placed which is case work and I was informed that I should link myself with organisations that utilize other methods of social work".

The research participants indicated that, some of their agency-based supervisors are not updating themselves with the latest development in social work curriculum. According to Miller, Kavacs, Wright, Corcoran and Rosenblum (2005:131) quality fieldwork practice is a critical component of social work education; however, the ability to provide quality fieldwork practice does not necessarily develop naturally from social work training or from subsequent years of practice. It requires the learning of new skills (Bogo, 1981; Larsen & Hepworth, 1982).

3.38.5 Responses on the existence of theory-less practice exist in social work

In response to the above question the respondents stated that, there is no theory-less practice in social work. They are of the idea that social work practice is informed by practice. The researcher thinks that, are aware that social work practice and intervention should be informed by theory. Boisen and Syers (2004:205) agree that social work education rests on the assumption that competent social work practice is grounded in the intentional use of theory. Practice informed by theory distinguishes professional social work from informal forms of helping. Theory expands the conceptualization of client problems, helps to organize large amounts of complex data, and provides direction for intervention.

3.38.6 Responses on the personal attitudes students towards fieldwork practice

When responding to the above question, the majority of agency-based supervisors stated that fieldwork practice is very essential as it prepares students for social work practice. It is interesting to note that social work students acknowledge and appreciate the significance of social fieldwork training. According to Kirke, Layton and Sim (2007:15) fieldwork practice in social work education forms the practical component of a social work curriculum. It is an integral part of the education of social work students and is instrumental in developing professional behaviour and acculturating students into the profession. Fieldwork training has been described as an essential bridge from classroom to service delivery settings. According to Kirke (2007:15), fieldwork practice provides an opportunity for students to connect theoretical education and fieldwork practice.

Fieldwork practice is designed to help students integrate theoretical concepts learned in the classroom into actual client situations within an agency setting (Panos, Panos, Cox, Roby & Matheson 2002:421). Students develop practice skills, translate theory from the classroom into the reality of practice, and test their ability to be professional social workers. In support of the above Schiff and Katz (2007:789) state that, fieldwork training has been long acknowledged as a major component of social work education. Theory,

ethics, and skills studied in classroom courses come together to shape the professional identity of the student social worker. In the field, students have the opportunity to put into practice what they learn in the classroom, which is to integrate theory with practice by helping people with deprivations struggling with unmet material and psycho-social needs. This allows the students to build a professional identity.

Fieldwork training is a central component of social work education (Bogo Globerman 1999: 49) and it is often cited by social work students as a critical element in social work education (McFall & Freddolino 2000).It provides the site for experiential learning for social work students as well as for a mutuality of learning for the supervisor and the student, and often other workers in the host agency (Goldstein 1998; Raschick1998). It plays a pivotal role in theory and practice integration in the human services and acts as 'a crucible where the profession's values and purposes are tested' (Reisch & Jarman-Rohde 2000; p. 207). Fieldwork training also provides opportunities for collaborations between universities and human services agencies (Bogo &Globerman 1999).

3.38.7 Responses on whether the respondents get sufficient supervision during block placement and concurrent placement

The above question elicited different feelings and emotions from the students. 73% of the students felt that they did not get sufficient supervision. Among the reasons that were pointed out as contributing to their plight were

- Supervisors were always attending workshops

- Supervisors attend meetings

- High case load of supervision

- Lack of supervisory skills

- Inexperienced supervisors

- Relationship problems

Despite the fact that 73% complained of not getting supervision, 23% of the students indicated that they did get sufficient supervision according to them their supervisors were committed to supervision and most of them were interested in furthering their social work careers. Looking at the above presented data the researcher may assume that the majority of social work students did not get enough supervision and this will have an impact on the quality of social workers that are being produced. As a result of this after completing their fieldwork practice, social work students are yet ready to be given sensitive social work cases. According to Mboniswa (2007:13), supervision in social work is used to describe the function of the supervisor in relation to the supervisee.

