# A Comparative Analysis of Social Work Fieldwork Supervision at the University of Venda and University of Limpopo: Implications for Policy and Practice Guidelines

By

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**Doctoral thesis**

**Submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for the Degree of**

**Doctor of Philosophy in Social Work**

**in the**

**Faculty of Humanities**

**(School of Social Sciences)**
**Department of Social Work**

**at the**

**UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO**

**Promotor: Prof. J.C. Makhubele**

**2021**

# Abstract

The present study is a comparative analysis of social work fieldwork supervision at the University of Venda (UNIVEN) and the University of Limpopo (UL) and has produced a list of implications for policy and practice guidelines. The study adopted a qualitative approach to scientific enquiry.  It was exploratory and descriptive in nature. The population of the study consisted of final year student social workers and fieldwork coordinators from UNIVEN and UL. Data was collected by means of semi-structured and focus group interviews. Data was analysed using thematic analysis. The study's results demonstrated that most students from both universities had outstanding relationships with their supervisors. The study also found that most students were supervised on an individual basis. Informal and ad hoc methods of supervision sessions were also preferred by supervisors, entailing that, as soon as a supervisor felt like saying something, they would just say it. If was found further that supervision methods lacked supervision structure, whereby it would have been planned and communicated in advance, so that students could contribute to the agenda, have a designated venue, and arrive prepared.  Group supervision was found to be a rarely used method. The study also found that most students reported that the frequency of supervisions was once a week, while others felt that supervision occurred every day. Fieldwork supervisors continue to deliver the three major functions of supervision, which are administrative, educational, and supportive. The study found that students had little support from university fieldwork coordinators. The researcher established that field support visits by both universities were unsystematic. The researcher has also established that UL students need financial support in the form of a stipend to cater for costs related to their fieldwork placement, such as transport and food. Furthermore, the researcher found that students from both universities need regular contacts with the university-based supervisors/ coordinators.

The study revealed the need to reinforce many critical aspects of fieldwork supervision. These include regular contact, field visits, ensuring formal supervision, ensuring formal orientation of students, and making sure that students are adequately exposed to social work practice. Despite the challenges they face, coordinators continued to play a critical role in ensuring that students were properly placed. Measures must be developed to ensure compliance with policy mandates. The study

also found that UL did not have fieldwork practice policies, operating instead by using a manual for practical work dated 2012. Given the fact that the university was operating on a newly accredited BSW programme, this manual is outdated. There is a need to align it for fieldwork with the current BSW curriculum.

In response to these findings and loopholes in fieldwork coordination and practice in general, the study recommends that UL develop policies related to fieldwork practice that will guide the department when planning fieldwork-related activities. Although UNIVEN has fieldwork practice and supervision policies in place, their practice lacks compliance with the policies, as reflected in the presentation of study findings in Chapter 10. In response to these inadequacies, the study recommends measures the university could use to ensure compliance. Finally, the study developed a social work fieldwork practice model. It is a six-phase model that includes analysis of historical and cultural dynamics for planning purposes, drafting a concept paper placement plan, broad consultation with the stakeholders, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and post-implementation consultation and termination.

# Declaration

I **Nngodiseni Jimmy Budeli** declare that '*A Comparative Analysis of Social Work Fieldwork Supervision at the University of Venda and University of Limpopo: Implications for Policy and Practice Guidelines*' thesis hereby submitted to the University of Limpopo, for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Social Work has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other university; that it is my work in design and in execution, and that all material contained herein has been duly acknowledged.

02/09/2021

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**Budeli, NJ (Mr)**                                                                **DATE**

# Dedication

**I dedicate this work to my wife, Pfarelo Irene**

# Acknowledgements

Completion of this research project represent the work of many. I am deeply indebted to a great number of people and institutions that served as my pillars of strength for this project to be successful.

# List of acronyms

**AACs -** associated assessment criteria

**AASW -** Australian Association of Social Workers

**BSW -** Bachelor of Social Work

**CASW -** Canadian Association of Social Workers

**CHE -** Council on Higher Education

**CSWE -** Council on Social Work Education

**DSD -** Department of Social Development

**ELOs -** exit level outcomes

**FCG -** focus group

**HEQC-**Higher Education Quality Commitee

**IFSW** - International Federation of Social Workers

**MoU -** memorandum of understanding

**NASW -** National Association of Social Workers

**NGOs -** non-governmental organizations

**OECD -** Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

**SACSSP -** South African Council for Social Services Professions

**TREC -** University of Limpopo Turfloop Research and Ethics Committee

**UL -** University of Limpopo

**UNIVEN -** University of Venda

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# CHAPTER 1
## GENERAL INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

### 1.1. Introduction

This chapter gives a general introduction and background to the study around the comparative analysis of social work fieldwork supervision at the University of Venda (UNIVEN) and the University of Limpopo (UL). Social work training across the globe requires students to undergo classroom theoretical learning and practical learning. This requirement dovetails with the new definition of social work, which states that

> social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility, and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing (International Federation of Social Workers, 2014).

Given that social work is a practice-based profession, fieldwork practice becomes a fundamental part of the training curriculum, also because it has the particular intent of orienting and developing future social workers and, more importantly, advancing the quality and effectiveness of services provided by organisations.

The foundations to the practice arena can only be achieved when students are exposed to the real world of work during training so that, before they graduate, they have a glimpse of what the profession is all about in the real sense. Therefore, social work supervision with students becomes a medium to introduce them to the professional practice of social work. Social work supervision is a continuous process in which novice social workers and student trainees get guidance from an experienced social worker, gain experience, and receive support regarding difficulties and challenging practice situations they come across. Through field work, students learn to integrate and apply theory in practice by testing out and putting into action the social

work value base and principles learned in academic discourses (Nunev, 2014:461; Bogo, 2006:164; Papouli, 2014:1; Padmore, Bailey & Johnson, 2012:19). It is prudent that lecturers of the social work curriculum and agencies providing placement of students have a planned approach to fieldwork, where each role player is aware of what they need to do throughout the placement period.

Bennet and Deal (2012:195) assert that "social work supervision is vital to the profession for the education of students, the transitioning and monitoring of staff in the work force, the development of advanced independent clinicians, and the treatment outcome of social work practice." Unquestionably, field supervision is an indispensable part of the student's fieldwork and is regarded to be central to BSW education. In the same vein, Bogo (2015:317) asserts that, for providers of social work education to produce responsible, effective, knowledgeable, and competent social workers who will pioneer social work practice, the quality of their fieldwork placement experience is paramount. Fieldwork practice is imperative, because the effectiveness of social work professionals is critical to developing and offering unsurpassed policies, programme, and practices. In addition, Bogo (ibid) notes that students and graduates described their fieldwork experiences as highly important in preparing them for forthcoming responsibilities in social work professional practice.

The American Council on Social Work Education (2008) recognises the importance of fieldwork education and designates it to be the "signature pedagogy" of social work education. Bogo (2015:318) contends that this phrase signifies the dominant method of teaching and learning in which social work educators, in collaboration with organisational social work supervisors, socialise student trainees on how to execute the various roles of a practitioner. The American Council for Social Work Education (CSWE) (2008) also notes that various professions have their own standards of connecting classroom learning with practice. In social work, the dominant standard for connecting theory and practice is through fieldwork practice placement.  As indicated above, the goal of fieldwork practice placement is to link theoretical learning with practical environments. The basic principle of fieldwork practice placement is that classroom theoretical learning and the field are equivalent, because each contributes differently to meeting the requirements and the achievement of important competencies for professional practice. For fieldwork practice placement to be

successful, it must be thoroughly planned, synchronised, and evaluated based on set criteria before commencement of practicals. Students should be required to demonstrate the achievement of fieldwork outcomes or competencies at the end of placement. At UNIVEN and UL, these competencies are referred to as standards, as outlined by Bogo (2015:318; CSWE, 2008; CHE, 2015).

These high-level preparations of students so as to enable them to enter practice depend largely on the quality of the relationship between supervisors and students. This relationship is regarded as a powerful predictor of students' fulfilment of the goals of the fieldwork practice placement. Research findings reveal that students feel a sense of contentment when fieldwork supervisors understand them and are sensitive to their feelings; when they are approachable and accessible; comforting; and, especially, when the fieldwork supervisors practise in a manner that is emulated by students and are open to sharing their feeling with students. Although the relationship is regarded as 'the context for learning', in most of the cases it is expected to be of an encouraging and at times challenging nature. Social work supervisors should take note that their relationship with students is an indispensable factor for students' development and their learning so as to become social workers. Fieldwork placement cannot be satisfying to students unless there is a harmonious relationship between the student and the supervisor (Ellison, 1994:13; Fortune & Abramson, 1993:98; Pehrson, Panos, Larson & Cox, 2010:73). Fox (in Pehrson et al., 2010:73) argues that the relationship between a student and the fieldwork supervisor influences the result of fieldwork practice placement. Due to the critical nature of the relationship, it is important that students and supervisors do thorough planning and try to create opportunities to successfully communicate and work with one another for the duration of fieldwork practice placement.

Doel and Sharlow (cited in Cleak & Smith, 2012:244), postulate that much of a student's learning during fieldwork placement is facilitated through the relationship that exists between the student and the fieldwork supervisor. It helps both to be free to ask for assistance from their supervisors. This could only happen if there is a sound professional relationship. Therefore, it is important that the student–supervisor relationship should be harmonious.

In conclusion, it is quite clear that supervision of students during fieldwork placements is ranked as the most significant practice of the social work training process. Importantly, authors agree that the quality of the relationship between the supervisor and the student is crucial for learning to take place smoothly.

## 1.2. Operational definition of key concepts

Understanding of the meaning in context of some concepts or constructs is central, and it is prudent that the researcher operationalises such concepts so that readers can enjoy the same understanding of these as he does. The process of operational definition is described by Bryman (2012:714) as the "the definition of a concept in terms of the operations to be carried out when measuring it." Dovetailing with this, Monette, Sullivan, Dejong, and Hilton (2014:21) postulate that these are "definitions that indicate the precise procedures or operations to be followed in measuring a concept." The following were the key concepts operationalised for the study.

### 1.2.1. Fieldwork placement

For work-integrated learning (WIL) to be actualised, fieldwork placements must be arranged, as those are the places where hands-on knowledge, skills, techniques, theories, and approaches are taught. According to O'Shea (2014:8), the term "fieldwork placement" is used as comprehensively to describe multiple planned work experiences where students accomplish some work in an organisation that has entered into agreement with the university and has been duly approved to provide opportunities for students' fieldwork placement learning. In this study, the term fieldwork placement is used to refer to an arranged and approved placement of student social workers in an agency or organisation for the purpose of social work experiential learning, as discussed in Chapter 4.

### 1.2.2. Experience

Executing certain activities over a period is termed "experience," and that experience is needed for a variety of reasons. Monette, Sullivan, Dejong, and Hilton (2014:21) define experience as "first-hand, personal observations of events." The term experience is also defined by Van den Bos (2007:354) as a "conscious event: an event that is lived through, or undergone, as opposed to one that is imagined or thought

about." The *Collins English Dictionary* (CED) (2010:581) defines the term as the whole of an individual's views, feelings, and remembrances. For the purpose of this study, experience means final year social work students' perceptions, feelings, and memories related to fieldwork supervision during block placement.

### 1.2.3. Supervision

Workplace mistakes and errors could be minimised if employees are supervised. Supervision ensures accountability in all spheres of work environments. Supervision is the process by which an authorised supervisor looks after an employee's performance, provides direction on work activities, and offers advice, comments, and criticism (Kirst-Ashman, 2017:117). For the purpose of this study, supervision entails a process where a qualified social worker provides guidance and oversees social work students' work during fieldwork practice as discussed in Chapter 4.

### 1.2.4. Fieldwork supervisor

For students to successfully complete fieldwork objectives, there is a need for guidance and support from more experienced social workers. Garthwait (2011:11) defines the fieldwork supervisor as the agency-based person responsible for the daily supervision of the student in practicals. For the purpose of this study, the fieldwork supervisor is a nominated social worker whose job it is to provide guidance and support and oversee social work students' work during fieldwork practice placement as discussed in Chapter 4.

### 1.2.5. Fieldwork supervision

Students enter fieldwork with a variety of theoretical knowledges derived from classroom learning. To put the theoretical knowledge into practice, students need to be subject to the process of supervision which, in the case of students, is referred to as fieldwork supervision. Maidment (2001:284) defines fieldwork supervision as the management of a student during fieldwork practice placement by a designated social worker whose prime responsibility it is to provide guidance to the student throughout the placement period, offering support and providing learning opportunities aimed at helping the student achieve fieldwork learning outcomes, while assessing day-to-day job performance and evaluating practice improvements. In this study, fieldwork

supervision means the teaching, guiding, support, monitoring, evaluation, and provision of social work students with learning opportunities that address practical objectives as discussed in Chapter 4.

### 1.2.6. Fieldwork coordinator

Coordination of professional activities always enhances service delivery and accountability to service users and funders. The fieldwork coordinator is the university staff/ faculty member responsible for organising and guiding the fieldwork programme (Garthwait, 2011:11). In this study, the fieldwork coordinator is the university staff/ faculty member assigned to manage the fieldwork component of the BSW programme, including working with social services agencies to identify suitable placement for students; writing and implementing memoranda of understanding; preparing students for placement; holding information sessions with assigned agency-based supervisors prior to placement; and tracing and evaluation of student placement progress as discussed in Chapter 7.

### 1.2.7. Student social worker

As in other professions or disciplines, student social workers mirror licensed or registered social workers, since the latter epitomise the highest ethical standards pronounced by the professional council. The student social worker is a person registered with the South African Council for Social Services Professions (SACSSP) in terms of Chapter 2, Section 17(a) of the Social Service Professions Act, No. 110 of 1978 as amended.

### 1.3. Research problem

Social work training around the world requires that student social workers integrate classroom knowledge into practice during their training and post-training period. Bogo (2015:317) asserts that "the ability of social work education to graduate ethical, competent, innovative and effective clinical social workers is highly dependent on the quality of their field experience." Social work supervision, therefore, is a fundamental part of the student's training and the professional development of qualified social workers, and of improving the quality and effectiveness of the services provided by the organisation (Nunev, 2014:461). A study conducted by Beytell (2014:182) about

fieldwork education in the health context at the University of Western Cape, South Africa, found that students value fieldwork seriously. One student elucidated this finding as follows: *"I felt like this is really serious… I am now a professional and have to do things differently from what I used to do."*

However, several researchers (Fortune & Abramson, 1993; Tanga, 2013; Beytell, 2014; Kanno & Koeske, 2010) warn that fieldwork supervision of social work students entails several challenges, as students hit a different level of social work training with a new person who will subject them to fieldwork training, in contrast with the classrooms theoretical learning they are used to. Fortune and Abrahamson (cited in Moorhouse, Hay & O'Donoghue, 2014:27) found that high-quality supervision and fieldwork practice are exclusively significant to the experiences of students, and may help ease those uncertainties, provided that the environment is conducive for learning. In addition, Cleak and Smith (2012:244) postulate that a considerable number of what students learn during fieldwork practice placement is facilitated through the student-supervisor relationship. Therefore, the quality of fieldwork experience and the student-supervisor relationship are central to producing ethical, competent, innovative, and effective social workers; the absence of these is problematic.

Further central and crucial aspects of quality control when students start their fieldwork practice placements relates to monitoring the placements and support by the universities. Monitoring of placements has been neglected in extant scholarship and considered to be critically looked at for the purpose of ensuring that quality education and training is attained. It is extensively understood that many shortcomings are likely to crop up during fieldwork practice placements. Therefore, it is mandatory for universities providing social work education and placement to institute and apply monitoring procedures. As soon as the placement commences, the fieldwork coordinators and fieldwork staff members are responsible for monitoring the quality of the placement programme and activities. This can be done through visits and by communicating with students and fieldwork supervisors. Through monitoring, fieldwork supervisors, fieldwork coordinators, and students can track progress and ensure that the student will be able to meet all the practical objectives, while also determining whether there is a need to lobby outside services (Liu, Sun & Anderson, 2013:183). Therefore, the university's fieldwork coordinators and fieldwork staff need

to take seriously the monitoring of students during fieldwork placement as part of supporting learners while in practicals. It is also important that the universities find out if students are supervised or not. If so, what are the identified gaps that need to be filled? If not, what kind of intervention do the university faculty or staff members involved in the field need to perform so as to remedy the situation, so that supervision of students is always rendered as required? It is important for the universities to continuously reflect on fieldwork supervision practice so as to ensure compliance with regulatory standards by the South African higher education quality assurance institution, the Council on Higher Education (CHE), and the social work professional body, the South African Council for Social Services Professional (SACSSP).

Although research on fieldwork education has been undertaken quite intensively in South Africa (Nadesan, 2019; Shokane, Nemutandani, & Budeli, 2016; Schmidt & Rautenbach, 2016; Ross & Ncube, 2018; Dimo, 2013; Beytell, 2014), no known comparative studies have been undertaken, bearing in mind – historical and contextual nuances, to investigate fieldwork supervision experiences of student social workers and the support offered by both universities when students are in practicals. Therefore, the study seeks to comparatively explore and describe UNIVEN and UL social work student's fieldwork supervision with the intent to produce a list of implications for policy and practice guidelines underpinned by the historical and contextual nuances. The focus is on students as consumers of education and fieldwork coordinators as providers of education as well as organisers of the overall fieldwork practice experience. Lack of in-depth information regarding the social work student's perception relating to fieldwork supervision and support provided by universities during fieldwork placement is a concern. It is envisaged that this comparative study will assist the two universities in the fieldwork practice component of the BSW degree.

## 1.4. Motivation for the study

Both universities are previously disadvantaged and are found in rural villages of the province. Frequently, academics and practitioners undertake research projects due to motivation derived from practice experience, curiosity, and personal interest around a particular topic. Brink (2006:71) succinctly states that motivation for undertaking

research is the most essential precondition for the researcher. Historically and contextually, University of Limpopo and University of Venda have been disadvantaged and were established to serve certain racial groups in the country. Resources were not and still not adequately provided as expected compared to historically advantaged universities, particularly for employment of staff and transport to fieldwork so as to be on par with historically advantaged universities. The point here is poor staff complement, on its own affect the delivery of the programmes. Unlike, historically advantaged universities, where students could be placed with Non-Government Organisations (NGO), University of Limpopo and University of Venda use rural communities to do fieldwork which come with dynamics as a result of socio-cultural and political conditions. Interestingly, the area where these universities operate, only deep rural communities and existence of registered non-governmental organisations is minimal.

As an academic involved with students' fieldwork placements, the researcher felt the need to undertake a comparative study between these two universities so as to reflect on students' experiences ad perceptions of fieldwork supervision and the support offered by the universities during fieldwork practice placements in the fourth (final) year level of their study. The fourth-year student social workers of Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) programmes at UNIVEN and UL are expected to undergo intensive fieldwork practice ranging from three to four months in the field, as indicated in Chapter 3. This kind of research will provide an overview of what is happening in the field and subsequently inform fieldwork supervision practice, supervision policy, and general fieldwork practice.

Furthermore, the researcher was motivated by the fact that the South African Council for Social Services Profession (SACSSP, 2006) and National Association of Social Workers (NASW-USA,1999) Code of Ethics recognise research as an important tool with a view to informing practice. In the code of ethics, social workers have the important ethical responsibilities of evaluation and research. Within the ambit of this ethical responsibility, it is emphasised that

> social workers should promote and facilitate evaluation and research to contribute to the development of knowledge. More importantly, social workers

should critically examine and keep current with emerging knowledge relevant to social work and fully utilise evaluation and research evidence in their professional practice (SACSSP, 2006 & NASW-USA, 1999).

Considering this, the present study is based on the notion that it will contribute immensely to the social work fieldwork supervision practice of both UL and UNIVEN.

## 1.5. Aim and objectives of the study

This section centres on the aim and objectives of the study. A study without an aim or goal as well as objectives is not worth completing. Aim provides the direction for the study. According to Gray (2009:52), aims are general statements on the intent and direction of the research. Objectives are indicators set towards realising a research goal. The concept of the "research objective" is defined by Grove, Burns and Gray (2013:708) as "clear, concise, declarative statements that are expressed to direct a study." It is a measurable statement of account that outlines what the researcher anticipates achieving on completion of the study (Creswell, 2005:117; Gray, 2009:52). The aim and objectives of the study are stated below against this imperative background.

### 1.5.1. Aim of the study

The primary aim of the study was to comparatively explore and describe social work fieldwork supervision at the University of Venda and University of Limpopo. The secondary aim is to compare social work fieldwork supervision practice at Univen and UL.

### 1.5.2. Research objectives

Therefore, the objectives of the study are as follows:
- To comparatively assess the student-supervisor relationship during fieldwork placement at the University of Venda and University of Limpopo,
- To contrastively appraise the final year student social workers' perceptions relating to supervision offered during fieldwork placements at the University of Venda and University of Limpopo

- To comparatively appraise the views of University of Venda and University of Limpopo final year social work students regarding support received during fieldwork placements,

- To contrastively establish the nature of support needed by final year social work students during fieldwork placements at the University of Venda and University of Limpopo,

- To comparatively determine if students are monitored during fieldwork placement at the University of Venda and University of Limpopo,

- To develop a social work fieldwork practice model for consideration by both universities for implementation

## 1.6. Brief research methodology

The point of departure for the research project is the correct usage of research methodology. Thus, research methodology assists in the quest to provide organised, accurate, and desirable outcomes. Research methodology refers to the totality of how the researcher plans to conduct the study. This includes choice of the research approach (epistemological position) and methods to be employed. In essence, research methodology provides the theoretical understanding of the method to be used towards addressing a particular case (Whittaker (2012:3). The present research adopts a qualitative approach and exploratory and descriptive designs. The population of the study consisted of final year student social workers and fieldwork coordinators at UNIVEN and UL. Availability and purposive sampling were used as methods for selecting participants. Data was collected through semi-structured individual as well as focus group interviews with the aid of an interview guide. Chapter 9 discusses the research methods used to achieve the objectives of this study.

## 1.7. Significance of the study

The study can make a valuable contribution to the body of social work knowledge, especially around fieldwork practice or the practicum as an important component of the Bachelor of Social Work programme. The social work student's preparedness to practice at a beginning level depends to a large extent on how the student was prepared and supervised during training. Moreover, in accordance with the SACSSP, all social work students should undertake fieldwork as part of the training. The South

African Government Department of Social Development (DSD) provides a framework for supervision that also acknowledges student's supervision as an important aspect during fieldwork practice. UNIVEN and UL fieldwork practice and supervision policies, manuals, teaching and learning policies, and monitoring and assessment rules for practice also make provision that all social work students must be offered supervision and support during fieldwork practice placements.

To ensure compliance with the requirements of these quality assurance and statutory bodies, a study such as this one needs to be conducted to investigate if students are supervised and if they feel they are supported during fieldwork practice placements. The study provides an overview of supervision and support offered to students during fieldwork practice so as to elucidate a gap that lecturers, fieldwork practice coordinators, and agency-based supervisors may have to bridge with a view to ensuring that fieldwork is more enjoyable and memorable as students prepare to enter practice.

## 1.8. Structure of the thesis

The thesis is divided into chapters, as set out below.

### Chapter 1: Introduction and background to the study

This chapter has introduced the study by discussing the operational definition of key concepts, the research problem, and the motivation for the study. The purpose of the study as well as the aim and objectives of the study have been outlined. The chapter has ended with the significance and limitations of the study.

### Chapter 2: Theoretical frameworks underpinning the study

The chapter discusses the theoretical frameworks underpinning the study. These include attachment theory, ecosystems theory, and three important matters centring on teaching and learning, namely apprenticeship, nurturing, and social reform.

### Chapter 3: Overview of Bachelor of Social Work at UNIVEN and UL

The chapter presents contextual information about the BSW programme of the two universities with specific reference to the expected outcomes/ standards, duration of

final year social work students' fieldwork placement, models of fieldwork placement, and assessment methods used for fieldwork placement.

## Chapter 4: The significance of fieldwork and fieldwork supervision in social work

The chapter depicts a brief history of social work supervision, the differences between supervision (professional) and fieldwork supervision, and the importance of fieldwork placement of students.

## Chapter 5: Functions of supervision

The chapter includes the functions of supervision, namely those designated to be administrative, educational, and supportive as well as those of motivation and modelling.

## Chapter 6: Methods of supervision

The chapter presents the common methods of supervision in social work professions. These are supervisions based on the individual, the group, and peers as well as those that are ad hoc, virtual, , formal, informal, and live supervision and, finally, those based on co-supervision.

## Chapter 7: The roles and responsibilities of fieldwork coordinator, fieldwork supervisor, and student

The chapter discusses the roles and responsibilities of the alliance partners in fieldwork education. These key role players are the fieldwork coordinator and the fieldwork supervisor.

## Chapter 8: Supervisory relationship

The chapter discusses the supervisory relationship as an important element in fieldwork placement of students. More importantly, it presents a brief overview of empirical findings related to the supervisory relationship.

## Chapter 9: Research methodology

Chapter nine centres on research methodology for the study. The chapter outlines in detail how it has been conducted, including a discussion of the research approach,

research designs, and research methods applied. The method of data analysis and data verification are also discussed.  It concludes with ethical considerations.

**Chapter 10: Data presentation, analysis, and interpretation**

The chapter centres on the presentation of study results obtained through in-depth qualitative interviews among final year student social workers and fieldwork coordinators at UNIVEN and UL. The results are presented.

**Chapter 11: Summary of major findings, conclusions, and implications for policy practice guidelines and research**

The chapter presents a summary of the major findings, conclusions, and implications of the study findings for policy, as well as practice guidelines and further research.

**Chapter 12:  Social work fieldwork practice model**

This chapter presents a social work fieldwork practice model. It commences by unpacking the need for the development of an integrated model, followed by an analysis of what contributed to failures around adhering to the existing fieldwork supervision policy and manuals as well as propped strategies for mitigating these. The chapter concludes with a social work fieldwork practice model which could be adopted by UNIVEN and UL department of social work.

## 1.19.  Summary

This chapter has provided an introduction and background to the present study entitled *A Comparative Analysis of Social Work Fieldwork Supervision at the University of Venda and University of Limpopo: Implications for Policy and Practice Guidelines*. The chapter has presented a general introduction, operational definition of key concepts, motivation for conducting the study and its aims and objectives. Furthermore, the chapter has unpacked the significance of the study, its limitations, and its structure.

# CHAPTER 2

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS UNDERPINNING THE STUDY

### 2.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the theoretical frameworks of the present study. To unpack and understand social work fieldwork practice, it is critical and essential to be guided by developed theories. Skidmore (1979) in Monette et al. (2014:26) define a theory "as a set of interrelated, abstract propositions or statements that offers an explanation of some phenomenon." In the same vein, Bryman (2012:20) states that a theory offers a framework in which a phenomenon studied is known and by which the study findings are elucidated. When it comes to social work practice, Teater (2010:1) asserts that theory is an indispensable feature that regulates the way social workers understand and tackle their work with individuals, families, groups, communities, and society at large. Resonating with this, Rubin and Babbie (2013:57) state that theory plays

> an important role in social work research, as it does in social work practice. In both practice and research, theory helps us make sense of and see patterns in diverse observations. It helps direct our inquiry into those areas that seem more likely to show useful patterns and explanations. It also helps us distinguish chance occurrences and observations that have value in anticipating future occurrence.

For the purpose of this study, the researcher uses the three theoretical frameworks to teaching and learning (apprenticeship, nurturing and social reform perspectives to teaching and learning) engendered by Pratt, Arsenau, and Collins (2001) in tandem with ecosystems theory and attachment theory, which are discussed in this chapter. These theoretical frameworks will subsequently be discussed to illuminate the functions of the theories.

**2.2. Functions of theories**

As mentioned, theories play a critical role in professional social work practice and scientific enquiries.  For example, Langer and Lietz (2015:27) argue that theory is confirmed by means of scientific methods to ascertain the degree to which its conventions are espoused by noticeable data. Monette et al. (2014:29) aver that theories serve three main functions, as discussed below.

**2.2.1. Explanation of phenomena**

Theories provide an explanation for phenomena. They say not only what will happen under certain conditions (which is what hypotheses also do, though more concretely) but also why it will happen. This provides a robust understanding of human behaviour.

**2.2.2. Guide for research and practice**

Theories guide and direct research and practice. They focus attention on certain phenomena as relevant to the issues of concern.

**2.2.3. Integration of multiple observations**

Theories help integrate and explain the many observations made in diverse settings by researchers and practitioners. They explain why something occurred and they allow us to connect the conclusions drawn from several studies and interventions done in various situations.

**2.3. Theoretical frameworks applicable in this study**

The discussion below centres on the theoretical frameworks that were deemed to be applicable in the study.

**2.3.1. Apprenticeship perspective of teaching and learning**

Traineeship, experiential training, and internship are some of the concepts used interchangeably around apprenticeship. It is meaningful for graduate programmes to introduce the students to the real world of work of the specific discipline while still in training. Pratt et al. (2001:70) define apprenticeship as a perspective on teaching which "is an interrelated set of beliefs and intentions that gives direction and

justification to our actions. It is a lens through which we view our work as educators."
Teachers or lecturers believe that education makes valuable sense when the students
integrate theory and practice during training. This is best facilitated when students are
assigned real and authentic work, rather than simulations and role plays. This is a
process that Pratt et al. (2001) refer to it as "enculturating students into a set of social
norms and a professional identity."  Therefore, fieldwork practice is built around the
experiential approach to teaching and learning. Chan (2012:205) describes
experiential learning as "learning by actual experience." This experiential approach to
teaching and learning requires all students to "move beyond just memorising theory",
as Schmidt and Rautenbach (2016) confirm.

Theories or approaches to social work practice include assumptions that are referred
to as key concepts, beliefs, characteristics, or basic tenets. It is important to
subsequently list the key beliefs of the apprenticeship perspective to teaching and
learning that Pratt et al. (2001:75) allude to.

### 2.3.1.1. Key beliefs of the apprenticeship perspective of teaching and learning

- Learning is a process of enculturation into a community of work.
- Knowledge is constructed while interacting and participating in the work.
- Knowledge is best learned in the contexts in which it is to be used.
- The product of learning is of two kinds: competence or skilled performance and identity in relation to a profession

This perspective further outlines the responsibilities of all role players in the
education of the student (Pratt et al., 2001:75), as listed below.

### 2.3.1.2. Primary responsibilities of all role players in the education of the student

- Model and demonstrate competent practice as it is performed within the community or profession.
- Teach by using authentic, relevant tasks, problems, and assignments.
- Teach for transfer of learning to contexts of application.
- Uphold the standards of the profession or community.

### 2.3.1.3. Application of the Apprenticeship Perspective of teaching and learning in this study

Fieldwork supervision is key in Social Work training and apprenticeship perspective is relevant in that teaching and supervision should be by using authentic, relevant tasks, problems, and assignments, mainly by transferring of learning to contexts of application. The BSW programmes at UNIVEN and UL provide students with the opportunity to practice what they were taught in class. At the centre of the process is the fieldwork supervisor who is responsible for providing guidance and support throughout the placement period. Students in their final year level are expected to be in practical/ block placement for three to four months depending on the number of notional hours and credits allocated for each practical module per university. Students are involved in fieldwork where they can practice what they have learned in the classroom, incorporating theory into practice under the supervision of a designated social work supervisor. The supervisor is expected to allocate work equivalent to the student's level of study and model good professional behaviour by using a variety of supervision methods as discussed in Chapter 6.

The present study established that participants were assigned work geared towards the integration of theory and practice, as discussed in Chapter 10. One of the functions of supervision is administrative, as discussed in Chapter 5. Among other things, practicums include workload assignments, which offer participants with opportunities to integrate theory and practice.

### 2.3.2. Nurturing Perspective to teaching and learning

The word nurturing is akin to supporting and encouragement and it talks to how social work students during fieldwork training should be looked at. Teaching and learning require that teachers or lecturers must display behaviour that encourages the growth and development of the student. From a nurturing perspective, Pratt et al. (2001:76) avow that successful "teaching must respect the learner's self-concept and self-efficacy." Pratt et al. (2001:76) outline key beliefs and the primary responsibilities of key role players in the educational process of the learner/ student, as listed below.

**2.3.2.1. Key beliefs of Nurturing Perspective to teaching and learning**

- Knowledge (knowing) and emotion (feeling) are interactive.
- When anxiety is raised too high, learning is seriously impaired.
- Threats to a learner's self-concept interfere with learning.
- High standards must be matched with a high level of support.
- Teaching requires a balance between caring and challenging.

**2.3.2.2 Primary responsibilities of all role players in the education of student**

- Promote a supportive learning environment.
- Do not harm or reduce learners' self-esteem.
- Build confidence while guiding students through content.
- Promote success in learning.
- Challenge ideas while caring about people.
- Foster a climate of trust and respect.

**2.3.2.3. Application of the Nurturing Perspective to teaching and learning in this study**

This perspective to teaching and learning requires and relevant to fieldwork supervisors and lecturers responsible for fieldwork to be supportive of students for the duration of the fieldwork practice placements. This can be enhanced when the student– supervisor relationship is satisfactory. Lecturers and fieldwork supervisors maintaining a nurturing perspective to teaching and learning as their main perspective must show care for their learners and capacitate them to achieve their practical outcomes or objectives within a reasonable period. They use a strategy known as a 'holistic approach' in social work, in which they do not only aim to see learners passing. They also guard against anything that threatens the self-concept and self-efficacy of the learner and their welfare in general.   A final teaching and learning perspective to teaching, namely that informed by social reform, is briefly discussed below.

**2.3.3. The Social Reform Perspective to teaching and learning**

Social work professional practice pursues social justice and social change and through fieldwork practice training it is attainable. With a view to a social reform perspective informed by these concerns, Pratt et al. (2001:76) point out that:

effective teaching is the quest of social change more than individual learning. Lecturers and fieldwork supervisors holding social reform as their dominant perspective are deeply committed to social issues or problems and structural changes in society. Lecturers and fieldwork supervisors are clear and articulate about what changes must take place, and their teaching reflects this clarity of purpose. They have no difficulty justifying the use of their teaching as an instrument of social change. Even when teaching, their professional identity is as an advocate for the changes they wish to bring about in society

Key beliefs and primary responsibilities of the role players are listed as follows by Pratt et al. (2001:78):

### 2.3.3.1. Key beliefs of the social reform perspective to teaching and learning

- Professional practices are saturated with ideals and values.
- Those ideals and values must be examined and subjected to questioning.
- Ideals and values should not be adopted without critical examination.
- The goal of education is not just to learn about the world but to change it.

### 2.3.3.2. Primary responsibilities of all role players in the education of a student

- Consistently represent the teacher's ideals in words and actions.
- Clarify the relationship between the ideals and goals of the curriculum.
- Problematise what is taken for granted.
- Justify and defend ideals against challenges.
- Focus on the collective rather than the individual.

### 2.3.3.3. Application of Social Reform Perspective to teaching and learning in this study

This perspective justifies the quest for social justice and change in the social work profession. When students move from classroom teaching to practical learning, they are socialised by the social worker, who functions as the fieldwork supervisor, to be advocates for change and activists and facilitators of problem solving in the society. Fieldwork practice provides students with opportunities to be forces of social change and advocate for the vulnerable as well as empower clients. All participants were

placed in agencies where social workers performed different functions and roles in pursuit of social justice, as evidenced by data presented in Chapter 10, where participants gave accounts of where they were placed and the services they were rendering.

## 2.3.4. Attachment theory

Attachment theory was first formulated by psychologist John Bowlby (1907-1990). It is a psychological, evolutionary, and ethological theory concerning relationships between humans. From 1930 to the 1940s, John Bowlby has performed hands-on research on the nature and purpose of the close relationships people form throughout the entire lives (Howe, 1995:46). An attachment is "an emotional bond between individuals, based on attraction and dependence, which develops during critical periods of life and may disappear when one individual has no further opportunity to relate to the other" (Barker, 1999:34). The most important precept of attachment theory is that a minor child needs to develop a satisfying bond with one principal caregiver for the him or her to enjoy normal social and emotional development. Bowlby (1988), as cited in Harris and White (2013:30), asserts that "caregivers who are available and responsive to a child's needs establish a sense of security in the child as he/ she develops. The child needs to know that the caregiver is dependable, and this creates a secure base from which the child can move out to explore the wider world." Simpson and Howe (1994), as cited in Howe (1995:51), argue that attachment behaviour is activated when an individual experiences stress, which is an emotional reaction. It leads to the development of bodily imbalances when an individual experiences a situation that they perceive to be of such as nature that they are incapable to deal with it. Examples of stressful events or situations are fatigue, relationship problems such as divorce, and rejection.

Since theories are built on basic/ key concepts, principles or characteristics, the basic characteristics of attachment theory is subsequently discussed.

## 2.3.4.1. Key characteristics of Attachment Theory

Weiss (1991), as cited in Howe (1995:52), and Harris and White (2013:30) mention key basic characteristics associated with attachment behaviour:

***Proximity seeking -*** the attachment behaviour is shown by attempting to remain within the protective range of his supervisor.

***Safe haven -*** when the child feels frightened, he or she can find security and consolation from the caregiver. Similarly, when the student feels afraid, he or she can find security from the supervisor.

***Secure base -*** the caregiver provides a dependable base from which the child can explore outwards (Harris & White, 2013; Budeli, 2016). The supervisor should create opportunities where the student can work without fear, knowing that he or she has the backup of the supervisor.  The availability of the attachment figure raises a sense of security in the student. This automatically brings less interest to the attachment figure and inspires confident development.

***Separation protest -*** fears for the continuous availability of the attachment figure brings dissatisfaction and triggers efforts to separate.

For attachment to be productive and fulfilling, there is a need to guard against any unpleasant communication style. Problematic communications patterns or styles are therefore discussed below.

### 2.3.4.2. Communication that produces attachment problems

The way in which people communicate determines the outcome of relationships. Effective communication is enhanced when people respect each other, set a reasonable tone for communication, and try to minimise derogatory languages that could be harmful.  Marrone (2014:16) calls patterns that create attachment problems as "pathogenic communications," and considers these communication patterns to be unsupportive and insensitive. They are discussed below.

### 2.3.4.2.1. Unfavourable comparisons

It is quite usual that care givers would make comparisons that favour one child over the other regarding their children's abilities (Marrone, 2014:120). The same goes for students: they have different characteristics and intellectual abilities. Supervisors may like a student to a point where they will not acknowledge mistakes are part of student

professional development. For example, If the student fails to complete a task, he or she will be told that student so-and-so can do it.

### 2.3.4.2.2. Constant blaming

A child who is constantly blamed is reluctant to explore the outside environment. This generally makes the child reserved and attachment with the parental figure may be hindered (Marrone, 2014:123). In the context of fieldwork placement, students who are constantly blamed may be reserved because they afraid to make mistakes.

### 2.3.4.2.3. Communication which undermines the child's best interest

Believing that a child is not doing things in a genuine sense undermines the child's best interest (Marrone, 2014:124). Supervisors are entrusted with the responsibility to provide guidance and support to students throughout the placement period. As such, supervisors need to develop trust that students are doing their work assignments in the genuine sense.

### 2.3.4.2.4. Comments that deny child's entitlement to have opinions

Children need space where they can air their views. Communication that shows that a child is not entitled to an opinion makes them to feel unworthy (Marrone, 2014:123). Students go to fieldwork placement not as empty vessels. They attend fieldwork with a bevy of knowledge from classroom teachings. Communications which afford them opportunity for opinions make them feel needed and glad to share their knowledge with their supervisors.

### 2.3.4.2.5. Rejection

In the social work profession, rapport is built when there is unconditional acceptance of each other. Rejection is defined by Barker (1999:406) as

The "refusal to grant, acknowledge or recognise something or someone." Students may feel rejected when their ideas, presence, and requests are not accepted by the fieldwork supervisor.

### 2.3.4.2.6. Neglect

Neglect is a lack of involvement and a complete failure to meet the child's legal and moral needs. Not making a child the priority is a sign of neglect (Marrone, 2014:127). Similarly, lack of involvement in student's learning in the field is an example of neglect.

### 2.3.4.3. Application of Attachment Theory in this study

Attachment theory is relevant to social work fieldwork training and practice since it focuses on proximity and safety. Students and fieldwork supervisors develop attachment to each other during training. Studies of social work fieldwork practice by Fortune and Abramson (1993) and Bennet, Mohr, Deal, and Hwang (2012) found that a student-supervisor relationship that is supportive envisages contentment of students with fieldwork supervision, where the individual attachment style/ behaviour (discussed above) is at the centre of such contentment. In the same vein, Bennet (2008:97) argues that an attachment-theory framework is predominantly suitable for interpreting the bond between student social workers and their fieldwork supervisors. Resonating with this assertion, Budeli (2016) maintains that "student social workers need to develop a positive relationship with the supervisor (caregiver) for emotional and professional development. The supervisor needs to create an opportunity (secure base) where the student can explore the practice of social work with confidence knowing that he/ she has a support." Marrone (2014:115) moreover believes that "a securely attached child is a happier and more rewarding child to care for, and less demanding than an anxious child. An anxious ambivalence child is likely to be clinging and emotionally taxing, while an avoidant child is likely to be distant and lacking in engagement." So, the more the student can easily relate with the supervisor, the happier the student can become. Student performance may suffer due to less engagement emanating from a strained relationship with the supervisor.

### 2.3.5. Ecosystems theory

Ecosystems theory was developed by the Russian-American psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner in 1979. Ecosystems theory brings together two main theories from two different theoretical perspectives, that is, the ecological approach and systems theories (Kirst-Ashman, 2017: 22). Cummins, Sevel, and Pedrick (2014:48) argue that the ecosystems theory/ ecological perspective is a "person-in-environment

perspective of social work practice expanded and benefited from the transfer of general systems theory in the physical sciences to the living systems of the human family." Cummins et al. (ibid) further argue that "deriving concepts from ecology (the study of organisms and their relationships with their environment), the ecological perspective, provided more concrete ways for understanding the person-in-environment than systems theory." Kirst-Ashman (2017: 23) states that "a system is a set of elements that are orderly and interrelated to make a functional whole." Resonating with this definition, Cummins et al. (2014:48) define a system as a "whole made up of many interacting parts or sub-systems." Kirst-Ashman (2017:23) maintains that systems theories focus on how communications between people changes in interactions over time. In addition, Payne (2005), as cited in Rapholo and Makhubele (2018:308), emphasises that systems theories are of the utmost importance to the social work profession, because they emphasise people's social connections and relationships. As indicated, a harmonious relationship is needed during students' fieldwork placement, which brings systems theory in focus.

Many social work theories, such as those that are strength-based, task-centred, conflict-related, person-centred, cognitive, and behavioural are built on basic key concepts. Before discussing the application of ecological and systems theories in the present study, it is important to elucidate the key concepts of these theories.

### 2.3.5.1. Key concepts of ecological and systems theories

Every theory has its underlying assumptions that form the basis for understanding it. This is true for ecosystems theory, of which basic tenets are discussed below.

### 2.3.5.1.1. System

A system is a unit or an object comprising interconnected and co-dependent parts. Langer and Lietz (2015:31) state that "a system often exists to accomplish a common goal. Families, communities, and organisations are examples of systems of interest to social workers." In the case of students' placement, these are placement agencies where students perform the practicum and are assisted by the supervisors.

### 2.3.5.1.2. Reciprocal transactions

German and Bloom (1999), as cited in Langer and Lietz (2015:32), state that reciprocal transactions are communications that happen among individuals and their environment. Langer and Lietz (2015) further argue that reciprocity means that "systems exert mutual influence on one another over time." Mbedzi (2019:91) asserts that the outcomes of a positive transaction are pleasure and satisfaction, whereas the outcome of a negative transaction is tension.

### 2.3.5.1.3. Feedback loop

The concept of the feedback loop describes the process by which systems receive the information required for needed adjustment (Langer & Lietz, 2015:32). The concept of self-correction is important. There is a need for a system to recognise areas that need change or modification, and they must be open for feedback, whether positive or negative.

### 2.3.5.1.4. Homeostasis

This concept is derived from general systems theory. According to Langer and Lietz (2015:32), homeostasis is "a system's desire to resist change and preserve status quo." The homeostasis principle emphasises that interaction within and between the systems must be stable. Viljoen, Moore, and Meyer (2008:481) are of the view that "the process of stabilisation and growth causes a dynamic movement in the system, but the two processes balance one another in such a way that a dynamic equilibrium or balance is maintained in the system." In a nutshell, stability and growth are important for systems to function well.

### 2.3.5.1.5. Adaptation and equifinality

General systems theory espouses the principles of adaptation and equifinality. Gitterman and German (2008), as cited in Langer and Lietz (2015:32), argue that "ecological theory suggests systems tend to protect and grow to accomplish a goal; a process known as adaptation. The related concept of equifinality suggests a system can take multiple paths as it adapts over time. A system, to adapt effectively, can depend on the goodness of fit of that system within its environment." It can be deduced that the ability of the system to adapt is of significance, irrespective of the different paths the system may take.

### 2.3.5.1.6. Microsystem

A microsystem is defined by Bronfenbrenner (1979:22) as "a pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given setting with a particular physical and material characteristic." This is regarded as the lowest level of the Bronfenbrenner hierarchy.

### 2.3.5.1.7. Mesosystem

A mesosystem comprises of "a set of interrelations among two or more settings in which the developing person becomes an active participant" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979:25). The mesosystem validates the significance of the way the systems interact. Social work fieldwork supervisors should look at whether relationships among systems support the development of a student.

### 2.3.5.1.8. Exosystem

An exosystem is defined as "consisting of one or more settings that do not involve the developing person as an active participant but in which events occur that affect or are affected by what happens in that setting" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979:25).

### 2.3.5.1.9. Macrosystem

A macrosystem is regarded as the larger system that influences a client's life or a student's life in case of this study (Langer & Lietz, 2015:33). It is "the consistency observed within a given culture or subculture in the form and content of its constituent micro-, meso-, and exosystems, as well as any belief systems or ideology underlying such inconsistencies" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979:26). For the purpose of this study, a macrosystem is a welfare organisation or placement agency that informs daily functioning.

### 2.3.5.1.10. Chronosystem

Bronfenbrenner (1979:34) describes the chronosystem as the life experiences that shape the client. His ecological theory focuses on child development; the chronosystems refer to how experiences in a child's life can influence his or her growth and how the child adjusts to these. In the case of student fieldwork placement, the chronosystem encompasses events that shape students' professional development.

### 2.3.5.1.11. The social environment

The ecological theory is nested in the environment. Kirst-Ashman (2017:22) points out that "the social environment includes the conditions, circumstances, and interactions that encompass human beings."

### 2.3.5.1.12. Coping

Coping refers to the in which way people adapt or adjust to environmental pressures around them (Barker, 1999: 105).

