Practice and Perspective of Students towards Fieldwork Training in Social Work Education

Ramanna G. Katambli
Teaching Assistant
Department of BSW Karnatak Arts College, Dharwad, India
Email: raghuraman000@gmail.com

Abstract: *Social work is a practice profession; hence, the context includes the vital component of practice learning opportunities. Practical training in the field forms an integral part of the total training programme. Fieldwork is essentially a major component in social work education both at undergraduate and postgraduate level in Social Work Courses. Fieldwork Practicum is a compulsory paper in each semester of BSW and MSW Programme and thus occupies a dominant place in social work education. Fieldwork in social work education has specific educational and service objectives, which are related to the area of knowledge, skills, attitude, perspective, and acting within a dynamic theoretical framework. Thus, training for professional social work is both teaching (knowledge) and practice oriented. Thus, filed education should be well integrated into the curriculum in preparing students with knowledge, values and skills for ethical, competent and effective practice. Fieldwork education must be sufficient in duration and complexity of tasks and learning opportunities to ensure that students are prepared for professional practice. The aim of this study is to understand the practice and perspectives of Students towards fieldwork training in social work education.*

Key Words: *Practice, Perspective, Fieldwork Training, and Social Work Education.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

The social work practice is closely associated with the social, political, economic, and cultural fabric of communities. Fieldwork carries different connotation in social sciences and in social work. Fieldwork implies both training and education for the different levels of students. Field education is widely acknowledged as a central component of social work education (Bogo, 2010; Cleak & Smith, 2012; Council on Social Work Education, 2008; Wayne, Raskin,& Bogo, 2010). Placement plays a critical role in students' integration of theory and practice and the development of skills. In practical terms, it also requires a substantial commitment of time and energy on their part. An educational programme is incomplete without guided practical learning. "Learning by doing" is the principle from which has developed the body of knowledge, specialized skills and the philosophy of professional work. Practical experience in social work teaching is offered through the method of fieldwork. Fieldwork in social work education is a guided interactive process between a student and social life situation. In this social work as profession has an alluding and deep concern that needs to be addressed, remedied, improved and changed for fuller development of human environmental potentials.

Fieldwork training is a supersized practice of student-solved worker under the guidance of trained social work education or field personal. It has been defined as educationally sponsored attachment of social work student to an institution, agency or a section of community in which they are helped to extend their knowledge, understand and experience the impact of human needs. Such an experience is deliberately arranged on a whole or part time basis. Social workers provide services for various populations in varied practice settings, including hospitals and medical facilities, schools, outpatient mental health programs, employee assistance programs, public defenders' offices, and departments of social services (National Association of Social Workers, 2019). The Council of Social Work Education (2015) emphasizes training for social work students inevidenced-based practice models.

Field education, variously known as field placement, practicum and field instruction, is a critical period for social work students (Lister, 2003; Maidment, 2003; Moriarty., 2009; Pelech, Barlow, Badry, &Elliot, 2009; Ryan, Barns &McAuliffe, 2011). Each placement is a compulsory component of the social work curriculum and may be full-time or part-time over a number of months. Locating placements within agency environments conducive to learning is challenging for universities (Cleak, et al,.2012; Todd & Schwartz, 2009) and in some instances, delays to the commencement of field placement occur with serious financial and personal costs for students (Bruce, 2008). The social worker assesses situations and plan interventions to facilitate and enhance the coping ability of people (Okala, Ijeoma, Okechukwu, &Malachy,2014).

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Kinni (2020) conducted a study on integration of theory and practice in social work education. Analysis of Finnish social work students' field reports; The study reveals that, some of the students found a gap between what is taught about social work at university and how social work is carried out in practice. Some of the students reported that they learned much more in the field than in classes. It should be noted that this field placement was for most of the students the first time ever they acted in the field of social work. It then offered a load of new experienced and things to learn, some of them very eye-opening.

Okala et al., (2014) conducted a study on a critical appraisal of the relevance of fieldwork practice in social work education in Nigeria'. The study has revealed that for effective social work education, fieldwork practice is indispensable. However, exposure at the various societal agencies through fieldwork practice will provide more opportunities for the training of more professionals in this vital area. A paradigm shift in fieldwork practice will bring about an enhancement in social work education.