Kadushin (1992:20) outlined the objectives of supervision as follows:
▪ To ensure that, the worker is clear about roles and responsibilities

▪ To assists professional development and growth.

▪ To ensure that, the worker has the capacity to render quality services to clients.

▪ To ensure that, the worker is given work context and resources to do his or her job

▪ To reduce stress and help the worker feel good about his job

▪ To ensure that, the worker meets the agency's objectives.

3.38.8 Attitudes of students' attitudes towards supervision

In response to this question the research participants stated that they view supervision as a form of guidance though the thorny issue is lack of it. "We don't get regular feedback; because it is only through supervision where identify our mistakes and our achievements".

There is evidence that a "good field placement" is one which contains quality supervision, relevant learning, careful communication and monitoring, as well as

accessibility and responsiveness (McFall&Freddolino, 2000). Taking the above mentioned information into consideration, the researcher assumes that social work students have positive attitude towards supervision and this will facilitate their learning in fieldwork practice.

According to Kadushin, Morrison, Gambrill and Stein as cited by Bootle and Bourn (2005:344), it is widely accepted that the supervision of social workers is key to the provision of public services and effective supervision is the cornerstone of safe social work practice.

3.38.9 Responses on whether the respondents think that, agency-based supervisors update themselves with the latest information as the social work curriculum constantly changes

In response to this question students felt that agency-based are not updating themselves with the latest information as they do not understand some of the theories and knowledge that the students bring into the supervision. It was also revealed by the respondents that agency-based supervisors do not develop themselves or further their studies in social work. The researcher believes that, since the respondents' feels that agency-based supervisors are not in line with the current developments as far as social work curriculum is concerned and lack of desire to further their career in social work might put social work students in a position where they will not get quality supervision and training. Apart from the zeal that they have knowledge is very essential.

According to Holtz Deal and Clements (2006:291), agency-based supervisors provide social work with the most sustained individualized educational experience of their social work education, yet they often receive little training for this vital role. Social work experts in field education continue to mention training for field instructors, especially in learning theories, as a major gap. Although social work practitioners can transfer some of their practice knowledge and skills to the new role of field instructor, the role also requires

specialized knowledge and skills, such as how to structure supervision, provide effective feedback, establish learning objectives, and help students develop a professional identity.

3.38.10 Responses on the significance of assessment during fieldwork training

Students had ambivalent feelings as they indicated that assessment is very essential though it has its own pitfalls. However the general feeling of the respondent was, assessment is compulsory because if they cannot be assessed they cannot move to the next grade and their progress cannot be measured. They also indicated that assessment should occur regularly like giving of feedback. The researcher has noted that, social worker students are eager to be assessed in order to measure their progress. The ability to make judgments about their knowledge and skills and whether they are at a level which equates to competence in professional practice is an important part and the learning process.

As Wergin (1988:5) writes:

If we have learned anything from educational research over the last fifty years, it is that students learn according to how they are tested. If we test students for factual recall, then they will memorize a set of facts. If we test them for their ability to analyze relationships, then they will begin to learn to think critically. If we assess how well they can apply classroom material to concrete problems, then they will learn to do that.
According to Cree, Doyle, Lough, Mercandante, Peat and Robertson (2006:189) assessment is one of the principal drivers of student learning; the examinations and essays which we set have a major impact on how, and indeed what, students learn. Brown and Knight (1995:13) define assessment as a process of defining, selecting, collecting, analysing information to increase learning and development. In terms of social work education, assessment of practice is the process of making a judgement of a student's knowledge, skills and values (Cowburn, Nelson & Williams, 2000:630).

3.38.11 Responses on whether the respondents understand the measuring tool that is used to assess social work students during their fieldwork training

When responding to this issue students indicated that they do not understand the measuring tool and they are not even involved in their assessment. One respondent said"

We are not involved at all; our assessment forms are filled on the last day of our fieldwork training. All we do is to sign those forms as a sign of agreeing with the agency-based supervisor.
 In analyzing the above statement, the researcher can assume that, social work students do not understand the assessment tool that is used to assess them and how the agency-based supervisors arrive at major decisions that affect their lives.