### 2.3.5.2. Application of ecosystems theories in this study

Ecosystems theories are applicable to social work practice as students are a subsystem, fieldwork supervisors are a sub-system, university on its own is a subsystem and all combined create a wholeness. Therefore, failure in one sub-system affect the operation of the whole system, hence using Eco-systems theory lenses becomes extremely relevant in this study. Holistic assessment in social work practice requires of social workers to explore the environment of the client and the system the client interacts with. In fieldwork practice, the placement agency is an environment, and the systems are employees within the agency. Viljoen, Moore and Meyer (2008:491) argue in this regard that

> an ecosystems approach assumes that all the role players in the educational context participate in the co-evolution of ideas that surround the educational structure and process. The role players are regarded as all those who are, in one way or another, involved in the educational context, whether they are drawn from the government structure, the school system or the social system.

Within the educational system, role players include students as trainees, faculty members or lecturers representing the university, and fieldwork supervisors representing the agency where the student is placed. Langer and Lietz (2015:29) view fieldwork supervisors at the organisation as representative of the system. In the organisation, the team includes a group of people who are connected by a mutual goal. The team members motivate each other to realise their goals. Anything that

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happens to a member affects everyone in the team. For example, if the fieldwork supervisor is absent for a long period of time due to ill-health, the whole system is affected by this unusual situation. Each team member is also distressed by the situation. This shows that any change to the system affects each member and the team.

## 2.4. Summary

The chapter has deliberated on the theoretical frameworks underpinning the study. It set out by discussing the functions of theories. The four frameworks that the researcher found relevant to the study are apprenticeship, nurturing and social reform perspectives; ecosystems theory; and attachment theory. The key beliefs and the three perspectives to teaching and learning have been elucidated, including elucidation of their application in the present study. Basic concepts of the ecosystems theories and attachment theory have also been elucidated.

# CHAPTER 3

## OVERVIEW OF BACHELOR OF SOCIAL WORK PROGRAMME AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO AND UNIVERSITY OF VENDA

### 3.1. Introduction

It is widely understood that BSW degree curriculums are regulated and accredited by a professional council of a country. In South Africa the SACSSP and CHE play this role. Australia has the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) and Canada the Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW). Professional councils regulate conduct of social workers in general and to some extent exercise control over how these programmes are offered by institutions of higher learning.  The aim of this chapter is to give an overview of the BSW programme in South Africa, its policy, and legislative mandates. The chapter will also cover a brief history of social work at UNIVEN and UL, an overview of BSW final year fieldwork placement of UNIVEN and UL, and an overview of social work education in South Africa.

### 3.2. Brief history of social work at UNIVEN and UL

Institutions of higher learning develop programmes based on the pressing needs of the communities where they are situated. Therefore, it is important for this study to provide a brief history of how social work at these two universities developed. This section centres on a brief history of social work at UNIVEN and UL.

### 3.2.1. History of social work at UNIVEN

The Department of Social Work at UNIVEN started offering social work training in 1986 under the leadership of Prof. Von Bochove. The late Prof. Thabede (then Mr. Thabede) took over as head of the department from Prof. von Bochove on her retirement in 1992, until his ultimate death in January 2014. Since its inception, the department has been offering only a four-year undergraduate training programme, the Bachelor of Arts in Social Work, BA (SW).  The department produced only 6 graduates in 1992 and, ten years later (2002), some 53 students graduated from the programme. In 2003, the first-year class had no less than 125 students, with 90 in the second year, 56 in the third, and 40 in the fourth; by 2010 it produced 116 graduates. By 2010, the first-year

class had 160 students, while the fourth and final year classes had 158 students. Since 2007, the Department of Social Work has offered a revised BSW programme that was prescribed for all universities providing training for social workers in South Africa. The B.A.(SW) was replaced with a BSW outcome-based curriculum comprising exit level outcomes (ELOs) and associated assessment criteria (AACs). The BSW programme, based on ELOs and AACs, was later reviewed. Currently, UNIVEN is providing social work training in line with CHE standard-based requirements *(see Addendum: I* UNIVEN BSW Information Booklet, 2018).

### 3.2.1.1. Practical training

Practical training for B.A. (SW) ranged from observational field visits in the first year and a brief introduction to working with clients in the second. At third year level, a brief groupwork facilitation and community work practical were introduced. Casework-concurrent placement for three weeks was also undertaken in the third year during the June/ July recess. Students in their final year were expected to work in agencies or organisations for four months from May–August of that academic year.

### 3.2.2. History of social work at UL

The University College of the North was officially opened on the second of March 1960. The department of sociology, social work, and criminology was one of the first to be established at this university college. The welfare needs of the local indigenous community around that time were also borne in mind, and a Department of Sociology, Social Work and Criminology, which made provision for the training of social workers, was created (Unikon, 1969:34; Unikon,1970:18). Apart from the University College of Zululand, the University College of the North was the only university college in the Republic that trained black social workers. In 1960, there were three students for the Diploma in Social Work and none for the B.A. (S.S.). At the beginning of 1961, two groups of social workers were trained in the department, 26 students enrolled for the diploma in social work and three for the B.A. (S.S.). One group followed a course, which led to the attainment of a Diploma in Social Work, while the other was being prepared for the B.S. degree in Social Science.  The diploma course in social work extended over two years. Students were required to spend another year of practical work in the field before a diploma could be awarded to them. During their first years of

study, students did at least one month of practical work a year. Both the degree and diploma students were encouraged to indulge in sports and cultural activities such as football, basketball, and arts and crafts (*Bantu Educational Journal*, 1961:446–447). A total of 96 students had enrolled in 1969. This was a sign of achievement and justification of its existence (Unikon, 1969:34; Unikon,1970:18).

### 3.2.2.1. Staff members and leadership

A staff of six men, including the head of the department, Prof. H.L. Crause, devoted themselves to the lecturing and training of these students. A noteworthy student in the history of UL is Prof. M.M. Bopape. He enrolled for the B.A. (S.S.) degree in 1961 and completed it in 1963. Two years later, in 1965, he obtained an honours degree in social work (cum laude) at the University of South Africa. In 1964, Prof. Bopape started his lecturing career in social work at the University College of the North as a junior lecturer. This was followed by his successive promotions to lecturer, senior lecturer, and associate professor in 1966, 1972, and 1976. Having served as acting head of the Department of Social Work from 1978 to 1981, Prof. Bopape was promoted to Head of Department in 1982.

### 3.2.2.2. The training curriculum

The training for the B.A. (S.S) degree was carried out in accordance with the curriculum of the University of South Africa. The course was spread over three years. During these three years, students were required to devote a month per annum to practical work. In addition to this, weekly practical work was carried out in the municipality of Pietersburg (now Polokwane) and the Department of Bantu Administration and Development (*Bantu Educational Journal*, 1961:446; 447). Prior to 1969, the curriculum of the diploma course consisted of two years' theoretical training and one year of practical training. Students in possession of a school-leaving certificate could enrol for this course. However, in a bid to improve and maintain a high standard of training, a new diploma course was introduced in 1968 with a curriculum akin to the B.A. (SS) degree. The senior certificate was required to enrol for the course (Unikon, 1969:34; Unikon, 1970:18).

### 3.2.2.3. Practical training

The practical training for the B.A. (S.S) was provided in two ways, as discussed below.

### 3.2.2.3.1. Casework and observation visits

The concurrent system of practical work during the term was done with welfare agencies in the neighbourhood in terms of the block plan of placement during the July and December/ January vacations. During that time, the department enjoyed the cooperation of various non-European welfare bodies and private welfare organisations. Students also had to undertake observation visits to institutions and welfare agencies (Unikon, 1969:34; Unikon, 1970:18).

### 3.2.2.3.2. Group work and community organisation

The University College provided practical training in group activities, such as occupational therapy and organised games, singing, music, handwork, first aid, and so forth. During that time, it was believed that this type of training was not offered at any other university in South Africa. Training in these group activities were provided mainly by two full-time lecturers in a well-equipped work centre. At a later stage, a more spacious and modern work centre was built that enabled social workers to initiate groups and work centres in indigenous communities, especially in the tribal areas ("Homelands"). That brought some satisfaction that students would be equipped to undertake community services such as cooperation with community organisations and community development, the latter which are of vital importance to the indigenous communities (Unikon, 1969:34; Unikon, 1970:18).

The section below briefly presents current BSW fieldwork programmes of UNIVEN and UL.

### 3.3. Brief overview of fieldwork practice of the University of Venda and University of Limpopo

The table below presents a brief overview of fieldwork practice of first to third year level fieldwork placement at UNIVEN and UL.

### 3.3.1. First to third year level fieldwork practice of the University of Venda and University of Limpopo

**University of Venda**                          **University of Limpopo**

**First year level**

First year students do observational visits to organisations providing social work services. During visits, social workers give presentations about services provided by the organisation. Students are afforded opportunities to ask questions and comment where necessary. After each organisational visit, students are required to write report

Practical learning at first year level is limited to observational visits. Such visits are arranged with variety of social service organisations around Mankweng and Polokwane.

**Second year level**

Social work students in their second year of study are required to do practical work in casework in a form of concurrent placement. They are required to visit organisations once a week where they spend eight hours working under the supervision of designated fieldwork supervisor and a faculty member assigned to the practical module. They are expected to practice casework method of social work. After their first visit to the organisation, students are required to write an observational report. This is followed by a process report after each encounter with clients.

At second year level, students engage in concurrent placement where they are introduced to casework and groupwork practical. Students are required to visit local schools, clinics, and communities in general to identify cases through consultation with relevant personnel. Once cases have been identified, students are expected to have sessions with clients. Students are supervised in-house by the university.

**Third year level**

At the third-year level, UNIVEN students are expected to do practical work in the forms of groupwork and community

UL fieldwork placement at third year level is concurrent. Students spend one month at the organisations under the

work. Groupwork and community work practical start with simulations in class in preparation for actual practical work. In groupwork, the faculty member responsible for the practical module makes contact with local schools to gain entry on behalf of students. Once the arrangements between the university and the schools are complete, students will visit the schools to finalise plans in terms of date, time, and the venues to be used.  This is followed by the actual facilitation of groups. After each session, students are required to write a groupwork process report. The faculty member/ lecturer responsible for the module acts as a supervisor.

Community work adopts the same format. Students are prepared in class through simulations and role play. Once they are prepared, they are required to visit communities to make contacts with gatekeepers (such as civic organisations, headmen or chiefs, and so forth) to get permission to enter the community. Once the community leadership has granted entry, students are required to start the process of community work from profiling to termination.  Supervision is done by the university lecturers.

supervision of a designated supervisor. Preferred placement agencies are hospitals and NGOs.

*Table: 3.1. First to third year level fieldwork practice of the University of Venda and University of Limpopo*

Table 3.1. shows fieldwork practice activities at UNIVEN and UL. Similarities and differences can be compared by means of the table. The similarities are that both university's first year fieldwork activities involve observational visits to social service organisations. Second year students are expected to conduct casework practicums. The difference is that UNIVEN students do only casework at second year level, while UL students do casework and groupwork. Another difference is that UL students do concurrent placement at the organisation for a month, incorporating all the social work methods, while UNIVEN students do concurrent placement for the duration of a year, with specific focus on community work and groupwork.

### 3.3.2. Overview of fourth year BSW fieldwork practice of the University of Limpopo and University of Venda: similarities and differences

The Bachelor of Social Work curriculum is a mix of theoretical and practical learning spread across the curriculum. With its particular level of complexity in mind, students at fourth year level are expected to undergo more intensive fieldwork training in recognised organisations in the country. As Raniga and Simpson (2014) state, in most of the universities in South Africa student social workers undertake long and intensive fieldwork in their final year. The fieldwork placement ranges from three to four months depending on the given university's expectation around the number of notional hours that students are required to work, since there are no standardised or prescribed notional hours. Brief information about UNIVEN and UL BSW final year fieldwork placement is offered below.

### 3.3.2.1. Duration of fieldwork placement

The final year fieldwork practice at UNIVEN and UL BSW differs in the number of days or months during which students must stay at the agencies. The UNIVEN fieldwork placement period is four months in any recognised agency in South Africa. The UL fieldwork placement period is three months in any recognised agency in South Africa. The learning expectations during fieldwork for both universities are the same. Students are required to do casework, group work, community work, and administration work (University of Venda fieldwork practice manual, 2019 & University of Limpopo manual for practical work, 2012).

### 3.3.2.2. Model of fieldwork placement

The most common methods or types of fieldwork placement are concurrent placement and block placement. Block placement is a method where students first fulfil coursework requirements and then spend some days in an organisation for a period agreed between the universities and organisations providing opportunities for practical training (Liu, Sun & Anderson, 2013:184). In a concurrent approach to fieldwork, students spend some time attending classes being taught theory while sometimes working at the agency (Liu, Sun & Anderson, 2013:184). In addition, Hoffmann (1990:32) states that "block pattern provides a continuous, relatively uninterrupted, undivided period of attendance for the student in a field course placement. Here the student is exposed to the day-to-day life of an organisation and is thus afforded the opportunity of sequential, continuous involvement in its programme." The main idea behind concurrent placement is that students must integrate theory and practice while the theoretical information is still new for them to be able to relate it to practice.

Both UNIVEN and UL have adopted a block placement method where students spend three to four months in agencies under the supervision of a social worker who is referred to as the fieldwork supervisor in this study. All students on placement are required to practice all the primary methods of social work, which are casework, group work, and community work as well as a secondary method of social work, which is administration. The method of placement dovetails with the apprenticeship approach to teaching and learning that Pratt et al. (2001) assert requires from students to integrate theory and practice through practical learning.

### 3.3.2.3. Assessment methods for fieldwork placement learning

Students undertake fieldwork with instructions about what they need to do within a prescribed placement period. Therefore, there is a need for continuous monitoring of students' progress until the task has been completed. Assessment is used to determine the extent in which learning is taking place (that is, of a formative nature) and the extent in which the outcomes have been achieved (that is, summative) (CHE, 2015:41). As part of assessment for fieldwork placement, lecturers responsible for fieldwork practice undertake field visits to check progress made at the time of visit. It

is during that period that students have time to ask questions for clarifications so that they can focus on what needs to be done for the finalising remaining period of placement. As part of assessing the overall placement, all students in these two universities (UL & UNIVEN) must produce a portfolio of evidence (PoE) of all the work undertaken by each student. Both universities also subject students to oral assessment after the fieldwork placement.

## 3.4. Overview of Bachelor of Social Work education in South Africa

This section provides an overview of BSW education and the national policies and legislations governing the training of social service professionals in South Africa.

### 3.4.1. South African national higher education policy and legislative mandate

Social work education in South Africa is regulated by the SACSSP, the Higher Education Act, 1997, No. 101 of 1997 and the CHE. The BSW was registered on the National Qualification Framework in 2003, and this registration was extended to 2015. Since 2007, all providers of social work education have had to offer a four-year undergraduate degree, the BSW, which consisted of 27 ELOs.  The BSW, which was built on ELOs and AACs then went under review, and new standards replaced the old ELOs-based curriculum. Since 2015, all South African universities have been required to offer a standard-based BSW curriculum. Below are the BSW 16 Standards (around core social work knowledge) and the nine core areas (related to application of knowledge and skills) that all training institutions providing a Bachelor of Social Work degree in South Africa must use. While not prescribing the content and levels in which all these standards are pitched, the universities must ensure that all the standards and the nine core areas are spread across the curriculum. Some of the standards require students to demonstrate their achievements through fieldwork, while others require classroom learning through role play, simulation, and theory. Therefore, it is befitting to give an overview of the South African higher education legislation and the functions of quality assurance institutions regarding social work training in South Africa.

### 3.4.1.1. The South African Higher Education Act, No. 101 of 1997 and its purpose.

The South African higher education is regulated by the Higher Education Act, No. 101 of 1997. The Act aims to achieve the following regarding higher education in South Africa:

- To regulate higher education.
- To promote the establishment, composition, and governance and funding of public higher education institutions.
- To provide for the appointment and function of the independent assessor.
- To provide for the registration of private higher education institutions.
- To provide for quality assurance and quality promotion in higher education.
- To provide for transitional arrangements and the repeal of certain laws; and
- To provide for matters connected therewith.

### 3.4.1.2. The South African Council on Higher Education (CHE) and its functions

The South African Higher Education Act, No. 101 of 1997, stipulates that the CHE may advise the Minister on any aspect of higher education at the request of the Minister. Chapter 2 (Council of HE Act), Section 5, subsection (1)(c) of the Higher this Act gives powers to the CHE through its permanent committee and Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) to:

- Promote quality assurance in higher education.
- Audit the quality assurance mechanisms of higher education institutions; and
- Accredit programmed of higher education.

### 3.4.1.3. The South African Council for Social Services Professions (SACSSP) and its functions

The SACSSP requires of training institutions to adhere to certain conditions regarding lecturers or instructors of social service professional programmes. According to Section 15(1)(b)(i) of the Social Service Professions Act, 110 of 1978, no person shall give instruction in any aspect of any subject in connection with social work, social auxiliary work, or child and youth care work at a training institution unless he or she is registered as a social worker or child and youth care worker with the South SACSSP in accordance with the Act. Furthermore, the SACSSP and the Professional Board for

Social Work as well as the Professional Board for Child and Youth Care Work have the following core responsibilities so as to ensure and assist social service professionals who enter their respective professions with the requisite knowledge and skills to practice that profession. In this regard, the SACSSP together with these boards have the legal obligations

- To determine the prescribed qualifications that will be acceptable to register a social service professional with the SACSSP;
- To determine the minimum standards of education and training of persons practising the professions falling within the ambit the SACSSP;
- To control and to exercise authority in respect of all matters affecting the training of social service professionals falling within the ambit of the SACSSP. This includes regular reviews and quality assurance of learning programmes provided by training institutions;
- To approve the learning programmes of training institutions, schools, and departments that provide education and training with respect to professions falling within the ambit of SACSSP;
- To promote liaison in the field of training relating to social services in the Republic and elsewhere, and to promote the standards of such training in the Republic;
- To recognise or prescribe the degrees, diplomas, or certificates that may be registered as *additional qualifications* at the SACSSP; and
- To prescribe the proficiencies which may be registered as specialties in specific professional categories http:/ / www.sacssp.co.za/ education-training-and-development/ , retrieved 8 September 2020.

It is therefore clear that all providers of social work training should take cognisance of the expected quality of education provided and the minimum standards of training as set forth by SACSSP, CHE, and the Higher Education Act, No. 101 of 1997. That is inclusive of theoretical learning and practical learning. The quality of social work education and training is measured not only in the classroom, but also in the field where students learn by doing. The new definition of social work rightly emphasises that is "a practice-based profession" (IFSW, 2014). At the centre of the field training is the designated social work fieldwork supervisor whose job is to educate, provide guidance and support the student in this learning journey.

### 3.4.2. South African Bachelor of Social Work Standards

As indicated earlier, the BSW programmes of UNIVEN and UL are grounded in prescribed standards as set forth by the CHE. The list of BSW standards *(see Addendum: I)* combines that which students should learn in the classroom environment and in practice. The list of sixteen standards (that, combined, comprise core social work knowledge) are primarily theoretical in nature. These are primarily matters that can be taught and discussed through direct classroom teaching and learning modalities. The nine core areas centred on application of knowledge and skills are primarily of a practical nature. To qualify this, common phrases used in the nine core areas include the following: -demonstrate; use of…; ability to…; upholding; critical engagement; show awareness of …, and so forth. The lists of these phrases indicate that students must be able to *apply* this or that in active, concrete ways. Practical learning offers an avenue into this kind of learning, where the fieldwork supervisor acts as an expert whose prime responsibility it is to help students demonstrate all the expected learning areas of the BSW requirements. The institutions of higher learning providing social work education and training are required to organise fieldwork programmes per level of study, where students can apply skills, theories, methods, and a variety of helping techniques. One of the nine core areas centres on "the development and consolidation of a professional identity as a social worker" (CHE, 2015). In this core area, students are expected to demonstrate "the ability to use supervision effectively in practice" (CHE, 2015). Therefore, the present study aims to explore and describe if and how the students were supervised during fieldwork practice placement and what support they received to help them achieve the practical objectives or learning outcomes.

### 3.5. Summary

This chapter has presented a general overview of the BSW degrees at UNIVEN and UL. The chapter has also unpacked the history of social work at UNIVEN and UL, an overview of BSW fieldwork practice placement at UNIVEN and UL, an examination of the similarities and differences between these, a consideration of models of placement as well as assessment methods for fieldwork placement learning. The chapter has concluded with an overview of BSW education in South Africa. These include the

standards *(see Addendum: I)* that must be covered in the curriculum without prescribing what should be featured in the curriculum.

# CHAPTER 4

## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF FIELDWORK AND FIELDWORK SUPERVISION IN SOCIAL WORK

### 4.1. Introduction

Fieldwork plays a critical role in introducing student trainees to the social work profession's practice. Universities provide social work education students with the theoretical basis of the profession, while fieldwork is an opportunity to integrate theory into practice. The latter is an integral part of BSW education, and it is that component of the social work curriculum where students "learn to practice social work through delivering social work services in agency and community settings" (Bogo, 2006:164). Raniga and Simpson (cited in Engelbrecht, 2014:174) assert that working under the supervision of experienced social workers, students learn to apply in practice the knowledge, skills, and values that they have been exposed to in their academic discourses.

This chapter outlines the significance of fieldwork and fieldwork supervision in social work. It includes a brief history of social work supervision, the differences between fieldwork supervision and supervision of professionals, the importance of fieldwork supervision, and the significance of fieldwork placement of students.

### 4.2. The history of social work supervision

There is no evidence as to when social work supervision started. According to Karpetis (2010:503),

> the history of social work supervision seems to have developed parallel to the evolution of the profession. The subject of social work supervision has long been discussed by scholars as early as 1900, with the most prominent early scholarship between 1920 and 1945 with family and social casework and Robinson's supervision in social casework in 1936 and the dynamics of supervision under functional controls in 1942.

Robin (in Mak, 2013) sees social work supervision principally as a didactic practice that occurs between the supervisor and supervisee. This definition assumes that supervisors have an exceptional competence when it comes to undertaking the work and a bevy of information that they may perhaps impart to their supervisees. Kadushin and Harkness (2002) also note that the educational function of social work supervision has been emphasised quite often in its history.

However, Tsui (2005:9), Mak (2013:11), and Kadushin and Harkness (2002:1) demonstrated that the administrative and supportive functions of social work supervision received considerable attention in the early 19th century as the social work profession progressed and expanded. When universities started to develop social work programmes and offer training at the beginning of the 20th century, a body of knowledge and a theoretical framework for social work supervision progressively emerged. Mandel (1973), as cited in Mak (2013:11), claims that

> in the 1950s and 1960s, a growing diversification of state agencies and client populations, paired with a greater emphasis on staff accountability, gave away to an increased emphasis on the administrative tasks of social work supervision. The field of social work also became much more attuned to the supportive function of social work supervision during the early 1970s, amidst growing concerns about civil rights of oppressed groups.

In the mid-1970s, Kadushin and Harkness (1992) also found noticeable growth in the literature related to the responsibilities of supportive supervision in response to a growing need to address staff burnout.

## 4.3. The differences between fieldwork supervision and professional (staff) supervision

Fieldwork supervision is distinguished from staff (professional) supervision. The definitions below give a clear view of the distinct features of field and staff supervision.

### 4.3.1. Definition of supervision

Hawkins and Shohet (2012:60) define supervision as a

joint endeavour in which a practitioner, with the help of the supervisor, attends to their clients, themselves as part of their client practitioner relationships, and the wider systemic context, and by so doing improves the quality of their works, transforms their client relationships, continuously develop themselves, their practice, and the wider profession.

Based on this, the following conclusions can be made:

- Supervision is a joint undertaking.
- It is not only directed from the supervisor to the supervisee. Supervisor and supervisee must work together as partners, helping each other in all work-related problems; and
- The practitioner attends to their clients with the help of a supervisee.

### 4.3.2. Definition of fieldwork supervision

Fieldwork supervision is defined by several scholars. Among them, Maidment (2001:284) defines it as the process whereby the designated supervisor watches over a student while on fieldwork by facilitating learning opportunities that help students accomplish fieldwork placement objectives.  The supervisor manages students' learning needs throughout the placement period, provides support, assesses the student's work performance, and evaluates the outcomes of their interventions.  In addition, Cheon, Blumer, Shih, Murphey, and Sato (2009:53) state that qualified supervisors also have the role of monitoring the growth, competency, and professional development of the student. In contrast, Kadushin and Harkness (2002:23) define social work supervision as the process of overseeing, directing, coordinating, enhancing, and evaluating the on-the-job performance of workers. This definition therefore underlines job performance which, for the purpose of this study, includes students, while the definition by Maidment (2001) puts students at the centre of attention immediately when he or she starts with practical learning.

Important differences between the student fieldwork supervision and that of staff supervision can be inferred from these definitions.  Bogo and Vayda (1998), as cited

in Mak (2013:13), assert that the main purpose and focus of fieldwork supervision is education, focusing on the development of practice skills and proficiencies. That is in contrast with the quality-of-service delivery, which is the focus of professional supervision. Secondly, activities assigned to students principally centre on training and practice research, while professional supervision of social workers emphasises the effectiveness and efficiency of service provision to clients. Another crucial difference is that fieldwork supervision concentrates mainly on future-orientated goals, such as social work values, attainment of knowledge and skill competence, whereas professional social workers focus on present-orientated goals. In the same vein, Nunev (2014:37) asserts that fieldwork supervision is different from professional supervision, because of its specific focus on the educative function of supervision. The supervisor spends much of his or her time on educating the student. This may include organising internal training, one-on-one practice-related information sessions, observation visits, and sitting in when the supervisor is interviewing clients. In general, fieldwork supervision centres on the management of a student during fieldwork placement by a skilled practitioner. "The fieldwork supervisor's primary responsibilities are to guide the student throughout the placement period, facilitate learning opportunities that address student learning needs, providing a measure of support and advocacy, and assessing work performance" (Maidment; 2001:284). Bogo and Vayda (1998) in Mak (2013:13) also suggest that

> the method of governance over fieldwork supervision and professional supervision create a difference in needs for supervision, for example, fieldwork supervision is provided within an institution or college setting whereby decisions are typically made by consensus. Professional social workers, however, operate in more bureaucratic organisations where authority may be centralised and hierarchal in nature, thus inherently changing the dynamics of the supervisory relationship.

In conclusion, fieldwork supervision is focused on the educational needs of students, while staff/ professional supervision focuses on job performance of the worker and meeting organisational goals.

**4.4. The importance of the fieldwork placement of students**

In this study, the term fieldwork placement is used to refer to an arranged and approved placement of student social workers in an agency or organisation for the purpose of social work experiential learning. Fieldwork could not be undertaken if it did not make meaningful contributions to the training of students. The importance of fieldwork placement is echoed by Kaseke (1986:55), who avows that "fieldwork is an instrument of socialisation since it prepares the student for a future role as a social work practitioner." Furthermore, he points out that a well-structured and meaningful fieldwork placement improves the student's perception of the social work profession and the kind of problems the organisation addresses. Ajibo, Mbah, and Anazonwu (2017:104) aver that it is during fieldwork practice placement that students integrate theory and practice, that is, learning by doing. This is the chance for entering the profession of social work where students are afforded opportunities to attend to clients with real problems. It is through attending to clients that students develop professional skills and competency.

Furthermore, the CHE (2013:16) states that "some qualifications will be designed to integrate theory and practice through the incorporation of work-integrated learning into the curriculum." Vocational programmes and professional degrees are examples of orientated qualifications through which fieldwork or WIL may be incorporated at all levels of the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework. Moreover, the South African Council on Higher Education (2011:6) notes that fieldwork (or WIL) provides several advantages:

- *Academic benefits* - such as improved general academic performance, enhancement of interdisciplinary thinking, and increased motivation to learn.

- *Personal benefits* - such as increased communication skills, teamwork, leadership, and cooperation.

- *Career benefits* - for example, career clarification, professional identity, and the development of positive values and ethics.

- *Skills development* - including increased competence and increased technical knowledge and skills.

### 4.4.1. Purpose of fieldwork placement

Fieldwork placement does not only serve to meet delivery of the curriculum purpose as outlined in the training institution's booklets, but also the development of the future professional. Ford and Jones (1987: 64) therefore rightly state that the main purpose of the fieldwork placement is to afford students the chance to attend to clients in the real world, rather than simulation and role plays that are normally done in early years of training. The main duty of the supervisor is to create opportunities for students.

### 4.4.2. Objectives of fieldwork placement

Fieldwork placement of students serves various objectives in the BSW curriculum. Panda and Nayak (2012:15) mention the following objectives as primary to fieldwork placement of students:
- To advance professional skills through practical learning;
- To utilise attained knowledge for the exploration of a problem and choosing the most suitable methods of providing solution to it;
- To advance the skills for providing solutions at all levels of social work practice;
- To advance the skills necessary for professional social work practice at a certain level of social work training; and
- To provide synchronised opportunities for the integration of classroom learning and real-life situations.

### 4.4.3. Fieldwork as an essential learning environment

Institutions providing social work education strive for alignment of classroom theoretical learning into practical application as required by the SACSSP and CHE. This dovetails with the work of D'Mello and Monteiro (2016:292) who states that "fieldwork placement plays an important part in social work education by providing an opportunity to the student to put his or her theoretical knowledge into practice during the period of training."   Resonating with this, Gulalia (2014:303) mentions that, in fieldwork practice, students are usually expected to apply professional knowledge and theory they have learnt in class.   Another more important point about fieldwork as a

learning environment is that students learn to socialise with other students who may originate from different institutions. Lit and Shek (2007) in Gulalia (2014:303) emphasise that, although fieldwork is the "doing' component of BSW curriculums, it is also a way of 'knowing' how social work practice evolves. That is, it is an introduction to the way in which the social work professional knows what is happening in the world. These objectives can be achieved when fieldwork supervisors play an expert role in training students to become competent social workers, as Gulalia, (2014:304) states.

Ford and Jones (1987: 26) postulate that a critical aim of fieldwork placement is the knowledge that students attain within the supervised social work practice environment. During fieldwork placement, students check whether they are suitable for the profession of social work or not, and match their personal attributes and their capacity to be of service to clients. It is during this period that a variety of skills develop through engagement in a variety of learning opportunities within and outside the placement agency. Ford and Jones (1987: 27) further postulate that it is during fieldwork placement that students learn to work in a team. So, students can learn not only how the agency works, what available resources are, and how the goals are realised, but also how the team functions. In so doing, students develop teamwork skills and regard his or her colleagues as models of influence. This can only be achieved when students are properly engaged and supervised by the supervisor who is determined and passionate to work with them.

### 4.4.4. The roles of fieldwork placement for student learning

Fieldwork placement is incorporated into the social work curriculum because it serves an important function. Gulalia (2014:305) argues that social work classroom-based learning

> is linked to fieldwork in practice. It is in fieldwork practice that the knowledge learnt in the class is assimilated in real life situations. This is what ultimately shapes the professional identity of the student intern. Quality fieldwork practice occurs when learning is optimal and can be individualised to the students' learning needs. In this context, it is believed that social work fieldwork practice

is designed, supervised, coordinated, and evaluated based on the criteria by which students demonstrate the achievement of program outcomes.

Gulalia (2014: 306) moreover argues that, during fieldwork, students learn the importance of receiving feedback related to their practice. The objective of providing feedback is to accept and incorporate it into future practice endeavours. The rationale for this is to assist students around improving their practice skills and equip them with essential information so that they may develop character suitable for the profession. Supervisors must create a balance between positive and negative feedback. It will be worthwhile and inspiring if the student could get positive feedback to a greater extent than negative. The supervisee must feel understood, appreciated, and respected. The supervisor must ensure that all his or her actions are encouraging and provide a supportive environment to the student. This calls for supervisors to be non-judgemental and to try and accommodate students' views as well as providing feedback that fosters students' strength to continue with practical work.

## 4.5. The significance of fieldwork supervision

The BSW curriculum across the globe regards the fieldwork component as an important section of training. The fieldwork component of the BSW programme involves students placed or working at recognised social service organisations or welfare agencies outside the universities under the guidance of the designated fieldwork supervisor. In some instances, fieldwork modules or courses require students to role play and do simulation to introduce them to professional practice. When students are in fieldwork placement, they work under a supervisor who is, in most cases, referred to as the fieldwork supervisor. In a nutshell, the supervisor's role is to provide guidance and socialise students to the profession and help them integrate theory and practice. Gulalia (2014:306) is of the view that supervision is a period for discovering practice and a period for training where the actual goal is helping students to grow. In the same vein, Kadushin and Harkness (2002:40) argue that it is through supervision where students learn to be accountable to the community they serve, as well as get to know the resources the organisation uses to service its clients. After long and intensive supervised training, the student is expected to develop what Kadushin and Harkness (2002) refer to as 'professional conscience'. For instance,

the student must be able to practice within the boundaries of the professional values, code of ethics and policies, and legislation and regulations that guide the provision of services of the employer.  Study conducted by Ncube and Ross (2018:36) revealed that students view fieldwork supervision as fundamental for building the future social worker. One of the student participants in the study indicated that "through supervision, the supervisor helped me with skills and how best to apply then as the supervisor has more experience than I do." Another student said: "the role of supervision is guiding, giving the feedback that builds us as student social workers. Guiding students and helping them to become better social workers in future." It is clear that students consider supervision to be fundamental for their pursuit to become professional social workers.

## 4.6. Summary

The chapter has covered a brief history of social work supervision and the differences between fieldwork supervision and supervision for professionals. The importance of fieldwork placement, the role of fieldwork education for students, and the differences between fieldwork supervision and staff/ professional supervision  have also been discussed. The chapter closes with a discussion about the significance of students' fieldwork supervision.

# CHAPTER 5

## FUNCTIONS OF SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISION

### 5.1. Introduction

Supervision is central to the provision of services in the social work profession. All social work professionals are expected to perform various functions as part of their daily duties. Kadushin (1992) and Skidmore (1990) focus pertinently on the functions of supervision. In South Africa, Engelbrecht (2019) has written intensively on supervision in social work.  The main functions of supervision are educational, administrative, and supportive. Other scholars, such as Weiner (1992) and Bittel and Newstrom (1990), extend these functions and include those of modelling and motivation. Although these functions have usually been discussed within the context of a fully trained registered and working professional, they are also applicable to social work trainees during fieldwork practice placement.  Lager (2010:192) claims that supervision in fieldwork practice is the relationship between a student and a supervisor who supervises the progress of the student during the fieldwork placement experience.  This chapter centres on the general functions of supervision in social work. Supervision in social work serves different functions, and each function is used for development of the worker, including the student social worker.

### 5.2. Functions of social work supervision

As indicated, supervision in social work professions serves different functions. These functions are applicable to professional social work practice of staff members and in fieldwork practice placement of students. These functions are discussed below.

### 5.2.1. Administrative function

The social work profession engages clients on a problem-solving process on a daily basis. Therefore, all the work done by the social workers must be properly managed within set timelines. The administrative function of social work supervision is described by Kadushin (1992:19) as a process of ensuring that the work within the organisation is accomplished, while control and accountability are maintained. Skidmore (1990:241) suggests that "in administration the supervisor guides and supports with management matters, including matters such as assigning of cases to supervisees,

advocating for students, monitoring and the evaluation of students' performance, appointments to committees, or any other agency work."  In the same vein, the National Association of Social Workers (2013:8) claims that administrative supervision is concerned with agency policies or organisational demands and puts emphasis on a supervisee's job performance and assigning of work.  Parker (2017:99) acknowledges that the important function of administrative responsibility emanates from report writing. Hoffmann (1990:81) mentions five processes commonly regarded as inherent in administration, viz. planning, organising, directing, controlling, and assessing. All five processes are applicable to the administrative functions of the fieldwork coordinator and the fieldwork supervisor at the two different levels at which each operates within the management of the fieldwork curriculum.

### 5.2.1.1. Planning

Planning in respect of the co-ordinator occurs on two levels. On one level, the module co-ordinator participates in the development of the fieldwork practice module. On the second, planning sets the fieldwork practice module into action around deciding what must be done during its implementation. In simple terms, this centres on the questions as to who will do what and when, and how it will be done (Hoffmann,1990:81). Hoffmann (1990)  points out that the coordinator must be knowledgeable about the human service system from which the organisations can be drawn to participate responsibly in the fieldwork placement of students.

### 5.2.1.2. Organising

Nothing could be achieved without a line-up of activities that needs to be done to help achieve the goal. Hoffmann (1990:81) argues that "the administrative process of organising operationalises the module plan by appropriately assigning activities to persons in order to fulfil the educational requirements determined by the module plan." The fieldwork coordinator has the responsibilities of assigning activities to the fieldwork supervisor and the student. The fieldwork practice supervisor will then operationalise activities to make sure that the practical outcomes are achieved.

**5.2.1.3. Directing**

The process of directing, as applied by the fieldwork coordinator, involves guiding and influencing the fieldwork supervisor and the student.  It consists not only of advising them about what to do, but also of explaining the reason behind the imperative (Hoffmann, 1990:82).  When students are in fieldwork placement, they need to be provided with directions to take so that their daily work has a 'buy-in' from the supervisor. When mistakes are made, they can rely on their supervisor for support, knowing that he or she is aware of what they are doing.

**5.2.1.4. Controlling**

By controlling the fieldwork practice plan, the fieldwork co-ordinator keeps it on track. This involves monitoring the teaching-learning process across the individual practice programme, checking the appropriateness of opportunities selected, checking these for quality and consistency, and taking corrective actions where necessary (Hoffmann, 1990:82). For Silence (2017:51), "control measures the effectiveness of programmes for quality assurance, protection of insufficient resources and effective forecasting." In a nutshell, controlling requires regular supervision of students' work so that the work is of a high quality. Regular contact with the supervisee ensures early identification of problems that may require immediate attention, so that actions will be taken as early as possible.

**5.2.1.5. Assessing**

When students are engaged with practical work, they are aware that their work will be assessed on a daily basis and, more importantly, at the end of the fieldwork placement period. Regular assessment of students' work and the module plan lead to adjustment, as Hoffmann (1990:82) states. Baum (2011:262) regards supervision as a triangle. Within this triangle, all parties are to be involved, that is, the fieldwork coordinator, fieldwork supervisor, and the student. So, all parties in the triangle must be involved in assessing students' work.

## 5.2.2. Educational function

Fieldwork of students centres on educating the future social work professional about how social work is practised. Kadushin and Harkness (2002) and Skidmore (1990) are of the view that the educational function of supervision emphasises the provision of training and orientation. This teaching function is aimed at assisting employees around enhancing their knowledge and understanding with the intention to strengthen their professional positions. It also encompasses supporting workers towards increasing and improving their social work practice skills. The supervisor's prime responsibility is that of ensuring that staff members receive all the necessary training to perform well in their positions. The educational tasks of supervision necessitate advanced teaching and technical skills. The supervisor is entrusted with the responsibility of offering the training that permits workers to realise their objectives and the skills that prepare them to do their work effectively and independently.

Regarding students, Nunev (2014:462) asserts that "the supervisor makes education interventions, through which he supports and guides the students, and encourages and mobilises them achieve their tasks by taking great responsibility, to explore problems, which have arisen, and overcome the consequent obstacle." Nadesan (2019:38) expresses the same sentiment and states that, throughout the placement period, fieldwork supervisors are entrusted with the responsibilities to provide regular and structured supervision. Structured supervision lays a foundation for review of all the work of a student so that it does not fall short of the expectations at the end of the placement. Furthermore, Nunev (ibid) mentions that the educational function of supervision stands out clearly in the case of training of social work students during fieldwork practice placement. Much of the function of the supervisor will be to 'educate' the student about how the organisation functions, procedures to be followed when attending to clients, and the process of recording and storage of documents for future reference. More importantly, students will be under daily observation and, where necessary and applicable training with the aim of improving skills may be arranged to ensure that the student performs up to the expected standard. It should also be noted that, although skills training may be required for students, not all agencies or organisations providing opportunities for fieldwork have budgets for such training.

Some of the skills deficiencies may be attended to when the students start working after having completed their degrees.

Engelbrecht (2019) highlights the most important aspect for consideration before any educational role can be assumed. He proposes that the supervisor should first create an inventory of job-specific outcomes and complete a personal development assessment register and design a personal development plan, followed by contracting, implementation and evaluation (see supervision cycle in Chapter 6). This will help the supervisor determine what educational activities should be arranged to meet the outcomes. The educational functions of supervision should not be viewed and assumed in isolation. Once the training has been provided and the supervisee starts working towards addressing the agreed upon goal, support, and guidance are inevitable (Parker, 2017: 22). The supportive function of supervision is described below.

### 5.2.3. Supportive function

Students require a greater degree of support in their work. Supervisors need to give students assurance that they are there for them, also when errors are made. Garthwait (2011:38) claims that:

> the supportive function of supervision has to do with sustaining staff morale, cultivating a sense of teamwork, building commitment to the agency's goals and mission, encouraging workers by providing support, and dealing with work-related problems of conflict and frustration.

Garthwait (ibid.) further points out that support supervision is crucial for human service organisations where stress and burnout are common risks. The supervisor has the responsibility of creating a work environment favourable for the efficient and effective rendering of services by the worker, while supporting the supervisee, who may be affected by a variety of personal and work-related problems. Lager (2010: 220) asserts that the fieldwork supervisor accepts an important role in the professional development of a new practitioner, a major component of which is the modelling of appropriate skills in dealing with the various stressors that arise during the fieldwork

practice placement. Parker (2017:98) takes the discussion further and states that the supervisor has the responsibility of providing emotional support by encouraging the supervisee to express their views and feelings but, more importantly, the supervisor should assist the supervisee to "pinpoint the source of stress and identify means to prevent it or cope with it more positively in the future." This point is reinforced when Lager (ibid) points out that "it is necessary for supervisors to communicate to students and prepare them in advance for the types of stressors they are likely to face and need to develop coping skills at the beginning of their professional careers." Students and supervisors need to develop means by which they can resolve the many challenges they may come across during their practical training. They need to be conscious of common stressors in the organisation so that they are not caught off-guard when these occur. These assertions by various authors indicate a strong acknowledgement that practical work can be stressful for students as well. Some ways of introducing students to the organisational stressors is briefing and debriefing them during fieldwork. Pearson and Smith (1986, cited by Mackenzie, 2002:83) defines briefing as "orienting a person to an experience, which includes the instruction, goals and rules within which participants in the activity can achieve their goals." Debriefing is defined by Lederman (1984), as cited in Markulus and Strang (2003:177), as a verbal conversation where student social workers and supervisors are involved in a question-and-answer meeting aimed at guiding students through a reflective process about learning. It should therefore be noted that students will, from time to time, experience stressful situations that need supervisors' attention. Engaging them in a reflective process where they can ventilate their feelings will make them feel at ease. Having said that, it must be stressed that orientation of students should occur as soon as they start with fieldwork.

### 5.2.4. Modelling function

It is generally accepted that the supervisor must display behaviour that he or she would like to see from their supervisee. Bittel and Newstrom (1990:236) assert that the modelling function, which is also referred to as the direct observation of the supervisor, encompasses situations in which an experienced worker displays the performance of an important profession's competencies while, at the same time, elucidating processes to be followed as well as the purpose for doing them. Ncube (2019:41)

argues that "the supervisor models appropriate behaviour, which the supervisee can enact or exhibit with service users". Simply put, modelling is all about learning by observing the supervisor performing the job. In similar vein, Linford and Marshall (2014) indicate that, in role modelling, supervisors portray 'values and behaviours' in the workplace that are observed and emulated, thus potentially moulding how students learn and develop. This is reinforced when Lager (2010:201) claims that most students prefer this function above others in that "they can learn a great deal when they can watch their supervisor in individual sessions, read reports written by the supervisor, and observe him or her in other actions such as staff meetings and conferences. One way of doing this is for the supervisor to allow student to sit in and work jointly during sessions with clients."

This typically means that the supervisor must see himself or herself as a professional person worthy of being emulated by the student social worker. Any behaviour, including unprofessional conduct, may have positive and negative impacts on the future of the upcoming professional. Therefore, it is important that the supervisor behave in a manner that does not bring the profession of social work into disrepute.

### 5.2.5. Motivation function

Successful completion of fieldwork placement objectives is centred on some level of motivation by the student. A student can achieve nothing without this. Garrison (1997:26) defines motivation as the "perceived value and anticipated success of learning goals." For Weiner (1992), motivation is an internal motivational influence that directs an individual to do things in a certain way. Therefore, it is the duty of the fieldwork supervisor to influence students to deliver effective and efficient services to the clients. Wonnacott (2012:30) argues that a unified approach to supervision necessitates supervisors to motivate and encourage students, and be a leader in the professional practice of social work. Good supervisors do not just work in accordance with the supervision policy, but are also passionate about their work and are interested in developing the supervisees which, in turn, promotes positive outcomes for their clients. Wonnacott (2012) further points out that they need to understand that being a leader requires them to develop high quality working relationships with those around them (these are students in this study).

Harmse (1999:56) asserts that "for the supervisor to carry out the motivational function of social work supervision effectively, he needs to understand and be able to implement the correct motivation theories to the right person at the right time and at the right place." Harmse (ibid) classifies motivational theories according to physiological theories, cognitive theories, and social/ behavioural theories. Physiological theories maintain that the manner in which people behave is shaped by the existence of basic needs, because they are inspired to gratify these needs. In contrast, cognitive theories affirm that, before individuals behave in a particular way, they first make a mindful choice concerning the consequences of their action and the benefit of such behaviour. Social or behaviourist theories acknowledge the effects of societal and environmental factors on the behaviour of an individual. These theories can play a critical role in providing strategies for motivation, given that it is the responsibility of the supervisor to provide motivational conditions for social workers. By making it mandatory for social workers to elevate their professional skills and competencies and through provision of practices for professional development, the supervisor can improve motivation of workers and their job performance. Fieldwork supervisors have a responsibility to motivate their students to continue with their practical work, no matter the difficulties they may come across as they negotiate their way towards meeting practical objectives or exit from the field.

## 5.3. Summary

This chapter has given an overview of the major functions of supervision. These functions are administrative, educational, supportive, motivational, and those related to modelling. Social work supervisors are expected to perform these functions to ensure proper modelling and introduction of students to the profession of social work. Administratively, social workers are expected to assign workloads to student supervisees and ensure that all the work is documented. The educational function of supervision requires fieldwork supervisors to teach the student how things are done. This may require several one-on-one educational sessions with the student supervisee. Where necessary and practical, training may be arranged for the student. It should be noted that when the student is in practice, work-related stressors may arise that need support from the supervisor. Therefore, the supportive function of

supervision comes into play. Lastly, the fieldwork supervisor needs to model professional behaviour to the student as well as motivate the student to continue with the work.

# CHAPTER 6
## METHODS OF SUPERVISION

### 6.1. Introduction

The practice of social work supervision does not take place haphazardly. Social workers use a variety of methods when supervising students during fieldwork practice placement. As indicated, a lacuna arises in extant research since the methods of supervision have primarily been discussed within a context of staff (professional) supervision, while some of these have been accepted to be applicable during fieldwork placement of students. In social work fieldwork practice, the supervisor may choose from the different methods of supervision, as discussed in this chapter, depending on the context in which they are applied and the efficacy of each. These choices depend on the organisational culture and individual preferences. Some organisations may approve a particular method over the others.

Some individual social workers may use a combination of all the methods.

### 6.2. Methods of social work supervision

This section centres on methods of supervision in social work professional practice.