Roy (2012) in his book "Fieldwork in Social Work", based on research findings he says that, fieldwork should not be only based on helping and preventive measures but it should focus on the new concept according to modern issues and problems which is emerging today. Further the idea and intervention of fieldwork should be based on factors like, examining the needs of the society, as per global situation, issues- based activities, to face new challenges which are emerging, job-oriented fieldwork, new areas has to be addressed incorporated in the syllabus, impose more responsibility on student related to project management, more research-based fieldwork, right-based approach in fieldwork and therapeutic approaches should be adopted.

Singh (2005) in his article, "Configuring Field Practice and Field Education in Social Work" has clearly mentioned its application in the context of professional training in social work. He also brings out the interrelationship and unity of theory and practice in social work.

Healy (2005) in his book, "Social Work Theories in Context", Creating Framework for Practice". Has clearly discussed the importance and relationship of theory with practice. She tried to identify the major ideas that form the foundation of social work practice for gaining knowledge of these ideas and increasing its relevance to social work's values and gaols. She identically focused on social work ideas which cover a complex terrain including context, discourse, and theories. By 'context' she tried to mean the interaction between the organization and the profession's formal bases. The term 'discourse' explained by her was based on the influence on practice by bio-medicine, economics and the law. In terms of social work 'theories', she argues that theories are critical to accurate assessments and effective delivery and that practitioner, along with academics, share responsibility for their development.

Further, Maidment, et al., (2003) conducted Study on "problems experienced by students on field placement". The study reveals that, field placement may have emotional and practical implications for social work students not only related to the placement experience itself, but also to worries about managing their other responsibilities.

Rohde, McFall, Kolarand Strom, (1997) conducted a study on 'The Changing Context of Social Work Practice'. The study reveals that, field programs must have resources adequate to maintain educational quality in a time of agency scarcity. Without those resources, training opportunities for students will erode, and poorly trained students will further diminish and marginalize the profession. Major aspects of field education should be regularly evaluated at each school not only to assess field program effectiveness, but to support issues of resource adequacy.

3. METHODOLOGY:

In the present study, researcher conducted a study in Bachelor of Social Work, Karnatak Arts College, Dharwad with the choosing purposive sampling techniques for selecting the respondents among the population to elicit the primary information based on the study objectives.

3.1. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:

- To know the socio-demographic profile of the respondents
- To understand the practice and perspectives about fieldwork by respondents

4. RESULTS:

Socio-Demographic Profile of Respondents

Gender			
Sl No	Particulars	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1	Male	25	45.50
2	Female	30	54.50
	Total	55	100

	Religion			
1	Hindu		49	89.10
2	Muslim		03	05.45
3	Christian		03	05.45
		Total	55	100
	Caste			
1	General		05	09.10
2	OBC		27	49.10
3	Scheduled Tribe		10	18.20
4	Scheduled Caste		13	23.60
		Total	55	100
	Geographical Background			
1	Rural		31	56.37
2	Urban		21	38.18
3	Semi-Urban		03	05.45
		Total	55	100
	Income Level			
1	Below 25000 Rupees		43	78.19
2	25001 to 50000 Rupees		06	10.90
3	50001 to 100000 Rupees		05	09.09
4	Above 100001 Rupees		01	01.82
		Total	55	100

The above table provides information regarding socio-demographic profile of respondents. Out of the total respondents, 45.50 per cent of respondents were male and remaining of the respondents, 54.50 per cent were female.
Out of the total respondents, 89.10 per cent of the respondents belongs Hindu community, 05.45 per cent of the respondents belongs to Muslim community, remaining 05.45 per cent of the respondents belongs Christian community. Out of the total respondents, 49.10 per cent of the respondents belongs to Other Backward Classes, following 23.60 per cent of the respondents belongs Scheduled Tribes, 18.20 per cent of the respondents Scheduled Caste and remaining, 09.10 per cent of the respondents belongs General category. Out of the total respondents, 56.37 per cent of the respondents hail from rural background, 38.18 per cent of the respondents hail from urban background and remaining of the respondents 05.45 per cent hail from semi-urban community. Out of the total respondents, 78.19 per cent respondents have income level below 25000 rupees, 10.90 per cent respondents have income level between 25001 to 50000 rupees, 09.09 per cent of the respondents have income level between 50001 to 100000 rupees, and remaining, 01.82 per cent of the respondents have income level above 100001 rupees.