According to Allison and Turpin (2004:51), as training programs and practice evolve, systems for assessing students need to be reviewed and updated constantly. Significant changes to both practice and educational environments have challenged the relevance of traditional models of fieldwork education. It is important to evaluate not only the students' performance, but also the process of the field learning experience to ensure that students are being given optimum opportunity to develop professional knowledge and skills.

The researcher has also noted that, social work students are not involved in their own assessment. The researcher can make an assumption that during supervision supervisors are not identifying area which needs to be improved. Baldwin (2000:452) states that the ability to make judgments about our knowledge and skills and whether they are at a level which equates to competence in professional practice is an important part of reflection and the learning process. Self-assessment should, however, be seen as separate both as a concept and as a process. Students could, for instance, competently assess their own level of incompetence in practice, or assess their lack of skill or knowledge without ever feeding that back into the learning cycle in a `return to experience.

3.38.12 Responses on the extent in which a bad supervisory relationship can affect the student learning process

When asked for their views majority of the agency-based supervisors alluded to the fact that, fieldwork practice takes place within the context of a supervisory relationship. They voiced their concern regarding the impact of a bad supervisory relationship which might have detrimental effects. Agency-based supervisors also indicated that, the personality, character and the attitudes of an individual contribute towards the success and the failure of fieldwork practice. The students believe that if the relationship between the supervisor and the supervisee is bad the supervisor might deliberately fail the student. The researcher believes that it is impossible to be effective and efficient in an unfriendly environment.

The researcher believes that bad supervisory relationships contribute towards the failure of fieldwork training and it also demotivates social work students. The quality of the student-supervisor relationship is an important factor mediating outcomes of social work fieldwork practice. Student-supervisor relationship is the cornerstone and the heart of fieldwork training in social work education. The significance and the quality of student-supervisor relationship is paramount in achieving the goals of fieldwork practice. Fieldwork practice in social work takes place within the context of relationship

Davys and Beddoe (2000:437) state that student supervision has traditionally been regarded as a developmental step in the career path of social work practitioners. Bennett, Mohr, Szoc and Saks (2008:75) state that historically, the student-supervisor relationship has been considered central to social work field education. A basic assumption of professional social work is that significant learning can take place during fieldwork training.

Conclusion

Quantitative and qualitative data was gathered. Information from quantitative was presented, analysed and interpretations were made in the form of tables, graphs and pie charts while qualitative data was also presented, analysed and interpreted in the form of discussion. There are signs that fieldwork practice at the University of Limpopo in particular; the Department of Social Work has challenges as agency-based supervisors are not eager to improve their qualifications in social work. It also poses a threat on how they can assist social work students to link social work theory and practice. There is also a general feeling that social work theory and practice are two different entities.

CHAPTER FOUR

Summary of the major findings, conclusions and recommendations

4.1 Introduction

The researcher has conducted a thorough investigation on evaluation of fieldwork practice at the University of Limpopo (Turf Loop campus).This is the final chapter and the problem statement is re-stated as well as the aim of the study, objectives and the research question. Major findings are drawn based on the analysis and interpretation of data from questionnaires and focus group conducted with the 3rd years social work students,4th year social work students as well as agency-based supervisors. The researcher has concluded this chapter with recommendations drawn from the major findings and conclusions.

4.2 Re-statement of the research problem

Social Work classroom-based learning is inextricably linked to Social Work fieldwork practice. In support of that, Schiff and Katz (2007:794) state that fieldwork practice has been long acknowledged as a major component of Social Work. It is in fieldwork practice that the knowledge learnt in the classroom is assimilated in real life situation, which concurrently and eventually shape the professional identity of the student social worker. In Social Work fieldwork practice, students have the opportunity to put into practice what they learnt in the classroom that is to integrate theory with practice.

