

**THE EXPERIENCES OF SOCIAL WORKERS AS SUPERVISORS OF SOCIAL WORK
STUDENTS FIELD PLACEMENTS**

by

Wulganithi Thaver
Student Number: 210551324

A research dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of

MASTERS IN SOCIAL WORK
in the
SCHOOL OF APPLIED HUMAN SCIENCES
in the
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES
UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU NATAL

SUPERVISOR: Dr Reshma Sathiparsad
November 2012

COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES

DECLARATION - PLAGIARISM

I, WULGANITHI THAYER, declare that

1. The research reported in this thesis, except where otherwise indicated, is my original research.
2. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
3. This thesis does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.
4. This thesis does not contain other persons' writing, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other researchers. Where other written sources have been quoted, then:
 - a. Their words have been re-written but the general information attributed to them has been referenced
 - b. Where their exact words have been used, then their writing has been placed in italics and inside quotation marks, and referenced.
5. This thesis does not contain text, graphics or tables copied and pasted from the Internet, unless specifically acknowledged, and the source being detailed in the thesis and in the References sections.

Signed

W. Thayer

11:03:2013

.....

DEDICATION

I dedicate this Research to:

My loving and incredible parents

Mr G.L Naidoo and Mrs A Naidoo

for believing in me and for their nurturance and support in making me the person I am today

and

To my husband Kevin and son Dushen

for their unconditional support, assistance, understanding, encouragement and tolerance

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I wish to express my sincere appreciation and gratitude to the following people for their assistance in making this study possible:

- The Participants in the study for their willingness, cooperation and time in sharing their experiences, but above all for their passion in contributing to the profession.
- My supervisor, Dr Reshma Sathiparsad for her guidance and encouragement when at times I felt helpless.
- My husband, Kevin, for his unconditional love, support, assistance and understanding. For being patient with me and allowing me the space to fulfil my personal goals. Thank you for holding me in such high esteem always.
- My awesome son Dushen for his patience, sacrifice and understanding who, through the most difficult of times never failed to bring a smile to my face with his incredible sense of humour.
- My parents Gopaul and Jaya Naidoo for their inspiration and support, for their unstinting belief in my abilities and for making it possible for me to realise this dream.
- My Niece Kamantha Moodley, for her love, care, assistance and support. Thank you for being the daughter I've always wanted.
- To my friends and colleagues; Saloschini Pillay, Punjee Naidoo, Fazila Padayachee, Sachin Suknunan and Roshanthani Subrayen for their motivation, encouragement and support. Thank you for believing in me.
- My friend Chuma Chinzila for her support, technical assistance and professional guidance. Thank you for your calm and empowering mannerism. Thank you for teaching me the skill of staying in control when things get tough.
- To my helper Nomonde Patience Paya for taking care of my home and responsibilities and for allowing me the opportunity to accomplish this.
- My sister Manogarie and her family and my brother Jaintheran for their motivation and encouragement.
- Above all special thanks to "The Almighty", whose miracles bless me in so many ways every day of my life.

ABSTRACT

Universities in South Africa endure the challenge on an annual basis to secure field placements for the growing number of social work students. Field practice together with the required supervision is a critical component of the social work curriculum, since it provides students with opportunities to practice the skills taught in their theoretical courses. Whilst securing field placement is an extension of the social work curriculum, it is also essential to understand the plight of the supervisors and agencies that provide this service. The literature available in South Africa on this aspect is very limited, yet the dependency on agencies and supervisors is immense.

This the study aimed at exploring and describing the experiences of social workers who supervise social work students' field placement within Durban and the surrounding areas in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. A qualitative explorative study was conducted through the use of an in-depth interview schedule and a total of 18 supervisors from a range of organizations formed the sample for this study.

Supervisors were interviewed individually with the aim of exploring their experiences, perceptions, needs and challenges with regards to field practice placements and they were invited to make suggestions for a best practice model.

The main conclusions drawn from this study were that agency supervisors acknowledge their critical role in this process. However, training and supporting them is minimised which impacts in various ways on their ability to function optimally. In addition, supervisors feel that students are not thoroughly screened for the profession; they are underprepared for the field and lack the basic skills essential for practice. Supervisors are often forced to function in isolation in the absence of models and theories on field practice placement and the lack of collaboration with the universities. The different universities in the province have different requirements and expectations of supervisors. The recent strategy to address the retention of social workers through the awarding of bursaries has resulted in enormous challenges, particularly related to students' commitment, dedication to the profession and the impact on the NGO sector. The time spent in field practice is regarded as insufficient for students' exposure to the dynamics of all types of services and the introduction of a policy, model and framework for student supervision by the professional counsel is long outstanding and impacts on the status of the profession. Emanating from the findings, recommendations have been made with regards to optimising the learning opportunity for students and to enhance the experience of supervisors in student supervision.

Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	3
ABSTRACT.....	4
LIST OF FIGURES	10
LIST OF GRAPHS	10
CHAPTER ONE	11
INTRODUCTION: NATURE, GOALS AND METHOD OF THIS STUDY	11
1.1 Introduction.....	11
1.2 Rationale for the study	12
1.3 Aims, objectives and key questions related to this research study	15
1.3.1 Aim	15
1.3.2 Objectives	15
1.3.3 Research Questions	15
1.4 Setting for this study	16
1.5 The value of the study	16
1.6 Principal theories upon which the research is constructed	17
1.6.1 A Model for practice (Brown & Bourne, 1996).....	17
1.6.2 Seven-Eyed Supervision: A Process Model (Hawkins & Shohet, 2006).....	20
1.7 Research Methodology	23
1.7.1 Research Design.....	23
1.8 Data analysis	24
1.9 Definitions and abbreviations of concepts	25
1.10 Presentation of contents	26
1.11 Conclusion	26
CHAPTER 2	28
LITERATURE REVIEW	28
2.1 Introduction.....	28
2.2 An overview of supervision	28
2.3 The history of social work supervision	30
2.3.1 Stage 1: Administrative roots of social work supervision (1878 to 1910).....	31
2.3.2 Stage 2: Change of context of supervisory training and emergence of a literature base (1911-1945).....	31