Analysis of Variance on topics that students are exposed in the Laboratory with their Gender

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	14.939	1	14.939	5.926	.018*
Within Groups	133.607	53	2.521		
Total	148.545	54			

*significant at 0.05 level

It can be seen that a significant difference is observed between the topics that students are exposed in the Laboratory with their Gender towards fieldwork in social work education. The value of F=5.926, the value of $p<0.05$ at 5% level of significance.

Analysis of Variance on necessary of dissertation in social work education at undergraduate level with their Gender

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.010	1	.010	.012	.913
Within Groups	42.427	53	.801		
Total	42.436	54			

*significant at 0.05 level

It can be understood that a non significant difference is observed between the necessary of dissertation in social work education at undergraduate level with their Gender. The value of F=.012, the value of p>0.05 at 5% level of significance.

Analysis of Variance on skills that the students are trained in social work education at undergraduate level with their Gender

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.019	1	1.019	5.229	.026
Within Groups	10.327	53	.195		
Total	11.345	54			

*significant at 0.05 level

It can be concluded that a non significant difference is observed between the skills that the students are trained in social work education at undergraduate level with their Gender. The value of F=5.229, the value of p>0.05 at 5% level of significance.

Analysis of Variance on coordination of objectives of fieldwork with the knowledge, attitudes, skills and objectives of the social work education at undergraduate level with their Gender

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.073	1	.073	.208	.651
Within Groups	18.727	53	.353		
Total	18.800	54			

*significant at 0.05 level

It can be seen that a non significant difference is observed between the objectives of fieldwork with the knowledge, attitudes, skills and objectives of the social work education at undergraduate level with their Gender. The value of F=.208, the value of p>0.05 at 5% level of significance.

Analysis of Variance on institution review the fieldwork manual in social work education at undergraduate level with their Gender

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.785	1	.785	1.567	.216
Within Groups	26.560	53	.501		
Total	27.345	54			

*significant at 0.05 level

It can be understood that a non significant difference is observed between the institution review the fieldwork manual in social work education at undergraduate level with their Gender. The value of F=1.567, the value of p>0.05 at 5% level of significance.

5. CONCLUSION:

Fieldwork practice is the crux of social work education. It is the primary medium through which students apply the learned theories to the amelioration of actual life, social problems and needs. It offers students in training the opportunity to develop and perfect social work practice skills. Field education referred to as the laboratory or testing ground for under graduate and graduate social work education. Field experience is frequently the first step in the transition from student to professional social worker. The field is where the student acquires specialized knowledge in order to meet the responsibilities of the clients, the community and the society. The prerequisite knowledge, skills and values for fieldwork practice, some salient issues in fieldwork practice and the role of field instructors in enhancing fieldwork practice. A practitioner needs to own the field and be ready to be owned and even disowned by it. One may experience a "throw back" and "throw out" in the field. So that, the dynamics of field practice thus calls for introspection, retrospection and prospection.

While the academic component of social work education (theory courses) also prepares students for their field education, fieldwork should have a taught component (in class). This will address two concerns. First, is the concern that students lack of knowledge and understanding of learning experiences on fieldwork. This would therefore prepare students for actual practice and facilitate the learning process during fieldwork. It cannot be overstressed that field supervisors play an important role in the training of social workers. They are partners in the training process with responsibility to manage the transition from the classroom to the field and this requires support and continuous dialogue between the training institution, the agency supervisor and the agency.