Parker (2007: 763) notes that there is a lack of integration between Social Work theory and Social Work fieldwork practice. In addition, Coulshed and Orme (2006:7) argue that there is indeed a continuing tension between theory and practice, pointing out that students and practitioners alike have protested that it was necessary to forget theory once in practice.

Amongst other problems related to integration of Social Work theory with fieldwork practice is the lack of standardised instruments for assessing fieldwork practice (learning and performance) (Bogo & Globerman, 2003:68). Hay and O'Donoghue (2009:42) emphasise that, assessment is a core feature of Social Work field education and enables both on-going formative processes of monitoring and feedback and summative assessment of a student's competence at the conclusion of a fieldwork placement. The purposes of assessments is manifold and includes enhancing and promoting student learning, ensuring competence, monitoring student work and development, instigating changes in policy, curriculum and practice, awarding qualifications and identifying further educational and practice needs. In Social Work fieldwork education, assessment includes both on-going formative processes of monitoring and providing feedback on student work and the formal process or summative assessment of a student's competence at the conclusion of fieldwork placement. Assessment processes in Social Work programmes usually draw upon a set of criteria or learning outcomes against which the work of a student is measured. Caspi and Reid as cited in Parker (2007:763), point out that there is a lack of coherent and agreed procedures for delivering effective practice learning experiences.

Another problem with integration of Social Work theory with fieldwork practice, as argued by Redmond, Guerin and Devitt (2008:868), is the attitudes of Social Work students before they enter practice. They state that it can have a significant impact both on their approaches to study and their occupational choices as professionals. They further assert that there is a concern with the range of attitudes that may exist for Social Work students towards work in different areas of Social Work, recognising that such attitudes must impact on student motivation towards aspects of both academic and fieldwork teaching. In support of the above, Fortune, Lee and Cavazes (2005:16) state that the student performance in fieldwork practicum as it relates to their attitudes is critical because the setting and the skills directly represent the real world of practice for which the student is being prepared.

There is dissatisfaction associated with lack of clear expectations, relationship difficulties between student and supervisor. According to White and Queener (2003:203) all supervision takes place within the context of relationship.The supervisory relationship is important in that it affects and is affected by all factors within the realm of supervision. Bogo and Globerman (2003:65) agree that the fieldwork supervisor and student relationship has the power to affect the student is learning negatively or positively and predicts satisfaction with fieldwork education. The clarity of guidelines and the expectations of learning and performance are also critical in fieldwork practice. The effectiveness of fieldwork practice is enhanced when the students, university-based educators and supervisors and agency-based supervisors work in harmony and continuously communicate goals and expectations with regard to Social Work students' integration of theory into practice. It has been observed that, the majority of agency-based supervisors are not on par with the current Social Work curriculum and knowledge base. In support of this view, Holtz-Deal and Clements (2006:291) argue that fieldwork instructors should provide students with sustained individualised educational experience of their Social Work education, though they often receive little training for this vital role. With regard to curriculum development, an integration of theory into fieldwork practice should include continuous training of agency-based supervisors, especially in learning theories, as it has been identified as a major gap.

4.3 Restatement of the aim and the objective and assumptions of the study

The aim of the study was to evaluate Social Work fieldwork at the University of Limpopo (Turfloop campus) in relation to theory. The aim was achieved.

4.3.1 Objectives of the study

The objectives of the proposed study were as follows;

- **To assess the attitudes of Social Work students towards fieldwork practice.**

This objective was achieved. The study has revealed that Social work students at the University of Limpopo (Turfloop Campus) have positive attitudes towards social work

fieldwork practice. Fieldwork education provides opportunities to try out first hand social work practice roles, to develop curiosity and a critical approach to theory and practice and to examine closely one's professional identity (Savaya, Peleg-Oren, Stance & Geron, and 2003:298).