2.3.3 Stage 3: Influence of practice theory and methods (1930s to 1950s)	32
2.3.4 Stage 4: Debate between interminable supervision and autonomous practice (1956 -1970s) ...	32
2.3.5 Stage 5: Back to administrative function in the age of accountability (1980- 1995).....	33
2.4 Supervision in social work.....	33
2.4.1 Defining supervision.....	33
2.4.2 The functions of supervision.....	36
2.4.3 Definition of a supervisor	37
2.4.4 The significance of supervision in social work.....	38
2.5 Research and literature on social work supervision.....	39
2.5.1 The practice of supervision: International context.....	41
2.5.2 Supervision of social work field practice education in South Africa	44
2.5.3 Legislation.....	47
2.5.4 Student admission into university	47
2.5.5 Gaps and the need for research on social work supervision	48
2.6 Supervision theories and models.....	49
2.7 Supervision: essential for effective social work practice.....	53
2.7.1 Challenges associated with field placement.....	54
2.7.2 Recommendations for the future of field practice education	55
CHAPTER 3	57
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	57
3.1 Introduction.....	57
3.2 The setting of the study.....	58
3.3 Research method.....	58
3.3.1 Research design	59
3.4 The research process	61
3.4.1 Negotiating permission to conduct the study	61
3.4.2 Sampling	61
3.4.3 Research instrument	63
3.4.4 The pilot study	64
3.4.5 Data collection process	65
3.5 Data analysis	67
3.6 Ensuring reliability (dependability) and validity (credibility)	67

3.7	Ethical considerations	68
3.8	Limitations to the study	69
3.9	Conclusion	70
CHAPTER FOUR.....		71
DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS		71
4.1	Introduction.....	71
4.2	Demographic data	72
4.2.1	Graph 1: Participants Age	72
4.2.2	Gender.....	73
4.2.3	Race.....	73
4.2.4	Graph 2: Qualification	73
4.2.5	University from which the qualification was obtained	74
4.2.6	Graph 3: Year of qualification as a social worker.....	74
4.2.7	Graph 4: Years of practice as a social worker.....	75
4.2.8	Type of organization	75
4.2.9	Type of services	76
4.2.10	Graph 6: Years of supervising students	77
4.2.11	Graph 7: Number of students supervised.....	77
4.3	Experiences in supervising social work students.....	78
4.3.1	Criteria for selecting supervisors	78
4.3.2	Role of supervisors.....	81
4.3.3	Supervising social work students.....	84
4.4	Supervisors' perception of student performance.....	89
4.4.1	Academic preparation	89
4.4.2	Attitude towards work.....	92
4.4.3	Dedication to the profession	96
4.4.4	Interpersonal skills	99
4.4.5	Ability and competence	101
4.5	Challenges and needs of supervisors in supervising social work students	103
4.5.1	Training for the role of supervisor	103
4.5.2	Students, agency, and professional challenges	106
4.6	Supervisors' experience of partnerships with universities in advancing student development	110

4.6.1 Challenges with the universities	110
4.7 Supervisors' suggestions on a best practice model to enhance field practice education	115
4.7.1 Best practice model.....	115
4.7.2 General suggestions	117
4.8 Conclusion	121
CHAPTER FIVE	123
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	123
5.1 Introduction.....	123
5.2 The research.....	123
5.3 Conclusions of the study	125
5.3.1 Supervisor profiles	125
5.3.2 Experiences in supervising social work students	125
5.3.3 Supervisors' perception of student performance.....	127
5.4 Challenges and needs of supervisors in supervising social work students	129
5.4.1 Training for the role of supervisor	129
5.4.2 Challenges facing supervisors.....	130
5.5 Supervisors' experience of partnerships with universities in advancing student development	131
5.5.1 Challenges with the Universities.....	131
5.6 Best practice model.....	132
5.7. Recommendations.....	132
5.7.1 Selection of supervisors	133
5.7.2 Supervisor qualifications.....	133
5.7.3 Academic preparation	134
5.7.4 Attitude	134
5.7.5 Dedication	134
5.7.6 Interpersonal	135
5.7.7 Competency	135
5.7.8 Training of supervisors	136
5.7.9 Acknowledgement of supervisory role by agency	136
5.7.11 Practice component in the curriculum.....	138
5.7.12 Legislation.....	138
5.8 Implications for further research.....	139

5.9 Conclusion	139
REFERENCES	140
ANNEXURE A.....	147
ANNEXURE B.....	148
ANNEXURE C.....	150

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: A Model for Practice

Figure 2: Seven-Eyed Supervision: A Process Model

LIST OF GRAPHS

Graph 1: Participants' Age

Graph 2: Participants' Qualification

Graph 3: Year of Qualification as a Social Worker

Graph 4: Years of Practice as a Social Worker

Graph 5: Type of Organization

Graph 6: Years of Supervising Students

Graph 7: Number of Students Supervised

LIST OF ACCRONYMS

ASASWEI: Association of South African Social Work Education Institutions

ELO: Exit Levels Outcomes

FPE: Field Practice Education

FPP: Field Practice Placement

NGO: Non-Government Organisation

NQF: National Qualification Framework

SACSSP: South African Council for Social Services Professions

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: NATURE, GOALS AND METHOD OF THIS STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Field placement/education is a required and critical component of the curriculum in most social work programmes both nationally and internationally. Labeled in various terms, ranging from, field placement, field education, field instruction, field practicum, field work, practice learning, and student supervision, the purpose and intention of the field component aims for similar outcomes. This is a component of social work education where students learn to practice social work through delivering social work services in agency and community settings under the supervision and guidance of a qualified and practicing social worker generally from the same organization or agency. The aim of field education is to promote practice competence by students learning to integrate and apply the knowledge, values and skills of social work while also offering services to individuals, families, groups and communities (Bogo 2005). During this process of field training, supervision is critical to the learning and development that occurs.