### 6.2.1. Individual supervision

Sometimes it is proper for the supervisor to have a session where there is privacy. Supervisees are more likely to open up when only two are present, in the supervision room. Garthwait (2011:39) asserts that individual supervision entails frequently prearranged, one-on-one supervision sessions between the fieldwork supervisor and the student. Kearney (1999), as cited in Coulshed, Mullender, Jones, and Thompson (2006:166), notes that individual supervision permits individual development of a student. It identifies each student's stage of professional practice development and attends to their individual, unique needs that cannot be met when discussed in a group situation. The student may talk about problems that are affecting his/ her work or has the potential to affect the work in future. Individual supervision is also an opportunity where students can receive appreciation for work well done. The UL manual for practical work (2012) indeed notes that one of the roles and responsibilities of the fieldwork supervisor is to supervise students individually and in small groups.

**6.2.1.1. Advantages of individual supervision**

The following are the advantages of individual supervision:

- The supervisee and supervisor have freedom to set the agenda without any disturbances;
- There is enough time to discuss every case the supervisee is dealing with in every session;
- The supervisor can thoroughly pay attention to the work progress of the supervisee;
- Where there are tensions, the supervisor can work on the relationship between himself or herself and the supervisee in order to pave the way for the smooth running of future supervision sessions;
- Modelling is learning by doing; therefore, the supervisee can watch the supervisor while doing the job; and
- There is high probability of confidentiality. The discussion in the supervision room may not be heard by other people (Kadushin & Harkness, 2002:390).

These advantages evidence that that the supervisee has more time to reflect on his or her practice and discuss issues, which may not be possible in the presence of others.

**6.2.1.2. Disadvantages of individual supervision**

Individual supervision has disadvantages as well. According to Kadushin and Harkness (2002:390), the first main disadvantage of individual supervision is that the student receives input or suggestions only from one person. Some of the suggestions or input may be biased and may not be helpful for the supervisee. Secondly, the supervisor and the student may disclose personal matters too closely and thus unintentionally develop an unprofessional relationship. Thirdly, in individual supervision, the student does not have the opportunity to compare his or her work with other social work students.

**6.2.2. Group supervision**

Social workers may choose group supervision over other methods depending on the agenda at hand. Doing supervision in a group has greater benefits than individual

supervision. According to Garthwait (2011: 39), group supervision entails frequently planned supervision sessions between the fieldwork supervisor and a small group of students. Nadesan (2019:40) notes that "group supervision is a viable alternative to the traditional individual modality in the context of strained agency resources for field instruction. Moreover, group supervision effectively promotes a setting of peer learning, which in turn provides a safe environment for students to share intervention strategies used with service users." Wonnacott (2012:30) warns that group supervision should not be used as replacement of the individual method where attention is given to an individual's practice developmental needs and support.  In group supervision, there may be some dominant members and some issues may be left unattended.  For Coulshed et al. (2006: 166), group supervision may be used primarily for all supervisees to get the support they need from each other as well as from the supervisor. The more valuable justification for using groupwork is that growth is stimulated when supervisees learn from one another, and this experience automatically reinforces the team. More importantly, the team becomes independent rather than dependent on the fieldwork supervisor for guidance.

### 6.2.2.1. Advantages of group supervision

According to Kadushin and Harkness (2002:398), the advantages of group supervision include the following:

- Group supervision saves time;
- Supervisees are afforded opportunities to share their experiences and can find solutions to challenging work-related problems they are experiencing;
- Supervisees can receive emotional support from members of the group;
- There is a high probability of morale increase when supervisees reveal shared work-related problems. Supervisees will accept what they are going through as normal and universal when others share their experiences (the concepts of universalisation and normalisation);
- In group supervision, supervisees can evaluate their potential by checking others' work;
- Some supervisees are more comfortable learning in a group setting;
- Group supervision promotes communication and peer-group solidity among workers;

- A group that is multiracial in nature offers opportunities for multicultural learning. In addition, Hawkins and Shohet (2012:178) assert that "the group can provide a way for a supervisor to test out their emotional or intuitive response to the material presented by checking if other group members have had the same response."

### 6.2.2.2. Disadvantages of group supervision

Like any other method of supervision, group supervision has disadvantages, too. Kadushin and Harkness (2002:399) mention that the main disadvantage is that group supervision pays greater attention to general, shared needs of supervisees in the group. Group supervision cannot accommodate for the individual needs of any one worker. Furthermore, problems are more likely to arise if relationship difficulties develop among group members. Supervisees may be uncomfortable about getting critical feedback, which may cause absenteeism among some group members. Supervisees may also find it difficult to control the large group, especially when supervisees have organised themselves to work against the supervisor.

### 6.2.3. Informal supervision

Time does not always permit for supervisors to have formal supervision sessions. This could be precipitated by supervising many workers or students and, sometimes, by using distance between the supervisor and the supervisees. Coulshed et al. (2006:167) contend that informal supervision

> is unavoidable and necessary, as one aspect of the support offered. It can be useful as an addition, either when the staff member is new in the post and needs to feel that he or she can 'pop in' for practical information or advice, or in a crisis when an individual needs immediate help. Within the parameters of easy access, the supervisor might witness an incident that holds tremendous learning potential for the novice worker. The supervisor can point out the strengths and the novice can return to his/ her work with a clearer sense of what to try and what not to try in future.

It should be noted that the informal supervision model cannot be relied on. Most of the work discussed during informal meetings is likely not to be recorded, and there will be no frame of reference in future engagements. Informal conversations do not provide

supervisees with opportunities to plan their agenda, making it difficult for supervisees to reflect on their work.

### 6.2.4. Formal supervision

This method of supervision involves frequent organised supervision sessions between the supervisee and the supervisor. The supervision session is planned in advance and the supervisee is invited to contribute to the agenda. Coulshed et al. (2006:168) argue that formal supervision which is aimed at developing practice where the supervisee can account to the supervisor is distinguished by the following features – it enjoys each of the following characteristics or features:

*Structure -* a formal structure for the supervision is made clear to the supervisee. Structure refers to the formats for conducting supervision, such as individual supervision, group supervision, or a combination of these formats. This is needed to ensure enough time for preparation, and it has a flexible agenda and time limits.

*Regularity -* Regardless of the structure used, the supervision should be conducted on a regular basis. It is easy for a busy supervisor to fail to formalise the regularity of supervision and, as a result, supervision is deferred or totally avoided.

*Focus -* It has aims and objectives for the sessions, which are clearly stated and, where necessary, revised from time to time.

S*etting* - There must be a context within which supervision is undertaken and which features as a basis for any discussions about strategies; and, since the organisational context has implications for practice, it must be at the forefront of supervisory discussions.

A r*ecord-keeping system* - This consists of a planned agenda and a note of points discussed, action to be taken, by whom and when, and a note on any issues that are to be referred elsewhere. Future training needs can be noted and acted upon, and both parties have a record of each supervision session just in case a need arises when

they need to refer. It is good practice to alternate between supervisor and supervisee when it comes to taking the notes.

*Evaluation -* The supervision itself should be evaluated. It is the responsibility of the supervisor to periodically solicit formal and informal feedback about the supervision practice they are conducting (Coulshed et al. 2006:168; Munson, 2002:12).

It is therefore clear that formal supervision should be encouraged at all times, especially where the emphasis is on orienting students as to how social work is done, including how supervision is done. When supervisors use this method, they can track progress made by the student, unlike in the case of the informal session.

All the formal supervision features discussed above cannot be achieved unless the formal supervision process is followed. Parker (2017:102) argues that the function of supervision, as discussed in Chapter4, and the methods of supervision, as found in Chapter 6, are embedded in the supervision process. The supervision process is pioneered by Engelbrecht (2019:175), who proposes a cyclical supervision process that  tracks progress made by the supervisee towards achieving intended outcomes. The cyclical supervision process is illustrated in Figure 6.1.  below.
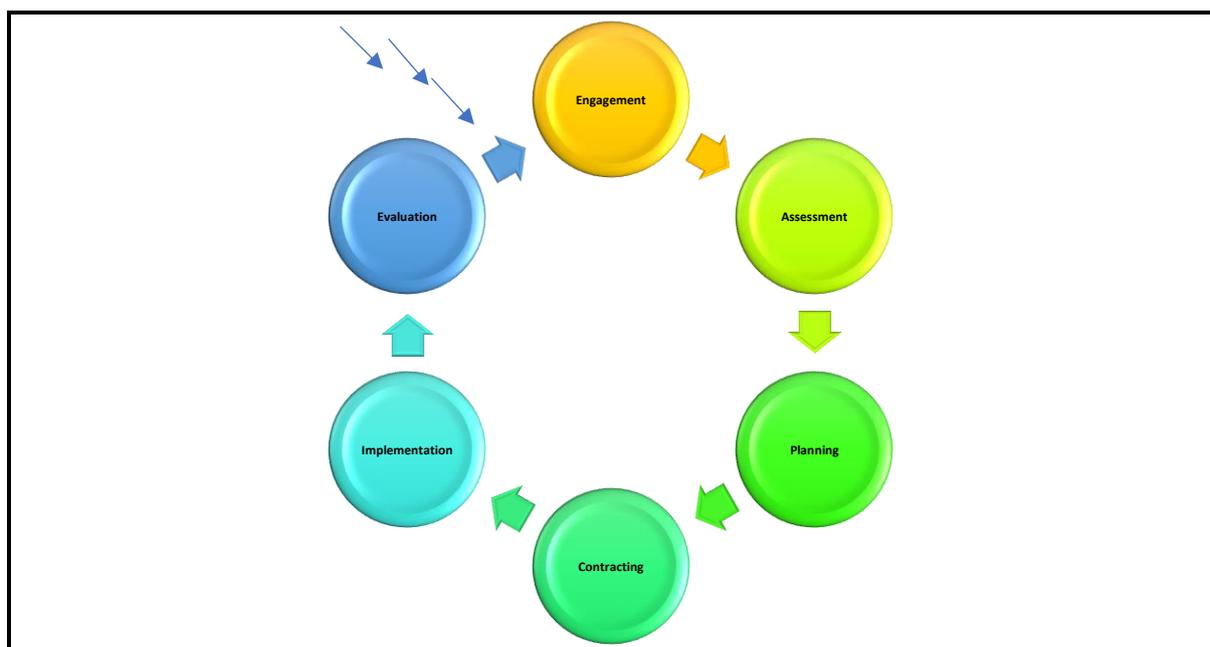


**Figure 6.1: The cyclic supervision process (Engelbrecht, 2019:175).**

Each phase of supervision as depicted above are briefly discussed in tandem with its associated tasks:

### 6.2.4.1. Phases

Below are the phases of supervision which Englebrecht (2019) suggested.

### 6.2.4.1.1. Phase 1: Engagement

The supervisor's task in this phase of the supervision process is to "create an inventory of job-specific competencies" (Engelbrecht, 2019:176). Parker (2017:104) argues that phase one sets a foundation for the supervisory relationship. Formulating competencies and the creation of standards to measure the achievement of the competencies provide the supervisor with an indication of what needs to be done for the supervision outcome to succeed.  Engelbrecht (ibid.) provides examples of competencies, including knowledge, skills, and values relating to applicable policies, legislation, and statutory processes; social work methodologies; engagement with service users; assessments; contracting with service users; integration of theories, perspectives , and models; documentation; utilisation of organisation-specific intervention programmes; management of service delivery programmes; and evaluation and monitoring of service delivery programmes.

### 6.2.4.1.2.  Phase 2: Assessment

Phase two of the supervision process centres on completing a personal development assessment register. This will depend on the list of competencies identified in the inventory of job-specific competencies.  Parker (2017:105) argues that this is a crucial information-gathering step that should be taken seriously before planning is conducted in the next step. The supervisor is expected to help the supervisee to specify his or her learning needs, strengths, and capabilities, which will form the basis for planning (Engelbrecht, 2019). In fieldwork, the social worker needs to understand the education-specific competencies that need to be addressed during the placement period. This does not hamper the supervisor around adding other social work job-specific competencies that are significant for professional development of the student

social worker. Once the personal development assessment process is complete,  the supervisor can move to the planning phase, which is discussed below.

### 6.2.4.1.3. Phase 3: Planning

The third phase of supervision involves designing a personal development plan. The successful implementation of this phase depends on the success of the preceding two phases.   A personal development plan is described by Engelbrecht (2019:178) as "a tool (which may be in the form of matrix) that clearly indicates identified challenges (learning or development needs) in order of priority, based on the personal development assessment."  This phase defines what the supervisee will learn, how the supervisee will learn it, and how the supervisee will be assessed. This can be achieved best when the supervisor has developed a monitoring and evaluation plan. Parker (2017) argues that each competency must have a specific outcome, supervision activities that will help in accomplishing the outcome, and assessment method/s to be used.

### 6.2.4.1.4. Phase 4: Contracting

The fourth phase of the supervision process centres on work agreement, also referred to as a contract. The work agreement determines the nature of the supervision relationship according to Engelbrecht (2019). A supervision contract is usually done in written form and both parties are expected to sign it. The signature is a symbol of the commitment of both parties to engage in activities aimed at addressing the intended outcomes identified in the personal development plan. In fieldwork, once the student has entered the agency and assigned a supervisor, it is crucial that the two enter into this kind of agreement, which specifies what needs to be done, how, and within what time frame. All planned activities and contract agreements must take into cognisance the deadline at which students are expected to finish their practicum.  The supervision contract should specify the outcomes, tasks, roles, and responsibilities of supervisor and supervisee and the frequency and duration of supervision sessions. Where there is a need to cancel or postpone the supervision sessions, this must be communicated. The supervision contract should also specify boundaries of the supervisor-supervisee relationship, methods of supervision to be used, as well as methods to be used for reviews and evaluations.

### 6.2.4.1.5. Phase 5: Implementation

Phase five of the supervision process centres on the execution of supervision sessions and documentation. According to Engelbrecht (2019) and Parker (2017), supervision sessions are regular meetings between supervisor and supervisee in which stated outcomes are worked out in line with the supervisee's personal development plan. In the case of a student involved in fieldwork placement, implementation should help the student to achieve the outcomes specified by the universities and those of the field supervisor. Successful implementation of this phase is followed by evaluation, which is discussed below.

### 6.2.4.1.6. Phase 6: Evaluation

The final phase is the evaluation of supervision process. This phase involves performance appraisal and launching a new cycle in the case of a social work professional (Engelbrecht, 2019). The launching of a new cycle may not be possible for students, since their stay in the agency is limited to three to four months. The fieldwork supervisor's task in this phase is to check if all the requirements, as set forth by the university, have been achieved. This must be done at least two to three weeks before the conclusion of the fieldwork placement so that, if certain outcomes have not been achieved, these can be attended to during the remaining period of placement.

### 6.2.5. Mentoring and coaching

Like the modelling function of supervision, mentoring is normally done by an experienced worker who acts as a role model.  A mentor is defined by Dennen (2004:817) as

> one who mediates expert knowledge for novices, helping that which is tacit become more explicit. The two most common uses of the words *mentoring* are to describe (a) a professional development relationship in which a more experienced participant assists a less experienced one in developing a career and (b) a guiding relationship between an adult and a youth focused on helping the youth realise his or her potential and perhaps overcome some barriers or challenges.

In mentoring and coaching, the supervisor offers guidance and support. Therefore, it is expected that student social workers are mentored by an experienced social work supervisor.

### 6.2.6. Indirect supervision

Supervision may also be conducted indirectly. Coulshed et al. (2006:168) are of the view that indirect supervision is a method generally preferred by most supervisors who are not able to work directly and observe what their supervisees are doing. In most cases, indirect supervision becomes handy when the supervisor works in a different office away from their supervisees. This method requires the supervisor to rely on a variety of discussion methods, reading through records, and possibly experiential exercises such as role play or simulations.

### 6.2.7. Peer supervision

Social workers may provide expert advice or supervision to each other, especially in the absence of their designated supervisors. Skidmore (1990:217) contends that "peer supervision involves frequently arranged meetings attended by a small group of social workers who assume responsibility for providing guidance and suggestions to each other." In case of students on placement, this method involves students supervising each other. This method is discouraged in the case of students during practical. In peer supervision, supervisees consult with each other when they need help. Each co-worker supervises another worker. Skidmore (ibid) claims that peer supervision is one of the methods found to be most helpful social workers, especially when the supervisor is not available.

Peer supervision, like any other method, has advantages and disadvantages. In peer supervision, workers, including students who are helping one another, are "in the same boat." Skidmore (1990: 217) contends that in group supervision

> supervisees are ordinarily sensitive to the problems, and uncertainties inherent in that position. It seems easy to identify with other workers of about the same age and experience. The main disadvantage of peer-group supervision is that

inexperienced workers may not have the knowledge and skills necessary to answer some of their questions, solve some problems, or make decisions.

Another disadvantage is that supervisees do not have a mandate to confront or reprimand each other when situations call for these. This may as well derail the meeting. Is it also important to note that, in peer supervision, no-one has authority over the other.

### 6.2.8. Virtual supervision

Virtual supervision is carried out by using technology such as computers, e-mail, or web supervision. In world of modern technology, supervisors may resort to various communication mediums to keep contact with the student learner. Such mediums may incorporate, among other things, WhatsApp, Skype, Facebook video calls and, recently, the use of Zoom and Microsoft Teams meetings (Garthwait, 2011:39). This method requires advanced technological skills from supervisors and should be communicated with students as early as possible if such supervision is to take place.

### 6.2.9. Co-supervision

It is common that the supervisor may not always be available to offer supervision to students, where co-supervision becomes an option. Coulton and Krimmer (2005:154) define co-supervision as "two or more workers who supervise a student. This means that a student will have more than one social worker who supervises him/ her." They further point out that co-supervision is an efficient and beneficial model that offers students increased accessibility to support and advice, greater breadth of knowledge, and diverse learning opportunities in situations where resources are scarce, the supervisee will learn better by having another supervisor with expertise in other services, and he or she may be placed with two fieldwork supervisors, referred to as co-fieldwork supervisors. These may or may not be in the same organisation. Co-supervision placement arrangements afford opportunities for students to experience practice in different settings rather than be confined to one placement agency throughout the placement period (Australian Learning and Teaching Council,

2010:33). It also affords a good opportunity for students to find areas of interest where they can channel their career after completion of their studies.

### 6.2.10. Live supervision (direct observation)

Supervisors need to be assured of what students or workers are doing in their absence. Therefore, there is a need to directly observe them when they attend to clients.  Lager (2010: 198) argues that "regardless of the particular model of supervision used, there is no substitute for directly observing a student's work with a client." In practice, Skidmore (1983:221) mentions that live supervision involves direct observation of a student and gives the supervisor an opportunity for immediate guidance. Live supervision is encouraged during fieldwork placement of students. Apart from being present in the interview room, the supervisor may accompany a student to home visits where he/ she listens and observes the interview between the student and a client. The advantage of live supervision is that students get immediate feedback and correction so that clients receive good quality service.  Its disadvantage is that that the student's fieldwork practice may be negatively affected by the nervousness of being observed by the fieldwork supervisor.

### 6.2.11. Ad hoc supervision

In workplaces, not every decision can be made using formal organisational procedures. Some matters are urgent and require immediate answers and decisions, while others may be banked for formally scheduled meetings or supervision sessions. Therefore, in cases of emergency, ad hoc supervision sessions are necessary. Garthwait (2011:39) refers to such a session as an unprepared short-term supervision period for discussing specific or pressing issues. This method is necessary when urgent decisions  must be made. Fieldwork supervisors may also host unarranged meetings with students to provide quick answers and communicate important issues.

### 6.3.  Summary

The chapter has outlined the models proposed by different renowned scholars about social work supervision. These models are include those related to the individual, group, and peers as well as formal, live, informal, co-supervision, virtual, mentoring and coaching, and indirect supervision. Although these models were written within the

context of staff (professional) supervision, they are applicable for fieldwork practice placement of students.

The choice of method depends on the context in which it is to be practised. Some organisations prescribe methods to be used, while others leave it open for social workers to use combinations of all the methods discussed in this chapter.

# CHAPTER 7
## THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE UNIVERSITY FIELDWORK
## COORDINATOR, FIELDWORK SUPERVISOR, AND THE STUDENT SOCIAL WORKER

### 7.1. Introduction

For the BSW programme to be complete and successful, various role players shape its fieldwork practice component. Each role player must execute their duties diligently in the best interest of the successful outcome of the fieldwork. Hoffmann (1990:52) regards the training of social workers as a tripartite alliance between three key role players. These are the university through the fieldwork coordinator who represents the department of social work, the fieldwork supervisor representing the host agency, and the social work student undergoing training. Fieldwork in social work education refers to training and education. It is learning by doing (Panda & Nayak, 2012:14). Therefore, all role players must 'do' the work associated with their positions.  This present chapter centres on the roles and responsibilities of university fieldwork coordinators, agency supervisors, and the student as important key role players in social work education.

### 7.2. The roles and responsibilities of the fieldwork coordinator

It is common practice for universities providing social work education to have a dedicated person who oversees the fieldwork activities of the programme. This dedicated person is referred to as 'fieldwork coordinator'. In this study, this term refers to the university staff/ faculty member assigned to manage the fieldwork component of the BSW programme, including working with social services agencies to identify suitable placement for students; writing and implementing memoranda of understanding; preparing students for placement; holding information sessions with assigned agency-based supervisors prior to placement; and tracing and evaluation of student placement progress. The South African Council on Higher Education (2011:55) emphasises that, for a placement to be beneficial and more satisfying, students should have an academic as well as a fieldwork supervisor. In Maxwell (1999:90) claims that

the success of the student practicum, while for the most part dependent on the effectiveness of the supervision and instruction offered by the agency supervisor, is also influenced by the role played by the university fieldwork practice coordinator who has overall responsibility for the practical as part of the BSW programme.

The university fieldwork coordinator plays various roles in BSW programmes. Most of the universities, including UNIVEN and UL, have designated fieldwork coordinators whose roles are to ensure the smooth running of the fieldwork components of the BSW programme. The subsequent section highlights some of the roles of the fieldwork coordinators.

### 7.2.1. Administration responsibilities

The fieldwork coordinator carries administrative responsibility regarding placement of students. Below is the list of the administrative responsibilities of the fieldwork coordinator as advocated by Hoffmann (1990: 83):

- Planning and facilitating fieldwork placement;
- Recruiting, selecting, and appointing organisations to provide fieldwork learning;
- Confirming acceptance and informing students of organisations willing to host them for placement;
- Assess eligibility of students to undertake fieldwork, including legal requirements such as registrations with the SACSSP;
- Establishment of and regular communication between the university and the organisation; and
- Monitoring the teaching-learning process.

### 7.2.2. Field visits

The duty of visiting students while on placement is fundamental. The UNIVEN fieldwork practice manual (2019) states that

students and agency supervisors will be visited by the department of social work fieldwork practice supervisors at least once during placement. The

university fieldwork supervisors will contact the agency supervisor to negotiate a date for mid-placement liaison visit. Students should have enough time on placement before the visit but early enough to allow for the redirection of particular aspects of the placement.

The visit will include discussions around the following:

- The development and implementation of the plan;
- The nature and outcomes of supervision sessions;
- The monitoring of progress in terms of knowledge, skills, use of self, understanding of theory in practice, and application of ethical standards;
- The identification of areas of strength and how to develop them further;
- Identification of areas for development and discussion of ways to maximise such development; and
- The identification of learning to be achieved in the remainder of the placement and any other matters/ concerns that might be identified during the visit.

Dovetailing with this list, Liu, Sun, and Anderson (2013:183) state that "another indispensable aspect of quality control once student enter field placement pertains to monitoring of the placement by the universities." Shortcomings in the field placements are likely, so it is required of the social work fieldwork curriculum to institute and apply monitoring procedures. Hoffmann (1990:84), who mentions that nothing can satisfactorily replace the personal visit of the fieldwork practice coordinator, also emphasises the importance of the visit. It engenders the sharing of information about how the placement is proceeding.  Personal contact allows for the projection of a cooperative, concerned, and caring stance on behalf of the university towards a prospective partner in education, which helps to lay a sound foundation for future collaboration. Face to face communication furthermore allows for in-depth clarification of fieldwork objectives and sharing of any other issues that may be deemed necessary for the enhancement of fieldwork practice placement (Hoffmann,1990). A study conducted by Baum (2010: 7) has demonstrated that students feel disgruntled when university supervisors fail to visit them during their fieldwork placement.

### 7.2.3. Monitoring and evaluation

The provision of social work professional service is grounded on primary and secondary methods of practice. The primary methods are casework, group work, and community work, whereas the secondary ones are administration (management) and research. Monitoring and evaluation are among the stages of development of each method and play important roles. Therefore, monitoring and evaluation of student's work and progress must be viewed as part of fieldwork processes. According to Mertens and Wilson (2012:211), monitoring involves "an ingoing assessment of a programme's progress toward intended outcomes." In the case of fieldwork and placement of students, "assessing the quality of the student's placement experience and the extent to which the aims of the placement have been achieved is important. The liaison visitor also plays an important role in monitoring and assessing a student's performance together with the fieldwork supervisor" (Cleak & Wilson, 2007). If monitoring is done regularly, mistakes can be attended to. This subsequently increases chances that the student may not fall short of fieldwork expectations.

### 7.2.4. The educator's role

Teaching in social work is an endless process, even for fully trained and working professionals. In the case of students, teaching continues even when they are doing fieldwork. The liaison visitor acts as the vital link between classroom teaching and the placement agency and provides educational support for the placement (Cleak & Wilson, 2007). Students may be having trouble around integrating classroom learning into practice. The liaison visitor will be in a good position to answer questions arising from practical experience.

### 7.2.5. Support and problem-solving

There is no doubt that problems may arise in the workplace. The university liaison visitor offers support and problem solving and serves as mediator if difficulties develop during fieldwork placement (Australian Teaching and Learning Council, 2010:37). These field support visits are fundamental for students, the university, and fieldwork supervisors. A study conducted by Brown, Herd, Humphries, and Paton (2005:87) about the roles of the lecturer in practice placement shows that

the need for support from the lecturer was the predominant feature of the discussions. There was a feeling of abandonment when students moved away from university into fieldwork placements. Some participants reported that they felt alone, and a friendly face made a difference to their experience of placement, even when the lecturer's visits were infrequent.

To summarise the roles of the university fieldwork coordinator, CHE (2011:55) lists the following functions and responsibilities of an academic supervisor:
- Establishing learning outcomes;
- Establishing effective lines of communication between the student and the organisations;
- Assessing the student's fieldwork performance together with the fieldwork supervisor; and
- Generally monitoring fieldwork issues.

## 7.3. The roles and responsibilities of the fieldwork supervisor

Fieldwork supervisors perform different roles and carry large responsibilities when students are occupied by fieldwork practice placement. These roles and responsibilities are discussed below.

### 7.3.1. Student's orientation

The significance of student's orientation cannot be overstated. Fieldwork supervision starts immediately when students enter the organisation that provides fieldwork education and make contact with the supervisor. It is common for students to feel anxious during their first weeks of fieldwork placement (Chui, 2009:14). Nadesan (2019) asserts that orientation is one of the important exercises valued by the universities, while Garthwait (2011:43) is of the view that orientation is one of the first stages that students pass through during orientation. At this stage, students may feel anxious, insecure, and unconfident. Hoffmann (1990: 104) asserts that the first day at the fieldwork practice agency is of special significance. It is necessary for students to be taken on a small journey for them to understand how the agency works before making any contact with clients. More importantly, this provides an opportunity where students get used to the person who will be supervising them for the next three to four

months. The fieldwork supervisor must be there to welcome the students and introduce himself or herself to other agency personnel. Orientation events are best scheduled in a written programme which, apart from being based on sound administrative procedures, will not only provide the student with a structured plan, but also make the student feel welcome and wanted in that preparation had been made for his or her arrival. The purpose of student orientation is to acquaint him or her with the policies, management, and service procedures, identifying specific administrative procedures to be followed in the execution of his or her assigned workload.

Lager (2010:209) argues that a well-organised and detailed orientation around the roles and responsibilities of the student in the agency helps the student understand what the supervisor expects as well as weaknesses of the organisation when it comes to meeting his or her expectations in addition to the boundaries applicable to the actions of the student. It is during orientation where students will be provided with information regarding the functioning of the agency, personnel, buildings, agency policies, manuals, procedures for helping clients, dress codes, and time slots for reporting for duty. The student must be advised as to the policy formulated regarding how he or she is to introduce himself or herself to clients (Lager, Hamann & Ashmore, 2010:101; Hoffmann, 1990:104). These are done to ensure that the student is well informed around the dos and don'ts of the organisations and, more importantly, of the social work profession. CHE (2011:55) notes that orienting the student into the agency or organisation is one of the key functions and responsibilities of the fieldwork supervisor.

### 7.3.1.1. Approaches towards inducting a student into fieldwork placement

Organisations providing education for students use different approaches when students start fieldwork. Some organisations will have planned an organised induction, while others may adopt a less formal approach. Ford and Jones (1987: 51) assert that "this is the period of role induction proper of the students into his or her role as a learner in the agency." They identify two basic approaches of inducting a student into the fieldwork placement.

### 7.3.1.1.1. The planned programme approaches

The value of planning cannot be overstated for the realisation of intended goals. Ford and Jones (1987:51) assert that, in a practical programme, the fieldwork supervisor engages with the student as a learner who needs an orienting session that usually lasts for a week or so. This is done to help the student feel at ease and get to know how the agency operates before he/ she starts real work with clients. This approach is also referred to as the first-hand approach to induction, where the supervisor takes the responsibility of explaining in detail how the organisation works. In this planned-programme approach, the emphasis is on educating students about the agency (personnel, resources), its work team, and outside agency partners. Ford and Jones (1987:52) further point out that the "planned induction programme may be the only opportunity in an entire career that students have to discover thoroughly the administration and resources of the organisation or agency in which they are placed, and those of other agencies with which it regularly works in partnership."

### 7.3.1.1.2. The acquire-as-you-go-along approach

In this approach, students learn as they go. This informal approach to induction is based on the notion that students will learn more about the agency and the resources when they want to use them. Information about how the agency operates flows as the students attend to clients, meet challenges, and find out how the agency can be of assistance with the help of the supervisor (Ford & Jones, 1987:52). This approach to orientation cannot be encouraged in the case of students. Students spend only three to four months in the agency. Therefore, it may not be possible for students to learn more about the organisation. Some organisations are busy and others not. Therefore, spending much time explaining how the agency works may be  of greater benefit than learning as the student meets clients or challenges.

### 7.3.1.2. Important considerations during first two weeks of placement

This section covers issues to be considered during first weeks of fieldwork practice placement.

### 7.3.1.2.1. An introduction to the work of the agency and its staff

There is no doubt that being new in the workplace brings uncertainties and anxieties. It is through introduction that the student will feel welcomed and valued.

Ford and Jones (1987:55) assert that "the act of introducing students to their immediate colleagues in the team is not a superficial courtesy, but a final act of planning, which began much earlier in the stage of pre-placement planning." For students' fieldwork placement to be effective, all staff members in the organisation must abundantly accept the student on placement. Such reception should entitle the student to participate in meetings, attend cases, and be part of any discussion that may unfold within the organisation.

### 7.3.1.2.2. An introduction to the resources of the agency and other key agencies

Students are required to achieve specified practical objectives, which require the use of resources in the agency. It is important that they are well informed of the available resources within and outside of the agency so that they may use them in the execution of their fieldwork placement plan (Ford & Jones, 1987: 56). Thorough understanding of available recourses within and outside the agency makes it easy for the student to use them, especially when quick decisions must be made in the absence of the supervisor.

### 7.3.1.2.3. An introduction to the personnel workload

One major responsibility of the fieldwork supervisor is it ensure that some work is assigned to students do. This is not only done for the purpose of meeting organisational needs, but also as part of helping the students to achieve practical objectives. Most of the time, universities prescribe a specific number of cases each student must attend, number of group (s) to be established, and number of sessions to be conducted so as to acquire some experience of how the placement agency conducts community work. They must also perform selected administrative tasks. Therefore, students need to be motivated early on to have contact with clients. At the heart of such motivation is the fieldwork supervisor who should inspire confidence in the student and assign caseloads as early as possible. Ford and Jones (1987:56) state that this is the main motivating factor for students' placement and should not be viewed as an administrative task.

## 7.3.2. The educator's role

Once the orientation is done, the fieldwork supervisor has the role of teaching professional practice skills, including ethics and values. They also select and assign responsibilities suitable to the student's individual learning needs and competencies, in line with the objectives of fieldwork practice. Some fieldwork supervisors may be a little more formal and will maintain strict professional boundaries; others may be more casual and include the student in their daily activities, home visits, and lunches. Fieldwork supervisors have responsibilities to:

- Conduct weekly supervision sessions with students;
- Read students' weekly progress recordings and provide feedback;
- Provide on-going feedback on students' performance in the field;
- Complete written evaluation of the student on a form provided by the university;
- Meet with the university fieldwork practice staff member and attend other meetings as arranged by the department of social work at the university;
- Notify the university immediately if the student's performance is less than satisfactory;
- Complete an end-of-placement evaluation report; and
- Adhere to the SACSSP code of ethics in his/ her engagement with students (Australian Learning and Teaching Council, 2010; University of Venda Fieldwork Practice Manual, 2019).

In addition, Baird (1996), as cited in Lager (2010: 209), is of the view that students should have an understanding of the following information:

- When supervisory sessions are scheduled;
- What the expectations are regarding the review of written material by the supervisor, including due dates;
- The procedure of reporting if the student will be absent;
- Protocols regarding confidentiality and how to deal with potentially harmful clients; and
- How to deal with occupational health and safety.

### 7.3.3. Planning for supervision

The fieldwork supervisor also has the responsibility of planning for supervision sessions. The following are aspects of supervision suggested by Ford and Jones (1987:6) in planning the overall supervision of a student:

- o The student will want to know that there is a planned, regular time when the supervisor will be available for them. This will help the student to plan his or her work, as it will act indirectly as a deadline within which to complete tasks.
- o Frequency and timing of supervision sessions can be negotiated. It is useful to have time-limited sessions so that the student and supervisor know what is expected. Sometimes the student would want to discuss the case immediately after attending to a client or after doing a home visit.

Ford and Jones (1987) further point out that

the expectations about the student's preparations and readiness for supervision should be made clear. The work done by the student is the focus for learning, students are required to share their experience with their supervisor, so that the work is open to be supervised. This provide the supervisor with the opportunity to confirm good work, to recognise and reinforce learning and the consequences of issues that have not been handled well.

In a nutshell, a well-planned supervision session makes the supervisor accountable for the work of the supervisee. It is easy to track where the supervisee is so as to offer further assistance where necessary, so that the supervisee can complete the task

### 7.3.4. Mediator

Problems may indubitably arise at any time during the fieldwork placement period. Therefore, one of the key roles of the supervisor is to act as a mediator between two parties in disagreement. The parties in disagreement could be a student and a fellow student or a student and a worker.  Zastrow (2010:71) mentions that the mediator's role includes "intervention in disputes between parties to help them find compromises,

reconcile differences or reach mutually satisfactory agreement." The fieldwork supervisor must be mindful of this role, because the student's satisfaction with practical work  can only be maximised when there are fewer problems.

### 7.3.5. Enabler

Enabling is like empowerment. Therefore, one of the most important roles of fieldwork supervisors is to empower students in finding solutions to the challenges they may face during fieldwork (Cummins et al. 2014:15). Students can successfully accomplish their tasks with the support and encouragement of their supervisors.

### 7.3.6. Broker

As indicated earlier, students need to know what resources are available within the agency and around the agencies including allied disciplines. Cummins et al. (2014:15) maintain that social work supervisors must provide access for the student to agencies or needed resources when necessary. Students will confidently use those outside agency resources if they are formally introduced to them.

### 7.4. Roles and responsibilities of the student

At the centre of fieldwork practice placement is the student. The student social worker is a person registered with the SACSSP in terms of Chapter 2, Section 17(a) of the Social Service Professions Act, 1978, No. 110 of 1978 as amended. All the arrangements by the fieldwork coordinator and the fieldwork supervisor should be done to ensure that the student is well received, and proper activities are assigned. The students must carry out their responsibilities professionally as instructed by the supervisor. Nicholas, Rautenbach, and Maistry (2010:15) state that professionalism necessitates the student's diligent and ethical efforts at helping clients overcome challenges. The supervisee is mandated to comply with the code of ethics for social work practice. The code of ethics sets out a general approach and provides guidelines for ethical conduct that are based on internationally accepted values and principles. The University of Limpopo Fieldwork Manual for Practical work (2012), University of Venda fieldwork Practice Manual (2019), Australian Learning and Teaching Council, (2010), and DSD and SACSSP (2012:23) detail what the student's responsibilities are regarding placement prerogatives. The students must ensure that they attend the

arranged supervision. He or she must not be reminded that they have supervision sessions; it is their responsibility to attend. Before attending supervision sessions, the supervisees must plan and prepare for supervision. These help the supervisee fully understand phenomena discussed in the supervision, and they will be able to argue with the supervisor or other group members.

In addition to the above, students have the following responsibilities:
- Developing and adhering to the fieldwork practice plan.
- Behaving in a professional manner with respect to the following:
  - Punctuality, dress, respect for clients and staff of the agency;
  - Attendance and participation in agency meetings;
  - Adherence to agency policy including that of health and safety, use of agency resources, confidentiality, completion of reports and forms, accounting for the use of time, and after hours work with clients where necessary;
  - termination of cases at the end of placement;
  - Adherence to the SACSSP Code of Professional Ethics; and
  - Completing all fieldwork placement tasks within agreed time frames.

## 7.5. Summary

Fieldwork practice placement is a tripartite partnership involving the university, the agency, and the student. The fieldwork coordinator represents the university, while the fieldwork supervisor represents the agency or organisations where students are placed for the experiential learning.  Each member of this triad alliance carries their individual responsibilities as discussed in this chapter. The major responsibilities of a student are developing and adhering to the fieldwork practice plan and preparing, attending, and participating in supervision. The agency fieldwork supervisor has the responsibility of orienting students to the organisation, assign caseload, and evaluate progress. The university fieldwork coordinator has responsibilities to carry.  To be precise, the fieldwork coordinator plans the whole fieldwork placement experience of students. These include liaising with potential organisations, conducting support visits to students during placement, and being part of the evaluation of students' work.

# CHAPTER 8

## SUPERVISORY RELATIONSHIP

### 8.1. Introduction

At the heart of social work professional practice is the building of a professional relationship with clients, which is termed 'rapport'. Social work believes that growth is stimulated when there is mutual respect between the client and the worker.  There is no doubt that rapport building is of paramount importance in the case of a student during practical work. A healthy professional relationship between the student and the supervisor determines the success of every project that the student may undertake as part of learning in the field. The supervisory relationship is the partnership and emotional bond between the supervisor and the supervisee towards change in the supervisee based on mutual agreement on the goals and tasks of supervision. If fieldwork practice objectives are to be achieved, there is a need for a satisfactory relationship between the supervisor and supervisee to develop, as espoused by White and Queener (2003:203). This chapter aims to discuss the supervisory relationship as an important element of fieldwork practice of students. The chapter discusses the significance of the supervisory relationship, the empirical findings from different research studies about the supervisory relationship, the characteristics of building the supervisory relationship, and the factors that negatively affect it.

### 8.2. Significance of supervisory relationship

The relationship between the fieldwork supervisor and the student cannot be underestimated. Sitting in a supervision session where there is a sound relationship, open discussion, and mutual respect is very satisfying and increases the chances of growth.  This is highlighted by Hopkins and Austin (2004:22), who state that "no matter what the nature of the organisation, positive relationship between supervisors and supervisees is important for supervision to be effective." Therefore, fieldwork supervisors must focus on building relationship with students during practical sessions. Weld (2012:280) notes that our existence is connected to the concept of 'interdependence', and relationship is at its centre. In addition, Pehrson et al. (2010:73) argue that "the relationship between a fieldwork practice supervisor and the social work student is an essential element in the student's growth and learning to become

a social worker." When there are challenges between the student and supervisor, students may find it difficult to reach out to the supervisor, thus affecting the entire supervision processes. A positive relationship creates an environment in which the processes of supervision can become more effective so that the student can learn, and clients receive the best service from the learning professional (Hopkins & Austin, 2004:22; Kadushin & Harkness, 2002:193). Linford and Marshal (2014) emphasise in this vein that "in relationship building, supervisors facilitate learning by being present, approachable and understanding, and satisfying the student's need to feel valued and safe." Moreover, relationship building requires of supervisors to devote their time in placement and help the students develop confidence and competence as professional trainees by building a healthy working and professional relationship with the student.

For Kadushin and Harkness (2002:194), the supervisor relationship has an effect similar to that of a client-worker relationship. The level of clients' participation in the helping process is higher and anxiety is lower when there is a positive relationship. Similarly, supervisees (students in this study) will participate in the supervision process to a greater extent when a positive relationship exists. The bond between the student supervisee and the supervisor serves as a motivation to learn. Because of the bond, the supervisee wishes to be like the supervisor, to have his or her knowledge, and begins to learn to imitate him or her.

## 8.3. Empirical findings on supervisory relationships

Research about the supervisory relationship during fieldwork of social work students is intensive. Fernandez (1998) and Knight (2000) indicate that successfully guiding students in direct practice is considered the primary role of the field instructor, and that it is pivotal to students' satisfaction during their placement experiences. A study by Tanga (2013:164) reveals that participants had mixed feelings regarding the relationship with agency supervisors. Out of 60 students who participated in the study, 85% of those supervised by social workers reported warm feelings and attachment. Hall and Barlow (2007) also conducted a study about the emotion and tension in social work field education, which  engendered findings different from those of Tanga (ibid).  The findings revealed that students in need of direction and support were critical of field instructors who were unsupportive. Some students reported that problematic

relationships with their field instructors left them feeling very vulnerable. Relationships with field instructors were strained when students received unsupportive feedback from their field instructors or experienced value differences or interpersonal conflicts with the field instructors.

Garthwait (2011:38) points out that the quality of the practicum is closely tied to the nature and quality of the teacher-student relationship. In the same vein, Noble (2011:7) demonstrates that students' access to good quality supervision underpins the effectiveness of fieldwork, that is, supervision that teaches them what social work is, how to perform social work tasks, how to build relationships, how to integrate theory and practice and reflect on its efficacy, and how to develop the necessary awareness for effective practice. Much of a student's learning on placement is mediated through a student-supervisor relationship. The relationship helps define and structure the range of learning tasks and experiences at hand (Cleak & Smith, 2012:244). These assertions evidence that students need harmonious relationships with supervisors when they enter the field.

Falender and Shafranske (2008: 5) suggest that "the supervisory relationship is one of three interconnected pillars upon which supervision is based, the other two pillars being enquiry, and educational praxis." Bennet (2008:97) points out that, theoretically, the supervisee will feel confident to explore the environment and develop a professional sense of self when the supervisor's care giving provides a secure base for learning. Research by Fortune and Abrahamson (in Bennett, 2008:97) on fieldwork practice suggests that the supervisors' support, availability, openness, and trust are characteristics that predict successful supervision in the eyes of new students. Furthermore, Kadushin and Harkness (cited in Bennett, 2008: 198) indicate that, when the supervisory relationship is positive, the supervisee is more receptive to feedback and more likely to identify with the supervisor, while they can use the supervisor relationship as a model for qualities found in the client–worker relationship. Munson (2002) adds that supervisor and supervisee must work to create a trusting climate. He also goes on to say that "the supervisor must be diligent to avoid using the information learned in the supervisory process against the supervisee." Therefore, it is important that the student–supervisor relationship should be enhanced to facilitate mastery of identified skills.

## 8.4. Characteristics of building supervisory relationship

Building a healthy supervisory relationship requires a strong commitment by the supervisor. The way the supervisor communicates and relates with the students determines the effectiveness of the relationship. Potgieter (1998:99) outlines several characteristics of building the relationship, as discussed briefly below.

### 8.4.1. Acceptance and respect

Communication is enhanced when people feel accepted and respected, irrespective of their unique traits. When we accept students and treat them with respect, it means that we value them as people of inherent worth. A relationship is built when the students are treated with dignity, regardless of their appearances and other personal differences (Cormier & Cormier, 1991, cited in Potgieter, 1998:99). When working with students, social work supervisors need to recognise that students are unique in a variety of ways, including when it comes to personality, emotional and physical strength, past experiences, emotional reactions, self-identity, and behavioural patterns (Zastrow, 2010:97). Therefore, fieldwork supervisors need to accept and respect the individual differences of students.

### 8.4.2. Commitment and obligation

Nothing is more satisfying than knowing that the supervisor will be committed to help the student go through the learning path. Kottler and Brown (1992, cited in Potgieter, 1998:104), argue that, for a relationship to function properly, there must be some agreed-upon rules and mechanisms to organise the being-together of the fieldwork supervisor and the student. Once the fieldwork supervisor has decided to work with the student towards achievement of practical outcomes, it is assumed that everything will be done to enhance the student's growth.

### 8.4.3. Warmth

In most situations, kindness and friendliness make people feel welcomed. In addition, acceptance and non-judgemental attitudes create warmth and a feeling of being cherished in supervisees. Warmth is defined by Ross and Deverell (2004:44) as "non-

possessive caring, gentleness and friendliness as opposed to a cold, clinical and technical approach." Ways of communicating warmth is through attentive listening and providing positive feedback (Potgieter, 1998:101). Students enter the field not as empty vessels, but with a high degree of knowledge from classroom learnings. Therefore, listening to them and giving positive feedback inspires their confidence. Growth is stimulated when their contributions are appreciated.

### 8.4.4. Clarity of goals and activities

Setting goals alone is not enough: they must be clear. Once the goals are clear, activities must be put in place to ensure that they are achieved. Clarification of goals and activities assist the fieldwork supervisor and the student to stay focused on what needs to be done, by whom and a what time. In a way, this serves as a boundary for supervisor and student that will minimise unnecessary conflict. Clarifying goals and assigning activities that help the student achieve them is more rewarding in a supervisory relationship.

### 8.4.5. Empathy

Relationships play critical roles for growth and development of people, irrespective of where they find themselves. Such a relationship is formed through understanding each other. Sekudu (2015:117) succinctly defines empathy as "the ability of the social worker to understand the client's world the way the client sees it and communicate such understanding to the client." Such communication helps put the client as ease. Likewise, students need supervisors who will be able to accommodate them in a way that shows understanding. Supervisors need to understand that they were students too, and reflect on how fieldwork may create anxieties and uneasiness for students. In this way, they will be able to understand students from their own frame of reference.

### 8.4.6. Courage

Courage is often defined and described in terms of character strength, such as is exhibited by bravery (Lindsay and Stenberg, 2007:80). Resonating with this, Clancy (2003:132) defines courage as "the willingness to face tough choices as well as overcoming the fear associated with them." In practice, supervisors are more likely to work with supervisees with difficult characters. When this happens, supervisors need

to be act swiftly and challenge any behaviour that may interfere with the working relationship.