- **To explore factors which hinder supervisor-supervisee relationship and expectations.**

The research study also made an attempt to explore factors that hinder supervisor-supervisee relationship and expectations as Holloway as cited in White and Queener (2003:203) state that all supervision takes place within the context of a relationship. This objective was also achieved. 28% of social work students highlighted poor command of social work theory by their agency-based supervisors as undesirable and not fair. Clements (2006:291) state that social work experts in fieldwork education continue to mention training for fieldwork supervisors, especially in learning theories, as a major gap. 40% of the research population mentioned poor communication as one of the factors that they dislike about their supervisors.

- **To assess the current instruments for assessing fieldwork practice.**

It was also the intention of the researcher to assess the current instruments for assessing fieldwork practice. The objective was also achieved. It has emerged from this study that social work students at the University of Limpopo (Turfloop Campus) do not understand the tool that is used to assess them during their fieldwork practice. Normally, the Universities regulations assume that the assessment of social work students should be the responsibility of the University-based supervisors and agency-based or fieldwork practice supervisors only however Self-assessment and peer assessment among fieldwork practice coordinators and with their agency-based supervisors should be encouraged. According to Crisp, Lister and Dutton (2006:727) proponents of self and peer assessments claim they focus on the students' capacities to assess themselves, to make judgements about their learning (and that of their peers) and to evaluate what has been learnt.

- **To assess the theoretical knowledge base of agency- based supervisors**

It was also the objective of this study to assess the theoretical knowledge base of agency-based supervisors as Bogo, Larsen and Hepworth as cited in Miller, Kavacs, Wright, Corcoran and Rosenblum (2005:131), state that quality fieldwork practice is a critical component of social work education.However, the ability to provide quality fieldwork practice does not necessarily develop naturally from social work training or from subsequent years of practice. It requires the learning of new skills (Bogo, 1981; Larsen & Hepworth, 1982). This objective was also achieved. The researcher has discovered that agency-based supervisors do not update their knowledge base

4.3.2 Assumptions of the study

The following are the assumptions of the study:

- The attitudes of Social Work students towards fieldwork practice are clouded with negativity.

It was the assumption of the researcher that the attitudes of social work students towards fieldwork practice are clouded with negativity. This assumption was proven wrong. Social work students at the University of Limpopo have positive attitudes towards fieldwork practice. The attitudes of Social Work students before they enter practice can have a significant impact both on their approaches to study and their occupational choices as professionals (Redmond, *et al.,* 2008:868). Christie and Kruk as cited in Redmond, *et al.,* (2008:868), believe that the motives, concerns, incentives and disincentives of Social Work students have a profound effect on the specific opportunities for, as well as barriers to, their learning.

- **There is blurred relationship between the students and university-based supervisors.**

The above assumption was proven right. Indeed there is a blurred relationship between the students and the university based-supervisors. According to Bennett, Mohr, Szoc and Saks (2008:75), historically the student-supervisor relationship has historically been considered central to Social Work fieldwork practice.

- The current instruments for assessing fieldwork practice are outdated

It was an assumption of the researcher that, the current instruments for measuring fieldwork practice are outdated. This assumption was proven right.

4.4 Major findings of the study

- Social work students at the University of Limpopo (Turfloop campus) have positive attitudes towards social work fieldwork practice. Field education is the only means by which all elements of social work curriculum are tested, applied and integrated. Social work student sees and experiences the integration of all the components of the social work curriculum such human behavior and the social environment, social welfare policy and services, social work practice and research in the context of the fieldwork practice.

- However, it also came to light that social work students encounter supervisor-supervisee relationship difficulties. There is also a blurred relationship between the University based supervisors and social work students. According to White and Queener (2003: 203), all supervision takes place within the context of relationship. The supervisory relationship is important in that it affects and is affected by all factors within the realm of supervision. Globerman and Bogo (2003:65) agree that the fieldwork supervisor and student relationship has the power to affect the student learning negatively or positively and predicts satisfaction with fieldwork practice. There is also dissatisfaction associated with a lack of clear expectations, relationship difficulties between student and supervisor.