Whilst the academic curriculum may differ amongst institutions, the critical outcomes are determined by the professional body and academic institutions which establish norms and standards for these academic programmes. The academic programmes are structured and comprehensive, aimed at preparing students for the theoretical component of their course. All universities in South Africa offer a 4 year degree in social work, with field work built into the curriculum.

The field practice placement component, however, differs significantly. Apart from universities themselves adopting different approaches, the agencies at which students are placed differ in terms of the fields of service, geographical and demographical settings, funding, staff and reporting structures.

In any given year, hundreds of social work students seek practice placements. For 2012 there were no less than 800 4th year students requiring placement in KwaZulu-Natal alone (These estimates emanate from the three universities that formed part of this study). Apart from the high

number of students requiring field practice education (FPE), in keeping with their academic programme, each student's experience will be unique simply because students are placed at different agencies.

Concerns for the status of FPE have regularly been on the agenda of both the Association of South African Social Work Education Institutions (ASASWEI), and the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP). According to Professor Sewpaul in her opening address as the president of ASASWEI at the 2011 conference, FPE is regarded as the backbone of social work education and training. It is the field that, for the most part, shapes the kind of social worker that a student becomes. The field provides for the lived experience of the profession and can thus not be under-estimated.

It is against this backdrop that the researcher explores the experiences of supervisors who participate in this critical aspect of the students' development and requirements for completion of the degree. This study is about the experiences of agency supervisors in their role of supervising fourth year social work students' field placements.

This chapter provides the rationale for the study, problem identification, research design, the aims and objectives, key questions to be answered as well as the theoretical framework underpinning the study.

1.2 Rationale for the study

Having qualified as a social worker in 1993, the opportunity of being supervised by agency social workers during her practical placement as a student was afforded the writer, as well as to supervise (in her capacity as a qualified and practicing social worker), third and fourth year social work students' field placements. During these roles the writer was not aware of any special or particular model of supervision being used, neither was she trained on how to supervise a student in training. In addition, universities differed in their expectations and requirements of the agency supervisor. This, together with the high turnover of staff and unrealistic caseloads, often resulted in supervision assuming the role of guidance and monitoring

the students' work based on personal and professional experience. From interaction with colleagues it was found that this was very much their approach as well. Literature, however, highlights the importance of the role of supervision in FPE which plays a fundamental role in the development of future social workers. According to Fransehn (2007: 72), "Supervision is seen as an integral part of social work education and is often regarded as a personal tool for the student to integrate theory, methodology and practice." Social work agencies and organizations aspire to employ competent and well trained social work graduates. The responsibility then to groom and develop competent and responsible social work professionals cannot be overlooked.

It has been acknowledged by the bodies that regulate the profession in South Africa, that there is a wide range of issues that require focused attention regarding FPE, one of which is standards for social work supervision. A recent audit conducted by both ASASWEI and SACSSP showed a huge variation in the way South African schools of social work organize and implement fieldwork education. The various universities in and around KwaZulu-Natal that offer the social work curriculum have regularly utilized the same agencies for field placement and in all probability will continue to depend on these same agencies for the training of current and future students. Some agencies agree to supervise students from different universities. Each university operates uniquely with different models, requirements and expectations of the agency and agency supervisor. Agency supervisors, however, play a significant and major role in the education of students. Studies by Knight (2001) and Kanno & Koeske (2010) indicate that the education functions of the field instructor are regarded as most critical. In addition studies by Fortune & Abraham (1993) reveal that students who had supervisors who were actively involved and supportive of their learning process, were more satisfied with their training and experiences in FPE. Given this, it is critical to explore and understand the perceptions and dynamics experienced by these supervisors in fulfilling their role within the academic programme that students undergo. It is particularly critical to understand the experiences of the supervisors whose role and responsibility is critical to the growth and development of confident and competent social work students.

There is documented evidence that there are significant variations in FPE across the various institutions, and the way this is practiced and managed. The 2011 ASASWEI Conference

focused on a variety of aspects impacting on FPE in South Africa. According to the President of ASASWEI, Professor Sewpaul's (2011) address, the theme of "Field Practice Education" was decided upon to pave the way for the development of minimum standards and clear recommendations for FPE and to bring these into the statutory domain. Sewpaul (2011) strongly emphasized that this issue was as much an academic issue as it was a practice based one, with educators and practitioners having much in common, with field based supervisors playing a major role in the education of students.

Sewpaul (ibid.) reiterated the contributions that FPE supervisors can make to "engaged citizenship, democratic practices, and active community engagement", and as such she emphasized that efforts must be directed towards, "transforming and democratizing education to help co-create students who not only hold transformative ideals, but are able to translate these ideals into practice". Preparation of students must take into consideration the complex socio-political and economic issues South Africa is facing, together with the unique localized cultural beliefs and practices which lends itself to a complex and difficult situation for students to grapple with. Sewpaul (ibid.) emphasized that the power of the practice context must never be underestimated.

Whilst it is essential to have minimum standards of field education, it was seen as critical to first explore the lived experiences of the supervisors and agencies that train students and provide the opportunity for FPE. It is against the background of the writer having supervised student social workers and her passion for the field of social work that this study has been undertaken. The academic curriculum alone cannot produce the professionals required to address the multi-faceted issues in a country like South Africa. Whilst FPE has been researched locally (to a certain extent) and internationally (extensively), the experiences of the people who are responsible for the essential training and exposure to the world of work in the South African context as practicing social workers is absent. Furthermore a study of this nature was not conducted with the agencies at which the universities in KwaZulu-Natal frequently place students. It is envisaged that this study will share the experiences of agency supervisors, the challenges they encounter as well as recommendations for improvement to field practice education and training. It is hoped, although it was not a primary reason for this research, that

rich data will be unraveled that can contribute to the SACSSP's finalization of the minimum standards on supervision.