### 8.4.7. Attention/ focus

One of the contributory factors to successful relationship is 'focus'.  For the ends of the present project, 'focus' is to give students attention and help them to manage their day-to-day activities (see Egan, 2014: 66). It is prudent that supervisors pay attention to matters that make a difference in a student's life during placement. Attention should be given to assigning activities that will help the student achieve the practical objectives or outcomes.

### 8.4.8. Persistence to do the right work

Students need supervisors who are consistent in their actions. More importantly, they need to do authentic work during fieldwork placement. Having a supervisor who sets clear and specific goals from the beginning of placement helps students persist (see Egan, 2014:306).  Persistence is defined by Howard and Crayne (2019:77) as "the personal tendency to endure through hardships to achieve goals." In field work, persistence is shown in a variety of ways: attending to clients, honouring appointments, and attending regular supervision.  Providing regular opportunities and experiences that help improve students' learning demonstrates that the supervisor is keeping up  with the work of the student.

### 8.4.9. Concern for others

Concern for others is the main motivating factor that prompts most social work professionals and students to choose social work as their career. Concern for others involves caring about people, respecting them, and feeling obligated to help them (Potgieter, 1998:104). Concern for each other cuts across many forms of relationships, be it client-worker relationships, student-supervisor relationships, or couple/ marriage relationship, just to mention a few. All these relationships function effectively when each role player shows concern and care for another person. In the context of social work fieldwork placement, the student-supervisor relationship is optimised when innate concern for each other predominates. When supervisors care deeply about students, they feel valued and, in return, students will work hard to satisfy the

supervisor. Students will guard against any behaviour that will disappoint their supervisors.

Having discussed the characteristics of building supervisory relationships, it is suitable to subsequently discuss the factors that affect supervisory relationships.

## 8.5. Factors that affect supervisory relationship

The supervisor-supervisee relationship is affected by a number of factors and, if these are not addressed, they can ruin the relationship and eventually defeat the set goals. These are discussed below.

### 8.5.1. Anxiety

Supervisors and students may all feel anxious about themselves as they approach fieldwork practice. One main source of anxiety could be the threat to the supervisor's independence and autonomy. Some supervisors may generally be happy to be on their own in the office, while the presence of the student may evoke different feelings that may cause challenges around the student-supervisee relationship.  The supervisor may also be anxious about risking ignorance of their work with clients and just be afraid of not meeting student's expectations. As much as supervisors may be willing to help the student, he or she may also be afraid that their limitations will be exposed to the student, and that their attitudes or approaches may be challenged (Jones & Ford, 1987). A study conducted by Nisivoccia (1990, cited in Chui, 2009:14) found that "feelings of incompetence and the student's dependence on others for instruction can leave the student feeling anxious about the placement experience." Students admit that they feel nervous because of the fear of being criticised, not being acknowledged in the  agency, or that their status  as a student social worker will not be appreciated. This may as well interfere in the relationship between the student and the fieldwork supervisor.  Therefore, to deal with their anxiety, Ford and Jones (1987:75) argue that "supervisors may fall into the trap of becoming overcontrolling, their control being exercised through over-use of their authority', 'previous training', or experience." On the other hand, students may be anxious about the kind of supervisor they are going to meet. Just being 'new' in the organisation may also contribute to the

anxiety. Fear of victimisation may also bring some uncertainties in the supervisory relationships.

Chui (2009:24) summarises sources of anxieties for students as follows:

- Anxieties can arise from not knowing how they should behave in supervision;
- Anxieties may arise around their abilities and performance in practice areas that they find difficult; and
- The student may feel inferior or incompetent if they were to expose their weaker areas in detail to their supervisors.

### 8.5.2. Absenteeism of fieldwork supervisors

Absenteeism of the supervisor affects student-supervisor relationship. Absenteeism also influences students' learning. A study conducted by Tanga (2013:164) establishes that

> students complained of government social workers who were always attending workshops and leaving them on their own to handle cases unsupervised. Furthermore, the students pointed out that social workers always travelled to attend meetings and/ or workshops for days or weeks at a time and leaving students to work on their own without adequate supervision and guidance.

Supervisor absenteeism raises concerns and leaves students not knowing what to do when confronted with a challenging situation.

### 8.5.3. Personalities of both the student and the supervisor

Personality is an important factor determining the development and effectiveness of the supervisory relationship. McCrae and Costa, 1989, cited in Hassan and Youshan, 2015:187), define personality as "an individual behaviour which reflects on individual unique characteristics such as offensive, obedient, diligent, lazy, independent, honest, and sociable, and many others." A personality clash between the fieldwork supervisor and the student may negatively affect the supervisory relationship. For example, a fieldwork supervisor who is less confident may feel intimidated by the more confident, and outspoken student. The supervisor may resort to creating a hostile environment

where the student may not find it easy to reach out to him or her. Similarly, the student, as learner, may be so reserved that the supervisor may adopt a rather aggressive approach to get the work done.  Such a personality clash could affect the relationship to a point where they both lack interest in meeting for supervision sessions. Students may  become disinterested  in fieldwork and the supervisor may as well adopt an informal ad hoc supervision style so as to avoid one-on-one planned and formal sessions.

## 8.5.4. Clear instructions

Clear work instructions are useful to the workers when it comes to improving the supervisory relationship. Clear work instructions and communication are the main factors determining the outcome of work assignments.  Sowell (2017:10) emphasises that "instruction-giving has a direct effect on learning; a lesson or activity becomes chaotic and fails when students do not understand what they are supposed to do." This calls for supervisors to speak clearly, give students a time frame within which to complete the task, avoid giving vague instructions, and  check if they understand the materials. In that way, expectations will be high that students will produce better results.

## 8.5.5. Skill in human relations

Human relations are easily translated as relationships among human beings. Human-relations skills and communication are inseparable, because both are geared towards establishing a harmonious relationship among people (Manullang , 2017:17). Human relations develop and improve when there is mutual respect, clear instruction, transparency, and good feedback that aims to develop another person. Lastly, the NASW-USA (2008) recognises the importance of human relationships as fundamental to social work practice.

## 8.5.6. Leadership style and skills

Supervisors' leadership styles and skills play a critical around the achievement of organisational goals. Campbell (2011:6) maintains that the way in which an individual leads has a direct effect on how that person may function in a supervisory position.

Before discussing the leadership style, it is important to define what leadership is. Northouse (2007:75) defines it as "a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal."

Three leadership styles can be identified, namely authoritarian (autocratic), democratic, and laissez-faire. In an authoritarian leadership style, leaders exercise power, give orders, and expect results (Campbell 2011:15). Supervisors who adopt this style do not involve the supervisees in decision making. Goethals, Sorenson, and Burns (2002:68) name four characteristics of autocratic leadership:

- The leader makes all decisions;
- The leader is only worried about supervisees completing tasks, not the satisfaction of the supervisee;
- The leader always distances himself or herself from supervisees; and
- The leader believes that punishment, rather than reward, yields better results.

The second leadership style is democratic, which involves mutual participation of the supervisor and supervisee with a view to the achievement of organisational goals. The supervisor allows input from supervisees in decision making. This leadership style is transformational in nature, because it encourages followers to support the vision and goal of the organisation. The third leadership style is laissez-faire, which is sometimes called 'free reign'. In the case of this leadership style the supervisor allows the supervisees to take control over decision making. The supervisor leaves the supervisee on their own and, where necessary, participates minimally. In most cases, supervisees use their own creativities in their work and judgement when decisions are made (Goethals, Sorenson & Burns, 2002:68). Out of the leadership styles discussed above, the supervisor may adopt one style or use a combination of all, depending on the situation at hand. However, the choice of leadership style that the supervisor may adopt and how they exercise it may create relationship problems between the supervisor and supervisee.

### 8.5.7. Knowledge of subject matter

Knowledge of subject matter plays an important role in supervision relationship. Supervisors are appointed to supervise students because they possess skills and

knowledge regarding the subject. When supervisors are not conversant with the current developments in social work education, they may tend to create a distant relationship with the student supervisees. When they do so, they are protecting themselves from exposing their weaknesses. It is significant that universities provide training to potential supervisors prior to commencement of fieldwork. Such training must be geared towards skills development and helping them to understand what they must do, how, and what the time frame is for completion.

### 8.5.8. Communication skills

Communication is a two-way process: involving in the case of the present study the supervisor and the student. Potgieter (1998:78) states that communication defines the relationship between concerned individuals or groups. Communication that is clear around its message and instructions makes it easier for role players to know what they must do. More importantly, communication that shows respect, acceptance of individual differences, and abstention from rudeness and vulgar language contributes to successful supervisory relationships. It is also important to note that communication is not only verbal, but also nonverbal. Among others, facial expression, posture, eye contact, and silence are nonverbal communication forms that must be taken seriously so that they do not send the wrong signals that would interfere with supervisory relationships.

### 8.5.9. Impartiality

Supervisors need to adopt a neutral position and accept supervisees as they are, and not as based on language, race, creed, gender, sexual orientation, educational status, political and religious affiliations, and so forth. Impartiality is defined as "fair, equitable, unprejudiced, unbiased and objective. To be impartial is to act free of favour for either party" (Stratus video, 2020).

### 8.6. Summary

The chapter has discussed supervisory relationship as an important element of the success of fieldwork practice experience. The significance of the supervisory relationship and empirical findings around it have also been discussed. Supervisors have the responsibility to make sure that the work environment is conducive for

learning. The chapter has also covered the characteristics of building relationship. Within the pool of characteristics underpinning a healthy relationship, respect and acceptance, warmth and commitment, clarity of goals and activities, empathy, courage, attention/ focus, persistence to do the right work and concern for others have been elucidated. Lastly, the factors that negatively affect supervisor relationships have been outlined., including anxiety, supervisor absenteeism, personality (of supervisor and student), clear instructions, skills in human relations, leadership styles and skills, knowledge of subject matter, communication skills and impartiality.

# CHAPTER 9

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 9.1. Introduction

This chapter centres on the research methodology in this study. Methodology entails itemising way in which the researcher goes about conducting the study. Gray (2009:581) defines research methodologies as "approaches to systematic enquiry developed within a particular paradigm with associated epistemological assumptions." Leedy and Ormrod (2014:7) share the same sentiment: they state that "research methodology is a general approach the researcher takes in carrying out the research project; to some extent, this approach dictates the tools the researcher selects." In the same vein, Payne and Turner (2008: 336) see research methodology as an approach to investigating a research topic. This includes specifying the approach to the enquiry, the choice of the methods to be used to collect data, and how the data will be analysed as well as rules and postulates used by specific disciplines." Consider that the term 'approach' is central to all the definitions. This means that the researcher needs to provide a detailed description of the approaches used to execute the study.

This chapter incorporates the description of methods used to carry out the study. These include the research approach; research design; research methods including population, sampling and sampling techniques and data collection; data analysis; methods of data verification; and ethical considerations.

### 9.2. Research approach

Before any scientific enquiry is undertaken, researchers need to ensure that they choose the right approach or approaches that would yield best results for the envisaged study. The research approach is defined by Whittaker (2012:3) as "the traditional division between qualitative and quantitative traditions in research." The present study employs a qualitative approach, which is defined by Babbie & Mouton (2011: 270) as the "multiple approach that attempts to understand participants in their natural setting by interpreting a social phenomenon in terms of the sense participants attribute to it." The purpose of research is to describe what has happened and being aware of it, rather than the clarification and estimate of human conduct. The emphasis

is on contributors' lived experiences and finding a complex understanding of their thoughts and feelings. Interpretivists argue that "the objective quantitative approaches of positivism miss this important part of the human experience: the subjective and personal meanings that person attach to themselves and what they do" (Monette et al., 2014: 40). Before explaining the rationale for using the qualitative approach, it is befitting to explain the main features or characteristics of qualitative research that formed the basis for the choice.

### 9.2.1. Main features of qualitative research

Qualitative research is distinct from quantitative research in many ways. This section covers the main features or characteristics of qualitative research that the researcher found to be suitable  for this study, as opposed to other approaches to scientific enquiries.

### 9.2.1.1. Qualitative research is a systematic approach

Qualitative research follows a particular process to arrive at a conclusion. Rossman and Rallis (2012:3) contend that "qualitative research is a process of conceptualising, describing, conducting and writing up what is learnt."  It is not a once-off event; it is a systematic process that results in knowledge generation. Creswell (2014:186) argues that the research process for qualitative researchers is forever developing. This means that the original strategies for the research cannot be followed as they are selected. Some stages of the research process may need some alteration when the researcher enters the field and commences to gather data. For example, due to the research questions that arise during interviews, procedures may change as the study develops.

Data is normally collected in the participant's setting; data analysis comes from the themes generated during the interviews; and, finally, the researcher should interpret the meaning of the data.

### 9.2.1.2. Qualitative research is an interactive approach

Lived experiences, views, and perceptions can only be found through talking, directly or indirectly. Most qualitative research involves talking to people. Mey and Mruck (2007:138) postulate in this respect that

qualitative research takes place within dynamic and complex interactions between the researchers and their personal and professional backgrounds, the respective fields of research and the characteristics of the scientific culture, i.e., the nature of the formal organisations to which the researchers belong. In qualitative research, the researcher, the participants, and any person who forms part of the study work together as part of the research process.

In the same vein, the interactive nature of qualitative research is described by Alston and Bowels (2003:10), who state that, from the qualitative researcher's point of view, reality is constructed through communications with people and cannot be detached from experience.

### 9.2.1.3. Qualitative research is a subjective approach

The subjective nature of qualitative research is interpreted further by Kalof, Dan, and Dietz (2008:80) who state that truth is seen as personal and flexible, while the main purpose is to comprehend how these interpretations of reality vary. In qualitative research, "participants' experiences, feelings, perceptions and knowledge are regarded as subjective and can therefore be understood properly if they are learnt from the participants' own point of view."

### 9.2.1.4. Qualitative research provides description of life experiences

When conducting research based on a qualitative approach, emphasis is placed on the natural contexts in which experiences are lived. Henn, Weinstein, and Foard (2006:76) argue that "in order to build an understanding of how people experience the world around them, and to identify what informs their behaviours, the researcher attempts to study action as it naturally occurs, with as little disruption to people's lives as possible."

Therefore, qualitative researchers collect data to describe the lived experiences of participants.

### 9.2.1.5. Qualitative research gives meaning to life experiences

According to Kalof et al. (2008:79)

the tradition of qualitative research tends to focus on the meaning and motivations that underlie cultural symbols (i.e., language), personal experiences and phenomena and on detailed understanding of the process in the social world. A central question for qualitative research is how people make sense of the world and carry out their everyday lives.

In other words, qualitative research explores the meaning that people attach consciously and unconsciously to their experiences, and brings the meaning to awareness. Creswell (2014:186) adds that, throughout the research process, the researcher focuses on establishing the meaning that the participants hold about the phenomenon under investigation.

### 9.2.1.6. Natural setting

Qualitative researchers prefer to gather data within the context of participants. This is espoused by Creswell (2013: 44), who argues that qualitative researchers ordinarily gather data in the setting where participants experience the phenomenon under investigation. This up-close, personal contact and interface between the researcher and the participants is considered the main significant element of qualitative research.

### 9.2.1.7. Researcher as key informant

Qualitative researchers collect data themselves, mainly through interviewing people. They form part of the study; hence they need to frequently reflect on the materials as they proceed. Although they may use different methods of data collection, they are the ones who gather the information (Patton, 2002:11). They do not necessarily depend on any data collection tools and instruments developed by other scientists.

### 9.2.1.8. Inductive and deductive data analysis

Qualitative research uses deductive and inductive approaches to data analysis. In the case of the inductive approach, Babbie and Mouton (2011:273) argue that "rather than beginning with an existing theory or hypothesis, the qualitative researcher begins with an immersion in the natural setting, describing events as accurately, and slowly but surely building second-order constructs."

Concisely put, the researcher begins the process of data analysis with observations of the phenomena under investigation, then to draw conclusions based on these. Around the deductive approach, Babbie and Mouton (2011) argues that the researcher starts with theory, develops hypotheses based on the theory, gathers data, and analyses to test the hypotheses.

### 9.2.2. The rationale for choosing the qualitative approach

The rationales for using the qualitative approach differ from those of other approaches to scientific enquiries. This is advocated by Bryman (2012:401), who states that the researcher's main reason for choosing this qualitative approach is that it allows for the description and exploration of the frame of reference of the participants.

The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows participants to share their experiences, perceptions, and feelings regarding fieldwork supervision. It was chosen also for its flexibility.  The views, feelings, and experiences of fieldwork supervision are subjective. Participants have  individual ways of interpreting their experiences of supervision during fieldwork placement at UNIVEN and UL. Frankel and Devers (2000:253) state that "qualitative research is forever changing, the researcher and research participants, their relationship, and the research setting are all subject to development and change."  Therefore, qualitative research is an appropriate approach.

### 9.3. Research design

Researchers need to indicate in detail how they are going to conduct the study. Research design is a blueprint upon which the study is based.  According to Creswell (2013:49), research design can be defined as a detailed strategy for conducting a scientific enquiry. Du Plooy (2009:51) sees research design as the process and procedure used to gather, analyse, and understand facts and information, while Hofstee (2006:108) asserts that research design has the following two meanings:
- The way in which you choose to design your study, which engenders the manner in which you conclude your thesis; or,

- The overall procedure/ s adopted in the study (that is, the interviews, a case study, content analysis, or an experiment).

The purpose of this study, the researcher adopted exploratory and descriptive research designs, as discussed below

### 9.3.1. Exploratory research design

It was the purpose of the researcher to unearth what is not known or that about which little is known, hence he opted for the exploratory design. Engel and Schutt (2013:180) are of the view that exploratory research tries to find out how people get along in the environment under study, including the meanings they give to their actions and matters that concern them. The purpose is to discover what is happening and explore social phenomena without expectations. Exploratory study could arise out of a need to increase the knowledge of the field of study and to provide a basis for further confirmatory studies (Grove et al., 2013:370). The researcher using this design aims to provide a detailed understanding of the perceptions and the involvements of the research participants (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2011:10; Babbie & Benaquisto, 2010:93). Babbie (2007:88) summarises the purpose of exploratory studies as follows:
- To satisfy the researcher's curiosity and desire for better understanding;
- To test the feasibility of undertaking a more extensive study; and
- To develop the method(s) to be employed in any subsequent study.

These assertions show that this type of design aims to 'discover' something new about the phenomenon under investigation. This could be achieved through face-to-face interviews with people who enjoy lived experience around the given point of focus.

### 9.3.2. Descriptive research design

Accurate description of a particular phenomenon is crucial to research. Descriptive research design is defined by Grove et al. (2013:632) as

> a research design that provides a precise description of the characteristics of a specific individual, event, or group in a real-life situation for the purpose of

discovering new meaning, describing what exists, determining the frequency with which something occurs and categorizing information.

In the same vein, Du Plooy (2009:221) points out that descriptive studies are intended to measure the characteristics of a population. They are envisioned to assess what transpired, not necessarily why. Rubin and Babbie (2011:134) add that "qualitative description is more concerned about the participants and their environment, interactions, meanings and everyday lives." The design is used to describe the facts of a situation (Bless, Higson-Smith & Kagee, 2006:48). It can therefore be deduced that descriptive studies aim to 'describe' the situations and life experiences of the participants from the insider's point of view.

### 9.3.3. The rationale for using exploratory and descriptive research designs

The researcher used these two research designs because they  elucidate the phenomenon of social work fieldwork supervision at UNIVEN and UL, engendering a detailed description of these. The emphasis is understanding what occurred, as Du Plooy (2009) states. In addition, Polit, Beck, and Hungler (2001:19) assert that "exploratory studies are undertaken when a new area or topic is being investigated, and qualitative methods are especially useful for exploring a little-understood phenomenon." Furthermore, the researcher has been persuaded by Steinberg (2015:51) that exploratory studies may be undertaken when "we do not know about the topic of interest, either in general or from a particular angle in which we are interested."  This holds for the present project: although the phenomenon of fieldwork supervision in social work has been studied extensively (Nunev, 2014; Bogo, 2006; Papouli, 2014; Bennet & Deal, 2012), no comparative study (which embodies a 'particular angle') had been undertaken between UNIVEN and UL.

From the descriptive-design point of view, participants' understandings of their everyday lives are considered important.  This is espoused by Engel and Schutt (2013: 18), who claim that descriptive research "typically involves gathering of facts" emanating from participants' understanding of an issue under investigation. These realities can only be collected through interrogating individuals who have had involvement with the phenomena under study.  Furthermore, the exploratory and

descriptive designs are logical and reliable with a view to getting the views of those who enjoy first-hand experience of the phenomenon under study, which is one major issue of the study of 'lived experiences' of supervision during fieldwork placement of final year student social workers at UNIVEN and UL.

### 9.4. Research methods

Research projects involve gathering of facts from a variety of sources in order to answer question/s that prompted the researcher to execute the study, this requires research tools. The research method centres on the techniques employed for data gathering (Bryman, 2012:46). This compels the researcher to make a full description of specific instrument(s) used to collect data, including interviews (in-depth structured or unstructured), questionnaires (self-administered or administered by researcher or research assistants) and, in some cases, observation where the researcher's duty is to observe others, pay attention to, and record what is unfolding. The researcher must also outline the method and procedures used to select participants.

The discussion below centres on the research methods employed to carry out the study; these include population, sampling and sampling techniques, and the method of data collection.

### 9.4.1. Population

Most research topics in social sciences require identification of people who will provide answers pertinent to the study. In research, the population is the group of people who are the focus of the study or the group that a researcher will generalise about (Rubin & Babbie, 2013:372; Giddens, 2009:1128). For Grinnell and Unrau (2008:552), this term refers to the "an entire set, or universe of people, objects or events of concern to a research study from which a sample is drawn." Carey (2009:41) defines the concept 'population' as the objects studied through research. Burns and Grove (2009:42) have taken the discussion further and warn that not everyone must be included in the research project. The group studied must meet certain criteria for inclusion.

Consider that the concepts *'collection', 'aggregation', 'entire',* and *'total'* are common phrases used in these discussions. In this study, a 'population' is a group of people

from whom a sample was drawn for the purpose of investigating the topic carried in the thesis title: *A comparative analysis of social work fieldwork supervision at the University of Venda and University of Limpopo: Implications for policy and practice guidelines.* So, the group of people who met the criteria for inclusion were final year student social workers and fieldwork coordinators at UNIVEN and UL.

### 9.4.2. Sampling and sampling techniques

Having identified the population for the study, the researcher needs to find a minimum number of people to whom he or she will administer the research instrument. This is referred to as 'sampling'. Sampling is defined by Brynard, Hanekom, and Brynard (2014:56) as a procedure utilised to choose participants for the study, that is, the sample. CED (2010:1450) defines the term 'sample' as "a small part of anything, intended as representative of the whole with a view to determining the characteristics of a large group (the population)." The main reason for studying a sample rather than the whole group is that the group may be so large that studying it is not feasible, and may take too long. Large groups may also complicate other research processes, for example the analysis of data and verification. Therefore, sampling allows the researcher to reduce the number to be of a more manageable size (Creswell, 2014:131). In addition, researchers can only study a small and sizeable number from the entire population and, again, this is the sample. Sampling therefore involves the process of selecting participants for the study where it is most likely that the findings will represent the entire population (in quantitative studies) and where the findings may be found to be relevant to all members of the group studied.

It is impossible in the case of certain research projects to study the whole population, as indicated by Creswell (2014).Instead, the study of a small portion of the population may be feasible. At the same time, rich information could be sought from a small group of people (Drewry, 2004:131). To select respondents who would provide appropriate and adequate insight into the phenomenon under investigation, the present researcher used two non-probability sampling methods. Creswell (2005:595) defines non-probability sampling as a procedure in which potential participants are chosen because they possess special characteristics that would produce indispensable results and are easily available. The probability of including everyone in the population

is limited in this kind of sampling procedure.  Among the non-probability sampling methods, the researcher used purposive and availability sampling techniques, as discussed below.

### 9.4.2.1. Purposive sampling

People are chosen to contribute to the study for a variety of reasons. For example, some people or groups of people may be selected to participate in the study because they possess special characteristics that serve the best interest of the study. Purposive sampling is defined by Monette, Sullivan and De Jong (2008:409) as "a non-probability sampling technique where the researcher uses his judgement and prior knowledge to choose people for the sample who best fulfil the purpose of the study."  Engel and Schutt (2013: 126) add that participants are chosen because they are in an exceptional position to provide rich data about the matter under investigation.

### 9.4.2.2. Availability sampling

Sometimes, researchers choose participants because they are easy to find, for instance in studies involving interviewing learners or administering a questionnaire to learners where the researcher works. Availability sampling is a method of obtaining elements for inclusion in the study when the population are selected because they are readily available to the researcher (Maree, 2007:177; Newman, 2011:242 & Bryman, 2012:201). Central to this type of sampling is that participants are easy to reach and would provide accurate information, so that conclusions can be drawn.

For this research, the participants were selected purposefully to meet the goal and objectives of the study was based on their availability, by using the following criteria:
- They were final year student social workers from UNIVEN and UL;
- They had completed their final year (4th year) social work fieldwork practice placement; and
- Fieldwork coordinators were involved in the arrangements, placement, and monitoring of these students.

The sample size was not determined for this study. The researcher observed the ethical principle of voluntary participation and the sampling technique of availability.

So, the researcher only interviewed those who showed willingness to participate in the study and were available for interviews.

### 9.4.3. Methods of data collection

One of the critical steps in every research endeavour is data collection. It is ethically and procedurally fair for researchers to indicate how they will go about the process of data collection. Data collection is the technique for collecting natural and unprocessed data that the researcher will use to answer the research question/s and reach evidence-based conclusions (Dodd & Epstein, 2012).Resonating with this, Monette et al. (2014:9) postulate that "a part of any research design is a description of what kind of data will be collected and how this will be done." The present section describes the methods of data collection and the tools used for data collection.

### 9.4.4. Interviews

The researcher used interviews as a method of data collection. Interviews are generally conducted face-to-face, where the researcher's task is to ask questions of the interviewee (Babbie, 2007:264).  Babbie and Mouton (2011:249) note that interviews can also be done by telephone. The researcher chose face-to-face individual interviews and focus-group interviews to collect data. Bryman (2012:501) states that the focus group is an interviewing procedure usually involving more than one person to a maximum of four. In case of UNIVEN, more student social workers were interested to participate in the study. Therefore, focus group interviews were used as an alternative to reach out to as many students as possible. The researcher was guided by the available time and resources to decide to use face-to-face and focus group interviews. Moreover, the researcher took note that face-to-face and focus group interviews allow for explanation of questions that a respondent may not understand in case of self-administered questionnaires or when interviews are conducted by research assistants or field workers (Monette, et.al, 2014:182). More importantly, it was in the researcher's interest to observe the emotions of the participants as they explained their supervision experience during fieldwork placement.

For this study, the researcher used a semi-structured interview schedule or qualitative interviewing as a tool of data collection **(see Addendum A**). A semi-structured interview is "an in-depth interview that is less structured which allows for participants to respond in their own words in a meaningful and socially relevant manner unanticipated by the researcher yet rich and informative" (Remler & Van Ryzin, 2011:64). Bryman (2012:471) asserts that, in semi-structured interviews, the researcher has a list of questions or themes to be addressed in the process of the interview referred to as an interview guide, but the interviewee has flexibility around how to respond.

In this study, face-to-face interviews were conducted with two fieldwork coordinators from UNIVEN and UL, ten final year student social workers from UL, and 15 final year student social workers from UNIVEN. Two focus-group interviews were conducted with the student social workers from UNIVEN. Each focus group comprised six student social workers. More students were reached at UNIVEN, because the university had a larger body of students enrolled than UL. At the time of data collection, UNIVEN had 65 final year student social workers, while UL had only ten, because the university was in the process of phasing out the old BSW programme based on CHE recommendations. So, all ten UL final year student social workers were sampled.

### 9.4.5. Data analysis

Interview transcripts, completed questionnaires, or experiments produce raw data that need to be interpreted for readers. Data analysis in qualitative research is described by Creswell (2013:180) as consisting of "preparing and organising the data (that is, text data as transcripts, or image data as photographs) for analysis, then reducing the data into themes through a process of coding and condensing the codes, and finally representing the data in the forms of figures, tables, or discussion." Monette et al. (2014:441) assert that "data analysis involves discovering meaning in the data. In qualitative research, this means identifying themes, patterns, and regularities and, in some cases, stating propositions, causal connections, and development of theories."

In this study, qualitative data was analysed thematically according to the eight steps proposed by Tesch (in Creswell, 2009:186):

- The researcher started the process of data analysis by transcribing all the audiotape interviews word-for-word;

- The researcher then selected interviews with the richest information in order to glean meaning from it;

- This process was followed in respect of all the other transcripts. Topics (themes) were then identified, and other information was identified as subtopics/ themes;

- With this list, the researcher then returned to the transcribed data and abbreviated the identified themes as codes;

- Related themes were then grouped together;

- The researcher then made a final decision about the abbreviations for each theme and its related code/ abbreviation;

- The researcher then put data material belonging to each category together in one place and performed a preliminary analysis; and

- The researcher commenced the process of reporting the research findings, which are presented in Chapter 10.

## 9.5. Methods of data verification (quality criteria)

This section centres on methods of data verification used in the study. Lietz, Langer, and Furman (2006:443) argue that is important for qualitative inquiries to prove beyond any reasonable doubt that the findings of the study are a true reflection of the meanings of participants. Researchers need to set up criteria for assessing the quality of qualitative research, that is, trustworthiness (Bryman, 2012:717). Lietz et al. (2006:444) further point out that "trustworthiness is established when the findings as closely as possible reflect the meanings as described by the participants." Lincoln and Guba (1985), as cited in Bryman (2012:39), propose the need to provide details on the ways in which the study will be evaluated. This relates to the concepts of reliability and validity. They propose two primary criteria for assessing a qualitative study which were used in this research: trustworthiness and authenticity, to be discussed below.

**9.5.1. Trustworthiness**

Researchers should strive to produce and report findings that are a true reflection of what the participants had shared. Trustworthiness is defined as "a set of criteria advocated by some writers for assessing the quality of qualitative research" (Bryman, 2012:717). Trustworthiness is made up of four criteria, each of which has an equivalent criterion in qualitative research:

- Credibility, which parallels internal validity;
- Transferability, which parallels external validity;
- Dependability, which parallels reliability; and
- Confirmability, which parallels objectivity.

**9.5.1.1. Credibility**

Every research project is carried out with the view to produce results that are believable. Shenton (2004:64) argues that one of the important criteria to be adopted by qualitative researchers is that of internal validity, which means that the study measures or tests what is intended. Several researchers (Yin,1994; Bryman, 2012; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) suggest a number of provisions to promote credibility, as discussed below.

i.  *The adoption of well-established research methods.* Yin (1994) argues that it is the duty of the researcher to incorporate "correct operational measures for the concepts being studied." To fulfil this requirement, the research proposal and the final research document were inspected at different levels of UL and found to be feasible.

ii.  *Development of early familiarity with the culture of participating organisations before data collection takes place.* The researcher can safely report that he was more familiar with one of the research sites. The researcher works at UNIVEN, which is one of the research sites, and has been teaching students from first year until the final year. This allowed the students to engage freely in the project, because they were familiar with the researcher. Furthermore, the researcher completed a Master's of Social Work at UL, which is another research site for this study.  Therefore, the researcher can report that he was familiar, though to a more limited extent, with the latter research site. Student

social workers who participated in the study were approached prior to data collection for briefing. This made it easy to relate with them during data collection sessions.

iii. *Triangulation -* which means the researcher uses different methods of data collection, such as observation, focus groups, and individual interviews (Shenton, 2004:65). In order to corroborate the findings gleaned from the face-to-face interviews, the researcher used focus-group interviews to validate the findings found by means of individual face-to-face interviews.

iv. *Another criterion to ensure credibility is that of affording potential participants an opportunity to refuse to participate in the project* (Shenton, 2004:66). Shenton (ibid) further points out that those who participate freely are more likely to give accurate information based on their lived experiences. Researchers must strive to establish rapport before data collection and encourage participants to participate freely. As discussed under the rubric of ethical considerations around voluntary participation and informed consent forms *(Addendum C),* all participants were informed that participation was voluntary and were free to refuse to participate in the study without any penalty. That, in essence, made them feel free to participate.

v. *Another crucial criterion that is useful is that of frequent debriefing sessions with the supervisor/ promoter.*

Around this criterion, Shenton (2004;67) avows that,

through discussion, the vision of the investigator may be widened as others bring to bear their experiences and perceptions. Such collaborative sessions can be used by the researcher to discuss alternative approaches, and others who are responsible for the work in more supervisory capacity may draw attention to flaws in the proposed course of action.

To fulfil this requirement, the researcher had several debriefing sessions with the supervisor/ promoter from the conception of, throughout execution of, and including the final stage of this research project. This helped the researcher to focus and make

necessary adjustments. For example, in research proposal the study adopted the face-to-face individual interview as a method of data collection. But during debriefing sessions it was found that it would be important to include focus-group interviews to widen the scope of the study.

Bryman (2012:390), asserts that the establishment of credibility of findings also entails going back to the people that the researcher had interviewed and confirming if the researcher understood and captured what they said correctly. This is also referred to as respondent validation. Bryman (2012:391) contends that respondent validation, which is sometimes called member validation, "is a process whereby a researcher provides the people on whom he has conducted research with an account of his findings."

To further ensure credibility for the study, the researcher provided all two fieldwork coordinators, three students from UL, and five students from UNIVEN with transcripts of what they said during interviews and conversation, as proposed by Bryman (2012:391). The researcher asked the participants two important questions, as suggested by Leedy and Ormrod (2014:106): a) Do they agree with conclusions? b) Do they make sense based on your experiences? The participants agreed with the transcript without corrections.

### 9.5.1.2. Transferability

This is the second criterion for ensuring trustworthiness. Lincoln and Guba (in Krefting, 1991:216) postulate that the second criterion of transferability can be addressed if the original researcher can present enough descriptive data to allow for comparison with other studies. Qualitative researchers are encouraged to produce what Geertz (in Bryman, 2012:392) calls 'thick description' - that is, rich accounts of the details of interviews.

The researcher fulfilled the criterion of transferability by providing a detailed description of the participants as well as the process followed to collect and analyse data, as outlined in this chapter (see: population, sampling, data collection, and techniques used). The researcher also provided a thick description of the context in

which the study data was collected. The interview questions were framed to allow participants to provide a thick description of their perceptions or experience relating to fieldwork supervision, support provided to students during fieldwork practice placements, the roles of the fieldwork coordinator in placement of students, support provided to students during placement, as well as the challenges encountered by coordinators during fieldwork practice placement *(see Addendum A: interview schedule)*.

### 9.5.1.3. Dependability

Dependability is equivalent to reliability in quantitative research. Lincoln and Guba (in Bryman, 2012:392) propose that "researchers should adopt an 'auditing' approach. This involves making sure that all records of all phases of the research process (that is, problem formulation, selection of research participants, fieldwork notes, interview transcripts, data analysis decisions) are kept in an accessible manner." Nadesan (2019:147) postulates that this implies that there be detailed accounts of the approach for data collection, coding, and analysis. The emphasis is "on presenting the research process in a logical, well-documented manner so that the results are an accurate reflection of the participants and the field instruction sites that were studied."

In order to observe the requirements of dependability, the researcher worked hand in hand with the research promoter, who acted as auditor. The promoter's job was to make sure that all procedures as outlined in this research proposal were being followed from the onset of the project to its completion. The promoter was provided with audio recording and transcripts to verify if data presented in chapter 10 are true reflections of what transpired during all phases of data collection. Furthermore, dependability was achieved through the use of research instrument that went through a pilot testing process to ensure relevance.

### 9.5.1.4. Confirmability

The fourth criterion of trustworthiness is concerned with

> ensuing that, while recognising that complete objectivity is impossible in social research, the researcher can be shown to have acted in good faith; in other words, it should be apparent that he or she has not overtly allowed personal values or theoretical inclinations manifestly to sway the conduct of the research and the findings deriving from it (Bryman, 2012:393).

The researcher allowed the research promoter to question the ways in which the study was being conducted and making sure that the researcher's personal values did not interfere with the research project. The researcher is an employee of UNIVEN, which is one of the research sites. Therefore, the researcher acted in 'good faith' by ensuring that students did not feel coerced to participate and that their participation was strictly voluntary. The researcher did not take advantage of the power differential between him and students. Consent forms were completed willingly by students. He was guided by the ethical principle or voluntary participation and availability sampling.

### 9.5.2. Authenticity

Authenticity, also referred to as external evidence, is primarily concerned with the question: is the article genuine? Establishing trustworthiness of documents in some cases may involve handwriting analysis, vocabulary usage and writing style, and supplying readers with transcripts and audiotapes on the interviews (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014:180). In addition to the four trustworthiness criteria indicated above,
Lincoln and Guba (in Bryman, 2012:393) suggest the following criteria of authenticity:

*Fairness:* Does the research fairly represent different viewpoints among members of the social setting;

*Ontological authenticity:* Does the research help members to arrive at a better understanding of their social milieu?

*Educative authenticity:* Does the research help members to appreciate better the perspectives of other members of their social setting?

*Catalytic authenticity:* Has the research acted as an impetus to members to engage in action to change their circumstances?

These make it clear that the researcher needs to involve multiple sources to ensure that the study findings represent views from different people who are familiar with the phenomenon under investigation. As discussed, the researcher fulfilled the requirements of the criteria of authenticity by involving the research promoter who assessed the entire process. The promoter was also provided with original audiotapes and transcripts so that he could keep track of whether the information was presented well for the purpose of analysis and interpretation, conclusion, and recommendations of the study.

## 9.6. Ethical considerations for the study

Ethics are central to every scientific enquiry. A code of ethics stipulates guidelines that the researcher must observe. A code of ethics defines how the researcher must behave and what his or her responsibilities are when conducting research.  It thus outlines expected responsibilities and behaviours (Hepworth, Rooney, Strom-Gottfried & Larsen, 2010: 9).  Leedy and Ormrod (2014:106) warn that, when human beings are used as study subjects, there is potential for distress. Therefore, researchers must look thoroughly at the ethical implications of their project. In this research, the researcher observed the ethical principles discussed below.

## 9.6.1. Permission to conduct the study

Some research projects require permission to access the research site. It is unethical for researchers to enter the site and start collecting data without permission from those with authority. Creswell (2005:203) points out in this regard that in qualitative and quantitative research, we need permission to begin our study. Creswell (ibid) emphasises that qualitative research needs to pay greater attention to obtaining permission to the research site. Hunn (2009:146) proposes that the researcher should obtain approval from the gatekeepers in order to enter the location of the study. Newman (2011:429) defines the gatekeeper as a "person in an official or unofficial role who controls access to a setting."

In this respect, consider firstly that all social workers are required to register with the SACSSP before any social work-related activities can be carried out. The researcher is an affiliate of SACSSP, with council registration number 10-23075. As an affiliate, the researcher was obliged to adhere to the ethical considerations for research as contained in Section 5.1.4 of the Policy Guidelines for Course of Conduct, Code of Ethics, and the Rules for Social Workers (SACSSP, 2006; Nadesan, 2019:153). Secondly, before study data were collected the researcher received faculty approval of the proposal letter from the University of Limpopo, Proposal No FHDC2018/ 4547 *(see Addendum G: Proposal approval letter)*. The researcher then applied and obtained an ethical clearance from the University of Limpopo Turfloop Research and Ethics Committee (TREC) *(see Addendum D: University of Limpopo ethics clearance certificate), Project number: TREC/ 78/ 2019: PG.* Once the ethical clearance had been received, the researcher applied for and obtained the permission to conduct the study from the University of Venda research and ethics committee *(see Addendum F: Permission to conduct research at the University of Venda)*. Finally, the researcher applied an obtained the permission to conduct the study at the University of Limpopo Department of Social Work *(See Addendum E: Permission to conduct the study at UL).*

Once all approvals had been received, the researcher started with the recruitment process discussed below.

### 9.6.2. Recruitment process

Gatekeeping processes were followed and it was easy to access entry since the study was registered and approved in the same university – UL. The Department of Social work at UL nominated one faculty member who helped secure a briefing with student social workers. On the day of the meeting, all ten fourth year student social workers were available, and the researcher introduced himself and explained the reason for the meeting as well as the background of the research project. All ten student social workers showed their willingness to participate in the study and interview meetings were then scheduled with each student. Consent forms were filled in by all students.

The researcher then proceeded to recruit students at UNIVEN. He went to a class of final year student social workers where he introduced himself and shared with them the purpose of the meeting as well as the overall background of the study. The researcher then asked those who were willing to participate in the study to contact him privately so that the potential participants were given an opportunity to work through the informed consent process, to be discussed below.

### 9.6.3. Informed consent

Informed consent centres on divulging all information to prospective participants about the research project so that they may take well-informed decisions as to whether to participate or not (Drewry, 2004:50). Resonating with this, Christians (2005:144) strongly suggests that, for potential participants to agree to take part in the study, they need full and open information about it. In view of these assertions, it is clear that the potential participants should not be taken for granted: they must be well informed of the details about the study so that they may take a decision while knowing the risks involved, if any.

In this research project, the researcher contacted final year student social workers and fieldwork coordinators from UNIVEN and UL once all approvals had been granted, as indicated. The researcher explained the purpose and procedures of the research and elicited willingness to participate. He requested permission to digitally record the interviews. In addition, participants were informed about people who would have access to the tape recordings and the transcripts of the tape-recorded interviews: that is, the researcher, the person who would write the transcripts, and the study promoters as well as external examiners. After they had decided to voluntarily participate in the research, they were requested to sign the consent form *(see Addendum C: Informed consent form).*

### 9.6.4. Protection from harm

Participants need protection from any form of potential harm resulting from the study process. Bryman (2012:134) states that research that has the potential to harm participants is considered improper. Diener and Crandall (in Bryman (2012:135) further explain that harm can be done in a form of physical harm; harm to participants'

development; loss of self-esteem; stress; and persuading participants to perform shameful activities. Drewry (2004: 61) asserts that "researchers should avoid exposing participants to physical or emotional distress. If the researcher has reasonable ground to believe that participating in the research will bring such distress or uneasiness, participants should be informed."

To uphold this ethical principle, the researcher guarded against any form of activities that had the potential to put the participants at risk of physical harm or psychological discomfort. The researcher also took note that psychological discomfort may arise (unexpectedly) from questions asked, which might require responses that give rise to emotions. The researcher informed participants that some of the questions might give rise to emotions, and that they would be referred for debriefing after interviews if any psychological discomforts arose.

### 9.6.5. Voluntary participation

Participants should not be forced to take part in research projects. According to Christians (2005:144), they must agree voluntarily to participate.  It is likely that researchers may exert physical pressure or emotional blackmailing of participants to take part in the study. Leedy & Ormrod (2014:107) argue that,

> when people are being recruited for participation in a research study, they should be told the nature of the study to be conducted and given the choice of either participating or not participating. Furthermore, they should be told that, if they agree to participate, they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time, and under no circumstances should people feel pressure to participate from employers or other more authoritative individuals. Any participation in a study should be strictly voluntary.

It is therefore clear that the ethical principle of 'free will' is a key element of any scientific enquiry.  To observe this, the researcher hosted a briefing session before each interview was conducted. Participants were informed about what the study was about, including its goals and objectives. He clearly stated to participants that participating in the project was voluntary and that there would be no consequences if

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they chose not to participate. Participants were told that they could withdraw from the study at any time in the process, with no consequences.

### 9.6.6. The right to privacy: anonymity and confidentiality

Confidentiality is one of the highly valued principles of the social work profession. It is undeniable that participants will be freer to participate in research projects where there is zero chance of their names or identity being revealed. In research, Mertens and Wilson (2012:415) contend, "confidentiality means collecting, analysing, storing and reporting data in such a way that the data cannot be traced back to the individual who provides them." Dovetailing with this, Drewry (2004: 58) indicates that under no circumstances should data be linked to an individual participant. Greener (2011:146) asserts that confidentiality and anonymity mean that researchers must put measures in place to safeguard that collected data and the informants remain confidential, except in situations where participants have given permission for their disclosure. An important consideration should also be made around storage and access to data.

The researcher adhered to the ethical principles of anonymity and confidentiality through avoiding the use of real names of participants for the purpose of interviews, audio transcripts, and analysis of data. Pseudonyms were used in the transcripts and no participant was referred to or called by name during interviews. The ethical principles of anonymity and confidentiality are directly linked to the ethical principle of management of information, described below in detail.

### 9.6.7. Management of information

Study data need proper management to avoid leaking. Any leak of data may result in identification of names of people who gave information. Engel and Schutt (2009:64) postulate that "it is possible that the researcher may harm participants unintentionally through the manner in which data is handled." The researcher must try to minimise the risk of access to data by unauthorised persons by locking the data, using lock-up codes. The researcher may use a password for study records stored in electronic equipment, such as laptops, external hard drives, memory sticks, and memory cards.

To uphold this ethical principle, the researcher stored all the collected data materials (audio tapes and transcripts) in two electronic devices (a laptop and USB storage device) to ensure safety. All the data folders were locked with password and could only be accessed by the researcher. The researcher also gave the transcriber a form to sign indicating that she would not distribute the audio tapes and transcripts to any other person *(see Addendum H: Confidentiality agreement for transcription services).* Furthermore, all data collected will be destroyed five years after completion of the study. The reason for this period is article writing based on the data.

### 9.6.8. Ethical publishing practices

It is common practice for researchers to disseminate study results after the study has been completed. This could be in the form of article writing for publications or conference presentation. When the researcher considers writing articles or publish any part of the research project, Babbie and Mouton (2011:526) warn that he or she should be cognizant of the ethics of publishing. These involve *rejection of any form of plagiarism.* This is one of the most important principles of ethical publishing, which requires that the researcher acknowledge all sources consulted as part of executing the study.

To ensure compliance with this ethical principle, the researcher acknowledges all the sources that were consulted for the purpose of compiling this research report. These include materials such as articles / research publications, books, internet sites, and persons consulted when compiling this research report.

### 9.6.9. Ethical considerations relating to analysis of data

Data analysis involves presenting the sense of the data gathered. During the data analysis stage, researchers may be tempted to be biased in the way the data is presented and interpreted.  When analysing data, Creswell (2014) advises key areas of avoidance, as subsequently expounded.

### 9.6.9.1. Avoid going native

It is quite common for researchers to be biased in the presentation of the study results.

Creswell (2014: 99) states that "it is easy to support and embrace the perspectives of participants in a study. In qualitative studies, this means 'taking sides' and only discussing the results that place the participants in a favourable light."

### 9.6.9.2. Avoid disclosing only positive results

When conducting research, researchers must be aware that the results may be positive or negative. As a result, Creswell (2014:99) warns that it is dishonest to suppress some results or to present results in a manner that put participants in a positive light to the participants or researcher's predispositions.  Therefore, it is ethically correct for researchers to present the study findings as they are, including those that may be conflicting to the themes.

To uphold this principle, all the findings were reported without prejudice. The full range of responses, whether negative or positive, were reported as reflected in Chapter 10.