- The researcher has also unearthed that agency-based supervisors do not update their knowledge with the contemporary knowledge in social work. For example social

work theories, models and perspectives. This is also confirmed Holtz -Deal and Clements (2006:291) when they highlight that social work experts in social work fieldwork practice continue to mention training for fieldwork supervisors, especially in learning theories, as a major gap. It has been observed that, the majority of agency-based supervisors are not on par with the current social work curriculum and knowledge base.

- It was also discovered that among social work students at the University of Limpopo that fieldwork practice and social work theory are viewed as two different worlds. 76% of the respondents indicated that there is theory-less practice in social work as Parker (2007: 763) contends that there is a lack of integration between social work theory and social work fieldwork practice. In addition to this statements, Veronica and Joan (2006:7) argue that there is indeed a continuing tension between theory and practice, pointing out that students and practitioners alike have protested that it was necessary to forget theory once in practice. Boisen and Syers (2004:205), strongly emphasise that social work education rests on the assumption that competent social work practice is grounded in the intentional use of theory. Practice informed by theory distinguishes professional social work from informal forms of helping. Theory expands the conceptualization of client problems, helps to organize large amounts of complex data, and provides direction for intervention.

- The study has also revealed that social work students do not understand the assessment tool that is used to assess during their fieldwork practice. This raises questions about their involvement in their own assessment while they are also outdated. Knowledge, values and skills of social work students have to be assessed by suitably experienced and qualified practitioners, both within social work fieldwork practice agencies and academic institutions.

- Lack of supervision during fieldwork practice is also a major problem for social work students. 73% of the respondents felt that they did not get sufficient supervision during their fieldwork practice. There is evidence that a "good field placement" is one which contains quality supervision, relevant learning, careful communication and

monitoring, as well as accessibility and responsiveness (McFall&Freddolino, 2000:78). Social work students should always be under the supervision of a qualified and experienced supervisor during their fieldwork practice.

4.5 Conclusions

The researcher has drawn the following conclusions from the above above-mentioned findings.

- The researcher has observed that, the number of social work students at the University of Limpopo is failing to grasp the very basic principles of theoretical application. They appear to be overwhelmed by the range of theories available and confused by where each concept or model should fit. The problem is that there seems to be a sense of theory as being a university requirement rather than an aid to social practice, a hindrance rather than a help.

- Social work students don't get sufficient and thorough supervision during their block placements

- Agency-based supervisors do not update their theoretical knowledge base.

- Social work students don't understand the assessment tool that is used to assess them.

- Social work students are also not involved in their own assessment and it is also outdated.

- Fieldwork training and theory are viewed by both agency-based supervisors and social work students as two different worlds.

4.6 Recommendations

Taking the above mentioned findings and conclusions into consideration, it is recommended that:

- The department of Social Work at the University of Limpopo should organize workshops for agency-based supervisors to update their theoretical knowledge base.

- The University-based fieldwork supervisor should conduct site visits during block placement period.

- Regular communication between agency-based supervisors should be encouraged.

- Fieldwork assessment tool should be reviewed and updated.

- Social work students should also be involved in the assessment process and self-assessment should also be introduced.

- Fieldwork supervisors and theory teachers should also be united as two are currently divided. Fieldwork supervisors and theory teachers should move at the same pace and communicate regularly.

- Agency-based supervisors should also be provided with course out lines so that they can be at the same pace with theory teachers.