1.3 Aims, objectives and key questions related to this research study

1.3.1 Aim

The overall aim of the research was to explore the experiences of agency supervisors in supervising social work students' field practice placements. Since fieldwork is such a critical and core component of social work education it is imperative to examine factors influencing this process such as the perceptions, experiences, needs and challenges of field supervisors.

1.3.2 Objectives

The objectives of this study are as follows:

- To explore with agency supervisors their experiences, perceptions, needs and challenges in supervising social work students.
- To ascertain from supervisors the experience of partnerships with universities in advancing student development.
- To obtain supervisors' suggestions on what they see as the best practice model to enhance field practice education experiences for students.

1.3.3 Research Questions

The following are the key questions on which this study is focused:

1. The experiences of agency supervisors with a specific focus on the following:
 - a. How do agency supervisors experience their role of supervising social work students?
 - b. How do agency supervisors view student performance?
 - c. How do agency supervisors experience their partnership and interaction with universities?

2. What do supervisors suggest as the best practice model to enhance the field practice education experiences of students?

1.4 Setting for this study

The study was conducted at social work agencies and institutions in and around KwaZulu-Natal. A variety of agencies were targeted, from government Departments of Social Development to non-government organizations, community based organizations and faith based organizations. A total of 18 participants from 14 agencies located in urban, semi-urban, townships and rural areas, and including both generic and specialist fields of service, participated in this study. The students referred to in the study are from three universities situated in and around KwaZulu-Natal. Universities A and B are located in an urban area, whilst University C is to the north of the province, mainly catering for students from the rural and semi-urban areas. Universities A and C are both full time universities while University B enrolls students through correspondence programmes/studies.

1.5 The value of the study

It is envisaged that emerging data will be of immense value especially since field placement supervisors have such a critical role to play in the contribution to the development of competent social work practitioners. In addition:

- The study will generate new knowledge since the experiences of supervisors from agencies in and around Durban have not been previously researched.
- It will highlight and give recognition to the perceptions and challenges experienced by agency supervisors.
- The study could be replicated in other provinces and more extensively in KwaZulu-Natal to widen the scope and understanding of field practice placement and supervision of social work students.
- It is anticipated that the findings may contribute to the recommendations of the minimum standards that the SACSSP is currently working on with regard to field practice supervision.

- The findings of this research will also be of potential value to the higher education institutions that seek placements for students on an annual basis since this will provide an understanding of the agency supervisor's needs, expectations and challenges.
- This study will enable the institutions to consider the recommendations made for better practice and forge relationships that will ensure continuity in FPE with the focus on the best possible training opportunity for the student.

1.6 Principal theories upon which the research is constructed

In developing competent social work practitioners, it is necessary to look at models of supervision that promote the overall growth and development of the student which in turn leads to student practitioner competence. Worthington (1984), as cited in Brown and Bourne, (1996: 74), highlights no less than 18 different models of supervision, which are all developmental in nature and apply to the Psychiatric, Psychological and Social Work professions. For the purpose of this study a few models for practice and supervision appear to be relevant. However, concentration is on 2 interesting models by different authors who allude to similar trends and processes that provide a solid theoretical background and framework for supervision. These are 'A Model for Practice' (Brown & Bourne, 1996) and 'Seven-Eyed Supervision: A process model' (Hawkins & Shohet, 2006).

1.6.1 A Model for practice (Brown & Bourne, 1996)

Both these models define and consider supervision to entail skillful interaction between the supervisor and the supervisee with the general goals being to make the supervisee more effective in helping people and to put theory into practice. The authors also refer to the educative role and functions of supervision, the need for supervision to be developmental in nature and the responsibility the supervisor has to the student as well as to the agency. Both authors refer to and build on Kadushin's (1976) listing of essential elements of social work supervision, as being educative, supportive and managerial.

Brown & Bourne (1996) developed their model from drawing on the research conducted by several writers in this field and try to integrate the developmental themes into the map of supervision functions. In addition, they include in their approach and model to the greater complexity and diversity encountered in social work tasks. They refer to 4 systems that form the basis of this model:

Practice system – recognizes the diversity of the social work profession and the intensity to which a worker operates to impact on the lives of those who receive the service and those who demand the service. The focus is thus on the social worker's efforts in all the work undertaken (including case discussions, meetings, administration, counselling, statutory proceedings, community development etc.).

The Team System – focus on the manner in which the student works with and interacts with team members /colleagues are seen to have a major impact on the quality of his/her work.

The worker system – in order to carry out the many social work tasks the worker will have to draw on his/her personal resources as well as professional expertise. The psychological well-being of the supervisee will influence her/his ability to effectively carry out the tasks

The agency System – involves all the aspects of work specified by the agency, which includes, codes of conduct, policies, procedures and guidelines that set the parameters within which the supervisee must operate.

Based on these 4 systems, Brown & Bourne developed a model operating at three levels of increasing complexity, each representing a developmental phase.