### 9.7. Summary

This chapter has given a detailed account of the methodology used for the study, which includes the research approach which is qualitative and the research designs which are exploratory, and descriptive. The chapter has also discussed research methods employed and that the population for the study were final year student social workers and fieldwork coordinators at UNIVEN and UL. The study employed two non-probability methods of selecting participants for the study, which were purposive and based on availability. The study used semi-structured interviews to collect data. The chapter has concluded with a detailed discussion of ethical considerations for the study. Ethics discussed were permission to conduct the study, informed consent, protection from harm, voluntary participation, rights to privacy (anonymity and confidentiality), management of information, ethical publishing practices, and ethics relating to data analysis.

# CHAPTER 10

## DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION

### 10.1. Introduction

This chapter centres on the presentation of data collected from final year student social workers and fieldwork coordinators at UNIVEN and UL. Since the study adopted a qualitative approach, data was collected using semi-structured interviews and open-ended questions, which were used to elicit information from participants regarding fieldwork supervision of social work students during their practical placement. Participants were selected purposefully and based on their availability. All participants signed informed consent forms prior to the process of data collection. The researcher followed the systematic steps for data analysis proposed by Tesch (in Creswell, 2009:186) as discussed in the preceding chapter.

### 10.2. Brief background of participants

Data was collected from 37 final year student social workers and two fieldwork coordinators at UNIVEN and UL. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with two fieldwork coordinators from UNIVEN and UL, ten final year student social workers from UL, and 27 final year student social workers at UNIVEN. Out of the 27 student social workers at Univen, two focus-group interviews were conducted. Each focus group comprised six student social workers. The two focus groups were identified as focus group one (FCG-1) and focus group two (FCG-2). In terms of gender disparities, out of 37 student participants, 25 were females and 12 males, as depicted in Figure 10.1 below.
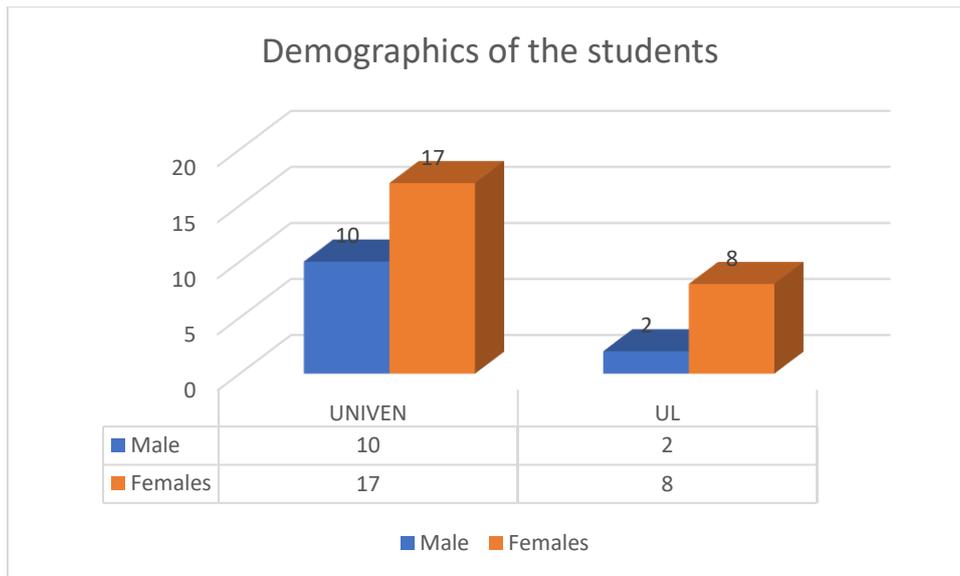
**Figure 10.1: Student participant's demographic distribution**

Figure 1 shows that most student social workers were females, with 68%, while 32% comprised male student social workers. The percentage confirms what Khunou, Pillay and Nethononda (2011:122) found, namely that women remain the majority in the social work profession.

All student participants had completed their final year social work fieldwork placement. Eight student participants from UNIVEN did their fieldwork placement with the DSD; four student participants did their practical at the Department of Health (hospitals); while the remaining three did their practical at the Department of Correctional Services. Six participants from UL did their fieldwork placement at the Department of Health (hospitals); one participant did practical work at a Child and Youth Care Centre; and the remaining three did their practical work at the Department of Social Development. The two Fieldwork Coordinators are male and female, and all were designated fieldwork coordinators of the two institutions. By comparison, UL seems to prefer at the Department of Health (hospitals) for placement of students, while UNIVEN seems to prefer DSD.

## 10.3. Overview of themes, sub-themes, and categories

This section describes the themes, sub-themes, and categories that emerged from the qualitative data gathered from student participants and fieldwork coordinators. Table

1 below presents an overview of the themes, sub-themes, and categories that emerged from qualitative data in order to provide an overview of the findings.

**Table10.1: Framework for analysis**

| SECTION A: QUALITATIVE DATA FROM UNIVEN AND UL FINAL YEAR STUDENT SOCIAL WORKERS | | |
|---|---|---|
| **THEME1: SUPERVISORY RELATIONSHIP** | | |
| Sub-theme | Categories | Sub-categories |
| Student-supervisor relationship | • Positive student - supervisor relationship<br>• Negative student-supervisor relationship (Unpredictable Horrible, hectic) | |
| **THEME 2: SOCIAL WORK FIELDWORK SUPERVISION** | | |
| Orientation of students<br><br><br>Delivery of supervision functions<br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br>Methods of supervision | • Planned programme approach<br><br>• Acquire -as-you-go-along approach<br><br>• Administrative function<br><br><br>• Educational function<br><br><br><br><br>• Supportive function<br><br>• Modelling function<br>• Motivational function | <br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br>• Feedback sessions<br>• Rotational work<br>• Training and workshops<br>• References to textbooks<br><br>• Debriefing |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Frequency of supervision sessions | • Individual<br><br>• Group supervision<br><br>• Co-supervision<br><br>• Live supervision<br><br>• Once a week<br>• Once a month<br>• Daily | • Formal supervision<br>• Informal supervision |
| **THEME 3: SUPPORT OFFERED TO PARTICIPANTS DURING PLACEMENT** | | |
| • Telephonic contacts<br>• Field visits | | |
| **THEME: 4 SUPPORT NEEDED BY PARTICIPANTS DURING PLACEMENT** | | |
| • Regular visits and contacts<br>• Financial support | | |
| **THEME 5: FIELDWORK-RELATED CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY PARTICIPANTS DURING FIELDWORK PLACEMENT** | | |
| • Dealing with sensitive cases<br>• Lack of resources<br>• Not enough work exposure<br>• Language barrier<br>• Personalities of supervisors | | |
| **THEME 6: PARTICIPANTS' SUGGESTIONS FOR ENHANCED FIELDWORK PLACEMENT** | | |
| • Early commencement of fieldwork<br>• Writing exams early before placement of students | | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| • Student-supervisor meeting before placement of students | | |
| **SECTION B: QUALITATIVE DATA FROM UL AND UNIVEN FIELDWORK COORDINATORS** | | |
| **THEME 7: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF FIELDWORK COORDINATORS** | | |
| Administrative responsibilities<br><br>Monitoring and support of students | • Planning for fieldwork<br><br>• Random field visits<br><br>• Telephone contacts | |
| **THEME 8: FIELDWORK SUPERVISION CHALLENGES FACED BY COORDINATORS WHEN SUPERVISING STUDENTS DURING PLACEMENT** | | |
| • Violation of ethics<br>• Students disappearing during fieldwork<br>• Producing fraudulent reports<br>• Indemnity | | |
| **THEME 9: SUGGESTIONS TO ENHANCE FIELDWORK COORDINATION AT UL AND UNIVEN** | | |
| • Early approval of placement of students<br>• Collaboration with government departments<br>• Engaging with NGOs<br>• Secretariat assistance | | |
| **THEME 10: SOCIAL WORK FIELDWORK INTEGRATED MODEL** | | |

## 10.4. Presentation of the research findings and literature control

This section covers the presentation, analysis, and discussion (interpretation) of study findings and gauging these against relevant extant the literature – either by way of endorsement or dispute. The findings are presented, analysed, and discussed in two sections. Section one centres on the qualitative data obtained from student

participants and section two on the qualitative data obtained from fieldwork coordinators from UNIVEN and UL. The study data were analysed by following the framework for analysis reflected in Table 1 above.

### 10.4.1. Section A: Qualitative data from UL and UNIVEN final year student social workers

Section A covers the analysis and discussion of qualitative data from UNIVEN and UL final year student social workers. The discussion is based on the themes, sub-themes, and categories that emerged from the qualitative interview data obtained from student social workers.

### 10.4.1.1. Theme 1:  Supervisory relationship

Relationship is a core aspect of any situation, be it related to family, the workplace, or training. Relationships can be enhanced or destroyed by a vision, mission, values, and attitudes.  The student–supervisor relationship was identified as a theme in this study. Weld (2012:280) notes that our existence is connected to the concept of 'interdependence', and relationship is at the centre of this. The supervisory relationship is the partnership and emotional bond between the supervisor and the supervisee for change in the supervisee base on mutual agreement about the goals and tasks of supervision. If fieldwork practice objectives are to be achieved, there is a need for a satisfactory relationship between the supervisor and supervisee to develop (White & Queener, 2003:203).

Participants were asked how they would best describe the relationship with their supervisors. Their responses were categorised as good, amazing, best, as well as unpredictable and horrible. The following responses are highlights of participants' views about how the relationship with their supervisors were experienced during fieldwork practice placement:

**Category 1.1: Positive student-supervisor relationship**
Participants reported their positive relationship with their supervisors as follows:

Some participants reported that they had a good relationship with their supervisors. The following is how they responded to the question about the relationship with their supervisors:

*"We have good working relationship. It's just working relationship; it does not go beyond that. When we come to work, we work and then we go home. That's what I have experienced, she hasn't been rude or treated me an unprofessional way because am a student. We had a good relationship, working relationship."* (Participant 001UL)

*"What I can say, she is a good person, she can be understanding sometimes and actually we are good. Whatsoever if am having a challenge I can be able to tell whatsoever challenges that I am experiencing even if its outside of work. She was able to assist… It's a good relationship, I can say."* (Participant 002UL)

Participant 004 from UL shared the same sentiment and stated that:

*"We had a good relationship, like okay we had a good relationship in general but there was time where I was told not to socialise with other people. Then I had to check that I am here to learn, like "U nga ni byeli kuri ni hungasa na mani, kumbe ni nga hungasi na mani. Leswaku wena na swimani-mani a mi kumani a swi lavi mina. Ni kombela kuri hi tirha."*
*Translated as "do not tell me who to socialise with and who not to socialise with. The fact that you are not in good terms with someone does not concern me, let us just work."* (Participant 004 UL)

In corroboration of the above views, one participant from the UNIVEN focus group one (UNIVEN FCG-1) echoed that:
"my relationship with my supervisor was okay, we had little misunderstanding, we attended to it and we moved on. So, it was good."

This resonates with responses from some participants in focus group two (FCG-2):
*"my supervisor was a jolly (cheerful) person, he was sweet to work with ad showed passion to work with students;" I had a good stay at Department of*

*correctional services, we were welcomed very well. My supervisor was like he has been waiting for us. He was good to us;" "the relationship was good, I enjoyed being there and I was treated like I was one of them."*

Another participant from UL felt that the relationship with the supervisor was great. This is what was shared with the researcher:

*"It was great. We were, you know it felt like home. From the first time that we got there, within a week we were already… you know smiling, friendly with each other. So, it was like, the reception was very welcoming. We were welcomed and all the supervisors were welcoming. Even when they introduced us, they did not say this is my student social worker they will say*
*"this is my colleague." The atmosphere and the relationship were very good; really, they are welcoming." (Participant 003 UL)*

One UNIVEN participant felt that the relationship with the supervisor was amazing. The following is what the participant shared with the researcher:

*"Wooow, it was amazing. Well, I actually thought it was going to be a little bit difficult on my first day when I got there, but to my surprise it was not.*
*She was very welcoming. She did not have this 'I know everything attitude'. Even when we are with some of her colleagues in meetings, if I don't understand something, she doesn't show them that. She will protect you and whenever you are the two of you, then she would say this is how it was supposed to be done."*
*(Participant 001UNIVEN)*

This was corroborated by participant 010 from UL who shared the same sentiment. The participant described the relationship with the supervisor as follows:
*"it was awesome, I don't regret doing practical in that agency and to be supervise by her. She treated me well, like am part of the family."*
Resonating with these assertions, one participant in FCG-2 stated the following:
*"it was amazing, very professional, nothing else."*

Participant 003 from UNIVEN felt that the relationship with the supervisor was the best.

The following assertion is evidence of what was shared during the interview:

*"I saw my supervisor as my mom, like we had this best relationship. At first, I was so scared of her. I don't know why, but I was not so comfortable day one. And then day two, she showed that this person is very nice and then we started getting along. Everyone in the office we got along. So, we had that relationship— it was good." (Participant 003UNIVEN)*

Participants 011, and 015 from UNIVEN shared the following that dovetails with the above assertion:

*"my supervisor was the best. The relationship was the best. I couldn't expect more from her;" "I was nervous on my first day of practical, but my supervisor saw it and called me to the office and explained that I should feel free and everything I needed I should ask. So, that actually put me at ease. We got along so well; I could say"*

**Category 1.2: Negative student-supervisor relationship**

Not all participants enjoyed good, best, great, and amazing relationships with their supervisors. Another participant at UNIVEN had a different experience regarding the relationship with the fieldwork supervisor. The participant described the supervisor's character as unpredictable and horrible, which made the relationship strained and not conducive for learning. The assertion below unveils the participant's view about the relationship with the supervisor.

*"Well, with my very own supervisor I would say … (short moment of silence) … her character was not predictable. Sometimes she will come to work having other issues and you do one mistake you will be told in your face in front of everyone, no time for preparing a session or anything. You will be told this is not what you are supposed to do… At times it was... am looking for a better word than "horrible." It was really tense because it can happen at any time of the day. It can happen in the morning and then your entire day is ruined. That is if you don't have that strong personality or character, but something does really need one to be strong. If someone says something that is not sitting well with you, obviously you are going to have a bad day. Or you would have something that's*

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*really bothering, and it might affect effectiveness on that day. So, in a way I wouldn't want to say anything more horrific than that, but it was not really a good thing, because you would be confused, at times you would also be demotivated. Actually, I was demotivated to come to work the following day. You know there are some usages of work which ask you if you were gaining anything from me, because most of all you are not getting paid, you are just a student. When someone steps on you like it's just very much devastating and sometimes you just want to sit at home and don't even think about your work."* (Participant 004UNIVEN)

Participant 002 from UNIVEN had a good working relationship with the supervisor, but encountered a problem with the agency supervisor from the first day of fieldwork placement. This is the response of participant 002 from UNIVEN regarding the relationship with the supervisor.

*"With my supervisor, the relationship was good. We got along so fine and the other colleague. The problem was only with the overall agency supervisor."* (Participant 002UNIVEN)

This is what participant 002 was told by the agency supervisor on the first day of arrival.
*"If she knew I was the one coming, she wouldn't have allowed. Then we continued working and I saw that the relationship is till tense, then I ended up feeling like (I was) mistreated, and then I ended up reporting it to the university."* (Participant 002UNIVEN)

Two participants from UL were not spared from a relationship that was not welcoming. They echoed the following:
*"my supervisor did not like me from first day. She stated that she was not informed that there is a student coming."* (Participant 005 UL)

Another participant mentioned that:
*"I don't know what to say, but things were not okay with my supervisor. We could hardly talk, laugh, or even go out together. Sometimes he would go for home visits alone. So, it was hard. (Participant 008UL)*

Participant 006 from UNIVEN described the relationship with the supervisor as hectic. The participant said:

> *The first week was hectic. At some point I felt that the supervisor did not like me. When I made mistakes, he would say 'you are not like students, you are too slow'. (Participant 006UNIVEN)*

In respect of participant 002 and participant 006 from UNIVEN and participants 005 and 008 from UL, the relationship was characterised by a lack of acceptance and respect, which Cormier and Cormier (1991) in Potgieter (1998:99) alludes to as one of the important characteristics of building professional relationship. From an ecosystems perspective, there was a lack of balance in the system around creating a conducive environment for the students. The fieldwork supervisor's relationship with one student was described as good, but the agency supervisor who was part of the system did not like the student from the first day of fieldwork placement. Furthermore, the way the fieldwork supervisors communicated with students lacked concern for other person's feelings. Potgieter (1998:78) argues that communication defines the relationship between individuals or groups that are concerned in a given situation. Communication that is clear in message and instructions make it easier for role players to know what they must do. More importantly, communication that shows respect, acceptance of individual differences, and avoidance of rudeness and vulgar language contributes to successful supervisory relationships.

By comparison, the findings indicate that most participants from UL enjoyed good relationships with their supervisors. Three participants from UNIVEN also had outstanding relationships with their supervisors, while some felt that they were at ease in such a way they could share their challenges with their supervisors. Most participants from focus groups also confirmed that they had good relationship with their supervisors. The findings corroborate what Pehrson et al. (2010:73) argue, namely that "the relationship between a fieldwork practice supervisor and the social work student is an essential element in the student's growth and learning to become a social worker." The findings are also in line with what Linford and Marshal (2014) emphasise: that in relationship building, supervisors facilitate learning by being present, approachable, and understanding, while satisfying the student's need to feel valued and safe. Moreover, relationship building requires supervisors to devote time

in placement and help students develop confidence and competence as a professional trainee by building a healthy working and professional relationship with the student. Furthermore, Kadushin and Harkness (2002, cited in Bennett, 2008: 198) indicate that, when the student-supervisor relationship is positive, "the supervisee is more receptive to feedback, more likely to identify with the supervisor and can use the supervisor relationship as a model for qualities found in the client-worker relationship." The findings show that most supervisors were available and created an atmosphere where they are approachable to their student supervisees. Supervisors did not take supervisory relationship lightly. They considered the supervisory relationship to be a significant element of creating a safe educational environment that supports professional development and the improvement of professional and personal values and skills (Nadesan, 2019:40). In terms of attachment theory, supervisors took into consideration the key basic characteristics associated with attachment behaviour as circumscribed around various key aspects by Weiss (1991, in Howe, 1995:52) and Harris and White (2013:30):

***Proximity seeking -*** the attachment behaviour is shown by attempting to remain within the protective range of his supervisor. Participants reported a good time with their supervisors, and they could easily relate with their supervisors.

***Safe haven -*** when the student felt afraid, they were able to find comfort and security from the supervisor.

***Secure base -*** the supervisor provides a dependable base from which the student can explore outwards (Harris & White, 2013; Budeli, 2016). Most supervisors created opportunities where the student could work without fear, knowing that he or she had the backup of the supervisor. This was evident in the earlier assertions about their relationship with the supervisors.

As indicated, some participants (participant 004 and 002UNIVEN) and participant 005UL and Participant 008 from UL encountered a relationship-based problem with their supervisors. The supervisor's characters were described as unpredictable and horrible. The participants reported devastating times, feeling confused at times, as well as demotivated, wanting to just sit at home. The findings are in line with what

Hopkins and Austin (2004:22) allude to: that challenges in the relationship between the student and supervisor often lead to problems. Students cannot easily reach out to the supervisor, thereby affecting the whole supervision processes, including the motivation to continue. A study by Tanga (2013) revealed that "participants had mixed feelings regarding the relationship with agency supervisors. Out of 60 students who participated in the study, 85% of the students supervised by social workers reported warm feelings and attachment." Furthermore, the findings of the present project corroborate the study by Hall and Barlow (2007) about the emotion and tension in social work field education. Their study findings revealed that "students wanted guidance and support and were not happy with fieldwork supervisors who were unsupportive. Some students reported that problematic relationship with their fieldwork supervisors left them feeling very helpless." Relationships with fieldwork supervisors were strained when students received unsupportive feedback from their fieldwork supervisors and had interpersonal conflicts with them.

Although this study is not aimed at generalising the findings to the whole population, as is the case with most quantitative studies, the researcher can conclude that most participants from both universities in this study had good, peaceful, and outstanding working relationships with their supervisors. The establishment of a healthy student-supervisor relationship helped students to be free to seek assistance from the supervisor at any time which, in turn, contributed to students' professional development and satisfaction with the placement.

### 10.4.1.2. Theme 2: Social work fieldwork supervision

Supervision is central to the social work profession in general and the training of future social workers. There is no doubt that supervision starts the day on which students start with their fieldwork placement. Therefore, it is incumbent on fieldwork supervisors to orient their students before entering hands-on work with fieldwork duties. Once the orientation is done, social workers perform various functions in order to help students achieve the fieldwork placement objectives. The supervision functions transcend supervision of fully trained employed social workers who have completed their degrees, but also extends to students when they are in training. During fieldwork placements, future professionals are being oriented to the profession of social work,

instead of just being concerned about assigning caseload to get the students to achieve the desired practical outcomes. Functions of supervision have always been identified as administrative, educational, and supportive (Skidmore, 1990; Kadushin & Harkness, 2002). As the profession of social work progresses, the motivational and modelling function of supervision have been identified as important functions (Bittel & Newstrom, 1990; Harmse, 1999; Wonnacott, 2012). Moreover, the profession of social work has identified a variety of methods of supervision used by social workers use. Individual, group, co-supervision, and live supervision are among the methods used in supervision.

**Sub-theme 2.1:  Orientation**

The orientation of students during fieldwork placement was identified as a sub-theme in this study. For fieldwork supervision to occur, the fieldwork coordinator, fieldwork supervisor, and student must play their part. Each party carries a supervisory role at different levels. The coordinator at the university gives students instructions about what needs to be done during placement. The supervisor at the agency has the responsibility  of orienting the student into the agency and assigning students with workload that will help them achieve the fieldwork practice objectives. The student has the responsibility of executing all the instructions given by the university and the fieldwork supervisor.

Participants were asked if they got orientation when they arrived at the placement agency. Their responses are recorded below.

> *"In a way, it wasn't like kind of formalized because it was not like that thing that they orientate you.  There was this social worker who was an intern, he was the one who showed us around, not every day though. Is not something that you will know that today you are going to do this. It wasn't that formal." (Participant 003UL)*

Other participants from UNIVEN and UL echoed that the only orientation received was being introduced to the physical environment of the organisations.  Participants said the following:

> *"We got orientation, physically about the environment, just you know to the ablutions block and different types of courts and all that. Then we had to be*

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*orientated to the colleagues now. You know this is what they specialize in, where you find them mostly and who can help you mostly when it comes to what"* *(Participant 004UNIVEN).*

Participant 007UL received orientation that was formal and planned. The participant said the following:

*"the first day was just orientation and induction to all staff members from admin, service staff, ground workers, cleaners, clinic and fellow social workers. Then in the second day, there were presentations about the agency services rendered to children as well as procedures. So, I will say, I was orientated."* *(Participant007UL)*

Participants from focus group one at UNIVEN enjoyed well-planned orientation for a week before being assigned supervisors and prior to engagement with clients. On behalf of the group, one participant said the following:

*"Our first week at the organisation was an orientation organised by human resource development office. We had a program for a week. We usually met at the human resource development boardroom. Each day will have presenters from different sections of the prison. We had presentations form security (warders), human resources, social workers, clinic. So, it was planned, we knew what was going to happen on the second day going forward. It (orientation) was planned."* *(FCG-1UNIVEN)*

Some participants felt that the orientation was limited to the physical environment only. They reported the following:

*"When we got there, those social workers they introduce us to specific wards, so I was at first given wards … I think it was female wards, the other wards it was oncological ward and maternity ward"* *(Participant 004 UL).*

*"they showed us offices, hospital wards and introduced us to other colleagues (social workers), but it was not formal."* *(Participant 005UNIVEN).*

*"Yaah, there was nothing much, except being shown around the organization, manager's office, mm. Yaa. That was that. As for work related stuff, I learned as I go." (Participant 011UNIVEN)*

Other participants from both universities reported that they were never oriented. The following statements evidence what they said:

*"As for orientation, nothing. It didn't take place. It was just the introduction which I had to force for it to happen. I told them that they have to introduce me even to other colleagues outside the building so that they don't get surprised. So, no orientation, nothing... I had to find a way to get things while I was working." (Participant 002UNIVEN)*

*"No, we never had an orientation. The only orientation was when I got in, this is Ms who who, that's the foster care office. This is where you will be based, your supervisor is this one. I had to find my way around. I also did not know my colleagues, had to grab their names while they are being called. Didn't even know how to operate a photocopier machine. I had to teach myself." (Participant 003UNIVEN).*

Three participants reported that there was no orientation done. The assertions below validate their responses:

*"as for orientation, nothing was done. The supervisor was not there when I went to the agency on the first day. When she came back the following day, she had a visit to attend, and we went tother. That's how I started working." (Participant 008UL)*

*"no orientation at all, nothing." Participant 006UL and Participant 006UNIVEN.*

These assertions show that, by comparison, most participants received orientation that was informal and limited to introduction to colleagues and the physical environment. Other participants, though introduced to colleagues, workspace, and the environment, felt that they did not receive orientation. The orientation lacked attention to details when compared to what Hoffmann (1990:104) states:

the orientation events are best scheduled in a written programme which, apart from being sound administrative procedure, will not only provide the student with a structured plan, but will also make the student feel welcome and wanted in that preparation was made for his arrival. The purpose of the student's orientation is to acquaint the students with the policies, management and service procedures, identifying specific administrative procedure to be followed in the execution of the student's assigned workload.

In addition, Lager (2010:209) argues that a well-organised and detailed orientation to the roles and responsibilities of the student in the agency helps him or her understand what the supervisor expects and the weaknesses of the organisation when it comes to meeting student expectations as well as the boundaries applicable to the student.

The findings also revealed that participant 004 from UNIVEN, participant 007UL and participants in focus group 1 (FCG-1UNIVEN) proudly reported to have received proper, formal orientation by the agency fieldwork supervisor. This dovetails with what Ford and Jones (1987:51) who state that in t*he planned programme approach, the fieldwork supervisor* takes the student as a learner who needs an orientation session, usually for a week or so. This is done to help the student feel at ease and get to know how the agency operates before he/ she starts with the real work with clients. In this planned programme approach, the emphasis is on educating students about the agency (personnel, resources), its work team, and outside agency partners.  Even though the orientation did not take place for a week, the fieldwork supervisor had time with the students to help them get to know the agency and those agencies they work with, such as different courts, as indicated by participant 004 UNIVEN, participant 007 UL and FCG-1 UNIVEN participants.

This section has discussed the question as to whether participants received orientation or not. The next section will examine approaches that fieldwork supervisors used when orientating students. Some agency supervisors may engage students in formal and planned orientation, while others may prefer less formal orientation. The literature reviewed show two approaches to orientation: planned programme and the acquire-as-you-go-along approach (Jones & Ford, 1987). Some students were oriented through the acquire-as-you-go-along approach.

**Category 2.1.1: Acquire-as-you-go-along approach to orientation**

This informal approach to induction is based on the notion that students will acquire more information about the agency and the resources when they want to use them. Information about how the agency operates flows forth as students attend to clients, meet challenges, and find out how the agency can be of assistance with the help of the supervisor (Ford & Jones, 1987:52). Some participants mentioned that orientation did not take place, so participants had to learn about how the organisation worked as part of their practical progresses. The following is what participants said:

*"As for orientation, nothing. It didn't take place. It was just the introduction to staff which I had to force for it to happen. So, no orientation, nothing…. I had to find a way to get things while I was working." (Participant 002UNIVEN)*

Other participants mentioned that orientation was limited to being introduced to the work environment. The participants mentioned the following:

*"When we got there, those social workers they introduce us to specific wards, so I was at first given wards … I think it was female wards, the other wards it was oncological ward and maternity ward" (Participant 004UL).*

*"In a way, it wasn't like kind of formalized because it was not like that thing that they orientate you.  There was this social worker who was an intern, he was the one who showed us around, not every day though. Is not something that you will know that today you are going to do this. It wasn't that formal." (Participant 003UL)*

*"I was introduced to staff members, the building and the manager's office." (Participant 006UL)*

Another participant from UNIVEN shared the same view that resonates with those of participants 004 UL stated above.

*"I was introduced to staff members in the agency. Then we moved around the building where the supervisor was showing me the building. Most of the things I learned as I was attending the cases."* (Participant 006UNIVEN)

### Category 2.1.2. Planned programme approach to orientation

The findings show that only one participant from UNIVEN felt that proper orientation was done. The participant's orientation was not only limited to the work environment. The participant reported the following in divergence from above assertions:

*"We got orientation, physically, about the environment, just you know to the ablutions block and different types of courts and all that. Then we had to be orientated to the colleagues now. You know this is what they specialize in, where you find them mostly and who can help you mostly when it comes to what. Because we had those who deal with early childhood development and substance abuse, if you have an issue or have something to do you would know who to go to."* (Participant 004UNIVEN)

Participant 007UL also received orientation that was formal and planned. The participant said the following:

*"the first day was just orientation and induction to all staff members from admin, service staff, ground workers, cleaners, clinic and fellow social workers. Then in the second day, there were presentations about the agency services rendered to children as well as procedures. So, I will say, I was orientated."* (Participant 007UL)

In corroboration of this view, participants from focus group one from UNIVEN enjoyed well-planned orientation for a week before being assigned supervisors and prior to engagement with clients. On behalf of the group, one participant said the following:

*"Our first week at the organization was an orientation organised by human resource development office. We had a program for a week. We usually met at the human resource development boardroom. Each day will have presenters from different sections of the prison. We had presentations form security (warders), human resources, social workers, clinic. So, it was planned, we knew*

*what was going to happen on the second day going forward. It (orientation) was planned." (FCG-1UNIVEN)*

It can be inferred on the basis of these assertions that participant 002 from UNIVEN insisted to be introduced to other colleagues within the agency and had to find his or her way as the practical progressed. Participant 003 from UL and Participant 004 UNIVEN were introduced to the work environment. By comparison, only one participant from UNIVEN and one participant from UL were oriented through a formal and planned programme. Student participants in focus group one (FCG-1UNIVEN) reported that they received planned formal orientation. This was supported by others, because they were in the same organisation. Comparatively summarising these responses, it can be said that most students from both universities were oriented through the *acquire-as-you-go-along approach*. Ford and Jones (1987: 52) mention that, in this approach, students learn as the practical continues. This manner of orientation lacks the formal structured plan which Hoffmann (1990) suggested.

**Sub-theme 2.2: Delivery of supervision functions**

This sub-theme centres on the delivery of supervision functions. The profession of social work requires social workers to perform different functions in their daily work. As indicated, these functions are also applicable to students during fieldwork placement. The following are assertions from students regarding how they experienced their supervisors' performance of the different functions of social work supervision.

**Category 2.2.1: Administrative function**

Social work professional practice requires accountability of work done by social workers, including student trainees. According to Kadushin (1992:19), the administrative function of social work supervision is a process ensuring that the work within the organisation is done and, more importantly, ensuring control and accountability of work done by staff members. The administrative function involves attending to clients, writing reports, and keeping records. Skidmore (1990:241) succinctly suggests that "in administration the supervisor guides and supports with management matters, including matters such as assigning of cases to supervisees,

advocating for students, monitoring and the evaluation of students' performance, appointments to committees, or any other agency work."

Participants experienced the administrative function of the supervisor in different ways. Their responses are captured below.

*"For administration, she will give me all the forms and say sign them, do them. Later, she will take them and say, here you were supposed to do the following. Then after, maybe, three or four days when I have forgotten she will give me the form again, to say fill in this form just to see if really there are improvements or mistakes" (Participant 001UNIVEN).*

One participant from UNIVEN had the opportunity to be assigned to many different cases. These included handling of foster care cases, monitoring of drop-in-centres, and couples counselling, which embodied some of the highlights of cases attended to, including writing reports. This is what the participant said:

*"I will talk about foster care because I did most of foster care cases. Right now, I think I am more than capable of writing foster care reports. I went to court, so I am more familiar with foster care services than any other services that are rendered in the agency. From doing the intake, wherein the child is brought to the agency, doing the assessment, going to the home of that person, and then doing advertisement and all that till we go to court and the child is now removed. I used to do monitoring of ECD (early childhood development), I used to visit drop-in centres to do the monitoring and then also the elderly centre, we used to go there, and then couple counselling I also did that. And then the campaigns of substance abuse, I did that too. I was also doing a log (book), because she is using a subsidy car. So, I will be logging for her" (Participant 003UNIVEN).*

In resonance with this sentiment, participants from UNIVEN felt capacitated enough to know different ways of approaching cases and writing reports. The participant said:

*"I have learned different ways of approaching cases. Sometimes you would have the same child grant problem, approaching it in different style. Other supervisors*

*make me learn how to write my own report. In a nutshell I can say I have learned a lot in terms of how to write a report, how to speak to clients, how to understand the difference between presented problem and the real problem" (Participant 004 UNIVEN).*

UL participants also had experiences similar to those of the UNIVEN participants. They reported that they, too, learned how to write different kinds of reports.

They said the following:

*"I benefited a lot, she taught me a lot like report writing and how to report on cases as well as how to attend clients when they come to the office … I managed to get just enough (cases) to pass" (Participant 001 UL).*

*"I had an opportunity to learn about how adoption is done, paupers' burial, aah, reunification" (Participant 004 UL).*

These sentiments resonated with those of participants 005 and 007 from UL who stated the following.

*"For now, I can proudly say I know how to write different reports.  What used to happen is…. I would write reports, submit to my supervisor for canalization. Then if there are no mistakes then the report is finalised. Where there are mistakes, then I would attend to them before the report is finalized." (Participants 005 UL)*

*"Child and youth care centre is busy. Everything must be done ..like by the rules. Each staff member must know how to write reports depending on which section they belong. As a student I was introduced to write different reports. Firstly, I had to observe when my supervisor was interviewing clients during admission and later on, she will write reports and show me how is done. When there is new admission, then she will ask me to do intake and assessment report. So, in a way I can compile different kind of reports. And… she always emphasized that every encounter with a client must be recorded, even if it's a short interview." (Participant 007UL)*

Participants of focus group interviews also had something to say regarding the administrative functions of supervision. Participants from focus group one (FCG-1UNIVEN) reported the following:

> *"There was a time when I was assigned to facilitate victim offender dialogue (VOD) and my supervisor asked me to write report. So, I know how to write VOD report."* Another participant said *"I know how to write admission report, report for CMC (case management committee), yaaah.. that's what I can say."* A student who was placed at female and Juvenile section felt that she learned a lot since she was ding practical with different gender section. She described her experience as follows: *"I know how to write discharge report for juveniles who are being discharged from the section to join the main prison cells, like Medium B or C. Another thing is what ……. (name withheld) had said, I know to write and present a report before CMC.* Another student who was placed in community corrections concluded the discussion by sharing his experience as follows: *"I did number of reports at community corrections, such groupwork reports for parolees and those sentenced under community corrections. Yaah, I did quite number of those (reports)."*

Views of participants from focus group two (FCG-2UNIVEN) are given below:

> "I attended a case on my first day. So, I even wrote a report;*" "Mmm, I was fortunate to work mostly at the hospital wards, so I had sessions with patients who needed different things like visits from their family members and tracing family members. At the end I must write reports and submit to the supervisor;" "I was lucky to attend multidisciplinary team meeting on behalf of my supervisor during practical. I had to present social work report in front of those professional. Yooh, I was scared but I learned a lot."*

This was confirmed by other participants who were exposed to similar administrative responsibilities, such as being assigned cases, writing reports, conducting home visits, and performing ward rounds.

It is evident in these responses that supervisors performed different administrative functions with the participants. It is exciting to know that the participants from both universities had opportunities to attend to clients or were assigned cases, as

evidenced by the assertions that participants had to produce reports, completed forms with the help of the supervisors, made home visits, and got to know the adoption processes. Some attended family reunification cases and pauper's burial cases. A more detailed exposure was reported by participant 003 from UNIVEN, who rendered information such as attending foster care cases from intake, assessment, a home visit, advertising, and a court appearance until the concerned child was placed under foster care. Furthermore, the participant was exposed to monitoring of early childhood development centres as well as working at drop-in- and elderly centres, in addition to doing a logbook for a subsidy car on behalf of the supervisor.

The findings confirm what Parker (2017) alludes to when he says that the important function of administrative responsibility stems from report writing. This is undeniably what all students experienced during fieldwork placement. All students were able to attend cases and produce reports. The amount of exposure that students reported also validates what Skidmore (1990) and Kadushin (1992:19) allude to, namely that "in administration the supervisor directs and guides and helps with management matters, includes aspects such as assigning of cases, advocating for students, monitoring and the evaluation of students' performance, appointments to committees, or other agency work." In addition, the NASW-USA (2013:8) asserts that administrative supervision is concerned with operational matters such as organisational policies and work requirements, while emphasising a supervisee's on-the-job performance and work delegation.  The supervisors exposed students to various administrative responsibilities during fieldwork placement. Although the fieldwork placement was of a duration of three months for UL students and four for UNIVEN, supervisors had done their best to ensure that students understood this important function of supervision, bearing in mind that they, too, had their own responsibilities apart from supervising students.

**Category 2.2.2: Educational supervision**

The educational function of supervision was also identified as the second sub-subtheme under the theme of delivery of supervision functions. One of the reasons for students' fieldwork is the educational purpose, which is to educate students about the practice of social work. One of the scholars of social work fieldwork education, Nunev (2014:462), indicates that the educational function of supervision stands out clearly in

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the case of training of social work students during fieldwork practice placement. Much of the function of the supervisor is to 'educate' the student about how the organisation operates and the process to be followed when attending to clients, and how that is documented for future reference.  Importantly, students will be observed daily and, where necessary, skills training may be arranged to ensure that the student performs up to the expected standard.

Regarding the educational function of supervision, participants had varied educational exposures/ activities as part of development, support, and guidance during fieldwork placement. Some participants from UNIVEN and UL felt that most of the educational activities were done in the office. The participants were assigned work, then the supervisor would have a feedback session where the he or she explained where participants did well and where not . The assertions below are what the participants said around each identified educational activity.

**Sub-category 2.2.2.1: Feedback sessions**

Some participants reported that feedback sessions were very helpful to them:

*"yaah… most of the things that she can just tell me you have to do this, you have to do that, but at the end he will just sit down with me and say this is what you did good. This is what you didn't do good. In order for you to achieve your goals, what do you think we can do or what else that I did not do well, or maybe I did not teach you well on how this is done." (Participant 002UL)*

In corroboration of this, participant 001 from UNIVEN said:

*"We used educational most of them. This is where, maybe I will be rendering services to the client. After the session then my supervisor will reflect... Immediately after the case, if you are a student social worker, there is a form where your supervisor is supposed to be highlighting to say this is what you did, you used this strength… So, immediately, they will sit down with you and would show this is what you did good. They will congratulate you on whatever you did good, and they will tell you to keep up, you know. And then on whatever you*

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*didn't do well they would educate you. When it comes to the educational part, that was very, very helpful."*

Some participants were exposed to rotational work within the organisation. Their responses are captured below.

**Sub-category 2.2.2.2: Rotational work**

Three participants reported as follows.

*"I had the opportunity of rotating because I wasn't supervised by one person. Initially there was this supervisor who was supervising. I have also learned and grown from other supervisors." (Participant 003UL)*

*"because I was placed in an agency where there are different sections, my supervisor would arrange that I spend some time in other sections. I my case I was also exposed to probation work and ECD services (Early Childhood development)." (Participant 010UL).*

Another participant from UL was given liberty to visit any offices within the organisation to broaden the scope of learning. This is what the participant reported:

*"my supervisor said, I can visit any offices whenever if feel like there is not much wok in the office. Then I took advantage of that, especially when the supervisor was off. I would visit any offices just to get a sense of how others do their work." (Participant 009 UL)*

In corroboration of the above, participant 001 from UNIVEN indicated that the supervisor would also arrange rotations where the participant visited other sections within the agency to learn how social work service was rendered in these.

Below is what the participant said:

*Even though my supervisor was allocated to certain wards, she would request that… there is something called rotation. They take a case for rotation meaning a certain case that does not belong to this supervisor is allocated to her or maybe because of educational purposes of the students.*

*(Participant 001 UNIVEN)*

Some participants attended training and workshops organised for all social workers within the organisation. Their responses are captured below.

**Sub-category 2.2.2.3: Training and workshops**

Participant 001 UNIVEN attended training on adoption services. This is what the participant reported:

> *"the only certificate I have is one for adoption services, that's the only training I got." (Participant 001UNIVEN)*

Participant 003 and participant 004 from UNIVEN had attended workshops that were organised for other social workers in the office. Their responses are subsequently given below.

> *"I attended workshops with other social workers. It was not for me only, but for every social worker in the office." (Participant 003UNIVEN)*

In corroboration, two other participants from UNIVEN and UL were subject to similar educational activities.

> *"Students workshops were not there. However, students used available departmental workshops for personal development." (Participant 004UNIVEN)*

> *"when she has meetings and workshops, she takes me along so that I can get the overview of everything there." (Participant 001 UL)*

Apart from one-on-one encounters with the supervisor, participants from focus group one (FCG-1 UNIVEN) had all attended training organised by the organisation. Their responses are summarised by one participant as follows:

> *"we attended two workshops on different matters, one was for assessment and the other one was for victim offender dialogue and victim offender mediation."*

Participant 002 from UNIVEN and participant 009 from UL did not attend any training or workshops. The participant was asked if there were any educational activities organised for students. The participants responded as follows:

*"No educational activities were organised … nothing. So, I had to do things my own way. I was working with this other social worker specializing in the NGOs, I just had to go with her at some point to her NGOs just see what is happening there. That was how I was learning. So, there was nothing organised for me." (Participant 002UNIVEN)*

*"Nothing was arranged, a lot of things I learned was mostly when the supervisor corrected my reports. that how I learned things, but not in way that is like an organized workshop." (Participant 009UL)*

In corroboration of these expressions, one participant from focus group two (FCG-2UNIVEN) reported on behalf of the group that *"here in hospital there were no trainings or workshops organized for students. It was upon supervisors to decide how to teach their students."*

As indicated earlier, some participants from UNIVEN and UL also felt that most of the educational activities were done in the office, even though there were no formal workshops and training. Below are their responses:

*"My supervisor taught me how to receive clients when they enter the offices, and how to interview;" (Participant 005UNIVEN).*

*"after attending to a client, my supervisor will tell me where I went wrong and where I did right. That's how I got to know the job; yaah, it was just that." (Participant 006UL)*

**Sub-category 2.2.2.4: Reference to textbooks**

*"She (supervisor) also had textbooks in her offices, which was very funny. She had textbooks, but the ones that she used during her time. So, I remember this other day when we had this other case, and then she was showing me the textbooks that was*

*talking about treating the client as a whole. We sat down and she will explain to me this is how you use this…." (Participant 001UNIVEN).*

Comparatively, the findings above show participants were subjected to varied educational activities in the office when they were attending cases. Only participant 001 UL had the chance to be taken along by the supervisor when he or she was going to attend a workshop. Participant 003 UL and Participant 001 at UNIVEN had chances to rotate to other sections of the agency, which maximised chances of learning. Participants from UNIVEN also had opportunities where the supervisors had to assign them work and later give feedback, congratulating the student for work well done and instructing them to make corrections where necessary. Participant 001 from UNIVEN had a supervisor who had to refer to textbooks in the office. Among the participants from the two universities, only participant 001 from UNIVEN had an opportunity to attend training where a certificate was issued. Participant 001UL, and participants 003 and 004 from UNIVEN, attended a workshop meant for social workers in the agency. Participants from focus group one (FCG-1UNIVEN) attended two workshops organised for students, while participants from focus group two (FCG-2UNIVEN) did not attend any workshop or training.

The findings confirm what Kadushin and Harkness (2002) and Skidmore (1990) allude to: the educational function of supervision emphasises the offering of educational activities, such as training and arranging formal in-service training. All these are done to help supervisees increase their social work professional knowledge. More importantly, the findings corroborate what Nunev (2014:462) asserts: that the educational function of supervision stands out clearly in the case of training of social work students during fieldwork practice placement. Much of the function of the supervisor is to educate the student about how the organisation operates and the process to be followed when attending to clients and how that is documented for future references. Importantly, students will be observed daily and, where necessary, skills training may be arranged to ensure that the student performs up to the expected standard. For Nadesan (2019:38), this educational role is more effective when supervisors provide regular and structured supervision. Supervisors took it upon themselves to organise various educational activities through training, workshops, and reflective feedback sessions that allowed students to achieve their fieldwork practice

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objectives and the skills that prepared them to do their jobs more effectively and independently. Although some students did not attend training such as workshops, there is evidence that several educational activities took place in the offices.

**Category 2.2.3: Supportive function**

The supportive function of supervision was identified as a third sub-subtheme under the sub-theme of the delivery of supervision function's theme. Students get into the field eager to learn, while not anticipating problems or challenges. But it is quite common that the workplace may sometimes be challenging, especially to students who are new to the environment. Therefore, students need greater support throughout the fieldwork placement period. According to Garthwait (2011:38), the supportive function of supervision involves that the supervisor will sustain the supervisee's morale, inspiring supervisees by providing support and by helping them deal with work-related and personal problems.

Regarding this function, supervisors performed different roles as part of sustaining the morale of students during fieldwork practice placement. Participants reported that debriefing was the main support activity conducted by supervisors and external service providers. The assertions below reflect this.