REFERENCES:

1. Bogo, M. (2010). 'Achieving competence in social work through field education', Toronto: Universityof Toronto.
2. Bogo, M., Mishna, F., &Litvack, A. (2010).'Emotional reactions of students in field education: Anexploratory study', *Journal of Social Work Education, 46*, 227–243. doi:10.5175/jswe.2010.200900007
3. Bruce, L. (2008). 'Improving practice learning: Eliminating delays in practice placement', *Journal ofPractice Teaching and Learning, 8*, 5–17. doi:10.1921/19661
4. Cleak, H., & Smith, D. (2012).'Student satisfaction with models of field placement supervision', *Australian Social Work, 65*, 243–258. doi:10.1080/0312407X.2011.572981
5. Curtis, B., McLelland, T., &Gabellini, B., (2015).'Educational policy and accreditation standards', *Council on Social Work Education*.https://www.cswe.org/Accreditation/Standards-and-Policies/2015-EPAS.aspx
6. Institutional Accreditation, 'Manual for Self-Study of Social Work Institutions', NAAC, UGC on Curricular Aspects of Filedwork Practicum.
7. Kapoor, J.M. (1961), 'The Role of Fieldwork in Modern Social Work Education', *The Indian Journal of Social Work, 22*(2), 113-20.
8. Kinni, R L., (2020): Integration of theory and practice in social work education. Analysis of Finnish social work students' field reports, *Social Work Education*, DOI:10.1080/02615479.2020.1754385
9. Lister, G. P. (2003). 'It's like you can't be a whole person, a mother who studies', Lifelong learning:Mature women students with caring commitments in social work education. *Social Work Education,22*, 125–138.
10. Maidment, J. (2003). Problems experienced by students on field placement: using research findingsto inform curriculum design and content. *Australian Social Work, 56*, 50–60. doi:10.1046/j.0312 407X.2003.00049.x
11. Maurya, Moti Ram (1962), 'Filed Work Training in Social Work', *The Indian Journal of Social Work, 23*(1), 9-4.
12. Moriarty, J., Manthorpe, J., Chauhan, B., Jones, G., Wenman, H., & Hussein, S. (2009). 'Hangingon a little thin line': Barriers to progression and retention in social work education.*Social WorkEducation, 28*, 363–379. doi:10.1080/02615470802109890
13. National Association of Social Workers.(2019). Practice. Retrieved from https://www.socialworkers.org/Practice
14. Okala A., Ijeoma B., Okechukwu I., &Malachy O, (2014).'A Critical Appraisal of the Relevance of Fieldwork Practice in Social Work Education in Nigeria'.*Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences, 5* (27).DOI:10.5901/mjss.2014.v5n27p1328
15. Pelech, W. J., Barlow, C., Badry, D. E., & Elliot, G. (2009). Challenging traditions: The fieldeducation experiences of students in workplace practica. *Social Work Education, 28*, 737–749. doi:10.1080/02615470802492031
16. Prasad, D., &Vijaykrishna, B., (1997), 'Field Instruction in Social Work Education in India', *The Indian Journal of Social Work, 58*(i), 65-75.
17. Raskin, M. S., Wayne, J., & Bogo, M. (2008).Revisiting field education standards.*Journal of SocialWork Education, 44*, 173–188. doi:10.1001/jama.287.2.226
18. Rohde L J., McFall J., Kolar P., & Strom G., (1997) 'TheChanging Context of Social Work Practice'. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 33:1, 29-46.http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10437797.1997.10778851
19. Ryan, M., Barns, A., & McAuliffe, D. (2011).Part-time employment and effects on Australian socialwork students: A report on a national study.*Australian Social Work, 64*, 313–329. doi:10.1080/0 312407x.2010.538420
20. Roy, S (2012), 'Fieldwork in Social work', *Rawat Publications,* New Dehli.
21. Singh, R.R. (1985), 'Fieldwork in Social Work Education, A perspective for Human Service Profession, *Concept Publishing Company,* New Delhi.
22. Skolnik, L. (1999). A Worldwide View of Field Education Structures and Curricula, *International Social Work*, Vol. 42(4): 471–83.
23. Todd, S., & Schwartz, K. (2009). Thinking through quality in field education: Integratingalternative and traditional learning opportunities. *Social Work Education, 28*, 380–395.doi:10.1080/02615470902808326
24. Wayne, J., Bogo, M. S., &Raskin, M. (2010).Field education as the signature pedagogy of socialwork education.*Journal of Social Work Education, 46*, 327–339. doi:10.5175/JSWE.2010.200900043