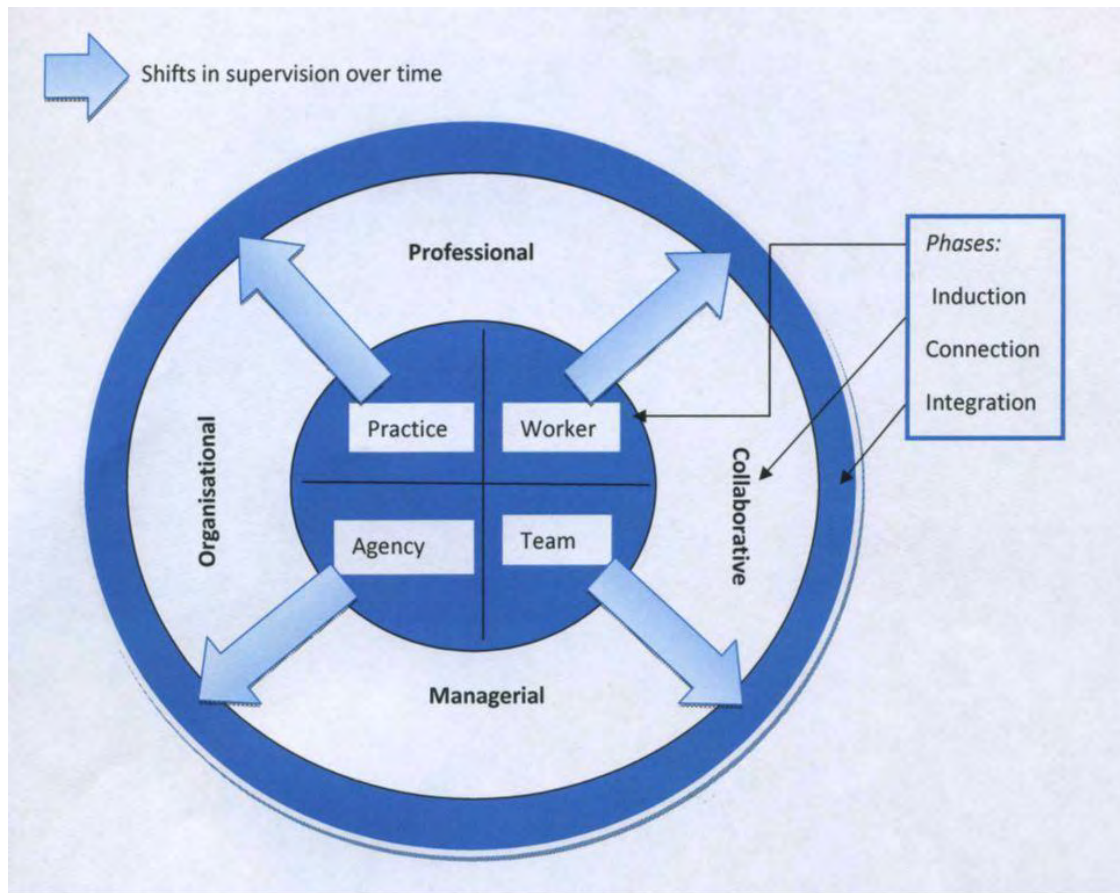


Figure 1: A Model for Practice

Source: Brown & Bourne, 1996

The first level shown in the inner circle, proposes that exploration in supervision can be mapped out into the four distinct primary systems in a relatively discrete way during the early or *induction phase*.

The second level, the *connection phase*, shown in the middle ring, proposes a more sophisticated level of exploration represented by the connectedness between each pair of systems, as follows:

- Professional (practice-worker interface)
- Collaborative (worker-team interface)
- Managerial (team-agency interface)
- Organizational (agency-practice interface)

The third level, the *integration phase*, represented by the outer ring, is a synthesis of all four systems and levels and often denotes expertise in the area of work.

The model provides an understanding of what goes on during supervision, with the supervisee developing with experience and competence over time thus progressing from the first, through the second and on to the third phase.

This requires the supervisee to have a sound operational knowledge of each of the four primary systems, (i.e. practice, worker, team, agency), as a prerequisite for effective work. During this early or induction phase the supervisee needs to be firmly grounded and the supervisor needs to ensure that the essential aspects of the work are well understood. The second level link areas allows for supervision to progress to the more complex and connected issues between the supervisee and practice that require constant review. The third level, the integration phase, represented by the outer ring, is a synthesis of all four systems. The developmental element is the gradual change of focus of supervision over time, as experience and competence increases from the first, through the second, to the third level. In this study the data gathered in relation to the systems described by Brown & Bourne is reflected upon.

1.6.2 Seven-Eyed Supervision: A Process Model (Hawkins & Shohet, 2006)

Hawkins & Shohet (2006) model; the “Seven-Eyed Supervision” model looks closely at the process of the supervisory relationship. This model arose out of a study by the authors of the significant differences in the way individual supervisors supervised within their own peer group as well as elsewhere. These differences could not be explained by developmental stages, primary tasks or intervention styles. Further explorations revealed that the differences lay in the choices made as supervisors in terms of what they focused on. It has since been accepted that there are many levels operating at any one time in supervision. At a minimum all supervision situations involve at least four elements, namely,

- A supervisor
- A supervisee/student
- A client
- A work context

Whilst generally the supervisor and therapist are only directly involved in supervision, the supervision process involves two interlocking systems or matrices:

- The therapy system – between the client and therapist
- The supervision system – between the supervisee and the supervisor

The task of the supervisory matrix is to pay attention to the therapy matrix, and it is in how this attention is given that supervisory styles differ.

This model therefore divides supervision styles into 2 main categories. Each of these styles can be further subdivided into three categories, which results in 6 modes of supervision. The seventh mode focuses on the wider context in which the supervision and the client work occur. It is the view of the authors that good supervision of in depth work with clients must involve all seven modes, although not necessarily so for every session.

The model is depicted below:

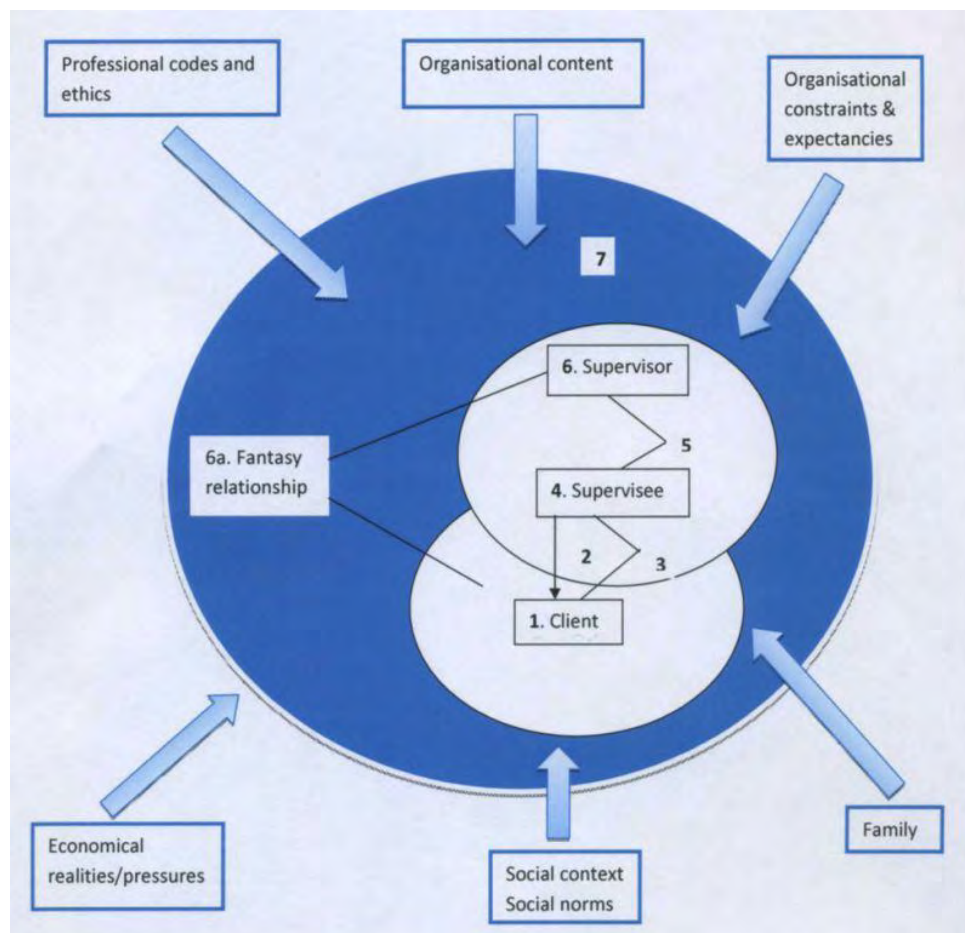


Figure 2: Seven-Eyed Supervision: A Process Model

Source: (Hawkins & Shohet, 2006)

Mode 1: Focus on the client and what and how they present

The aim is for the supervisee to pay attention to the client, the manner in which the client presents the choices he/she makes and the connections between the various aspects of the client's life. According to Shainberg (1983) as cited in Brown & Bourne, 1996) "It is the task of the supervisor to enable the supervisee to become more aware of what actually takes place in the session, true knowing comes from being able to observe and describe what is going on in the present in accurate, concrete and complete detail. This will help the student to see the client as a unique human being before anxiously applying theory learnt to immediately bring about changes in the client's life. The focus in this mode is on *being* with the client prior to *doing*".

Mode 2: Exploration of the strategies and interventions used by the supervisee

This mode focuses on the supervisees' choice of intervention used, when and why. The main goal of supervision in this mode is to increase the supervisees' choices and skills in intervention.

Mode 3: Exploring the relationship between the client and the supervisee

The focus on this mode is on the conscious and unconscious interactions in the relationship between the client and the supervisee. The goal is for the supervisor to assist the supervisee step out of his/her own perspective and develop insight and understanding of the dynamics of the working relationship with the client.

Mode 4: Focus on the supervisee

The Supervisor focuses on how the supervisee is affected by the work with the client. The goal in supervision is to increase the supervisee's capacity to engage more effectively with the client.

Mode 5: Focus on the supervisory relationship

The focus is on the relationship in the supervision session in two areas

- Ensuring that regular attention is given to the quality of the working relationship
- Exploring how the relationship might be paralleling the hidden dynamics of the work with clients

The goal in supervision is to enable the supervisee to realise hidden dynamics that might be present.

Mode 6: The Supervisor focusing on his/her own process

Here the supervisor pays attention to her/his own here and now experiences, what feelings, thoughts and images are surfacing both in working with this supervisee as well as in response to the material shared about the work with the client.

Mode 7: Focus on the wider contexts in which the work happens

The supervisor-supervisee, client relationship, exists within a wider context that impact on the process that unfolds. The dynamics of this relationship have to be understood within the context of professional codes and ethics, organizational requirements and constrictions, social, cultural, political and economic contexts of the client, supervisee and supervisor.

According to Hawkins & Shohet, (2006) good supervision must involve all seven processes. This model provides a framework for new levels of depth and ways of creatively intervening in a supervision session. The developmental process of the model is emphasised and it is seen as necessary for the supervisor to be able to identify the readiness of the student to receive different levels of supervision, commencing with the focus on the content of the work with the client before progressing to strategies and beyond.

Highlighting these two theoretical approaches is significant for this study as it provides a background into the expectations and understanding of the supervisory processes. In unpacking the experiences of the supervisors interviewed in this study, the researcher will be guided by the basic premise and principles of supervision as outlined by the theorists. Based on the depth and value that these models have for supervision, growth and development of students to become fully functioning, competent and confident social workers, these theories will be used to guide this study further.

1.7 Research Methodology

Research Methodology describes the research plan (including methods, techniques and procedures) employed in the process of implementing the research design. A brief overview of the research methods used in this study is presented in this chapter, although it is elaborated on in greater detail in Chapter 3.

1.7.1 Research Design

The study combined elements of exploratory and descriptive designs. Schutt (2007) explains that exploratory research “seeks to find out how people get along in the setting under question, what meaning they give to their actions, and what issues concern them.” The goal is to learn, “what is

going on here”, and to investigate social phenomena without explicit expectations, whilst descriptive studies focus on describing a problem. These research designs were appropriate to this study since a study of this nature was not previously conducted and the experiences of social workers as student supervisors have not been highlighted.

This study is located within a qualitative framework, which, according to Babbie and Mouton (2001:270), always attempts to study human action from the perspective of the social actors themselves.