**Sub-category 2.2.3.1: Debriefing**

*"So, where I was placed, there is also … what they do is they have debriefing sessions every month. They have monthly meetings. After the monthly meetings they dedicate two hours for debriefing sessions. There is a group that came, is called Zinakekele. They (supervisors) allocate room for you; you can talk to that person (from Zinakekele) one-on-one. They are not concentrating or offering support based on work, you can talk about personal stuff. Is some sort of support. (Participant 001UNIVEN)*

Another participant from UL shared the same sentiment and reported the following:

*"Honestly, thankful there was this … usually during those group supervisions that I was talking about. You don't discuss cases only, you also discuss the challenges, what is it that we face in there, it's kind of like debriefing. You know I saw this and then you know we talk about it and then discuss. we discuss it so*

*that we take our mind out of it and also ... I was happy that the head supervisor organized/ sent me to a motivation talk. So that person really helped that day. We discussed our issues and after discussing, I felt like, at least I can breathe. We got to forget about the problems, you focus on adjusting, feel free and forget what you just saw so that tomorrow you persevere." (Participant 003 UL)*

This resonated in focus group two (FCG-2UNIVEN). The assertions below confirm their experience:

*"We were two in the section, is myself and …..(name withheld). When we are not busy, our supervisor would have a session with us where we talk about everything. Like she would ask us if we are learning or if we have any problem that need her attention. So, we were free to talk about anything;" " my supervisor would asked me from time to time if am okay, in a way felt supported."*

Some participants from focus group one (FCG-1UNIVEN) did not attend any debriefing sessions, but reported that the supervisors did provide support. Participants reported their experience as follows:

*"…more especially when i am stuck, he would continue with the case so that I don't feel embarrassed in front of the client. After the session he would encourage me and explain where I went wrong so that I can improve;" "my supervisor was very encouraging, she used to tell me that is not the first time she is supervising students. So, in a way it made me feel ok, knowing that if I made mistakes, I would get her support."*

Participant 004UNIVEN had problems with the supervisor. As part of helping the student to deal with the matter, some social work colleagues were decent enough to offer emotional support.  The participant was asked if the organisation had a forum where students could ventilate about anything regarding fieldwork placement. This is that the participant reported:

*"I can't really call it a professional debriefing session, but I can say there were colleagues who could see tensions that were happening, or unethical or unfair actions were happening. They took it upon themselves to say, let's have a corner with this lady and let's talk to her about this certain matter and that was a bit of a*

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*debriefing. But it was not that professional to say we are in debriefing, you know, it was one of those things that says help this person and talk about issues of concern and one of the colleagues will just go straight to the point and tell you I have seen this and that and I don't like it, what is your point. There were people who took a step of a little bit of debriefing. Would just try to care for a student to see that things were going well. Some of the supervisors asked me about my well-being and coping in the workplace and that made me feel valued."*
*(Participant 004UNIVEN)*

Other participants reported that, whenever there was a problem with the supervisor, it was said that we would talk about it and move on. The assertions below reflects this response:

*"when we had challenges, we addressed it and move on." (Participant 010UL)*

*".... I wouldn't say we had problems, but there a time where I had some misunderstanding with the supervisor. I think for day, he couldn't talk to me, but the following day he called me to his office and resolve the issue." (Participant 012 UNIVEN)*

Some participants felt that the supervisor was not keen to know whether they were happy or not, from the first day of their arrival to the agency. They explained their experience as follows:

*"it was all about work, nothing else. We never had friendly chats, but he would question me where I went wrong, but with little advice…yaah." (Participant 008UL).*

*"I spent most of my time alone. So, I can't say I was supported." (participant 005UL)*

These assertions reveal that fieldwork supervisors and other social workers within the agency had tried their level best to provide support through debriefing sessions to students during fieldwork placement, as evidenced by  assertions by participants 003UL, participant 001 UNIVEN, and participant 004 UNIVEN. In corroboration of these assertions, participants from FCG-1 UNIVEN and FCG-2UNIVEN shared similar

experiences of support from their supervisors. These ranged from open sessions that looked like debriefings to the supervisor asking if the student was OK or politely taking over the case when the student was challenged. In general, participants reported that they had forums where they were afforded opportunities to ventilate their work and personal issues. The findings confirm what Garthwait (2011:38) alludes to: that "the supportive function of supervision has to do with sustaining staff morale, inspiring workers by providing support and helping them deal with work-related and personal problems." The debriefing sessions that participants attended amounted to a form of support where students could deal with work-related and personal problems when these were interfering with their work or had potential to interfere with their work in future.

Another important issue that the findings reveal is that participants were afforded opportunities for oral discussions in which students and supervisor participated in a question-and-answer session intended to guide students through a reflective process about learning, as postulated in fact by Lederman (1984) cited in Markulus & Strang (2003:177). Lager (2010: 220) also points out that "it is necessary for supervisors to communicate to students and prepare them in advance for the types of stressors they are likely to face and need to develop coping skills at the beginning of their professional careers." Students need to develop ways in which they can deal with many challenges they may come across during their practical training. They need to be aware of common stressors in the organisation so that they are not caught off-guard when these occur. So, most students were afforded opportunities to talk about their stressful situations so that they could get help from the supervisors.

Two participants felt they never got any support from their supervisor. One participant spent most of the time alone in the office. From the findings it is quite clear that these students felt they were never supported. This finding does not comply with what Garthwait (2011) and Parker (2017:98) suggest, namely that, in the supportive function, the supervisor should accept the responsibility to provide emotional support by encouraging the supervisee to express their views and feelings and, more importantly, that the supervisor should assist the supervisee to "pinpoint the source of stress and identify means to prevent it or cope with it more positively in the future." Therefore, it can be inferred from the findings that the fieldwork supervisor did not act

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on this primary responsibility of providing emotional support, in contrast with that which Parker (2017) and Garthwait (2011) propose. Students were not prepared and helped to deal with work stressors, the latter as postulated by Larger (2010), where supervisors must prepare supervisees to deal with work stressors so that they may develop skills to deal with them.

**Category 2.2.4: Motivational function**

The motivational function of supervision was identified as the fourth sub-subtheme under the sub-theme of delivery of supervision function's theme. No matter how hard things may turn out to be, motivation is at the centre of achieving goals. One of the responsibilities of the fieldwork supervisors is to motivate students to complete the fieldwork. Wonnacott (2012:30) has succinctly argued that a unified approach to supervision necessitates supervisors to motivate, encourage, and  lead the professional practice of social work. Good supervisors do not just work in accordance with the supervision policy, but are also passionate about their work and are interested in developing the supervisees which, in turn, promotes positive outcomes for their clients. Wonnacott (2012) further points out that they need to understand that being a leader requires them to develop high quality working relationships with those around them (students in the case of this study). The motivational function of supervision is linked with supportive supervision, where the relationship between the student and fieldwork supervisor is important.

Some participants felt motivated by the support, encouragement, constructive feedback, and relationship they had from or with their fieldwork supervisors. Some participants highlighted the following:

> *"She was very supportive and always there to assist if I get stuck with work." (Participant 003UNIVEN)*

> *"she was very supportive in everything. When I am having difficulties, she will tell me not to panic and say she will help me. I remember there was a time when we were going to schools, and she said if you feel like you can't talk, then she will take… in a way she was showing me support." (Participant 007UL)*

In corroboration of these sentiments, other participants from UNIVEN disclosed the following:

*"Yooh, she was very supportive, I don't want to lie. She made sure that whatever that I don't understand she explains. What I like about her is that even when we are with some of her colleagues in meetings, if I don't understand something, she will protect you. Whenever it's only the two of us, then she would say this is how it was supposed to be done."* (*Participant 001UNIVEN*)

*"She was very supportive, yaah. When I needed her she was always there. She will be there over the phone. She was always not around, but then I would find her every time I wanted to find her. So, she was supportive, I would ask her whatever I want to ask and then she will help me whether she is around or not."* *(Participant 002UNIVEN)*

Some participants from UNIVEN and UL felt that motivational words and constructive feedback/ corrections made things easy. Furthermore, the participants were afforded opportunities to explain decisions. The assertions below evidence this:

*"My supervisor used different supporting methods such as motivational words, and corrections. At times I would handle a case on my own, then later discuss how I managed to handle it. I had an opportunity of explaining my perceptions and my decisions. I was guided on how to improve in all my cases." (Participant 004UNIVEN)*

*"Most of the things that she can just tell me you have to do this, but at the end he will just sit me down and say this is what you did good. This is what you didn't do good. In order for you to achieve your goals, what do you think we can do or what else that I did not do well." (Participant 002UL)*

Lastly, one participant from UL felt motivated by the fact that the supervisor would allow him or her to use the supervisor's laptop. The participant stated the following:

*"My supervisor has been very generous on letting me use her laptop, she was very generous." (Participant 001 UL)*

Participants 001, 002, and 003 from UNIVEN indicated that their supervisors were very supportive. Supervisors made sure that students received the necessary support from them, even when they were not around. Participant 004 UNIVEN indicated that the supervisor used different motivational words and corrections. In a way the support that participants received motivated them to keep going, irrespective of whether the supervisor was around or not. In the same vein, assertions by UL participants revealed the same sentiment. Participant 001 UL reported that the supervisor was very generous where the participant could even use his or her laptop. This motivated the student, knowing that the supervisor was keen to help. Participant 002 UL also indicated that the supervisor would assign work and later give feedback regarding where the student did well or not.

Comparison of the findings shows that both universities are in line with what Wonnacott (2012:30) argues: that a unified approach to supervision necessitates supervisors to motivate, encourage, and lead the professional practice of social work. The findings show that participants from both universities were inspired and motivated by the various ways in which the fieldwork supervisors performed their duties. Regarding attachment theory, it is clear that the student's supervisors created what Bowlby (1988) calls a "secure" base and "safe haven" where students can obtain comfort and a dependable base to explore the outside environment. Most students from both universities reported that their supervisors were caring, available, and responsible. It was easy for them to relate to their supervisors without fear, knowing that the supervisors were supportive.

In addition, ecosystems theory emphasises the interaction among individuals in the environment. The students and fieldwork supervisors who are key roles players in the environments (workplaces) should interact harmoniously for the environment to be effective and efficient for learning. On comparison of the assertions, the researcher can positively conclude that the interaction between the students and fieldwork supervisors were conducive for learning.

**Category 2.2.5: Modelling function**

Fieldwork placement requires students to observe the supervisor while doing the job, such as interviewing clients and presenting reports in courts. Common phrases used around the modelling function are demonstrating, showing, exhibiting, and displaying. Regarding this function, Bittel and Newstrom (1990:236) state that it amounts to direct observation of the supervisor, which can be defined as "a process in which a skilled co-worker or supervisor demonstrates the performance of key job skills and simultaneously explains steps involved and the reason for doing them. In simple terms modelling has to do with learning by watching or observing an experienced worker doing the task."

Participants had mixed experiences of the modelling function of supervision. Some had a chance to observe while the supervisor was doing the work, while others did not. One participant from UL did not get a chance to observe their fieldwork supervisor while attending clients:

*"I felt it was a challenge for me to work with them in the beginning. So, it wasn't easy because I feel like, sometimes when you do practical if ever you have to learn, you have to learn sometimes by observation. I was hoping she would show me the ropes, how it is done. But unfortunately, it wasn't like that, it's like I have to come up with my own thing. So, it was a challenge at first because she wasn't like that kind of a person who will show you how it's done, she expected me to ask questions." (Participant 003UL)*

It is clear that the participant was dissatisfied at not getting a chance to observe the supervisor while doing the work. The participant felt stuck, not knowing how to go forward with some work. All the participant 003UL wanted was:

*"that chance to observe so that you can learn how is done." (Participant 003UL)*

The above finding is contrary to the findings of Bittel and Newstrom (1990:236) who postulate that the modelling function involves "a process in which a skilled worker or supervisor demonstrates the performance of key job skills and simultaneously explains steps involved and the reason for doing them. In simple terms modelling has

to do with learning by watching or observing an experienced worker doing the task." The assertion cited above evidences that the participant was dissatisfied.

In contrast, some participants had chances to observe how certain services were carried out in the agency:

*"I had an opportunity to learn about how adoption is done, paupers' burial, and reunification." (Participant 004 UL)*

*"So, my supervisor made sure I know everything, she would allocate a day to say today, yes we will be dealing with cases. She will give me all the forms and say do them and sign them. After she will take them and say "no here you were supposed to write what what, here you are supposed to write what what." Now you see your mistakes. Then after may be three or four days when I have forgotten she will give me the form again, to say fill in this form and then we see. Just to see if really when she said here there was a mistake." (Participant 001UNIVEN)*
*"I observed my supervisor while presenting the report in court"*

Participants from focus group one (FCG-1UNIVEN) had similar experiences:

*"Like I said that the first week of placement was orientation by different sections of the prison. Then second week we were observing... I remember we were all taken to admission to observe while prisoners are being admitted. We observed our supervisors conducting admission processes."* another participant adds that:
*"I got a chance to observe my supervisor while facilitating VOD (victim offender dialogue)"*

This assertion provided a summary of what other participants experienced during practical work.

The assertions by participant 004 from UL and participant 001 from UNIVEN support what Bittel and Newstrom (1990:236) assert: that the modelling function encompasses a process in which an experienced worker or supervisor displays the performance of

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important profession competencies and at the same time expounding processes to be followed as well as the purpose for doing them. In simple terms, modelling has to do with the supervisor modelling appropriate behaviour, which the supervisee can enact or exhibit with service users learning by observing an experienced worker doing the job as Ncube (2019) stated.Participant 004 from UL and participant 001 from UNIVEN had chances to observe supervisors while they were performing their duties. Participants from focus group one (FCG-1UNIVEN) had similar experiences of observation. Furthermore, Linford and Marshall (2014) indicate that in role modelling supervisors portrays values and behaviours in the workplace that are observed and emulated, thus potentially moulding how the students learn and develop. Lager (2010:201) postulates that most students prefer this function above others in that "they can learn a great deal when they can watch their supervisor in individual sessions, read reports written by the supervisor, and observe him or her in other actions such as staff meetings and conferences." One way of doing this is for the supervisor to allow the student to sit in and work together during sessions with clients.

**Sub-theme 2.3: Methods of supervision**

The social work profession uses a variety of supervision methods. The These are found on the levels of the individual, groups, and peers and may take virtual, ad hoc, formal, informal, and/or co-supervising forms.  Participants were asked about the methods of supervision used by their supervisor during fieldwork placement. Their categorical responses are recorded in the sub-subthemes below:

**Category 2.3.1: Individual supervision**

The social work profession uses a variety of supervision levels and approaches, as stated above. Students may be subject to individual supervision depending on the issues to be addressed. Sometimes the student may be the only one in the agency, and individual supervision becomes the only available option.  Garthwait (2011:39) asserts that individual supervision entails prearranged, one-on-one supervision sessions between the fieldwork supervisor and the student.

Participants reported the following regarding the exposure to the individual method of supervision:

> *"it's individual."*  (Participant 001UL &Participant 007UL)

*"Most of the time we were doing individual methods, so where we can sit one-on-one in the office, she will explain something to me. So far is one-on-one because most of the time it's both of us in the office… is the two of us."* *(Participant 002UL)*

*"Mostly we were doing individual supervision like after a case, we sit down with the supervisor that's where we talk about the case. I believe the individual was more beneficial for me. (Participant 003UL)*

*"I was alone where I was placed. So, individual was the only method we used for supervision." (Participant 007UL)*

This was corroborated by a participant from UNIVEN who was also placed alone in the agency:

*"As I was the only student in that agency, we always did individual. So, it was the only one available as I was alone. We would do it anywhere wherever we can with my supervisor. As we go places or when we are on our way back, we would start talking about work and all that." (Participant 015UNIVEN)*

*"Most of the time wherein I have a client, most of the time my supervisor will be there like I will be the one in charge, I will be the one asking questions and all that and after that, neh, my supervisor will sit down with me and say this is where you went wrong, maybe next time you can do this and that." (Participant 002UL)*

*So, I feel like that one-on-one … like every time after I see a client, we will have that discussion. (Participant 003UNIVEN)*

*"One-on-one and group." (Participant 004 UL, Participant 013UNIVEN & Participant 014UNIVEN)*

*"We used individual most of the time … it was the one dominating." (Participant 001UNIVEN)*

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It is therefore clear that the most dominating method of supervision was individual. Most participants from both universities were principally supervised on a one-on-one basis. The findings are in line with UL manual for practical work (2012) requirement which emphasises that one of the roles and responsibilities of the fieldwork supervisor is to supervise students individually and in small groups. Importantly, the individual method is regarded as the most valuable method by several scholars, including Coulshed et al. (2006:166), who note that individual supervision allows for the development of professional and personal practice. It identifies each student's stage of professional practice development and attends to their unique needs, which cannot be met when discussed in a group situation. The student may talk about problems that are affecting his/ her work or has the potential to affect the work in future. Individual supervision is also an opportunity where students can receive appreciation of work well done.  On comparison of the assertions, it can be concluded that the participants from both universities were primarily supervised through the individual method.

**Sub-category 2.3.1.1: Informal individual supervision**

The following responses encapsulate the participants' view on whether the supervision was formal or informal.

*"It was informal because she will just say while we are sitting. My supervisor usually gave me pointers after a meeting with a client since she was usually present during my interactions with clients." (Participant 003UNIVEN)*

*"We would do it anywhere wherever we can with my supervisor. As we go places or when we are on our way back, we would start talking about work and all that." (Participant 002UNIVEN)*

*"Immediately after the case, they will sit down with you and would show this is what you did good, they will congratulate you on whatever you did good and they will tell you to keep up, you know… doing that. And then on whatever you didn't do well they would educate to say, for instance, maybe the client you were supposed to involve the family and you didn't, they will tell you to say in cases*

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*like this next time you should include the family, the reason being 12345."*
*(Participant 001UNIVEN)*

*"After a case, we sit down with the supervisor. that's where we talk about the*
*case." (Participant 003 UL & Participant 006UNIVEN)*

The responses from three UNIVEN participants and one UL participant indicate that they had informal individual supervision. Supervisors could start work-related discussion with the student anytime, including immediately after attending a case/ client as participant 001UNIVEN and participant 003UL indicated. In a nutshell, the findings suggest that supervision the participants received was *informal, individual, and ad hoc.* The findings confirm that which Garthwait (2011:39) indicates: that informal and ad hoc supervision involves unprepared short-term supervision sessions to discuss specific or pressing issues. In the same vein, Coulshed et al. (2006:168) postulate that

> informal supervision is inevitable and necessary, as one aspect of the support offered, but it can be useful as an addition, either when the staff member is new in the post and needs to feel that he or she can 'pop in' for practical information or advice, or in a crisis when an individual needs immediate help.

In summary, informal and ad hoc methods were used as prime modes of supervision among the sampling of the present study.

**Sub-category 2.3.1.2: Formal individual supervision**
Not all supervision sessions were informal : formal supervision methods were also utilised. Some participants from both universities enjoyed formal and arranged supervision sessions, as indicated by a participant:

> *"We had numerous arranged supervision sessions and knew that on this day we will be having supervisions session, and we knew what was going to be discussed and each and every one of us had to probably come up with two, three lines to show that you are ready for the session. And whenever someone says something you also had to show that you had prepared something in relation to*

*the agenda, because it's prepared, it's formal, you knew about it.*" (*Participant 004UNIVEN*)

Participant 004 from UNIVEN also partook in formal supervision sessions, as expressed above, but also acknowledged that there were minimal informal supervision sessions:

*"We also had informal ones where out of the blue something has to be said and it just had to be said. We had to deal with it at that time. Organized ones were more than twice per month. Unorganized ones could be more than twice as well depending on the need. However, organized supervisions were often more than unorganized supervision sessions." (Participant 004 UNIVEN)*

*"We had three formal supervision sessions at the beginning of practical. As times goes, she (fieldwork supervisor) would just talk about a case anytime, more especially after attending to client." (Participant 006UNIVEN)*

Participants from both focus group interviews had similar experiences, as expressed below:

*"When I started practical and assigned supervisor, we had signed a learning contract where I knew that on such a day, we are having supervision session;"* "*Not all supervision were informal, but we had time where we would have a formal supervision. In one of the supervision sessions my supervisor asked me to write minutes." (FCG-1UNIVEN)*

One participant from focus group two (FCG-2UNIVEN) had a similar experience regarding supervision:

*"Formal supervision was once a week."*

This shows that there were times where fieldwork supervisors used formal methods of supervision. Participants had formal and arranged supervision sessions, corresponding  the features of developing practice outlined by Coulshed et al.

(2006:168) and expounded in the present thesis around structure, regularity, focus, setting, record keeping, and evaluation (see section 6.2.4. formal supervision in Chapter 6).

These dimensions, alluded to by Coulshed et al. (2006) and Munson (2002), were to some extent accomplished, as evidenced by the following response:

*"I knew that on this day we will be having supervisions session, and we knew what was going to be discussed and each and every one of us had to probably come up with two, three lines to show that you are ready for the session. And whenever someone says something you also had to show that you prepared something in relations to the agenda, because its prepared, its formal, you knew about it."  (Participant 004 UNIVEN)*

**Category 2.3.2: Group supervision**

Social work supervisors may not have time for individual supervision sessions with their supervisees, especially when the supervisor has more than one student. Therefore, group supervision becomes an option. According to Garthwait (2011: 39), group supervision consists of frequently planned supervision sessions between the fieldwork supervisor and a small group of students. Participants had the following to say regarding the exposure to the group supervision method:

*"There was also group supervision. They assess us as colleagues, we come together, we talk about the challenging cases and then we come up with the way forward. So, when it comes to group supervision, most of the things you can even give inputs, knowing that during individual supervision we did this and that, you can also give inputs to others in their cases." (Participant 003UL)*

*"One-on-one and group." (Participant 004UL, Participant 013UNIVEN & Participant 014UNIVEN)*

*"We had group supervision sessions."  (FCG-1 & FCG-2UNIVEN)*

Another participant from UL was also exposed to group supervision, and said:

*"From group supervision, I think as in an individual you learn a lot because you… Loko kuri ka ntlawa lowu ku nga na murhangeri, u kota ku swi vona leswaku a wu wexe u nga na tinkingha. Loko u ri na van'wana u kota ku dyondya, u kuma na leswi nga ta ku pfuna hikuva nkarhi wun'wani a wu koti ku vulavula hi tinkingha ta wena. That's when you can be able to relate that am not alone facing challenges like these."* (Participant 004UL)

These assertions demonstrate that participants from both universities had group supervision as an alternative method . By comparison, none of UNIVEN participants were subjected to group supervision. The findings align with what Wonnacott (2012:30) alludes to when he says that "group supervision can be an invaluable addition to individual supervision and is particular useful in situations where the same group of people are working with the same service user, for example, in hospital." Proof of this is found in the following assertion by a participant:

*"So, when it comes to group supervision, most of the things you can even give inputs knowing that during individual supervision we did this and that, you can also give inputs to others in their cases."* Participant 003 UL

The assertion by participant 003UL means that his or her level of confidence and functioning was built during the individual method where  he or she could in fact even relate to what was done during one-on-one sessions. Furthermore, participant 004 UL indicated that, in group supervision, you were able to relate some of the issues that surfaced during individual supervision sessions. The participant further pointed out that there were greater chances of learning  relate that you were not alone facing challenges. More importantly, you could get help from others. The responses confirm what Coulshed et al. (2006) postulates: "group supervision may be chosen as the way in which everyone will get the support they need, given the time available."

Over and above this, the findings confirm what Nadesan (2019:40) asserts, namely that

group supervision is a viable alternative to the traditional individual modality in the context of strained agency resources for field instruction. Moreover, group

supervision effectively promotes a setting of peer learning, which in turn provides a safe environment for students to share intervention strategies used with service users.

Participants were able to learn and get support from each other in group supervision.

### Category 2.3.3: Live supervision

The modelling function of supervision entails that the supervisor demonstrates to the supervisee how work is done, as explained in Chapter 5. In its turn, live supervision requires the supervisor to observe the student supervisee while doing the job. Lager (2010) argues that "regardless of the particular model of supervision used, there is no substitute for directly observing a student's work with a client." The present study revealed that some participants had chances to be observed by their fieldwork supervisors, as found in the statements below:

*"After the session, then my supervisor will reflect because where I was placed, there is a form. Immediately after the case, if you are a student social worker, there is a form where your supervisor is supposed to be highlighting on what you did. So immediately, they will sit down with you and would show you where you did good. They will congratulate you on whatever you did good and they will tell you to keep it up. And then on whatever you didn't do well they would educate you." (Participant 004UNIVEN)*

In substantiation of this, consider this statement by a participant:

*"Most of the time wherein I have a client, most of the time my supervisor will be there, like I will be the one in charge, I will be the one asking questions and all that and after that my supervisor will sit down with me and say this is where you went wrong, maybe next time you can do this and that." (Participant 003UNIVEN)*

*"Most of the time when I attend a client when my supervisor is there, sometimes I feel stuck and would want her to assist me. She once told me I am not self-confident.  Your self-confidence is not that much, I don't know how you handle cases if I am not around." (Participant 002UL)*

*"… I attended most of the cases while the supervisor was there. It was not easy to be observed, you become anxious not knowing what the supervisor is thinking" (Participant 009 UNIVEN)*

These assertions were supported by participants from focus group one and stated the following:

*"In the section where I was placed, the supervisor wouldn't allow me to handle a case alone. She makes sure that she is there all the time;" " at the beginning ( of practical) there was a time where I observed supervisor while attending to prisoners, but as times goes, he allowed me to attend cases while observing me…;" ( FCG-1UNIVEN)*

These statements provide sufficient evidence for concluding that participants had time to attend to clients in the presence of their fieldwork supervisors. In these cases, they were given immediate feedback about how their sessions went with the client, so that they might improve in their future encounters.  Although this was not performed through a one-way mirror, the conclusion can be drawn that participants were observed. The findings confirm what Skidmore (1983:221) denotes:

> live supervision involves direct observation of a student via a one-way mirror and gives opportunity for immediate guidance to the student. Apart from being present in the interview room, the supervisor may accompany a student to home visits where he/ she listens and observes the interview between the student and a client. This method has advantages as it corrects inefficient practice immediately, thus ensuring that the client received good quality service.

Furthermore, this method, as Skidmore (1983:221) and Lager (2010:198) explain, has the disadvantage that the student's practice may be negatively affected by the anxiety of being observed by the fieldwork supervisor. This is validated by the assertion of a UL participant:

*"Most of the time when I attend a client when my supervisor is present, sometimes I feel stuck and would want her to assist me. I become very limited."* *(Participant 001UL)*

This confirms that the participant felt anxious when the supervisor was present. Due to the participant's level of confidence, he or she felt that the supervisor should continue with the case. The finding is in line with what Chui (2009:21) asserts, namely that two sources of anxiety for students are "feeling inferior or incompetent if they were to expose their weaker areas in detail to their supervisors and their abilities and performances in practice areas that they find difficult." The fact that the student felt stuck and limited in the presence of the supervisor served as evidence of anxiety.

**Category 2.3.4: Co-supervision**

Designated supervisors may be tied up by personal and professional responsibilities. As such, they may not always be available to offer supervision to students. Therefore, for learning to occur, the most common supervision practice is that the student is left under the supervision of another social worker. Sometimes, students may have more than one supervisor because of specialised areas that the agency wants the student to be exposed to. The practice of students having more than one supervisor is referred to as co-supervision. Co-supervision is described by Coulton and Krimmer (2005) as two or more workers who supervise a student.

The findings of this study reveal that some participants from both universities had opportunities to be supervised by more than one social worker within the organisation, while others were left on their own in the absence of their designated supervisors some:

*"I had a chance to be supervised by two supervisors."* *(Participant 002UL)*

*"I had the opportunity to be supervised by three supervisors. I had the opportunity of rotating because I wasn't supervised by one person."* *(Participant 003UL)*

Some participants were left under the supervision of another social worker in the absence of the designated fieldwork supervisor:

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*"In case my supervisor is absent, I will be left with another social worker. Sometimes she will give me time off if all social workers are absent." (Participant 007UL).*

Some of UNIVEN participants had a similar experience, in corroboration of the assertions by UL participants:

*"After I had my second supervisor what we did is during supervision session it will be the three of us (two supervisors and a student), because both of them they were teaching me. I was with this one and… they both have different wards so we would be the three of us would sit down and then will talk." (Participant 001UNIVEN)*

*"You know when your own supervisor is not around, you always have someone you go to. It always happens that in the absence of the appointed supervisor, you have to speak to someone, so they were all, actually all introduced to me as colleagues. But when times went, they turn from colleagues to supervisor? Depending on the necessity of that person that time." (Participant 004UNIVEN)*

*"We were never allowed to be alone in the offices. If a client comes, we have to go to another social worker's office and attend to the client there." (FCG-2UNIVEN)*

One participant from focus group two shared the same sentiment:

*"I don't know if it was because of trust. My supervisor always arranged another social worker to supervise me." (FCG-1UNIVEN)*

These statements indicate that participants from both universities had another social worker to supervise them when the designated supervisors were not available. The findings corroborate what Coulton and Krimmer (2005:154) indicate, namely that co-supervision means that "a student will have more than one social worker who supervises him/ her'. They further point out that co-supervision is an efficient and

beneficial supervision model that offers students increased accessibility to support and advice, greater breadth of knowledge, and diverse learning opportunities. It is quite evident that the placement agencies that arranged for alternative supervisors did not take students for granted, not leaving them unattended when the designated fieldwork supervisor was not available. Students had diverse learning opportunities facilitated by social workers who had different work experiences and approaches to supervision.

The study also notes that not all participants had alternative supervisors in the absence of the designated supervisor. Participant 002, participant 011UNIVEN, and participant 001UL pointed out that the supervisors could not arrange anything in case they would not be at work. The statements below serve as evidence of this.

*"She wouldn't arrange anything. I was only left with whoever who was available; if I wanted help, I would ask anyone of the colleagues to say here I have a challenge, someone came they want 123, where do I go, what should I do and then they help." (Participant 002UNIVEN)*

*"In the agency that am in, there is only one social worker who is my supervisor, so when she is not around, I am alone, am not supervised. There were no arrangements made for supervision when she is not around." (Participant 001UL)*

*"Most of the time I will be alone when the supervisor was not around (Participant 011UNIVEN)"*

These findings validate the those of Tanga (2013), whose study found that some students who participated in the study were left alone in the office without anyone to attend to their learning needs.

**Sub-theme 2.4: Frequency of supervision sessions**

Frequency of supervision sessions was identified as a sub-theme under the social work fieldwork supervision theme. It was the researcher's interest to find out the frequency of supervision sessions that students attended during fieldwork placement.

**Category 2.4.1: Once a week**

Most of the participants had supervision sessions once a week, as reflected by the statement below:

*"We had supervision session once a week." (Participants 012;013;014;008;004, 003, and 001UNIVEN)*

Most of the participants from the two focus group interviews had similar experiences. To sum up their responses to the question on the frequency of the supervision sessions, their response was as follows:

*"Once a week" (FCG-1UNIVEN & FCG-2UNIVEN)*

Most of the participants from UL also had similar experiences. Participants 001, 003, 004, 006, 007, 009, and 010 reported that they had supervision session once a week.

**Category 2.4.2: Once a month**

Even though the majority had supervision sessions once a week, some reported that they had supervision session once a month.

*"May be once a month." (Participant 015UNIVEN)*

*"It was once a month." (Participant 011UNIVEN).*

*This was echoed by participants 008, 005 and 002 from UL.*

**Category 2.4.3: Daily**

Some participants from focus group interviews indicated that supervision happened almost daily:

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*"Usually, we would have one supervision per week, buy also every time when I am attending the case my supervisor assist or talk to me after the client is gone"* (FCG-1UNIVEN)

*"almost daily because we had clients everyday"* (FCG-2UNIVEN)

These findings demonstrate that most of the participants from both universities in this study had weekly supervision. The findings are in line with what Coulshed et al. (2006:168) postulate, namely that formal supervision aimed at developing practice where the supervisee can account to the supervisor is distinguished by its regularity. Coulshed, et al. (2006) assert that, regardless of the structure used, the supervision should be conducted on a regular basis.

The findings also revealed that some participants had supervision once a month. On average, this means the participates had three to four supervision sessions throughout the duration of the fieldwork placement period. These supervision sessions were irregular and did not consider the student as a learner who needed regular and consistent advice, support, and guidance. Some participants felt that supervision happened daily when attending to clients. Their responses dovetail well with the ad hoc and informal kinds of supervision which are aimed at providing support or solutions to immediate problems. This kind of supervision occurred when the students were attending a case and needed immediate help.

### 10.4.1.3. Theme 3: Support offered during placement

Fieldwork places a number of responsibilities on the universities responsible for students in placement. One of the key responsibilities is that of support for students. Cleak and Wilson (2007) claim that evaluating the student's placement experience and checking if the practical objectives or outcomes have been achieved are important. In addition, Liu et al. (2013:183) state that another indispensable aspect of quality control once the student has entered field placement pertains to monitoring of the placement by the universities. The UNIVEN fieldwork practice manual (2019) avows "that students and fieldwork supervisors will be visited by the department of social work fieldwork practice supervisors at least once during placement. The

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university fieldwork supervisors will contact the agency supervisor to negotiate a date for misplacement liaison visit."

Regarding the support received during fieldwork placement, participants said the following, as arranged per sub-themes.

**Sub-theme 3.1. Telephonic contacts**

*"I don't know what to say, but I think the university was open enough for us to always come to them if we need something in terms of information and help if we are experiencing challenges, yaah. So, I think the support was enough."* *(Participant 002UNIVEN)*

Echoing this, some participants indicated the following:

*"The support from the school was to enquire. I had an opportunity of calling the school (university) to say I have a problem with my boss, then they could do something about it. However, if felt that this I can just deal with it, I didn't have to come to school and tell them. It was just one of those things where you can just call the office and say am facing this and that type of challenge. The school really did try to support in term of the placement to say if you are having certain problem these are the procedures you can follow. You can either speak to the colleagues, speak to the supervisor there (at the agency) and if something cannot be done then they can take legal actions."* *(Participant 004UNIVEN)*

*"If you encounter any challenges, you can contact the supervisor (University) and assist us at the field."* *(Participant 001 UL)*

*"Sometimes my supervisor here on campus Mr…… (name withheld) he can call to find if we are still okay and attending."* *(Participant 002 UL)*

These statements suggest that most participants from UNIVEN had little visible support from the university. The university only made it open for students to seek assistance when the need arose. Participant 004 UNIVEN only managed to make an

enquiry when she needed assistance. Participant 002 UNIVEN said the university was open enough to help.  Same evidence was found among UL participants for a similar trend. Participant 001 UL reported the pledge that was made by the university that they (participants) should be free to contact the coordinator if they encountered any challenge. Participant 002UL indicated that the coordinator called just to find out how the practical was going. These findings demonstrate that participants from both universities received little support while they were in placement.

The findings are in line with the study results of Brown, Herd, Humphries, and Paton (2005:87), namely that the need for support from the lecturer was the predominant feature of the discussions of the roles of the lecturer in practice placement. Their study also found that students felt abandoned when they moved away from university into fieldwork placements. Some participants of the present study reported that they felt alone.

Apart from the little support mentioned by the above participants, some participants were left stranded and helpless, as evidenced by the following assertions:

*"Mmm, of supporting, the coordinator will always say in case you need anything we are here for you. If ever we felt like we had challenges, we can call him.  We were three where I was placed, and other students were having challenges. So, we called, but unfortunately, they couldn't come. Sometimes they do if they have a chance … it's unfortunate that they couldn't come to us."* Participant 003 UL

*"… for example, we did not agree which format are we going to use in report writing. Like we have to come back to the university and ask.  It was their duty to tell us that we are going to use that format. The other thing is that they knew we had transport challenges but then they didn't make any effort to help us through."* (Participant 004 UL)

*"I just thought probably because I was placed there alone, others said that they did get visitors from the university. I was placed alone, so I just assumed that because I am alone, they will not come. And then later on, I realized that others are getting the visit. Maybe they are getting the support, they will be telling them*

*their challenges and I will not get the opportunity because I am not getting the visit. Because I heard like other students saying they were asking us how the placement is and for me there is no one who came asking me about how the placement is going." (Participant 003UNIVEN)*

*"The first week was hectic… at some point I felt that the supervisor did not like me. When I made mistakes, he would be like… you are unlike previous years students, you are too slow... that's the time I needed at least a call from the university find out how I am doing... Yooh, it was not easy to adjust" (Participant 006UNIVEN)*

These findings are consistent with Baum (2010:7), whose study found that students felt dissatisfied when university supervisors failed to visit them during their field placement. Lack of visitation leads to the absence of that face-to-face communication which, as Hoffmann (1990) indicates, allows for in-depth clarification of the fieldwork objectives and sharing of any other issues that may be deemed necessary for the enhancement of fieldwork practice placement. In support of this, Liu et al. (2013:183) state that shortcomings in field placements are likely, so that it is required for the social work fieldwork curriculum to institute and apply monitoring procedures. The Australian Learning and Teaching Council (2010:37) notes that the liaison visitor provides support, problem solving, and mediation if difficulties develop during fieldwork placement. Participants 003 and 004 from UL experienced challenges while on placement, but their problems could not be resolved, despite the promise that it would be.

### Sub-theme 3.2. Field visit

The value of field visits cannot be overstated. Some participants were impressed by the visit from the university. The support received made a significant contribution to their fieldwork practice experience. The participants expressed their feeling as follows:

*"I was impressed, very happy because for starters, am actually... according to her (the supervisor), I am the first University of Venda student. The mere fact that the University of Venda is from far, they don't really take it… you know… that much. So, being the least of the so-called special university to them, and the*

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*lecturers taking time to come and supervise if everything is going well… they were really blown out. Even the head of department announced that in the meeting and all the students were like... wooow- really…" (Participant 001 UNIVEN)*

*"They came and we were called to the boardroom. So, our supervisors were telling them about our work and conduct in general. So, we were happy that the university got to know how we are doing, if we are representing the university well." (FCG-2UNIVEN)*

The visit undertaken by the university played an important role in monitoring and assessing the student's performance together with the fieldwork supervisors (see Cleak & Wilson, 2007). These findings show that participants from both universities received little support. The universities, through their coordinators, pledged their availability should the need arise, but did not take responsibility to provide support. However, the value of field visits cannot be underestimated. Participants who received support visits was excited and felt important, in contrast to those who were not visited.

**Sub-theme 3.3.  No support**

Most participants reported that they never received any support while on placement: this was reported by 006UL, 008UL, 011UNIVEN, 014UNIVEN and 015UNIVEN.

The same sentiment was shared by participants from focus group one (FCG-1UNIVEN):

*"We did not get any support. We had problems and we needed to enquire. But used to enquire through the class representative. We would submit our problems to the class rep, then she will forward our problems to the fieldwork coordinator. Sometimes it took time to get an answer;" "no support at all, except the stipend for transport;" "I expected the university coordinator to keep on checking us." FCG-1UNIVEN)*

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**10.4.1.4. Theme 4: Support needed by students during fieldwork placement**

Students are at the centre of fieldwork practice. Therefore, it was important for this study to seek participants' suggestions regarding the kind of support they needed, which would enhance their fieldwork supervision practice experience. The assertion below sums up UNIVEN participants' responses regarding support needed during fieldwork.

**Sub-theme 4.1: Regular contacts and support visits**

*"I will suggest that because the practical is like four months, at least after two months the university should just go there and visit. Like, to ask the students how they are finding the work environment, if they are being treated well because some supervisor can be abusive and then there is no way a student can report that. That's what I will suggest, visiting like every student not picking there and there because honestly speaking one will feel not important if others are getting visits and others not getting any." (Participant 003 UNIVEN)*

This assertion illustrates that, for fieldwork supervision to be satisfying and meaningful, there is a need to regularise contacts and visits by the university staff members or faculty members. Participants discouraged random visits, which were perceived as biased and favouring some students over the others.

**Sub-theme 4.2: Financial support for students**

All participants from UL felt that they needed financial support to cover fieldwork-related costs such as travelling, lodging, and lunches, as reflected in these statements:

*"You use your money to go to your practical, you use your money for lunch, you use your money for everything. We don't get transport, you transport yourself. That's one thing they can improve on." (Participant 001UL) "Maybe stipend, because that thing it encourages us… I can feel that maybe I am doing something. But if there is no stipend; sometimes you get tired. I am fortunate enough because am doing practical here (Turfloop). There are those who are doing practical at a distance and they don't have money to catch local transport.*

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*The supervisor on campus maybe they need to try by all means to provide something for us." (Participant 002UL)*

*"Financial support…. because like you know we are from different families." (Participant 004UL)*

*"Unfortunately, right now there is nothing that we are getting. No financial support, we just go and do our work. Because we are not on bursary or anything, whatever happens comes from our own pockets. There is no finance that comes from the university." (Participant 003 UL)*

These findings evidence that not all UL participants received financial support for fieldwork placement-related expenses. They pleaded with the university to offer them a stipend which would cater for travelling, lunch, and other expenses to be incurred as part of fieldwork placement. No participant from UNIVEN mentioned the financial matter to be an issue of concern.   UNIVEN provided students with a stipend for fieldwork-related costs, while UL did not.

### 10.4.1.5. Theme 5: Fieldwork-related challenges students experienced during placement

This theme centres on fieldwork challenges students faced during fieldwork placement. It was important for this study to find out fieldwork-related challenges participants experienced during fieldwork. The reason for asking participants to share the challenges was  that their responses would put an emphasis on why they needed regular supervision, monitoring, and support while on placement.

**Sub-theme 5.1: Challenges relating to dealing with sensitive cases**

Some participants experienced challenges  around cases that were sensitive:

*"The challenges that I had were dealing with cases that included children. There was this other case that I started but I couldn't finish. My supervisor had to continue with it because I told her I can't." (Participant 001UNIVEN)*

In corroboration of this, another participant from UL said:

*"A health setting is very challenging because sometimes when you go to see a client, you find that the client has vomited, you know, and you have to see the client at that moment. So, you have to soldier on and go and see that client…yooh it's not easy. Going to the hospital ward finding a child, especially burn victims, it was so difficult, honestly. Seeing that child burnt in that pain… it was not easy like that. So, it was very challenging."* (Participant 003UL)

These findings reveal that some participants from both universities developed emotions by being attached to their work environment. Fortunately, the participants were afforded opportunities to ventilate their feelings from time to time, as evidenced by these statements:

*"After the monthly meetings, they dedicate two hours for debriefing sessions. There is a group that came, is called Zinakekele, they came, its one on one. They allocate room for you and you can talk to that person. What is it that you find hard, like everything and its anonymous."* (Participant 001UNIVEN)

*"Honestly, thankful there was this… usually during those group supervisions that I was talking about. You don't discuss cases only, you also discuss the challenges, what is it that we face in there, it's kind of like debriefing."* (Participant 003UL)

The challenge relating to dealing with sensitive cases  emphasises that students need greater support while they are on fieldwork placement. The researcher is of the opinion that the students will feel at ease with the placement to a greater extent when the university, which holds the final say regarding passes or failing grades, provides them with sufficient support.

**Sub-theme 5.2: Challenges relating to resources**
Unavailability of resources was one the challenge some participants from UNIVEN experienced during fieldwork placement. Two participants had transport problems:

*"So, I didn't deal much with the home visits because there is no transport.*

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*They don't have a car. They used to borrow a car from head office. They can go for a month without having a car. If they want to go somewhere, the head office arranges a transport for them."* (Participant 002 UNIVEN)

*"I did not choose where I was placed because I knew there are no cars. So, it was a challenge to do home visits. The whole office operating with one car…"* (Participant 010UL)

One participant from UNIVEN encountered a problem around office space:

*"My perception, I would go for the settings, the environment. It was not conducive enough. The challenge was just having a lot of people in one place."* (Participant 004UNIVEN)

By comparison, only one participant from UNIVEN and one participant from UL encountered challenges around transport in the agency. Another participant from UNIVEN had a problem with office space. Support visits and regular contacts from the university could have identified such gaps and possible alternative placement of the student could have been sought.

### Sub-theme 5.3: Challenges relating to *work* exposure

Some participants felt that fieldwork placement had the shortfall of too little work exposure in the agency:

*"My challenges that I experienced was getting cases. That was the challenge I have experienced because at the agency that I was placed there are no many cases and I am expected so much reports and am not getting enough cases."* (Participant 001 UL)

*"I never went to court. I don't know anything about court proceeding because of the transport issue. As for a cell phone, we can go a month without having a phone. We couldn't call our clients any time we wanted."* (Participant 002 UNIVEN)

These assertions show that fieldwork practice had shortcomings. The findings corroborate what Liu, Sun, and Anderson (2013:183) assert, namely that many shortcomings are likely during fieldwork practice placements. Therefore, it is a mandatory practice for universities providing social work education and placement to institute and apply monitoring procedures. As soon as the placement commences, the fieldwork coordinators and fieldwork staff members are responsible for monitoring the quality of the placement programme and activities. This can be done through visits and by communicating with students and fieldwork supervisors. Through monitoring, fieldwork supervisors, fieldwork coordinators, and students can track progress and ensure that the student will be able to meet all the practical objectives or whether there is a need to lobby outside services. Kaseke (1986) asserts that fieldwork is a means of socialisation, because it prepares the student for forthcoming roles and responsibilities of a social work professional. Furthermore, he points out that fieldwork placement enhances the student understanding of the social work profession and the nature of the problem the profession addresses. The participants' assertions suggest that their fieldwork placement experience did not address certain expectations because of a lack of exposure to key social work practice areas. This is evidenced by lack of cases and lack of exposure to court work, which are central to social work practice in some agencies. Lack of basic service-delivery tools of trade such as cell phones jeopardized participants' chances of contact with clients.

### Sub-theme 5.4: Challenges relating to language

Being conversant with the language spoken around the organisation where students undertake their practical is important. Two participants from UL had problems with language, as evidenced by these utterances:

> *"Personally, I can say that since myself am not a Pedi, sometimes it becomes very challenging for me to intervene especially in cases of older persons. The older people don't understand English; I have to try by all means that I squeeze myself to accommodate them. That was the most challenging thing that I faced."* *(Participant 002 UL)*

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*"Like the challenges that I had it was a language, it was a barrier because like in that agency a lot of people are Pedi speaking and then I am Tsonga. And then it was a challenge." (Participant 004UL)*

The researcher asked participants whether they chose the placement agency or not. Both indicated that they did not choose where they were placed for fieldwork:

*"I did not choose placement." (Participant 002 UL)*

*"it (placement) was imposed." (Participant 004 UL)*

The researcher argues that, if students were afforded opportunities to choose placement, they could have chosen placement in areas where they were conversant with the language, preferably their home language.

**Sub-theme 5.5: Challenges relating to personalities of supervisors**

Personality is an important factor in determining the development and effectiveness of the supervisory relationship. One participant had problems with the personality of the supervisor:

*"You know besides all other types of challenges; I think character was a problem. Because when you go out to the field to monitor, you see types of characters, how people deal with people, how they talk to them. That was a challenge. So, since they are my supervisor and I am supposed to learn from them, does it mean I am supposed to be harsh like them or is there any other way I can do things." (Participant 004UNIVEN)*

**Sub-theme 5.6: Challenges relating to ethics**

*"She wouldn't arrange for a meeting. If SASSA (South African Social Security Agency) is having clients, she will force us to go and register their names so that she can use them whenever she wants to use them. We act as if we are the ones who called the clients." (Participant 002UNIVEN)*

These assertions show several challenges that participants experienced while they were on fieldwork placement, confirming the statement of Liu et al. (2013:183) that shortcomings in the field placements are likely, so that it is required for the social work fieldwork curriculum to institute and apply monitoring procedures. Some of these shortcomings could have been attended to if universities had proper monitoring programmes in place.

**10.4.1.6. Theme 6: Student's suggestions to enhance fieldwork placement**

The qualitative data illustrates that participants had something to say as suggestions to enhance the fieldwork placement experience, as discussed below.

**Sub-theme 6.1: Early commencement of fieldwork**

Participant from UNIVEN felt that fieldwork should be done earlier:

*"The only thing that I noticed which is little bit lacking is that I have noticed that in other universities they do placement very early such that the students get exposed for a very long period of time. So, you know being placed earlier helps you, you get exposed to a lot of things." (Participant 001UNIVEN)*

Due to late placement of students, the participant missed out ON opportunities for training where attendees (including students) receive certificates:

*"My supervisor also told me that if you had come in March, there were some training and conferences that they attended." (Participant 001UNIVEN)*

The findings show that one participant from UNIVEN suggested that practical work should take place earlier. The participant was prompted to suggest this because the agency where she was placed arranged training for staff and students during the first quarter of the year. Therefore, the participant missed a few training sessions that were offered before commencement of practical work.