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Annexure: A

UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO

TURFLOOP CAMPUS

Faculty of Humanities
School of Social Sciences
Department of Social Work

Dear Social Work Student

My name is Masibinyane Dimo. I'm doing my MA (Social Work) with the University of Limpopo. Conducting this research is part of that programme.The intention of this research project is to evaluate fieldwork training at the University of Limpopo (Turfloop Compass). Your participation in this project is very necessary for the growth and improvement of Department of Social work at the university. Please answer all the questions given below. Note that, there are no right and wrong answers. Your participation is voluntary. You do not have to divulge your identity, for instance, your name and surname. The information you provide will be treated as confidential. You are at liberty to ask for clarity in case you encounter problems. The results of this project will be published in a dissertation which will be accessible at the University of Limpopo.

Thank You.

Dimo MP
MA (SW) candidate

Annexure: B

Questionnaire for third and fourth year social work students

Title of the study: Evaluation of fieldwork practice in Social Work Education at the University of Limpopo (Turfloop Campus): Aligning Theory and Practice

Please complete the entire questionnaire as accuratetly as possible.

Demographic Information.

1. Gender

Male	
Female	

2. Age

20 -25 years	26- 31 years	32-37 years	38 and above

3. In your understanding, do you think that there is a connection between social work theory and practice?

Yes	
NO	

4. Which theory or theories have you applied in working with these clients?

Explain:
....
....
....
....

5. How did you apply the theory or theories?

....
....
....
....

6. Social work intervention is informed by its theory, when you are in fieldwork training do you refer or consult your theoretical information?

Yes	
NO	

Explain:
....
....
....
....

7. What are the factors that hinder the translation of theory into practice?

....
....

....

....

8. Does theory-less practice exist in social work? Circle your answer and explain below.

   Yes

   No

   Explain:

   ....

   ....

   ....

   ....

9. What is your personal attitude towards fieldwork practice?

   ....

   ....

   ....

   ....

10. Indicate the significance of fieldwork practice in social work. Circle your answer and explain.

   i.   Important.

   ii.   Not important.

   iii. Less important.

   iv.   Very important.

Explain:

....
....
....
....

11. Do you got sufficient supervision during your block placement period? Circle your answer and explain

    Yes
    No

Explain

....
....
....
....

12. What do you think about supervision? Circle your answer and explain below.

    i.   It is intended for guidance.

    ii.   It provides learning opportunity.

    iii. It is not important.

    iv.   It is aimed at policing students.

Explain:

....
....
....
....

13. Do you think that, agency based supervisors update themselves with the latest information as the social work curriculum constantly changes? Give your opinion

....
....
....
....

14. Assessment is very essential during fieldwork training, What are your views?

    i.   It helps to identify learning areas to be improved.

    ii.   It is aimed at monitoring the student progress.

    iii.   It is not important.

15. Do you understand the measuring tool that is used to assess social work students during their fieldwork training?

    i.   Yes

    ii.   No

Explain:

....
....
....
....

16. Fieldwork training takes place within the context of supervisory relationship, what are your views. Circle your answer and explain

    i.   Agree

    ii.   Strongly agree

    iii.   Disagree

iv.   Strongly disagree

Explain:

....
....
....
....

17. Do you think that a bad supervisory relationship can affect the student learning process if so to what extent?

....
....
....
....

18. What are the factors that you dislike about your supervisor? Circle your answer and explain.

   i.   Unavailability of supervisors.

   ii.   Poor communication.

   iii.   Poor command of social work theory.

      ....
      ....
      ....
      ....

Thank you for taking your time to answer these questions.

Thank You.

Dimo MP

Researcher

Annexure: C

UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO

TURFLOOP CAMPUS

Faculty of Humanities
School of Social Sciences
Department of Social Work

Dear Agency Based Social Work Supervisor

My name is Masibinyane Dimo. I'm doing my MA (Social Work) with the University of Limpopo. Conducting this research is part of that programme. The intention of this research project is to evaluate fieldwork training at the University of Limpopo (Turfloop Campus). Your participation in this project is very necessary for the growth and improvement of the Department of Social work at the university. Please answer all the questions given below. Note that, there are no right and wrong answers. Your participation is voluntary. You don't have to divulge your identity, for instance your name and surname. The information you provided will be treated as confidential. You are at liberty to ask for clarity in case you encounter problems. The results of this project will be published in a dissertation which will be accessible at the University of Limpopo.