1.7.1.1 Sampling and data collection

The researcher relied on the positive response, co-operation and availability of social workers who supervised field practice placements and therefore non-probability sampling was used. A sample of 18 supervisors who had supervised 4th year students within the past 3 years participated in this study. The researcher met with individual supervisors at their respective agencies and each supervisor was interviewed once. Data was collected through in depth interviews guided by the use of a semi structured interview schedule. Due to the personal nature of the data and experiences being shared, respondents’ informed consent was secured prior to the interview. The interviews were audio recorded and data collected through transcribing the tape recordings.

1.8 Data analysis

The transcripts formed the main data source, which was then organized and analyzed using thematic content analysis. The process of qualitative data analysis involves looking at the similarities and differences that arise and drawing conclusions from these emerging themes. Some of the rich data extracted is reflected verbatim. The section on demographic data will be presented quantifiably and will be illustrated in graphs and tabulations.

1.9 Definitions and abbreviations of concepts

The concepts relevant to this research as defined by the Social Service Professions Act 110 of 1978 are as follows:

Social Work: According to the scope of practice social work is a professional activity that utilizes values, knowledge, skills and processes to focus on issues, needs and problems that arise from the interaction between individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities. It is aimed at improving the social functioning of people in order to improve their quality of life.

Social Worker: Is an individual who has a three year degree or a four year honours degree to practice social work and is registered with the South African Council for Social Service Professions in accordance with the Social Service Professions Act 110 of 1978

Field Practice Education (FPE): This is a component of social work education where students learn to practice social work through delivering social work services in agency and community settings under the supervision and guidance of a qualified and practicing social worker generally from the same organization or agency.

Supervisor: Is a skilled or qualified person to whom authority is delegated to direct, coordinate, enhance and evaluate the on the job performance of the supervisee for whose work he is held accountable.

Student/Supervisee: One who is still in the process of learning/acquiring skills and knowledge in the field of social work.

Supervision: The primary means by which an agency designated supervisor enables staff, individually and collectively and ensures standards of practice.

ASASWEI: Association of South African Social Work Education Institutions.

SACSSP: South African Council for Social Service Professions.

1.10 Presentation of contents

This report comprises five chapters as outlined below:

Chapter one: Introduction to the Study

This chapter serves to provide an introduction and broad overview of the study and includes aspects on the objectives, value, aims, research questions, research design, theoretical framework and the definition of key concepts.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter presents a discussion on the origin, historical development of social work supervision and field practice placement, its current trends and practices both nationally and internationally.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

This chapter provides a description of the Research Methodology, in terms of the Research Design, Research Techniques, Methods of Data Collection and Analysis and Ethical Implications.

Chapter Four: Results and Analysis

This chapter provides an analysis and discussion of the results of the study in terms of Research Findings and Discussions, Implications of Findings and Limitations of the Research.

Chapter Five: Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

This is the final chapter and outlines the main findings, Recommendations, Summary and Conclusions drawn from the study

1.11 Conclusion

In this introductory chapter an overview of the study was presented. The background and rationale for the study was contextualized and supported by references to the literature. It highlighted the why, when and how of this study and provided a platform for the need for a study

of this nature as it serves to contribute to the understanding of supervision in relation to field practice placement. Chapter two provides the literature study on which this research was based.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter places supervision into context and outlines the critical role of supervision in social work focusing on the history of supervision, definitions, functions and objectives of supervision, international studies on supervision and the significance of supervision in social work in South Africa.

The role of field practice placement in social work education is regarded as an integral part of the student's professional preparation, where essential structured practical experience is provided by qualified social workers in field agencies (Maxwell, 1999). Professional internships are designed to provide students with opportunities to build skills (Poulin, et al., 2006). Field placement then is:

“without a doubt, the primary means by which we prepare the next generation of social workers who will engage and assist people who live in a complicated ever-changing and problematic world” (Thomlinson, et al, 1996).

2.2 An overview of supervision

An ‘on the job’, training/internship/fieldwork/practica (as it is known in the different programmes), forms part of most graduate programmes in the helping professions, such as medicine, law, teaching, psychology and social work. It is during this placement that the definitions of the primary role in terms of the tasks they need to perform are identified and clarified through supervised experiences aimed at enhancing students' professional skills and competencies. Field education is a significant component of social work education, and the supervision of social work students at different levels of their academic programme is practiced throughout the world. According to Bogo (2006) during 2008 the Council on Social Work Education, in its Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (USA), identified field education as the signature pedagogy of Social Work. According to Waldfogel as cited in Tsui & Ho (2008), social work supervision is as old as social work itself and has maintained a unique and important role in the field of social work.

The importance of supervision for the learning process has been given increasing attention over the last 10 years (Fransehn, 2007). According to Harkness & Poertner (1989), social work has been described as a supervising profession. Social work as a practice was built on a foundation of supervision, aiming to ensure better client outcomes. “As the scope of social work practice expanded, the purposes of supervision were reconceptualised and, after 1938 the focus shifted from that of helping clients to that of training workers” (Burns, 1958).

Whilst the academic programmes differ from university to university, the principal goal of field placement remains that of providing the student with a broad set of experiences as a practicing professional within an organization under competent supervision. The student conducts similar professional and technical activities to that of the practitioner so as to enable him/her to develop the required skills, knowledge and an experiential base. A triangular alliance is generally formed between the academic instructor from the educational institution, the field placement supervisor and the student, with all parties having set responsibilities to fulfil (Mayer, 2002).

However, according to Kadushin (1992), Harkness (2002) and Karpets (2010), supervision has received little attention in social work research, even though it is characterised as one of the most significant factors in job satisfaction and a precondition for the delivery of quality service to clients. This is reiterated by Bradley et al. (2010) and Botha (2002), who indicate that research on supervision in South Africa is not comprehensive. According to Tsui & Ho (2008), since most of the service consumers in the field of social work do not pay for the service, the responsibility of the supervisee is to be accountable to the agency through supervision and to the professional board as a professional practitioner. Accountability to the client is indirect and through the supervisory process. Therefore, as long as the supervisee or social worker is not employed directly by the client, supervision in some form will exist.