**Sub-theme 6.2: Writing exams early before placement**

One participant from UNIVEN suggested that final year students should write all other module exams before commencement of fieldwork, as evidenced by this assertion:

*"I think the university needs to limit the pressure because one thing is I myself think we should do this writing thing, writing exam before we can go to practical so that we can limit the pressure of going back to the university and write exams. While we are at the practical we have to do the office work, we have to do the schoolwork which is too much. Because the office work is demanding itself and the schoolwork. So, I think if we write exams before we go to practical and then we know that we are left with writing reports only. That will be better."* (*Participant001 UNIVEN*)

**Sub-theme 6.3: Student and fieldwork supervisors meeting before commencement of placement**

A participant from UNIVEN suggested student-supervisor meetings before practical work commences:

*"Sometimes some students say it is better for a person to choose his or her own supervisor. But still, you never know a person until you start working with them. The university should really work hard on students' placement issues, especially with the supervisors. It's actually good to meet those people (supervisors) and knowing who to expect. It should be one of the most important… it should be like Christmas. It shouldn't be like a surprise when we get there."* *(Participant 004UNIVEN)*

**Sub-theme 6.4: Choosing placement agency**

One participant from UNIVEN felt that students should be allowed to choose where they wanted to do their practical:

*"… yes, students must choose where they want to do practical… what is the use of being asked to choose where you want to do practical and ended up being placed somewhere else… after giving three options (to the coordinator), at least I must be placed where I choose, so that even if there are no resources, but is what I chose." (Participant 006UNIVEN)*

## 10.4.2. Section B: Qualitative data obtained from UL and UNIVEN fieldwork coordinators

The study included in-depth interviews with fieldwork coordinators from UNIVEN and UL. The questions were centred around the role of fieldwork coordinators in monitoring of students during fieldwork placement, the support they offered to students during fieldwork, and fieldwork supervision challenges experienced when students were on fieldwork placement. The qualitative data engendered three themes, which are the roles and responsibilities of fieldwork coordinator, fieldwork supervision challenges faced by coordinators when supervising students during placement, and suggestions to enhance fieldwork coordination at UNIVEN and UL.

### 10.4.2.1. Theme 7: The roles and responsibilities of fieldwork coordinators

Fieldwork places immense responsibilities on fieldwork coordinators. Some of the responsibilities of fieldwork coordinators are administration of fieldwork and monitoring and support of students during placement. It is undeniable that fieldwork requires constant monitoring and support to students to help them focus on their work towards achievement of practical objectives. Monitoring is also conducted to attend to any problem that may arise during placement. This theme covers the qualitative data about the roles and responsibilities of UNIVEN and UL fieldwork coordinators, the challenges experienced by fieldwork coordinators while students were on fieldwork placement, and suggestions for enhancing fieldwork coordination at UNIVEN and UL. Two sub-themes were identified as based on the qualitative data.

### Sub-theme 7.1: The roles and functions of fieldwork coordinators

This section covers responses about the roles and functions of fieldwork coordinators. Their responses were classified under two sub sub-themes , as below.

### Category 7.1.1: Administrative responsibilities

The qualitative data revealed that fieldwork coordinators performed various administrative responsibilities before fieldwork placements commenced, as illustrated in the following response:

*"With block placement, students go out and stay with the organizations for at least three months. Firstly, we request students to list at least three places where they would prefer to do their practical, and then we communicate with all these three agencies. The coordinator will then liaise with the organisations. Then, if all the three (organizations) approves that the student can come, we give the student a chance to choose one (organization) out of three. If the student wants to go to the Department of Social Development, then the person will go to social development. Same process applies, we liaise with the organisations that the student is coming." (UL coordinator)*

Resonating with this, the UNIVEN fieldwork coordinator stated:

*"The process is that the students select or identifying places where they want to go, then the list will be compiled. But there should be submission that will be made to respective places where the (students) have chosen to go. So, it doesn't like… confirm that they have been placed, or they will be placed because the department must make a final decision. Mostly we deal with the government departments, correctional services, health, and social development. Then from there will have to wait for the approval". (UNIVEN coordinator)*

The findings corroborate what Hoffmann (1990:83) indicates, namely that some of the prime administrative responsibilities of the fieldwork coordinator include planning and facilitating fieldwork placement; recruiting, selecting and appointing organisations to provide fieldwork learning; confirming acceptance and informing students of organisations willing to host them for placement; determining assess eligibility of students to undertake fieldwork, including legal requirements such as registrations with the SACSSP; establishing regular communication between the university and the organisation; and monitoring the teaching-learning process.

**Category 7.1.2: Monitoring and support of students**

The second sub-subtheme under the roles of fieldwork coordinators is that of monitoring and support of students while on placement. The fieldwork coordinators' responses are reflected below:

*"Meeting with the supervisors in the field together with the team from the school (university) so that we can check what other improvements we can do, what other things can we put in order for the fieldwork placement to run smoothly. As a team we have what we call 'mid-placement visits' where we monitor the placement of students before they come (back). The other support is that we are always available for the students, they know their supervisors' contact details in case a problem arises in placement agencies. That's where they are able to come and even during the mid-placement consultation week. That's where they come and meet with their relevant (university) supervisors depending on the specialization like community work, group work. Where they experience challenges in those fields, they are assisted." (UNIVEN Coordinator)*

The UL fieldwork coordinator shared the same views. The monitoring and support methods used by the UL fieldwork coordinator seemed similar to those of the UNIVEN coordinator. The assertion below provides evidence of this:

*"Now as the student is that side (placement agency), now the coordinator will constantly communicate with the organisation. To check how is the student doing and progress. We ask questions like 'do you think the student can make a good social worker,' that kind of communication. We also arrange site visits / liaison visits where we visit students when they are in practical. Even though we do visit, we do a random selection. We do not announce when you go there, we want to catch you at your best peak. If we tell you that we are coming, you are obviously going to do everything by the book." (*UL Coordinator*)*

The findings corroborate what Hoffmann (1990) states, namely that monitoring the fieldwork practice learning contract keeps it on track. This involves monitoring the teaching-learning process from the first day to the last day of placement, inspecting the suitability of the agency and the opportunities available, checking these for quality and consistency, and taking corrective actions where necessary. For Silence (2017:51) "monitoring promote the effectiveness of programmes for quality assurance, protection of limited resources and effective planning." Regarding monitoring and support of students during fieldwork placement, the findings revealed that the coordinators were aware of these two critical roles of monitoring and support of

students, but their practice was not consistent with this (see Hoffmann 1990). In conclusion, it should be noted that the control measures and support provided by both universities random, instead of including all students, as reported by student participants. It appears the support and monitoring were biased based towards easy-to-reach students.

### 10.4.2.2. Theme 8: Fieldwork supervision challenges faced by coordinators when supervising students during placement

Fieldwork placement involves a tripartite alliance between the university, the fieldwork supervisors, and the students. Within this alliance, problems or challenges are likely. The study enquired about fieldwork-supervision-related challenges faced by fieldwork coordinators while students were on placement. The responses below serve as evidence of  such challenges.

### Sub-theme 8.1: Student disappearing during fieldwork

*"We have a student who is placed at Mankweng but disappeared. I only found out when I visited them. So far nothing has been done with the student. The student is from KZN (Kwazulu-Natal Province). (He) went to the hospital and worked there for three weeks and then disappeared. He is not taking our calls, he is taking his friend's calls, but we understand he is still alive." (UL Coordinator)*

Apart from the challenge of the disappearing of students, another fieldwork-supervision-related challenge was producing fake reports.

### Sub-theme 8.2: Producing  fake reports

The fieldwork coordinator at UL reported that another student from UL did not attend practical work but produced forged reports at the end of fieldwork placement. The coordinator explained the matter as follows:

*"I remember one case in Mpumalanga. Our understanding is that this girl was doing her practical, only to find that the girl is not doing practical. Because it's far and we cannot visit all of them. Even though we do visit, we do a random selection. She was just seated at home, not going to practical. When reports were submitted, we picked up that these are fabricated. She fabricated the*

*signature of the supervisor and the council registration number. The supervisor who is supervising… who is supposedly to be the supervisor on the forms doesn't know this person, never saw this person". (UL Coordinator)*

The issue of indemnity was identified as a sub-theme under the fieldwork supervision challenges faced by the fieldwork coordinator.

**Sub-theme 8.3: Indemnity**

A UL participant had been involved in a car accident. The assertion below is evidence of what the coordinator shared with the researcher  around this event:

*"We had a student who got into an accident in a government vehicle when they were doing their rounds in the communities, but the student was not driving. She was with the supervisor when they got into the accident. The hospital said it is not taking responsibility. Psychosocially the student received support, but not from us directly. The HoD (Head of Department) arranged with a professional, I am not sure if it was a psychologist or social worker, who gave the psychosocial support." (UL Coordinator)*

The UNIVEN fieldwork coordinator reported the challenges expounded below.

**Sub-theme 8.4: Students' dissatisfaction with placement arrangements**

The coordinator indicated that some students were dissatisfied with the way fieldwork placement had been done, especially around being placed in agencies or areas that they had not chosen. The coordinator explained their dissatisfaction as follows:

*"The students are not happy or satisfied because mostly you find that they are not even placed at their second choices. They will be taken somewhere else where they did not even choose, they are not even familiar with that place, so they are not happy at all." (UNIVEN Coordinator)*

**Sub-theme 8.5: Allocation of supervisors, resources and unavailability of supervisors.**

Some challenges related to allocation of supervisors and resources and unavailability of supervisors during first weeks of placement.   The coordinator explained the challenges as follows:

*"Allocation of supervisors, that's the problem, and office space. Some also complain about transport because they have to attend to some cases out of the office.  Another thing is like, students will go there for two weeks, or three weeks and the supervisor is not there because the supervisor wasn't informed. Sometimes they are on their own without any supervisor in the absence of the designated supervisor." (UNIVEN Coordinator)*

In corroboration of this, one student participant reported a lack of resources as a challenge experienced:

*"So, I didn't deal much with the home visits because there is no transport. They don't have a car. They used to borrow a car from head office. They can go for a month without having a car. If they want to go somewhere, the head office arranges a transport for them. As for a cell phone, we can go a month without having a phone. We couldn't call our clients any time we wanted." (Participant 002 UNIVEN)*

**Sub-theme 8.6: Getting enough work exposure**

Another challenge related to students not getting enough work exposure during fieldwork placement. The coordinator said the following:

*"Not getting enough exposure and even the practising of all methods of social work. Because you find that this one is placed where they only do casework, no community work. So, it's little bit difficult for students though they are expected to be exposed to all the methods." (UNIVEN Coordinator)*

The assertion by the UNIVEN coordinator about work exposure was also confirmed by a UNIVEN student participant:

*"I never went to court. I don't know anything about court proceedings because of the transport issue. As for a cellular phone, we can go a month without having a phone. We couldn't call our clients any time we wanted."* (Participant 002UNIVEN)

The findings show that the UL coordinator experienced disappearance of students during fieldwork placement, which subsequently led to a student producing fraudulent reports after the placement. According to the SACSSP (2006), all social workers, student social workers, and social auxiliary workers have an ethical responsibility towards the professional integrity of the profession around dishonesty. Producing fraudulent reports is a serious violation of the social work code of ethics regarding dishonesty. The researcher strongly believes that this could have been detected in advance and the student should have been reprimanded as early as possible, instead of finding out about it at the end of fieldwork placement. The study findings evidence that a student was involved in a car accident while in a government vehicle. This brings into focus the further issue of concern, around indemnity, which requires agencies providing fieldwork placement and the university to arrive at a consensus about who takes responsibilities when such cases occur. There is a need for a memorandum of understanding (MoU)/ agreement to be in place where both parties spell out their responsibilities and expectations, incorporating the issue of indemnity.

The challenges faced by the UNIVEN coordinator were dissatisfaction among students with placement arrangements, allocation of a supervisor, office spaces, transport, unavailability of supervisors during first weeks of placement, being left alone in the office and, more importantly, too little work exposure. Most of these challenges were confirmed by some student participants under the theme of challenges faced by students during fieldwork placement.

### 10.4.2.3. Theme 9: Suggestions to enhance fieldwork coordination at UNIVEN and UL

Fieldwork coordinators from both universities were asked what they would like to suggest in order to improve fieldwork coordination. Their responses are set out below.

**Sub-theme 9.1: Early approval of placement**

*"If coordination with the departments (government departments) that we are working with can be done earlier, regarding placement of students because sometimes that's the challenges that we have. You will send the list of students, students are not placed on time, we need to get the approval earlier."* (*UNIVEN Coordinator*)

**Sub-theme 9.2: Designated personnel organisation working specifically with fieldwork**

*"I will be happy if things can go well. If we can have designated people or individuals within the government department or any placement (agency) that we know that we work with will make things run smoothly, instead like not knowing exactly who we deal with."* (*UNIVEN Coordinator*)

**Sub-theme 9.3: Providing resources**

*"Within the university also, resources I think are a problem; we don't have like specific resources, a bus / transport for our students, finances in terms of stipend. Students are not like being given what is due to them. So, if we can have such things happening within fieldwork placement it can be okay."* (*UNIVEN Coordinator*)

**Sub-theme 9.4: Lobbying private and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to provide opportunities for fieldwork placement**

*"I would prefer engaging with the Non-Governmental Organizations so that students can go wherever they want to go (for placement). For now my concern is that our students are only focusing on government but if we can allow our students to go explore… if student say I have found like maybe EAP (Employee assistance programme) services at ESKOM or something like that, then we should be flexible for as long as the student will learn and will be able to practice*

*because I believe in such companies there can be groups that can help."* (*UNIVEN Coordinator*)

**Sub-theme 9.5: Administrative support from the departmental secretary**

The UL coordinator made a different proposal from that of the UNIVEN coordinator:

*"Generally, I am not sure how other institutions do it, but personally my take is that the departmental secretary should be responsible for this. With transport, I think the best way would be for the coordinator to take the list and (missing word) … after I have gone to communities where my students are going (for practical), I should take the list and give it to the secretary to arrange transport. We are not seeing it. Even if you do give it, the person takes ages for that to be executed."* (*UL Coordinator*)

These assertions entail that the suggestions for improving fieldwork coordination are that communication with fieldwork partners be tightened. It was also suggested that the organisation should provide a designated person who would deal with fieldwork matters. Early confirmation of students' placement requests surfaced very strongly as a concern from both universities' coordinators. Another valuable suggestion was that the universities should consider lobbying for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the private sector to provide opportunities for fieldwork placement. The UL fieldwork coordinator suggested that the departmental secretary take a hands-on role in fieldwork administrative responsibilities.

**10.5. Critical reflection on theoretical frameworks**

Fieldwork supervision continues to play an important role in students' learning as well as socialising them into the profession of social work. The BSW programme at UNIVEN and UL adopted the apprenticeship perspective to teaching and learning. The programme provided students with the opportunity to practice what they were taught in class. This perspective holds the fieldwork supervisor to be central when it comes to taking responsibility for providing guidance and support throughout the placement period. Students from UNIVEN and UL attended practical/ block placement for three

months in the case of UL and four at UNIVEN. This depended on the number of notional hours and credits allocated for each practical module. Students were involved in fieldwork where they had various opportunities to practice what they had learned in the classroom, incorporating theory into practice under the supervision of a designated social work supervisor. The supervisor allocated work equivalent to their level of study and modelled good professional behaviour using a variety of supervision methods as discussed in Chapter 6.

The nurturing perspective to teaching and learning helped the researcher to understand that teaching is not enough it if is not followed by support and encouragement. This perspective is linked to the discussion about the roles and responsibilities of the fieldwork coordinator, fieldwork supervisor, and the student (see Chapter 7) and supervisor relationships (see Chapter 8). Central to the discussion in Chapter 7 is that university coordinators and fieldwork supervisors have the responsibility of supporting students during fieldwork placement. Chapter 8 emphasises that the supervisor relationship is the main predictor for students' satisfaction with placement. Students who received support in the form of field visits and telephonic contact reported feelings of happiness. Those who did not get support felt left out and reported disappointment.

The student-supervisor relationship cannot be undervalued when it comes to this induction into the social work profession. A harmonious relationship between the supervisor and the student plays a critical role around creating an environment conducive to learning, which makes it easy for the students to explore the profession without fear. In light of the attachment theory, a harmonious relationship between the student and the supervisor creates opportunities whereby students feel free to work and take on new challenges knowing that they have someone to rely on if mistakes are made. The supervisor serves as a 'secure base' that the student can lean on. The ecosystems perspective maintains that fieldwork supervisors, students, and university coordinators are the main role players in the system. They have the potential to enhance or deter the student's development during fieldwork placement. The findings made here show students had different experiences of the environment they were working in. Most students had a welcoming environment, while some did not. This was evident in the assertions about relationship with their supervisors as to whether a

student received orientation, the methods used for supervision, and frequency of supervision. Some students encountered attachment problems with their supervisors:

*"my supervisor did not like me from first day. She stated that she was not informed that there is a student coming." (Participant 005 UL)*

*"I don't know what to say, but things were not okay with my supervisor. We could hardly talk, laugh, or even go out together. Sometimes he would go for home visits alone. So, it was hard." (Participant 008UL).*

One student from UNIVEN suffered what Marrone (2014) calls 'constant blaming'. The student reported:

*"When I made mistakes, he would be like… you are unlike previous years students, you are too slow... (Participant 006UNIVEN).*

The ecosystems theory helped the researcher comprehend and that fieldwork supervisors and university lecturers are the main role players when it comes to improving or preventing the student's professional development during fieldwork practice placement. The participants (student), as a part of the system, who experienced effective interactions with their supervisors and placement agency (the environment) found that it helped them endure during fieldwork placement and succeed in completing it. They reported a high level of satisfaction with placement. Significantly, the study revealed that most participants worked under different social workers; some of them acted as co-supervisors but were able to relate well with them. This contributed to further security and a sense of being welcomed in the agency. The study also revealed that one participant had a bad relationship with the supervisor. The supervisor's behaviour affected some of the social workers within the agency, some of which provided support to the student. This indicates that anything that happens to a member affects everyone in the team. It can therefore be concluded that students need effective interactions with all staff members who are directly and indirectly concerned with the practical work. Such interaction helps the students survive and thrive for the duration of fieldwork practice placement. Therefore, students

need to have effective interactions with their environments to survive and thrive during block placement.

## 10.6. Summary

This chapter has covered the presentation, analysis, and discussion (interpretation) of study findings gauged against extant literature –whether by way of support or dispute. The data has been presented in two sections. Section A has centred on qualitative data obtained from UNIVEN and UL students, and Section B on qualitative data obtained from UNIVEN and UL coordinators. The identified themes for student participants are student-supervisor relationships; social work fieldwork supervision; support offered to participants during fieldwork placement; support needed by participants during fieldwork placement; fieldwork-related challenges experienced by participants during placement; and participants' suggestions for enhancing fieldwork placement. The identified themes for fieldwork coordinators were the roles and responsibilities of fieldwork coordinators and fieldwork supervision challenges experienced by coordinators during placement.

# CHAPTER 11

## SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY, PRACTICE GUIDELINES AND FUTURE RESEARCH

### 11.1. Introduction

This chapter centres on a summary of the major findings, conclusions drawn from the study, and the discussion of implications of the study findings for policy, practice guidelines, and future research.

### 11.2. Summary of major findings

This section covers a summary of the major study findings and a discussion of how the findings correspond with the research objectives.

- **To assess the student-supervisor relationship during fieldwork placement at UNIVEN and UL.**

This objective was achieved. The study revealed that most students at both universities had a good relationship with their supervisors. Supervisors were readily available when students needed them, either through face-to-face contact or on their mobile phones. The following is how one of the students described the relationship with their supervisors: "Woow, it was amazing", "*she is a good person"; "We had a good working relationship"; "It was great. We were, you know it felt like home"; "I saw my supervisor as my mom, like we had this best relationship."* This summarizes the students' relationships with their supervisors. Although most students reported they had good relationships with their supervisors, some reported to have had a bad relationship. The relationships were described as unpredictable. One student echoed this:

> *"I don't know what to say, but things were not okay with my supervisor. We could hardly talk, laugh, or even go out together. Sometimes he would go for home visits alone. So, it was hard. (Participant 008UL)*

- **To appraise the final year student social workers' perceptions relating to supervision offered during fieldwork placements by UNIVEN and UL.**

The objective was also accomplished. The first day in placement marks the first day of supervision of students. Orientation becomes the most important event that determines how the supervision will proceed. Regarding orientation, the study found that most of the students received informal orientation to the agency. This approach to orientation is referred to as acquire-as-you-go, where students get to know about the agency as the placement continues. Most students were discontented by the way orientation was conducted. Few students received properly planned orientation, which is referred to as a 'planned programme approach'. This approach to orientation is planned and organised where students learn about the organisation in detail before commencement with the practical work.

Regarding methods of supervision, the study found that fieldwork supervisors used a variety of supervision methods during fieldwork placement. The main method of supervision used was individual. However, the study found that the majority of students were supervised in an informal way, where supervisors pointed out issues that students needed to improve on or consider during their next contacts with clients. Students reported that the supervision could be done in the office or while driving to or from home visits. This method of supervision lacks formal structure, the latter where students should go to supervision prepared and an agenda is to be followed. The study also found that group supervision is rarely used. Some supervisors used group supervision as an alternative. Some students in the focus group shared their experience as follows:

> *"We had group supervision sessions." (FCG-1 & FCG-2UNIVEN).*
>
> *"There was also group supervision. They assess us as colleagues, we come together, we talk about the challenging cases and then we come up with the way forward…" (Participant 003 UL)*

Furthermore, the study found that most students from both universities were supervised by more than one supervisor. This method is referred to by Coulton and Krimmer (2005) as co-supervision. This was precipitated by the fact that they were subject to rotations, which means they had two or three people to supervise them. Most of the time they would be left under the supervision of someone when the main supervisor was absent.

Regarding the delivery of supervision functions, the study found that fieldwork supervisors continued to deliver the three major functions of supervisions, which are administrative, educational, and supportive. The modelling and motivational functions of supervision were also applicable. Regarding the administrative function, the study found that students were assigned cases, produced reports, and were involved in court appearances. For the delivery of the educational function, some students attended training organised by the agency where they were placed, while others were educated through a variety of means, including information sessions in the office and immediate feedback after attending to clients. Regarding the supportive function, some students from both universities attended organised debriefing sessions where they could ventilate their feelings about placement and their personal matters. Lastly, the study found that motivational and modelling functions of supervision were also predominant. Some students had a chance to observe their supervisors doing the work, where they observed how an experienced professional interviewed a client.

Regarding the frequency of supervision sessions, most students reported that they had supervision once a week. Although some students felt supervision happened once a month, there were some who reported that they had supervision daily.

- **To appraise the views of University of Venda and UL final year social work students regarding support received during fieldwork placements.**

The objective was achieved as well. Most students from both universities reported dissatisfaction regarding support from the universities. The study found that students had little support from university coordinators. Students reported that both universities' coordinators pledged their support, but they did not get the support when they needed it. The research established that field support visits from both universities were random. This was also confirmed by the fieldwork coordinators from both universities. This left some students feeling abandoned and dissatisfied, because they felt they were less important, while others were getting support. One of the students expected the university coordinators to visit so that they could hear how satisfied the fieldwork supervisors were with the conduct and work in general.

- **To establish the nature of support needed by final year social work students during fieldwork placements at UNIVEN and UL**

This objective was attained. Students from both universities had different views about the support they needed during the fieldwork placement. Firstly, the study found that all students from UL needed financial support above anything else. They felt that the university should give them a stipend to cater for travelling, lodging, and food. Secondly, students from both universities suggested regular contact and field visits to all students as important support they required.

- **To establish if the students are monitored during fieldwork placement.**

This objective was also achieved. There is no doubt that field visits play an important role during placement of students. It is the best time for university coordinators to contact fieldwork supervisors and students so as to clarify certain issues pertaining to placement. It was found that fieldwork coordinators from both universities agreed that one of the methods they used for monitoring students during fieldwork placement was the field visit. But the study found that there was a lack of regular field visits by the university's fieldwork coordinators. The visits were unsystematic and perhaps performed on an easy-to-reach basis. Both university coordinators' and student participants' assertions concur that the visits were made on a selective basis. As such, some students felt less important, since others visited, but not they.

- **To develop a social work fieldwork practice model**

This objective was achieved. The model was developed on the grounds of the study findings **(see Chapter 12).**

## 11.3. Implications of the study findings for policy, practice guidelines and future research

The study has focused on a comparative analysis of social work supervision at the University of Venda and the University of Limpopo and the implications of this for policy and practice guidelines. The present section centres on the implications of the study findings around policy, practice guidelines, and future research.

### 11.3.1. Implications for policy

The researcher acknowledges and commends both universities for having fieldwork manuals in place, but they are not consistently adhered to. The UL manual for practical work (2012) is silent on the responsibilities of the fieldwork coordinator with regard to ensuring support and visits of students during fieldwork placement. It is also important to note that UL does not have a department-specific policy on fieldwork supervision of students. Therefore, there is no strong emphasis on making support and field visits mandatory. It is recommended that the UL manual for practical work be reviewed and infused with supervision aspects, such as field visits and regular contact with students while on placement. Alternatively, UL should consider developing a fieldwork supervision policy separate from the manual for practical. The UNIVEN fieldwork practice manual (2019), fieldwork supervision policy (2018), and fieldwork practice policy (2018) clearly spell out the roles and responsibilities of the fieldwork coordinator, including that students will get be visited while in placement. However, practice is in breach of what the manual and policies stipulate. Measures must be put in place to ensure compliance with these important fieldwork practice policies and guidelines. In the next chapter, Chapter 12, the research will outline issues that may have contributed to lack of compliance with the fieldwork manuals and policies, followed by proposed strategies to ensure compliance.

### 11.3.2. Implications for practice guidelines

The findings of the study suggest that much needs to be done regarding fieldwork practice. Both universities' coordinators are aware of what they need to do in fieldwork. The research findings of the present project suggest that both universities establish a fieldwork component of the department of social work. The component should be reinforced with designated staff members whose primary responsibilities are those of fieldwork-related matters. Where possible, they should be exempted from teaching or assigned less theory class teaching. The researcher is of the view that this will give fieldwork coordinators and all academics working in the fieldwork component sufficient time to execute all the plans related to administration of fieldwork, such as planning for fieldwork, support, and field visits to all students during fieldwork placement.

Fieldwork is regarded as an important aspect of social work training across the world. It's a "signature pedagogy" of the profession of social work (CSWE, 2008). Therefore, it is important to ensure that fieldwork practice supervision is done appropriately, noting the requirements and obligations as set forth by the SACSSP and CHE. The study found irregularities regarding supervision from the universities' side as well as that of agency supervisors. The study also found that little support was offered by the universities and there was a failure to help when needed by students. Both student participants and coordinators agreed that field visits were not consistent. This left some students feeling abandoned. The researcher is of the view that the establishment of the fieldwork components suggested above will increase the chances of making sure that all students receive the support they need.

The preferred methods of supervision were found to be individual, informal, and ad hoc. This raises concern that students are exposed to informal ways of supervision. The researcher is of the view that fieldwork supervision involves some form of orienting the student into the profession of social work. Therefore, fieldwork supervisors should strive to ensure that students are subject to formal supervision. Students need to understand that supervision is considered to be an important feature of the social work profession, and having regular and structured supervision, as Nadesan (2019) has suggested, shows students what they have to expect when they are fully trained practicing social workers. Although formal supervision is rarely practised, the universities may consider having a formal agreement with placement agencies that all supervision of students must be formal, with agendas and records to be made available as part of the student portfolio of evidence (PoE).

Another critical aspect the study found is that student-supervisor relationships were amazing and welcoming, to use participants' words. The researcher is of the opinion that, as part of reflective practice, universities should consider meeting with fieldwork supervisors after fieldwork placement. The meetings will afford both parties opportunities for sharing information that may help to reinforce fieldwork curriculums.

Furthermore, the researcher is of the view that the placement agencies consider having formal orientation of students. A study by Chui (2009) found that students develop anxieties while on placement. Orientation into the agency may be one way of

minimising the student's anxieties. The researcher believes that the universities may also play a critical role in ensuring that formal orientation is in place. Meeting with potential supervisors before placement commences to outline the fieldwork plan and objectives could be an opportunity to emphasise this critical aspect.

Fieldwork is an opportunity where students learn by doing. The study found that some students have challenges around work exposure during fieldwork placement. These limit students' opportunities to explore the profession in depth, and they struggle to reach targets. Constant contacts with students during fieldwork may uncover these shortcoming and alternative arrangements may be sought to maximise students' learning. Contacts do not necessarily have to be direct; the use of emails and social media platforms can serve their function in this respect.

### 11.3.3. Implications for future research

Fieldwork placement is considered a 'tripartite' alliance between the fieldwork supervisor representing the agency, the fieldwork coordinator representing the university, and the student who is a trainee. The researcher recommends that a large-scale study be conducted involving students, university fieldwork coordinators, and fieldwork supervisors focusing on their collective experiences during fieldwork placement of students. The researcher recommends that a mixed-method approach study be undertaken. The study should aim at reaching many participants from the student population, fieldwork supervisors, and fieldwork coordinators. Interviews (individual and focus group ones) and self-administered questionnaires should be used for data collection. The researcher is of the view that several issues could be unearthed from these key role players of fieldwork and a more comprehensive fieldwork plan could be developed.

### 11.4. Limitations of the study

It is highly unlikely that a study can be conducted without experiencing some pitfalls. The researcher experienced one challenge. The ethical clearance certificate was issued late, and this contributed to the delay of applying for permission to conduct the study at UNIVEN and UL which, in turn, caused a delay in data collecting. Due to time

constraints, fieldwork supervisors were not included in the study, as indicated above. Therefore, this study's findings cannot be generalised to the larger population.

## 11.5. Concluding remarks

This chapter has elucidated the conclusions drawn from the study in general. The researcher can report that most participants from both universities reported to have had outstanding relationships with their supervisors. Informal, individual, and ad hoc methods of supervision were preferred. Mostly, supervision was of an on-the-go nature, meaning that, at any time when supervisors felt like saying something, they would just say it. This meant that the most students finished practical without being introduced to most important key aspects of supervision, which indicates that supervision must be planned and communicated in advance, so that students can contribute to the agenda, in addition to establishing a designated venue so that the students can come to the practical work prepared. Group supervision is rarely used. It is also highly appreciated that most participants had alternative supervisors in the absence of the appointed supervisor. Organisations providing fieldwork placement should be applauded for ensuring that most participants were not left alone with no supervision, which would have been unethical.

The study findings reveal a lack of regular and systematic contact with students by both universities' coordinators. The study also discovered that participants experienced several challenges during placement. Some indicated that they felt devastated when dealing with sensitive cases. That was evident especially among students who were doing their fieldwork placement in hospitals. The study data also revealed that a lack of resources interfered with their learning. Unavailability of transport and the telephone surfaced strongly in this respect. Lack of office space, the personalities of supervisors, and a lack of work exposure were also identified as problems. The findings reveal that coordinators experienced challenges when supervising students during fieldwork placement. Some students disappeared in the middle of fieldwork placement, while others produced fraudulent reports. The issue of indemnity was also identified as an issue at UL. The UNIVEN coordinator was also not spared from experiencing challenges. He or she was dissatisfied with placement arrangements. Firstly, the placement arrangements were completed late by the

placement agencies or organisations. Secondly, the coordinator was aware that some had students complained about a lack of work exposure. Therefore, the researcher is of the view that some of these challenges should have been identified early so that amicable solutions could be found, which would have been likely if there was constant contact with the organisations facilitating students' placement.

Another important point to mention is that there is a need to reinforce many critical aspects of fieldwork supervision. These include regular contact, field visits, ensuring formal supervision, ensuring formal orientation of students, and making sure that students are adequately exposed to social work practice. Despite the challenges they faced, coordinators continued to play critical roles in ensuring that students were placed.  Measures must be developed to ensure compliance with the institutional policies related to supervision of students and fieldwork practice in general.  Some proposed strategies to ensure compliance with institutional polices are discussed in Chapter 12.

# CHAPTER 12

## SOCIAL WORK FIELDWORK PRACTICE MODEL

### 12.1. Introduction

The preceding chapters of the study have dealt vigorously with the topic by setting the tone in Chapter 1, followed by an intensive literature review, unpacking of research methodology, data presentation, analysis and interpretation of the study, summary drawn from the study as well as discussions and conclusions. The narratives from student participants and fieldwork coordinators revealed gaps in fieldwork practice that need immediate attention and solution. Such gaps include problems with fieldwork coordination and planning by both UNIVEN and UL coordinators, lack of planned and organised field visits and contact with students during fieldwork as well as several challenges presented by student participants and fieldwork coordinators , as found in Chapter 10. The findings evidence that there is a disjuncture and inconsistency in how fieldwork is coordinated by both universities under the study. Therefore, this chapter will provide narratives of issues for consideration towards the development of a social work fieldwork practice model within an ecosystems approach, where Viljoen, Moore, and Meyer (2008:491) argue that

> all key role players in the educational context participate in the co-evolution of the ideals that surround the educational structure and process.  The role players are all those who are, in one way or another, involved in the educational context, whether they are drawn from the government structure, the school system or the social system.

The ecosystems approach emphasises that we are dependent on each other to survive in life. Students are dependent on university guidance and fieldwork supervisors to thrive and survive during fieldwork placement.  It should be noted that the model is not of a nature where one size fits all, but acts instead as a guide towards developing a customised social work fieldwork practice model depending on the various universities' fieldwork curriculums, model/s of placement and available resources as well as the cultural and historical background of the universities and the communities where students conduct practical learning. Before discussing the

proposed fieldwork practice model, it is befitting to provide a justification for the social work fieldwork practice model.

## 12.2. Justification for the social work fieldwork practice model

UNIVEN and UL are found in the northern province of the Republic of South Africa. Due to their location and lack of certain resources (human, financial, and physical), as compared to some universities in metropoles, the two universities are commonly known as previously disadvantaged. UL was established in 1959 under the apartheid government. The extension of the University Education Act of 1959 made provision for the establishment of racially exclusive universities for black South Africans. The College was placed under the academic trusteeship of the University of South Africa. Since the dawn of the democratic government in 1994, there has been notable changes in the higher education system of South Africa. One of these has been the merger of some institutions of higher learning, including the merger of UL and the Medical University of Southern Africa in 2005. The UL that resulted from the merger is found in Turfloop (also known as Mankweng), about 40 kilometres east of the Polokwane CBD. The town is also named Sovenga, due to the three ethnic groups of Sotho, Venda, and Tsonga that are dominant in the areas. Due to its rural location, it is rare to find organisations, such as NGOs, non-profit organisations (NPOs), community-based organisations (CBOs), and faith-based organisations (FBOs), which could be lobbied for student's fieldwork placement. The university relies considerably on government departments for students' fieldwork.

UNIVEN is located in the small rural town of Thohoyandou in the far north of the Limpopo Province. The university is situated approximately 152 kilometres from the Beitbridge border post to Zimbabwe. UNIVEN was established as a branch of the University of the North on 18 February 1981, one of the last universities to be established in South Africa. It operated as a branch of the University of the North from 1980 until 1981. Its status as a branch of the University of the North changed when the Venda government passed the University of Venda Act, 19 of 1981 (Molapo, 2012:1). A few NGOs in Thohoyandou place students for fieldwork. From 2009-2013, the Department of Social Work at UNIVEN used to place students at FAMSA and Childline welfare organisations. These organisations closed due to a lack of funding.

Some organisations that are available, such as Thandululo Counselling Organisation (TCO), do not have social workers who can supervise students during fieldwork. Currently, the university relies considerably on government departments for students' fieldwork, as indicated. These distinctive features of the two universities explain why the study found many shortfalls in fieldwork. Fieldwork supervisors have done tremendous work to position fieldwork supervision as an integral part of social work training. Consideration should be given to particular focus on languages spoken, accessibility to traditional leadership, and control of who should access their subjects and who not, as well as religious and traditional social values designed to deal or address social problems.

Given the present data presentation, analysis, and interpretation, the researcher is of the view that the fieldwork coordination and practices of the two universities (UNIVEN and UL) are in line with BSW standards as set forth by CHE. Although student participants and the universities' fieldwork coordinators reported several supervision-related challenges, students were able to practice methods of social work practice and met the practicum objectives. Supervisors strove within the available resources to orient students into the profession of social work. The study notes that safeguarding the fieldwork practices while students are on placement received inadequate attention. Some students were left stranded when fieldwork supervisors left them alone and university coordinators or supervisors failed to offer support. The following sample of assertions from one of the student participants and a fieldwork coordinator provides a basis and justification for the social work fieldwork practice model, which is open for consultation by all stakeholders in the fieldwork practice, and for continuous engagement throughout the duration of the placement:

> *"I will suggest that because the practical is like four months, at least after two months the university should make fieldwork site visits. Like to ask the students how they are finding the work environment… visiting like every student not picking there and there because honestly speaking one will feel not important if others are getting visits and others not getting any." (Participant 003UNIVEN)*

> *"…we also arrange site visit / liaison visit where we visit students when they are in practical. Even though we do visit, we do a random selection… (UL*

*Coordinator)*

For the development of a social work fieldwork practice model aimed at ensuring constant contact with fieldwork supervisors, and care and support of students during fieldwork placement, two things must happen. Firstly, the researcher proposes that UL develop a departmental fieldwork supervision policy. Secondly, UNIVEN must consider adopting measures for compliance with the policy and manual currently in place. The next section deliberates on the issues that contributed to the failure of UNIVEN and UL when it came to adhering to the policies and manuals currently in place followed by proposed strategies to ensure compliance.

## 12.3. Compliance failures towards implementation of fieldwork supervision policies and manual

As outlined in Chapters 10 and 11, a number of factors contribute to non-compliance with the polices and manuals. The following compliance failures were identified.

### 12.3.1. Failure of administrative capacity

Universities should not only rely on drafting good policies, but they should also devote resources that would ensure the implementation of such policies. Compliance is compromised when there are no resources to execute duties associated with the establishment of such policies (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2000:20). The assertions below provide evidence of failure in administrative capacity:

*"Within the university also, resources I think is a problem; we don't have like specific resources, a bus / transport for our students, finances in terms of stipend. Students are not like being given what is due to them. So, if we can have such things happening within fieldwork placement it can be okay."* (*UNIVEN Coordinator)*

*"Generally, I am not sure how other institutions do it, but personally my take is that the departmental secretary should be responsible for this…."*

These assertions expose an unavailability of resources, while these are imperative for ensuring compliance. Another issue that led to compliance failure, is the failure to monitor it, which is discussed below.

### 12.3.2. Failure to monitor

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2000:19) claims that "a rule that is on the book, but not monitored is unlikely to elicit compliance." Random visits by the universities have become a habit because there is no monitoring in place to ensure that policies and manuals are fully implemented. Failure in monitoring is compromised also when the people who are supposed to be regulators rely on self-regulation; for example, when policy is implemented and regulated at the departmental level where there is no accountability to the larger system, which is the university.

### 12.3.3. Failure to communicate with the placement agencies

The researcher argues that failure to communicate with the placement agencies to make appointments seems to have contributed to non-compliance. The assertion below is evidence of the failure of coordinators to communicate with agencies prior to visits:

> *"We also arrange site visit / liaison visit where we visit students when they are in practical. Even though we do visit, we do a random selection. We do not announce when you go there…."* *(UL Coordinator)*

The assertion illustrates that it is not mandatory to visit if there were no arrangements made prior to the visit. Having deliberated on the compliance failures, it is befitting to discuss the proposed strategy or guideline that will help ensuring compliance with the policies and manuals.

### 12.4. Proposed strategies to ensure compliance

Universities need to provide measures to ensure regular compliance with the policies and manuals. The OECD (2000:25) argues that one major difficulty when it comes to ensuring compliance is lack of knowledge about the problem that the policy is intended

to solve. Therefore, there is a need for institutions to develop methods of data collection and strategies that would yield outcomes that will lead to compliance. The following strategies to ensure compliance are hereby proposed, each of which is briefly discussed below.

### 12.4.1. Provision of resources

The study revealed a lack of resources as one of the thorny issues confronting fieldwork coordination and fieldwork placement. The researcher proposes that the universities establish a fieldwork component or directorate within the departments. The component will be solely responsible for fieldwork practice-related matters, such as planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. The component must be fully equipped with resources such as designated staff members, transport, and a budget.

### 12.4.2. Performance management and incentives

One key motivating factor for seeking employment is money. It is inevitable that employees' performance will be managed to produce the desired results. Sahoo and Mishra (2012:3) define performance management as a procedure used to manage the performance of workforces to obtain anticipated outcomes. In the same vein, Aguinis (2013:2) claims that performance management is "a continuous process of identifying, measuring and developing performance in an organisation by linking each individual performance and objectives to the organisation's overall mission and goals." This definition maintains that performance management is a continuous process leading towards achieving the desired outcomes. Living within the bounds of a minimum wage can be very demotivating and, as such, performance incentives could also give rise to improved performance and compliance with important organisational regulations. Providing clear job descriptions coupled with the necessary resources, as discussed above, could motivate fieldwork staff to comply with the policies.

### 12.4.3. Policy formulation

Policy represents official communication of the institution's plans and goals and what should be done to achieve the envisaged goal (Madimutsa, 2008:20). In principle, policy establishes the direction that an institution adopts and helps it to perform

introspection about how it is doing its business (Sapru,1998:11). The study found that UNIVEN has a fieldwork practice policy *(see Addendum K)* and fieldwork supervision policy *(see Addendum L)* in place, while UL does not have fieldwork-related policies in place: instead, they have a fieldwork manual that contains all guidelines for fieldwork practice. To add value to the fieldwork practice curriculum, the researcher recommends that UL must consider formulating clear-cut fieldwork policies that would serve as bases for planning fieldwork activities. In most of cases, employees feel obliged to adhere to written regulations and chances are that the formulation of policies would help improve fieldwork practice. In the context of this study, it is envisioned that policy formulation by the institution will provide order and accountability within the fieldwork practice curriculum.

### 12.4.4. Development of memorandum of understanding

Currently UNIVEN and UL are operating under the universities' general MoU with government, private organisations, and NGOs. The absence of this kind of agreement will provide leeway around doing things, hence the presence of the document could establish commitment from both parties that enter into agreement. Therefore, the researcher recommends that UNIVEN and UL enter into formal agreement with fieldwork partners. The formal agreement should spell out the expectations, roles, and responsibilities for both parties.

The section below presents the social work fieldwork practice model.

### 12.5. Social work fieldwork practice model

The study proposes a six-phase cyclical social work fieldwork practice model as depicted in the schema below.
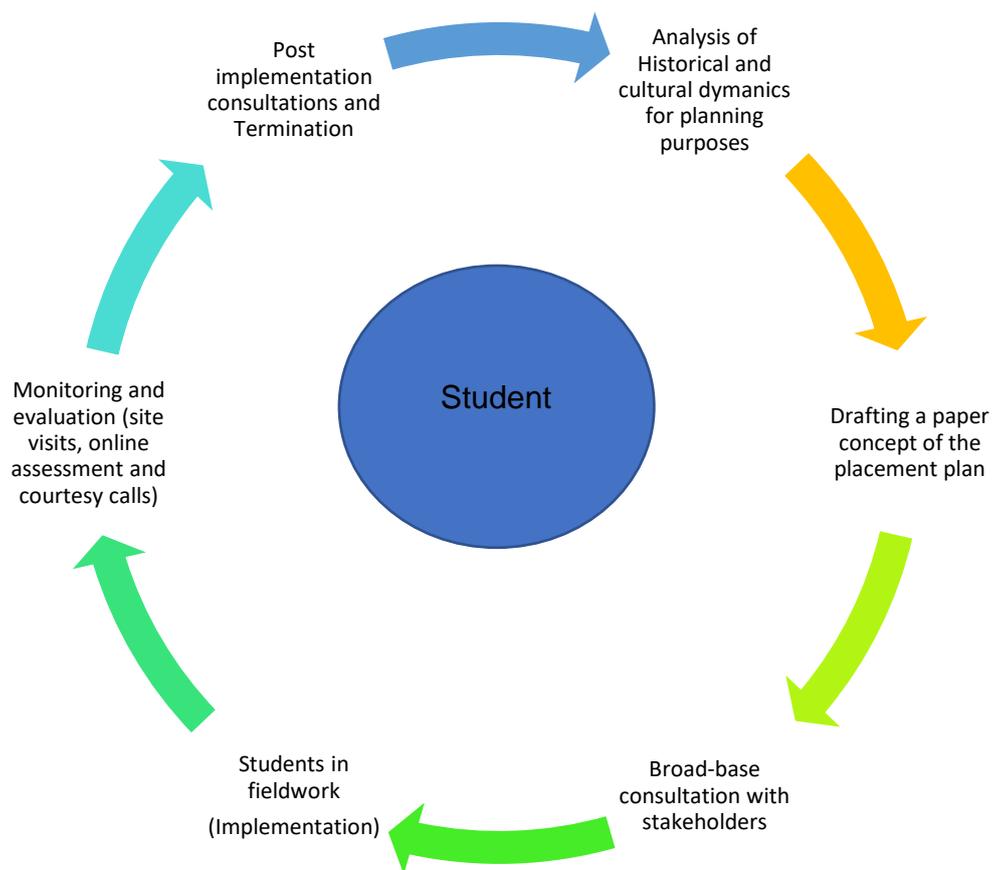
**Figure 12.1. Social work fieldwork practice model**

## 12.5.1. Description of the phases of social work fieldwork model

Phases of the proposed social work fieldwork model are subsequently discussed.

### 12.5.1.1. Phase 1: Analysis of historical and cultural dynamics for planning purposes

This phase requires fieldwork coordinators planning the entire fieldwork practice experience to understand historical and contextual dynamics which have a bearing on training of social workers. The environment in which these two universities are situated experiences huge challenges in terms of the dearth of active social welfare organisations, hence it is prudent to make use of the surrounding communities as places of training. Analysis of these factors should precede and guide planning for fieldwork. Planning is defined as "the act or process of making plans for something" (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 2000:887). In this model, planning refers to the process of making plans for fieldwork. The first phase of this social work fieldwork

practice model entails an analysis of the historical and cultural background of the communities surrounding the universities, the history of the potential organisations for fieldwork placement, its available personnel, and the practical experience of the potential fieldwork supervisors. Given the context of the universities discussed earlier in this chapter, the universities, through the fieldwork coordinators, must identify available organisations that may be lobbied to host students for fieldwork placement. These include knowledge of CBOs, NGOs, schools, and government departments and clinics where students are likely to be placed for fieldwork placement. The identification of these organisations will be followed by initial contact, which will form the basis for drafting a concept paper of the fieldwork placement plan.

### 12.5.1.2. Phase 2: Drafting a paper concept  of the placement plan

Information obtained in Phase 1 of this model will help fieldwork coordinators to draft a fieldwork placement plan outlining the fieldwork work placement outcomes.  A placement plan is described by Harris and White (2013:357) as a written statement describing the activities and agreements that should be in place when practical work commences. The fieldwork placement plan must include, among other things:

- Contractual agreements such as a university-agency agreement (acceptance of students);
- A fieldwork placement learning agreement detailing what students must to address the learning outcomes;
- A supervision contract agreement detailing the number of supervision sessions required, frequency of supervision, and preferred methods;
- An SACSSP code of ethics; and
- A grievance procedure.