Thank You

Dimo MP
MA (SW) candidate

Annexure: D

Questionnaire for Agency based Social Work Supervisors

Please complete the entire questionnaire as accurate as possible.

Title of the study

Evaluation of Fieldwork Practice in Social Work Education at the University of Limpopo (Turfloop Campus): Aligning theory and practice

Demographic information

1. Sex   Male

        Female

2. Age

21 - 30 years	31- 40 years	41-50 years	51 and above

3. What is your highest qualification in social work?

Qualification	Where obtained	When obtained
Diploma in Social Work		
BA (SW) 3 years		
BSW (4 years)		
BA (SW) Hons		
MA (SW)		
PhD (SW)		
Others, please specify		

4. Please state your years of practice as a social worker. Please circle the correct answer.

   4.1 0-3 years

   4.1 4-5 years

   4.3 6-10 years

   4.4 10 years and above

5. Supervision of social work students during their fieldwork is very essential. What are the roles of a supervisor during fieldwork training?

....

....

....

....

1   Do you think that,   there is a link between fieldwork practice and theory?

Yes	
NO	

Explain:

....

....

....

....

7. What are the factors that hinder the integration of theory into practice?

....

....

....

....

8. Which method(s) do you primarily use in your agency? Mention and d explain how you advise students to apply them.

....
....
....
....

9. Which theory/theories do you frequently teach students whilst under your supervision?

Mention them and explain how they should apply them.

....
....
....
....

2   Which techniques do you frequently teach students whilst under your supervision?

Mention them and motivate how they should apply them.

....
....
....
....

12 Which skills do you frequently teach the students whilst under your supervision?

Mention them and motivate how they should apply them.

....

....
....
....

13. Fieldwork training takes place within the context of supervisory relationship, what attitudes do students display towards fieldwork practice?

....
....
....
....

14. What is the significance of social work supervision during fieldwork training? Circle your answer and explain below.

     i.   It provides guidance to the student

     ii.   It is aimed at monitoring the progress of students.

     iii.   It is aimed at policing the students.

Explain:

....
....
....
....

15. Supervision of social work students can be a very challenging task, particularly when it comes to the latest developments in social work curriculum. How do you update yourself with current information?

Explain:

....
....
....
....

16. Do you have an assessment tool that guides you in your assessment? Circle the correct answer and explain.

      i.   Yes

      ii.   No

....
....
....
....17.   When you assess social work students, do you involve their university based supervisors? Circle your answer and motivate.

      i.   Yes

      ii.   No

Motivate your response

....
....
....
....

Thanks for your time and information provided

Mr. PM Dimo
Researcher

Annexure: E

Interview guide questions for the third and fourth year social work students
Title of the study
Evaluation of Fieldwork Practice in Social Work Education at the University of Limpopo
(Turfloop Campus): Aligning theory and practice

1. Which theory or theories have you applied in working with clients?

Mention them and say why?

2. How did you apply the theory or theories?

3. Social work intervention is informed by its theory, When you are in fieldwork training, do you refer or consult your theoretical information?

4. What are the factors that hinder the translation of theory into practice?

5. Does theory-less practice exist in social work?

6. What are your personal attitudes towards fieldwork practice?

7. During your block placement period, did you get sufficient supervision? What were the reasons according to you?

8. What are your attitudes towards social work supervision?

9. Do you think that, agency based supervisors update themselves with the latest information as the social work curriculum constantly changes? Give your opinion

10. Assessment is very essential during fieldwork training, what are your views?

11. Do you understand the measuring tool that is used to assess social work students during their fieldwork training?

12. Fieldwork training takes place within the context of supervisory relationship, what are your views? Do you think that a bad supervisory relationship can affect the student learning process and if so, to what extent?