The draft placement plan will form the basis for the next phase, namely that of broad consultation with stakeholders, as discussed below.

### 12.5.1.3. Phase 3: Broad-base consultation with stakeholders

This phase involves broad consultation with stakeholders and contracting institutions. The main issue for consideration in this phase are discussing the draft fieldwork placement plan. Around this phase, Cummins et al. (2014:237) argue that effective planning must involve the commitment and collaborative efforts of all stakeholders,

that is, students, placement agencies representatives, and fieldwork coordinators. Consultations with stakeholders should be done at two levels, of which the first involves students. The findings of this study reveal some levels of dissatisfaction when students are not involved in the planning of fieldwork, especially around choosing the organisations where they will be doing their field work. The assertions below provide evidence of this:

*"…some students choose to be placed in a [articular agency, but they ended up being placed somewhere else. So, what is the use of being asked to list agencies you prefer to do practical, but ending up sending the student somewhere where the student did not choose". (Participant 005UNIVEN)*

Other students indicated the following:
*"I did not choose placement." (Participant 002UL)*
*"it (placement) was imposed." (Participant 004UL)*

These assertions evidence that students need to be consulted when planning for fieldwork.

The second level of consultation involves fieldwork supervisors. The value of fieldwork supervisors cannot be underestimated if the universities are to succeed in fieldwork placement endeavours. Nunev (2014:462) postulates that fieldwork supervisors support and guide students and make educational interventions aimed at helping them achieve their learning outcomes. It can be deduced that placement arrangements are likely to produce satisfactory results if fieldwork supervisors are consulted. For fieldwork placement to be successful, there is a need to consult people who will take a hands-on approach with students. The findings of this study reveal that the university's fieldwork coordinator contacted the placement agencies to arrange for placement. Little attention was paid to detailed engagement with the potential fieldwork supervisors to share the fieldwork placement plan, to solicit their willingness to participate in student's fieldwork placement learning, and to contract with them. The researcher acknowledges that it is procedural for universities to contact placement agencies via the representative entrusted with the responsibilities for student's placement, but consultation with fieldwork supervisors detailing the expectations will

help them make informed decisions as to whether to accept the students or not. Therefore, the planning should involve potential supervisors. Once the consultation and planning have been concluded and all parties understand the expectations, fieldwork coordinators can finalise the selection of agencies appropriate to provide learning in line with the requirements of BSW in South Africa. The selection of agencies must be followed by the selection of fieldwork supervisors based on the set criteria. For example, the supervisor must have sufficient time to provide guidance to students throughout the placement period and have a required number of years of practice to qualify to be a supervisor.

Once agencies have approved the placement and contract assigned by agencies to host students and supervisors, a meeting must be secured with potential supervisors for orientation so that they will be familiar with what they have to do with students. This could be a moment where students meet their supervisors and begin to bond, as suggested by one of the student participants:

*"….It's actually good to meet those people (supervisors) and knowing who to expect. It should be one of the most important… it should be like Christmas. It shouldn't be like a surprise when we get there."* *(Participant 004UNIVEN)*

Although the study revealed that fieldwork coordinators conducted workshops for supervisors, it was also noted that these supervisors' workshops were not always conducted before placement commenced. Some workshops were conducted while students were already in placement and the agencies had assigned students to supervisors without their consent. Such practices seem to have contributed to poor student-supervisor relationships and the inability of supervisors to provide formal and planned supervision.  The broad consultation with the stakeholder's phase is followed by implementation phase, which is described below.

### 12.5.1.4. Phase 4: Implementation (students in placement)

The implementation phase requires concerted efforts aimed at achieving fieldwork curriculum objectives. The implementation takes place while the students are in placement. In this phase, the tripartite alliance partners (university, students, and

placement agencies) through their representatives execute all the plans outlined in Phase 1 and phase 2.

*Fieldwork supervisors* engage students in a formal orientation process and assign their responsibilities aimed at helping them integrate classroom learning and practice. Furthermore, fieldwork supervisors create a professional student-supervisor relationship conducive for learning. Efforts should be made to ensure that the environment is free from bias, hatred, and unprofessional conduct and emotional outbursts, where the latter lead to students' dissatisfaction with placement.

*Students* in this stage are at the centre of attention. They are required to execute assigned tasks. Through supervision, they learn about clients served by the organisations, problems addressed, as well as policies and procedures applicable for the provision of services. A supervision session is also an important opportunity where students seek clarity on pressing matters and subsequently get feedback which will help them improve future encounters with clients.

*Fieldwork coordinators* focus on the smooth running of fieldwork practice. This includes providing continuous support to students throughout the placement period, liaison with the fieldwork agencies and, more importantly, supervisors monitor how placement is going and provide answers to critical issues that may be challenging placement or have the potential to interfere with placement in future.

### 12.5.1.5. Phase 5: Monitoring and evaluation

Every intervention must be monitored and evaluated to check if it produced the desired results. Lauffer (in Potgieter,1998:257) asserts that monitoring ensures that programmes are modified based on feedback received from stakeholders. Monitoring is followed by evaluation. Cummins et al. (2014:282) argue that evaluation is a core of social work practice. In addition, Barker (1999:366) states that evaluation looks at whether the process followed to implement the policy and the results are reasonable, well-defined, and understandable. Furthermore, Thomas (in Shokane, 2017:99) argues that the purpose of evaluation is that "it provides the necessary feedback to determine whether the innovation be retained and utilised as it has been developed

or should be re-designed or developed further." Therefore, fieldwork placement needs to be monitored and evaluated. The researcher proposes that institutions adopt a formal method of evaluation, which Munger (2000:20) calls "purely formal evaluation" in which institutions monitor routine tasks. These routine tasks refer to the roles and responsibilities of fieldwork coordinators, fieldwork supervisors, and students, as discussed in Chapter 7, and the placement plan in Phase 2 of this model. Brown et al. (2005:84) argue that monitoring is the requirement of promoting professional development for a student. In consultation with fieldwork supervisors, coordinators set dates for formal and planned site visits. It is important that the agenda be set for such visits, an agenda which is agreed on by both parties, so that the meetings do not divert to friendly chats. During the visit, the coordinator checks progress made and what needs to be done during the final stage of placement. One-on-one or group sessions with students could also be arranged during the visit. This could be a platform where students share good practices and raise their concerns if there are any. Attention should be given to address issues that interfere with student's field learning or have the potential to interfere in future. This supportive role is also necessary to help students deal with challenges within the practice placement. Therefore, field placement liaison visits must be conducted regularly, not as an option, but as a requirement. Communications platforms such as courtesy calls, Zoom, Microsoft team meetings, emails, and other available communication platforms should be used as alternative means to monitor and evaluate fieldwork placement activities. Through liaison visits, the fieldwork coordinator must facilitate feedback from students, fieldwork supervisors and, where necessary, managers of organisations. This formal evaluation process will inform future planning of fieldwork endeavours. Evaluation will inform the departments if there is a need to modify the model or whether it requires the development of a new one.

### 12.5.1.6. Phase 6: Post-implementation consultations and termination

The last phase of this model would require further consultations with the stakeholders. These should focus on discussing the supervisors' experience of hosting students in their organisations. These may include discussions about challenges experienced with students; what the strengths and weaknesses of BSW curriculums of both universities are; and soliciting the supervisors' suggestions that will enhance future fieldwork

practice activities. This phase also requires meeting with students to evaluate their practical experience as well listening to their suggestions for future planning. The post-implementation consultation akin to a 'post-mortem,' where the focus is on general feedback of 'what happened' during fieldwork placement, which will inform 'what must happen' to improve future placement.

In conclusion, this proposed cyclical model requires maximum cooperation from all stakeholders involved in the fieldwork curriculum. The ecosystems approach emphasises the interdependence of all the stakeholders for the system to function properly. Any divergence to the agreed-upon plans by any party to the agreement should be discouraged, because it will have the potential of interfering with field learning. Therefore, efforts should be organised, and resources channelled to all parts of the system so that fieldwork practice brings the outcomes stated in policies, operation manuals, and contractual agreements.

## 12.6. Summary

This chapter has responded to the objective of developing the social work fieldwork practice model. The chapter has started with unpacking the need for the development of the model, followed by an analysis of what contributed to failures when it comes to adhering to the existing fieldwork supervision policy and manuals as well as the suggested strategies for mitigating such failures. The chapter has concluded with the social work fieldwork practice model which could be adopted by the UNIVEN and UL departments of social work.

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# ADDENDUMS

## ADDENDUM A:  INTERVIEW GUIDE

**The following questions will guide the interviews:**

- May you please share with me the preparatory work the university has done before your fieldwork?
- What would be the highlights of what you benefited from your supervisor during fieldwork practice?
- What type of supervisory style did you find helpful during fieldwork practice placement?
- How often were the supervision sessions?
- What difficulties did you face during fieldwork practice placement?
- What kind of support has been offered to you by the university fieldwork supervisors during fieldwork placement?
- What do you think the Department of Social Work at the UL & UNIVEN should do to support you during fieldwork practice placements?

**Questions for Fieldwork coordinators**

- Could you please share with me the process you used to place your students for fieldwork?
- Could you please share with me your role in fieldwork placements?
- During their placement period, how do you provide support to students?
- What challenges do you normally encounter when students are on placement?

## ADDENDUM B: LETTER REQUESTING THE INDIVIDUALS' PARTICIPATION IN THE RESEARCH

**P.O. BOX 1670**

**SIBASA**

**0970**

Dear Prospective Participants

**RE:   A  LETTER  REQUESTING  THE  INDIVIDUALS'  PARTICIPATION  IN  THE RESEARCH PROJECT**

I **_Nngodiseni Jimmy Budeli_**, the undersigned, am a lecturer in the Department of Social Work at UNIVEN, Limpopo Province, and also a full-time PhD student in the Department of Social Work at UL.   In fulfilment of requirements for the Doctoral degree, I have to undertake a research project and have consequently decided to focus on the following research topic: **A Comparative analysis of Social Work Fieldwork Supervision at UNIVEN and UL: Implications for Policy and Practice Guidelines.**

In view of the fact that you are well-informed about the topic, I hereby approach you with the request to participate in the study.  For you to decide whether or not to participate in this research project, I am going to give you information that will help you to understand the study and the reasons for a need for this particular study. Furthermore, you will be informed about what you will be asked, what you will be requested to do during the study, the risks and benefits involved by participating in this research project, and your rights as a participant in this study.

Should you agree to participate, you would be requested to participate in a face-to-face interview that will be conducted at a place and time that will be convenient to you. With your permission, the interviews will be digitally recorded. The recorded interviews will be transcribed word-for-word. Your responses to the interview, both the taped and transcribed versions, will be kept strictly confidential. The recordings will be coded to disguise any identifying information. My research supervisor and the independent coder will have access to the recording. The audiotapes and the transcripts of the interviews will be destroyed two years after the completion of the study. Identifying

information will be deleted or disguised in any subsequent publication and/ or presentation of the research findings.

Please note that participation in the research is completely voluntary. You are not obliged to take part in the research. Your decision to participate, or not to participate, will not affect you in any way now or in the future and you will incur no penalty and/ or loss to which you may otherwise be entitled to. Should you agree to participate and sign the information and informed consent document herewith, as proof of your willingness to participate, please note that you are not signing your rights away. You have the right to change your mind at any time during the study and discontinue participation without any loss of benefits.

Should you require any further information regarding this study, contact me (Jimmy Budeli), the researcher, on these numbers: cell phone 082 404 5332/ 015 962 8468 or alternatively Prof. J.C. Makhubele, my supervisor, on cell number 084 712 2913

Based upon all the information provided to you above, you are asked to give your written consent should you want to participate in this research study by signing the consent form provided herewith and initialling each section to indicate that you understand and agree to the conditions.

Thank you for your participation.


Kind regards

_____
**NNGODISENI JIMMY BUDELI (Researcher)**
**Contact details:**
**Cell: 082 404 5332**
**Tel: 015 962 8468**
**Email: Jimmy.Budeli@UNIVEN.ac.za**

**Title of the research project: A Comparative analysis of Social Work Fieldwork Supervision at UNIVEN and UL: Implications for Policy and Practice Guidelines**

**Researcher:** Mr. Jimmy Budeli
**Address:**
P.O.BOX 1670
SIBASA
0970

**Contact cell phone number:** 082 404 5332

| DECLARATION BY THE PARTICIPANT: | Initial |
|---|---|
| I, THE UNDERSIGNED, _____ (name), [Student No/ Staff Number _____] <br><br> **A. HEREBY CONFIRM AS FOLLOWS:** <br> 1. I was invited to participate in the above research project, which is being undertaken by Jimmy Budeli, a Doctoral student in the Department of Social Work at UL (Turfloop Campus), Polokwane, South Africa. | |
| 2. The following aspects have been explained to me: <br><br> 2.1. Aim: The aim of the study is to comparatively explore and describe Social Work Fieldwork Supervision at UNIVEN and UL <br> 2.2. The information will be used to inform the department of social work at UNIVEN (UNIVEN)  and UL (UL) on the social work fieldwork curriculum | Initial |
| 2.3.     I understand that: <br> • The goal of the study, the need for the study and the benefits it will have for me, UNIVEN and UL department of social work. | Initial |

| | |
|---|---|
| • The reasons for being selected to participate in the study and that my participation is voluntary. <br><br> • I will participate in a face-to-face interview at a place and time convenient to me for a period not exceeding two hours. <br><br> • The information that I will share will be audio-taped and recorded on a paper and later on transcribed. <br><br> • The information that I will share will be made known to the public by means of a research report and might be used in subsequent scholarly presentations, printed publications or further research. <br><br> • I have the right to withdraw from the study at any point. <br><br> • I have the right to ask for clarification or more information throughout the study. <br><br> • I may contact the relevant administrative person or body if I have any questions with regard to the researcher's conduct or procedures of the study. | |
| 2.4. Risks: <br> • I do not see any risk associated with the study. | Initial |
| Possible benefits: As a result of my participation in this study, more information on the fieldwork supervision during practicum will be established and publicised. Results will also be shared with the department of social work at UNIVEN and UL so that, where necessary, adjustment/ improvement could be made regarding fieldwork supervision. | Initial |
| Confidentiality: <br> My identity will not be revealed in any discussion, description or scientific publications by the investigators/ researchers. | Initial |
| Voluntary participation/ refusal/ discontinuation: <br> My participation is voluntary. My decision whether or not to participate will in no way affect me now or in the future. | Initial |
| The information above was explained to me by Jimmy Budeli in English. I was given the opportunity to ask questions and all these questions were answered satisfactorily. | Initial |
| No pressure was exerted on me to consent to participate, and I understand that I may withdraw at any stage from the study without any penalty. | Initial |
| Participation in this study will not result in any additional cost to me. | Initial |
| | |

**B.     I HEREBY GIVE CONSENT VOLUNTARILY TO PARTICIPATE IN THE   ABOVE PROJECT.**


_____          _____

Signature or right thumbprint of participant          Signature of witness

## University of Limpopo

Department of Research Administration and Development
Private Bag X1106, Sovenga, 0727, South Africa
Tel: (015) 268 3935, Fax: (015) 268 2306, Email:

anastasia.ngobe@ul.ac.za

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| TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE |
|---|
| ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE |

MEETING:              05 April 2019

                           TREC/ 78/ 2019:PG

PROJECT NUMBER:

PROJECT:
Title:
                           A comparative analysis on social work fieldwork supervision at
                           the University of Venda and University of Limpopo : Implications
                           for policy and practice guidelines.
Researcher:         NJ Budeli
Supervisor:          Prof JC Makhubele
Co-Supervisor/ s:  N/ A
School:                Social Sciences
Degree:               PhD in Social Work

PROF P MASOKO

CHAIRPERSON: TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

The Turfloop Research Ethics Committee (TREC) is registered with the National

Health Research Ethics Council, Registration Number: REC-0310111-031

Note:

i)

This Ethics Clearance Certificate will be valid for one (1) year, as from the abovementioned date. Application for annual renewal (or annual review) need to be received by TREC one month before lapse of this period.

iii)

Should any departure be contemplated from the research procedure as approved, the researcher(s) must re-submit the protocol to the committee, together with the Application for Amendment form.

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER IN ALL ENQUIRIES.

Finding solutions for Africa

**ADDENDUM E: UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

University of Limpopo

Department of Social Work

Private Bag X1106, Sovenga, 0727, South Africa

Tel: (015) 268 2605, Fax: (015) 268 3636/ 2866, Email:

masenyani.manganyi@ul.ac.za

_____

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

**Re: Permission to conduct research granted to Budeli NJ, PhD candidate, student number:………….: Department of Social Work**

1. This letter has reference
2. Kindly be advised that permission is granted for you to conduct interviews with the fourth level class of 2019.
3. Good luck with your project.

Sincerely,

Dr. Masenyani R Manganyi

HoD: Department of Work
School of Social Sciences

Faculty of Humanities

University of Limpopo, RSA

**ADDENDUM F: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT UNIVEN**

<div align="right">

Research and Innovation

Office of the Director

</div>

---

14 June 2019

Mr NJ Budeli
P O Box 1670
Sibasa
0970

Dear Mr NJ Budeli

### **Permission to conduct Research at the University of Venda**

You are hereby granted permission to conduct research at the University of Venda.

The research will be based on your Doctoral Research topic: ***A comparative analysis of social work fieldwork supervision at the University of Venda and University of Limpopo: Implications for policy and practice guidelines registered at the University of Limpopo.***

The conditions are that all the data pertaining to University of Venda will be treated in accordance with the Ethical Principles and that will be shared with the University. In addition, consent should be sought by you as a researcher from participants.

Attached is our policy on ethics.

Thank you
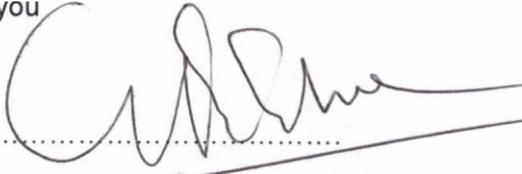
Senior Prof. G.E. Ekosse

Director Research and Innovation

Cc:   Prof JE Crafford (DVC Academic)

# ADDENDUM G: UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO (TURFLOOP) FACULTY APPROVAL OF PROPOSAL
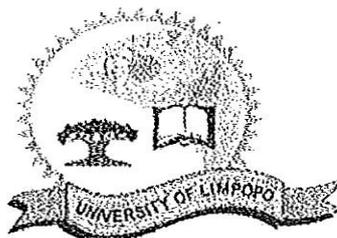
**University of Limpopo**
**Faculty of Humanities**
**Executive Dean**
Private Bag X1106, Sovenga, 0727, South Africa
Tel: (015) 268 4895, Fax: (015) 268 3425, Email:Satsope.maoto@ul.ac.za

DATE: 4 December 2018

| | |
|---|---|
| NAME OF STUDENT: | BUDELI, NJ |
| STUDENT NUMBER: | [201533327] |
| DEPARTMENT: | PhD – Social Work |
| SCHOOL: | Social Sciences |

Dear Student

**FACULTY APPROVAL OF PROPOSAL (PROPOSAL NO. FHDC2018/4547)**

I have pleasure in informing you that your PhD proposal served at the Faculty Higher Degrees Meeting on 21 November 2018 and your title was approved as follows:

TITLE: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL WORK FIELDWORK SUPERVISION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF VENDA AND UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO: IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE GUIDELINES

Note the following:

| Ethical Clearance | Tick One |
|---|---|
| In principle the study requires no ethical clearance, but will need a TREC permission letter before proceeding with the study | |
| Requires ethical clearance (Human) (TREC) (apply online) | √ |
| Proceed with the study only after receipt of ethical clearance certificate | |
| Requires ethical clearance (Animal) (AREC) | |
| Proceed with the study only after receipt of ethical clearance certificate | |

Yours faithfully

Prof RS Maoto,

Executive Dean: Faculty of Humanities

| | |
|---|---|
| Director: | Prof SL Sithole |
| Supervisor: | Prof JC Makhubele |

Finding solutions for Africa

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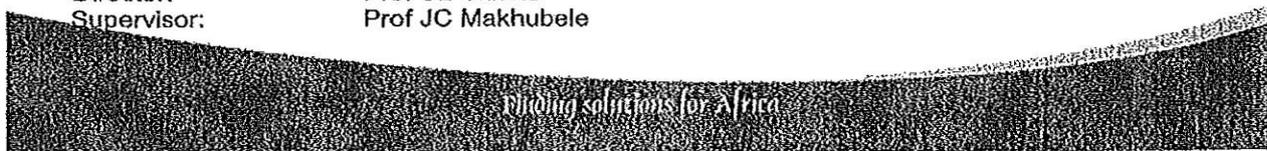
# ADDENDUM H: CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT FOR TRANSCRIPTION SERVICES

I, **Elizabeth Chauke**, transcriptionist, agree to maintain full confidentiality in regard to any and all audiotapes and documentation received from Nngodiseni Jimmy Budeli related to his Doctoral study on *"A comparative analysis of social work fieldwork supervision at the University of Venda and University of Limpopo: Implications for policy and practice guidelines."* Furthermore, I agree:

1. To hold in strictest confidence, the identification of any individual that may be inadvertently revealed during the transcription of audio-taped interviews, or in any associated documents;

2. To not make copies of any audiotapes or computerized files of the transcribed interview texts, unless specifically requested to do so by Nngodiseni Jimmy Budeli;

3. To store all study-related audiotapes and materials in a safe, secure location if they are in my possession; and

4. To delete all electronic files containing study-related documents from my computer hard drive and any backup devices.

I am aware that I can be held legally liable for any breach of this confidentiality agreement, and for any harm incurred by individuals if I disclose identifiable information contained in the audiotapes and/ or files to which I will have access.

**Transcriber's signature** _____

**Date: 06 December 2020**

**Addendum I: Declaration of language editing**



## cumlaude
### language practitioners

Director: CME Terblanche - BA (Pol Sc), BA Hons (Eng), MA (Eng), TEFL

| | |
|---|---|
| 22 Strydom Street | Tel 082 821 3083 |
| Baillie Park, 2531 | cumlaudelanguage@gmail.com |

### DECLARATION OF LANGUAGE EDITING

I, Juan Etienne Terblanche, hereby declare that I edited the dissertation titled:

### A Comparative Analysis of Social Work Fieldwork Supervision at the University of Venda and University of Limpopo: Implications for Policy and Practice Guidelines

for **Jimmy Ngodiseni Budeli** for the purpose of submission as a postgraduate research study. Suggestions were indicated in track changes and application was left to the author.

Regards,

JE Terblanche

Cum Laude Language Practitioners (CC)

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**Addendum J: Bachelor of Social Work Standards**

**Core Social Work Knowledge (STANDARDS)**

A graduate has demonstrated knowledge of the following:

1. comparative welfare policies in respect of the residual, institutional, industrial-achievement and developmental frameworks and their implications for access to social services on the selective-universal continuum;

2. the developmental social welfare paradigm, which is aimed at integrating micro-, mezzo- and macro-level assessment and intervention; clinical, developmental, therapeutic, preventative and rehabilitative aspects of social work; and the harmonization of social and economic development;

3. the influence of historical eras, including the eras of colonialism and apartheid, on welfare service delivery and on the history of social work in South Africa;

4. the transition from apartheid to democracy and its influence on social welfare service delivery and social work;

5. the demographics, socio-economic development status and linguistic and cultural diversities of South Africa's peoples;

6. structural determinants of poverty and inequality, their manifestations and consequences and possible responses to these;

7. relevant international and regional conventions/ treatises/ declarations and a pertinent range of national policies and legislation;

8. national, provincial and local structures for the delivery of social welfare services and the role of social work in social welfare policy planning, development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation;

9. a range of relevant theories, perspectives and models such as eco-systemic theories; critical and radical theories; structural theory; cognitive-behavioural theories; psychodynamic theory;

10. human behavior and the social environment, with particular emphasis on the person-in- environment transaction, life-span development and the interaction among biological, psychological, socio-structural, economic, political, cultural and spiritual factors in shaping human development and behaviour;

11. service beneficiary assessment, intervention processes, methods and

techniques to render preventative, protective, developmental and therapeutic interventions with individuals, families, groups, organisations and communities;

12. the various fields of service such as child and family welfare; youth work; statutory social work; mental health; corrections; health; HIV/ AIDS; social work in occupational settings; gerontology; forensics; disability; substance abuse and crime prevention;

13. the ethical requisites of the profession; an appropriate range of ethical theories; and the complexities of ethical decision-making in day-to-day practice;

14. the Self vis-à-vis Professional practice;

15. social work management; social work administration and supervision;

16. research paradigms/ methods, designs and strategies.

**Nine core areas (Application of Knowledge and skills)**

**1. The development and consolidation of a professional identity as a social worker**

The central threads that permeate the social work professional identity that a graduate needs to master are:

   a. Understanding the power of process and building sound relationships;

   b. demonstrated ability in advancing human rights, and working with and for the most disadvantaged groups in society;

   c. commitment to work toward social justice and egalitarian societies;

   d. understanding the Self as an important instrument of intervention;

   e. commitment to caring, building humane societies and mutual inter-dependence;

   f. use of validation as one of the core empowerment strategies in working with individuals, families, groups and communities;

   g. willingness to *be for the Other*, and ability for empathic entry into the life worlds of people;

   h. demonstrated skills in critical thinking and scholarly attitudes of reasoning, and openness to new experiences and paradigms;

   i. commitment to professional ethics and to on-going professional development;

   j. ability to deal with complexity and ambiguity and to think on one's feet;

   k. understanding of social work as a context-embedded, proactive and responsive profession;

   l. ability to use supervision effectively in practice.

   m. demonstrated ability to understand the links between the personal and the professional dimensions of life and the relationship between the micro- and the macro-aspects of students' lives and the lives of people whom they engage with.

**2. Application of core values and principles of social work**

   a. Demonstrated ability to respect the inherent worth and dignity of all human beings;

   b. demonstrated understanding that every person has the ability to solve his/ her

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problem;

c. demonstrated ability to separate acceptance of the person while challenging and changing conditions and behaviours that are self-destructive or harmful to others;

d. upholding the value of doing no harm and practising beneficence;

e. understanding the mutual inter-dependence among human beings and between human beings and other living entities, and a commitment to inter-generational equity and continuity (third generation rights) as advocated by 'green' social work;

f. respecting the rights of people to inclusion in decision-making and in the planning and use of services;

g. respecting rights to self-determination (with due consideration to potential structural constraints);

h. respecting rights to confidentiality within legislative constraints.


**3. Holistic assessment and intervention with individuals, families, groups and communities**

a. Recognising humans as bio-psycho-social (BPS) beings, as the biological, psychological and social (including the spiritual) dimensions of life are inter-connected and mutually reinforcing;

b. undertaking holistic BPS assessments to facilitate holistic intervention directly and/ or through referrals to appropriate professionals and resources;

c. understanding of the Person-in-Environment gestalt, appreciating that the environment consists of the natural, geographic environment and the various social systems, both proximate and distal, that surround and impact individual and family functioning;

d. understanding of how historical and contemporary BPS approaches impact on human functioning and capabilities development;

e. ability to undertake appropriate interventions ranging from direct protective/ therapeutic/ educational interventions with individuals, families and groups to broader community interventions, including education, social activism and/ or advocacy at local, regional and/ or international levels;

f. ability to use a range of strategies to monitor and evaluate interventions.

**4. Demonstrated competence in the use of codes of ethics vis-à-vis the moral impulse**

   a. Awareness of international, regional and national statements of ethical principles and codes of ethics;

   b. critical engagement with codes of ethics;

   c. recognising the inter-relatedness between the moral impulse and codes of ethics;

   d. awareness of the boundaries of professional practice and what constitutes unprofessional conduct;

   e. understanding of principled ethics and feminist relational ethics, and skills of negotiating ethical decision-making through discourse ethics and dialogue, and through peer consultation and supervision.


**5. Working with a range of diversities**

   a. Demonstrate self-awareness regarding personal and cultural values, beliefs, traditions and biases and how these might influence the ability to develop relationships with people, and to work with diverse population groups;

   b. awareness of self as individual and as member of collective socio-cultural groups in terms of strengths and areas for further development;

   c. competence in non-discrimination on the basis of culture, nationality, ethnicity, religion, language, race, gender, language, physical status, and sexual orientation;

   d. ability to minimize group stereotypes and prejudices and to ensure that racist, sexist, homophobic and xenophobic behaviour, policies and structures are not reproduced through social work practice;

   e. ability to form relationships with, and treat all persons with respect and dignity irrespective of such persons' cultural and ethnic beliefs, gender, nationality, language, religion, disability and sexual orientation;

   f. ability to serve as cultural mediators through the use of constructive confrontation, conflict- mediation, discourse ethics and dialogue where local cultural values, traditions and practices might violate universally-accepted human rights, as entrenched in national, regional and international human rights instruments;

g. awareness of the importance of inter-sectoral collaboration, and teamwork across disciplines and among social service professionals;

## 6. Ability to undertake research

a. Demonstrate appropriate skills in the use of qualitative and/ or quantitative research methods;

b. ability to recognise and apply the ethical requisites of social work research;

c. ability to use research to inform practice and vice-versa;

d. appreciate the value of practice-based research, of practice as research, and of research as practice;

e. ability to document and communicate research findings to professional and non-professional audiences.

## 7. Knowledge, practice skills and theories

a. Ability to make judicious selection from the wide range of available knowledge and theories to facilitate conceptualization at higher levels of abstraction;

b. ability to select from a range of theoretical perspectives and practice skills to facilitate effective interventions at the level of the individual, family, group, organization and community;

c. demonstrate an understanding of the structural determinants of people's lives and how criteria such as race, class, gender, language, religion, geographic location, disability and sexual orientation might constitute sources of privilege and/ or oppression.

d. demonstrate an understanding of the complex relationship between the power of structural determinants and the power of human agency, and the relationship between freedom and responsibility;

e. show awareness of strategies to facilitate praxis and consciousness-raising to enable people to understand and challenge structural determinants of normalization, and of oppression and/ or privilege;

f. demonstrate critical understanding of how socio-structural inequalities, discrimination, oppression, and social, political, economic and environmental injustices impact on human functioning and development at all levels.

## 8. Policy and legislation

a. Demonstrate an understanding of how social welfare policy and legislation influence the conception of issues as social problems, interventions and resource allocation;

b. ability to analyse, formulate, evaluate and advocate for policies that enhance human wellbeing and environmental sustainability;

c. demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the law and social work;

d. applying knowledge of global, regional and national declarations, policies and legislation relevant to social welfare and social work;

e. applying knowledge of national, provincial and local governance structures, and the general laws and charters governing social welfare policy and social work services in South Africa;

f. identifying understanding the historical, political and economic dimensions of welfare policies.

## 9. Writing and communication of professional knowledge

a. Ability to write coherent, logical, grammatically correct and well considered reports/ memos whether for internal or external use;

b. awareness of the ethical and legal aspects of report-writing;

c. awareness of the targeted audience of any particular communication; the central messages to be communicated and how these are to be communicated, for example, probation reports; reports for children's court enquiries, divorce settlements, referrals for medical/ psychiatric assessment and treatment; support for a social action campaign;

d. demonstrate clear, coherent and engaging oral communication skills;

e. ability to apply interviewing skills;

f. ability to record and disseminate social work research findings and knowledge;

g. ability to function in a multilingual context and to use oral and/ or written translation and interpretation when necessary.

**Addendum K: University of Venda fieldwork practice policy**



**SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK**

**DEPARTMENTAL FIELDWORK PRACTICE POLICY**

| Version Number | Date (dd/ mm/ yyyy) | Author | Description | Process | Reviewed Date |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| BSWPOL 05 | 27/ 2/ 2013 | Department of Social Work | Original Draft | School Board Meeting | 13/ 02/ 2018 |
| BSWPOL 05 | 27/ 2/ 2013 | Department of Social Work | Original Draft | Centre for Higher Education Teaching and Learning, IPQA, CE and Department | |
| BSWPOL  05 | 27/ 2/ 2013 | Department of Social Work | Original Draft | SENATE | |
| BSWPOL 05 | | Department of Social Work | Original Draft | COUNCIL | |

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|---|---|
| **Policy Reference Number      :** | **BSWPOL 05** |
| **Date Approved by Council      :** | …………………………………………………………. |
| **Signature of the Registrar      :** | …………………………………………………………. |
| **Signature  of  the Vice Chancellor:** | …………………………………………………. |

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# UNIVEN – DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK POLICY ON FIELDWORK PRACTICE

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**DOCUMENT CONTROL DETAILS**

**Master document**     **Documentation Control Centre**

# DEPARTMENTAL FIELDWORK PRACTICE POLICY

## Table of     Contents

# 1. INTRODUCTION

The Department of Social Work policy on fieldwork practice derives its mandate from the official calendar (Part 6) of UNIVEN and the SACSSP. The practice of social work as well as the training of social workers in South Africa is partly governed by the Social Service Professions Act (Act 110 of 1978).

# 2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines to social work students, staff, agency supervisors and other stakeholders who may serve UNIVEN regarding fieldwork practical.

# 3. SCOPE AND APPLICATION

Fieldwork practice is an important component of social work training. This policy is applicable to all social work students in the levels of study that have practical modules. It is therefore mandatory that all social work students undergo this practice and meet the minimum requirements as stipulated in the official calendar (Part 6) of the university to progress to the next level and to qualify as a social worker in terms of the Social Service Professions Act, (No 110 of 1978).

# 4. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE MODULES

## 4.1. Compulsory registration with South African Council for Social Service Professions

4.1.1. The social work students are expected to be registered with the SA Council for Social Service Professions in line with the Social Service Professions Act, (No 110 of 1978) from the second year of study.

4.1.2. It is a criminal offence to practice as a student social worker without registration with the Social Service Professions Act, (No 110 of 1978).

4.1.3. The onus lies with the students to ensure that they are correctly registered so that they may practice as a social worker once qualified.

## 4.2. Attendance

Attendance of fieldwork practice by all social work students is compulsory.

## 4.3. Student conduct on fieldwork practice

4.3.1. The students shall abide by the applicable rules of the organisation in which they are placed. Clarifying these aspects with the agency supervisor should be one of the first tasks when a student starts with placement at the organisation.

4.3.2. The students are expected to comply with the organisation's requirements regarding hours of work, including signing in and out procedures, dress code, behaviour and relationship with organizational staff and the community.

4.3.3. All organisational requirements regarding recording and confidentiality must also be adhered to.

## 4.4. Ethical obligation

4.4.1. The students must note that the social work profession is grounded in the belief of the dignity and worth of every human being and recognition of the need for a democratic, just and caring society.

4.4.2. The student social workers have an ethical obligation to uphold these values and conduct themselves responsibly in their interactions with staff at the Department of Social Work at UNIVEN, clients, colleagues, social workers, and society in general.

4.4.3. Students are expected to take an oath and sign the Code of Ethics. In signing the Code of Ethics, students are bound by the ethical obligations as contained in the Regulations for Social Service Professions (Government Gazette of 1993).

## 4.5. Breaching of the Social Work Code of Ethics

In the event of students breaching the Social Work Code of Ethics, the following steps shall be taken:

4.5.1. An interview with the student and the academic coordinator and / or Head of the Department will be held.

4.5.2. A recommendation regarding further action will then be taken to a staff meeting and a decision will be made. This may include any or all the following:
   • Instituting disciplinary action within the university.
   • Suspension or exclusion from the social work programme.
   • Reporting the matter to the SACSSP.

## 5. NATURE OF FIELDWORK PRACTICE PROGRAMME

5.1. Students will be placed at social service organisations where practical work is done with individuals, groups, and communities under the supervision of qualified social

workers who are registered with South African Council for Social Service Professions as required by Social Service Professions Act, (No 110 of 1978).

5.2. All the fieldwork practice modules run throughout the academic year. The nature of fieldwork practice programme for all levels is/ are as follows:

5.2.1. First year: observational study visits and volunteer work.

5.2.2. Second year: the casework concurrent fieldwork practice placement incorporating laboratory sessions

5.2.3. Third year: Groupwork and community work concurrent fieldwork practice placement incorporating laboratory sessions

5.2.4. Fourth year: Block placement in the 4th year runs over a four-month period and requires the student to work full time at the organisation.

5.3. Students generally do not receive any remuneration during practical work although there may be some organisations that do remunerate the students.

5.4. The travelling and personal maintenance expenses during block placement regarding practical work are the responsibility of the students.

5.5. Due to the intensive nature of the programme and practical work placement, students shall not be allowed to register any modules other than social work modules in the 4th year.

# 6. ASSESSMENT OF FIELDWORK PRACTICE

6.1. In accordance with Department of Social Work policy on assessment students shall be assessed both formatively and summatively. For formative assessment the student shall be required to compile and submit a portfolio of evidence (PoE) for assessment. For summative assessment the student shall write exams at the end of the semester/ year. Final year students shall be subjected to an oral assessment.

6.2. To successfully complete a practical work module, the students shall meet the following requirements:

6.2.1. Complete the required field work in line with the Standards of the Bachelor of Social Work.

6.2.2. Attend and actively participate in the required training, meetings, and workshops.

6.2.3. Provide satisfactory written reports (portfolio of evidence).

6.2.4. Obtain a year mark of at least 50% to qualify to write the final assessment.

6.2.5. Obtain a pass mark of at least 50% in the final exams.

6.3. All written work must demonstrate the following:

6.3.1. Critical reflection on knowledge acquired during training.

6.3.2. Ability to critically reflect on practice experience.

6.3.3. Ability to integrate theory and practice.

6.3.4.  Ability to write reports using appropriate language, style, literature, and theory.


## 7. SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISION FOR FIELDWORK PRACTICE

Social work supervision is a process whereby a qualified social worker guides, directs and supports a student social worker in performing professional functions and duties of a social worker.

### 7.1. Goal for Student Supervision

The primary goal of student supervision is to assist the student social worker to integrate theory and practice.

### Objectives of student     supervision

The objectives of student supervision are to:

7.2.1.  apply acquired theoretical knowledge into concrete problem-solving situations,

7.2.2.  apply professional values and ethical standards of practise and

7.2.3.  acquire knowledge of organisational policies, procedures, and intervention modalities.

### 7.3. Roles and responsibilities of supervisees (student social workers)

The supervisees/ student social workers) shall:

7.3.1. comply with the SACSSP Code of Ethics and University of Venda regulations

7.3.2. keep record of supervision sessions

7.3.3. seek feedback and evaluation from their supervisors for the enhancement of supervision

7.3.4. plan and prepare for supervision sessions

7.3.5. adhere to the lines of communication and authority

7.3.6. maintain the same standards and practises as organisational staff

7.3.7. complete relevant documents

7.3.8. adhere to organisational policies and procedures

7.3.9. participate in planned supervision sessions

7.3.10. carry out assignment in a responsible and timely manner

7.3.11. integrate theoretical knowledge with practice

7.3.12. consult with appropriate persons when there are challenges to learning

7.3.13. compile required reports on activities undertaken.

## 7.4. Roles and responsibilities of Agency    Supervisors

The roles and responsibilities of the agency supervisors as guided by the Code of Ethics of the SACSSP shall be to:

7.4.1.  plan and prepare for supervision sessions

7.4.2.  ensure that intervention techniques and approaches used by the supervisee are appropriately applied

7.4.3.  ensure correct implementation of policies and legislation

7.4.4.  ensure written and informed consent is received prior to disclosing confidential information regarding the beneficiaries as well as within the context of supervision

7.4.5.  evaluate supervisee's performance in a manner that is fair and respectful

7.4.6.  keep record of supervision sessions

7.4.7.  seek feedback and evaluation from their supervisees for the enhancement of supervision

7.4.8.  assist in conducting assessments that are challenging for supervisees aimed at identifying conditions in service delivery that justify relevant interventions

7.4.9.  ensure that records of social work interventions, processes and outcomes are produced and maintained

7.4.10. review the contract if the relationship between supervisor and supervisee interferes with the process of effective supervision

7.4.11. attend evaluation sessions for student social workers.


## 7.5. Roles and responsibilities of agencies for student placement

The roles and responsibilities of agencies providing the students with practise education placements shall be to:

7.5.1.  avail the nominated student supervisor to attend supervision training in the university

7.5.2.  appoint a supervisor who takes primary responsibility for the supervision of the student social worker and to provide the supervisor with an appropriate job description

7.5.3.  facilitate the primary goal of student placement, which is to provide an opportunity for integration of theory with practical experience under the supervision of a social worker

7.5.4.  contact the university timeously should there be any concern about student performance and behaviour

7.5.5. inform the university should there be any changes in the agencies that may affect the students (for example, if the allocated supervisor resigns)

7.5.6. complete mid - term and final placement evaluations reports.

## 7.6. Roles and responsibilities of the  university fieldwork coordinator

The roles and responsibilities of the university fieldwork supervisor shall be to:

7.6.1. Draw a MoU between UNIVEN, Department of Social work and agencies providing practise education placement for student social workers

7.6.2. train nominated supervisors on the requirements of the BSW qualification

7.6.3. monitor and assess student performance

7.6.4. mark all the reports, portfolio and provide feedback to students

7.6.5. conduct mid-term and final assessment

7.6.6. organize and plan practice education programme and

7.6.7. ensure that communication channels and protocols are observed.

## 8. EFFECTIVE DATE

This policy will be effective from 2019.

## 9. Review date

This policy will be reviewed after FIVE and/ or when the need arises.

**Addendum L: University of Venda supervision policy**



**University of Venda**

**SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**SUPERVISION POLICY**

| Version Number | Date (dd/ mm/ yyyy) | Author | Description | Process | Reviewed Date |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| BSWPOL 03 | 27/ 2/ 2013 | Department of Social Work | Original Draft | School Board Meeting | 13/ 02/ 2018 |
| BSWPOL 03 | 27/ 2/ 2013 | Department of Social Work | Original Draft | Centre for Higher Education Teaching and Learning, IPQA, CE and Department | |
| BSWPOL 03 | 27/ 2/ 2013 | Department of Social Work | Original Draft | SENATE | |
| BSWPOL 03 | | Department of Social Work | Original Draft | COUNCIL | |

**Policy Reference Number :**     **BSWPOL 03**

**Date Approved by Council :** …………………………………………………………..

**Signature of the Registrar :** …………………………………………………………

**Signature of the Vice Chancellor:** …………………………………………………………..

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**UNIVEN – DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK POLICY ON SUPERVISION**

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# DEPARTMENTAL SUPERVISION POLICY

## Table of    Contents

## INTRODUCTION

**The Department of So**cial Work policy on supervision derives its objectives from the Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession in South Africa; DSD and the SACSSP and UNIVEN. The practice of social work as well as the training of social workers in South Africa is partly governed by the Social Service Professions Act (Act 110 of 1978).

Social work supervision is an interactional and interminable process. It is based on distinct theories, models, and perspectives. It is conducted within the context of positive, ant discriminatory relationships.

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines and promote a consistent approach to student's supervision by setting out the responsibilities of social work staff members, students, agency supervisors and other stakeholders who may serve UNIVEN regarding student social work supervision.

## SCOPE AND APPLICATION

This policy is applicable to all social work students, Department of Social Work, University of Venda, and agencies regarding student social work supervision. Supervision of all student social workers is mandatory. Social Work students engaged in practical shall be supervised

by registered social workers with required experience and qualifications, and to whom authority is delegated in terms of Service Professions Act (No 110 of 1978).

## 4.  GUIDELINES FOR STUDENT SUPERVISION

### Goal for Supervision

The goal of student supervision is to provide guidance and support for the integration of theory with practical experience under the supervision of a designated social worker.

### Objectives of student supervision

The objectives of student supervision are to assist the student social worker to:

4.2.1.    apply acquired theoretical knowledge into concrete problem-solving situations

4.2.2.    apply professional values and ethical standards of practise

4.2.3.    acquire knowledge of agency policies, procedures, and intervention modalities.

### 4.3. Roles and responsibilities of supervisees (student social workers)

The roles and responsibilities of supervisees /  student social workers shall be to:

4.3.1.  comply with the SACSSP Code of Ethics of SACSSP

4.3.2.  keep portfolios of evidence (PoE's) of all the work

4.3.3.  keep record of supervision sessions in their PoE's

4.3.4.  seek feedback and evaluation from their agency supervisors for the enhancement of supervision

4.3.5.  plan and prepare for supervision sessions

4.3.6.  adhere to the lines of communication and authority

4.3.7.  maintain the same standards and practises as agency staff

4.3.8.  complete relevant documents

4.3.9.  adhere to agency policies and procedures

4.3.10. participate in planned supervision sessions

4.3.11. carry out assignment in a responsible and timely manner

4.3.12. integrate theoretical knowledge with practice

4.3.13. consult with appropriate persons when there are challenges to learning

4.3.14. compile required reports on activities undertaken.

### 4.4. Roles and responsibilities of agency supervisors

Social work supervisors at the agency, supervise student social workers by performing various supervision functions such as educational, supportive, and administrative functions. The roles

and responsibilities of the agency supervisors as guided by the Code of Ethics of the SACSSP shall be to:

4.4.1. plan and prepare for supervision sessions

4.4.2. ensure that intervention techniques and approaches used by the supervisee are appropriately applied

4.4.3. ensure correct implementation of policies and legislation

4.4.4. ensure written and informed consent is received prior to disclosing confidential information regarding the beneficiaries as well as within the context of supervision

4.4.5. evaluate supervisee's performance in a manner that is fair and respectful

4.4.6. keep record of supervision sessions

4.4.7. seek feedback and evaluation from their supervisees for the enhancement of supervision

4.4.8. assist in conducting assessments that are challenging for supervisees aimed at identifying conditions in service delivery that justify relevant interventions

4.4.9. ensure that records of social work interventions, processes and outcomes are produced and maintained

4.4.10. review the contract if the relationship between supervisor and supervisee interferes with the process of effective supervision

4.4.11. attend evaluation sessions for student social workers.

## 4.5. Roles and responsibilities of agencies for student placement

The roles and responsibilities of agencies providing the students with practice education placements shall be to:

4.5.1. appoint a supervisor who takes primary responsibility for the supervision of the student social worker and to provide the supervisor with an appropriate job description

4.5.2. avail the nominated/ appointed student supervisor to attend supervision training at the university

4.5.3. facilitate the primary goal of student placement, which is to provide an opportunity for integration of theory with practical experience under the supervision of a social worker

4.5.4. contact the university timeously should there be any concern about student performance and behaviour

4.5.5. inform the university should there be any change in agency which may affect the student (e.g., if the supervisor resigns)

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4.5.6. complete mid - term and final placement evaluations reports.

## 4.6. Roles and responsibilities of the university

The roles and responsibilities of the university shall be to:

4.6.1. draw a MoU between UNIVEN, Department of Social Work and social service organisations as agencies providing practise education placement for student social workers

4.6.2. train nominated supervisors on the requirements of the BSW qualification

4.6.3. monitor and assess student performance

4.6.4. mark all the reports, portfolio and provide feedback to students

4.6.5. conduct mid-term and final assessment

4.6.6. organize and plan practice education programme

4.6.7. ensure that communication channels and protocols are observed.

## EFFECTIVE DATE

This policy will be effective from 2019.

## REVIEW DATE

This policy will be reviewed after five years and/ or when the need arises