There are many gaps, particularly in the impact and outcome of supervision on the client, the psychological context of social work supervision and the building of the supervisory relationship. The emphasis of supervision has thus far been on building practice skills and on meeting concrete goals rather than building on the process of the supervision relationship (Karpets, 2010). Field education is therefore a critical component of social work training that

serves to increase the quality of services provided. “The quality of social work and of social workers depends in part on the availability and the effectiveness of field education opportunities provided within schools of social work” (Kanno & Koeske, 2010: 23).

Despite the many challenges agencies experience, they remain committed to offering field placement opportunities to serve as the training ground for student social workers. To sustain this commitment a greater understanding of field instruction is required than is available.

2.3 The history of social work supervision

Much of the current understanding of the history of social work supervision is derived from Alfred Kadushin’s research into this aspect. Kadushin (1992) explored the earlier work by Gardiner (1895), Eisenberg (1956) and Burns (1958). Many authors thereafter, such as Miller (1977), Harkness & Poertner (1989) and Ming-Sum Tsui (1997) quote the work of Kadushin.

Becker (1961), Thwing (1893), Burns (1958), Eisenberg (1956) and Miller (1987) as cited in Kadushin(1992) , all refer to supervision of social work as dating back to as early as 1843. The authors are consistent in their findings that the practice of supervision developed over the years according to the historical development of social work as a profession.

Prior to 1920, the process of supervision was different to that which is known today. The process then was concerned with the administrative supervision of the agency by a licensing authority or government board, to which the agency was accountable for the use of public funds and service to their clients. “The term supervision applied to the inspection and review of programmes and institutions rather than to the supervision of individual workers within the programme” (Kadushin, 1992: 1). The first social work text that used the word *supervision* in the title, *Supervision and Education in Charity* by Jeffrey R Brackett in 1904 was concerned with this very aspect.

Following the publication of *The Family* by the Family Welfare Association of America in 1920, increasing reference has been made to supervision as it is known today, supervision of the individual social worker.

According to Tsui (1997), based on the findings of the researchers mentioned above the development of supervision in social work can be broken down into 5 major stages each with its own dominant theme.

2.3.1 Stage 1: Administrative roots of social work supervision (1878 to 1910)

The administrative and educational functions of supervision is said to have its roots as early as 1843, in New York and Boston, where the focus was on the improvement of the living conditions of the poor. “Friendly visitors” were volunteers used to offer help and direct services to families in need. They were recruited, trained and supervised by a few “paid agents” employed by the Charity Organization Societies, (Thwing, 1893; Becker 1961; Harkness & Poertner, 1989 as cited in Tsui, 1997). Visitors received training and administrative instructions through literature, and weekly discussions with the paid agent. In addition, the visitors required supportive supervision, since they were difficult to recruit, easy to lose and were often frustrated and disappointed. These “paid agents” are regarded as the early predecessors of the modern supervisor and were initially directly accountable to a district committee of the charitable agencies. The committees, however, gradually became more policy and administration orientated, allowing more autonomy and thus leaving the decision making on individual cases to the paid agent supervisor who then assumed responsibility for the work of the direct service worker.

2.3.2 Stage 2: Change of context of supervisory training and emergence of a literature base (1911-1945)

In USA, since 1898 social work education programmes were developed, extending from initially a six week training programme to a one year programme that prepared students for field work practice. In 1911 the first course in supervision was offered, the training of social workers shifted from the agency to universities, and supervision became an educational process for learning the required values, knowledge and skills for social work practice. As supervision became an integral part of social work education, it became necessary to teach students more, beyond “how” and into “why”. This gave rise to the theoretical underpinning of the education programme.

Supervision at this point was defined by Virginia Robinson as, “an educational process”. Between 1920 and 1945, 35 articles on supervision were published. During this period, the professional development of social workers was the dominant purpose of supervision. (Burns, (1958) and Harkness & Poertner, (1989) as cited in Tsui (1997).

Thus the focus in supervision shifted from clients to the social workers. Two views prevailed in terms of explaining this: the majority held the view that the refocus of supervision was a reflection of both Freud’s new psychology and the profession’s growing use of the learning theory for training workers (Burns, 1958). The minority view explains the change as a recurrent adaptation to larger caseloads as a result of economic depression (Eisenberg, 1956).

2.3.3 Stage 3: Influence of practice theory and methods (1930s to 1950s)

The emergence of psychoanalytic theory as the major theory in the helping profession had a profound effect on social work supervision, where the supervisor influenced by this theory saw the supervisory process as a therapeutic process. Until the 1950s, the social casework method had a great impact on the format and structure of social work supervision.

2.3.4 Stage 4: Debate between interminable supervision and autonomous practice (1956 - 1970s)

The value and need for on-going supervision for professionally trained social workers was questioned (Austin, 1942; Bacock, 1953; Schour, 1953 as cited in Tsui, 1997). While, the emergence of the National Association of Social Workers in the USA in 1956 served to reinforce the professionalization of social work, the desire for professional status gave rise to the debate about independence, both of which were regarded as hallmarks of well-developed professions (Waldfogel, 1983). Long term supervision was seen as an insult to their professional status and alternatives to supervision were sought. This resulted in “interminable” supervision being followed by, autonomy through years of practice.

2.3.5 Stage 5: Back to administrative function in the age of accountability (1980- 1995)

Since the 1980s, resources and funding became dependent on the efficient and effective delivery of services. The government and community placed demands that the funding be spent in a “value for money” and “cost effective manner”. Supervision once again began to emphasise the administrative functions of social work.

“The development of social work supervision was greatly influenced by the demands of the external environment of human service organizations and the internal demands of the professionalization process of social work” (Tsui, 1997).

According to Tsui (1997), some social workers feel that supervision is unnecessary and prefer consultation or autonomous practice. However, according to Kadushin (1992) and Munson (1993), the format and structure of social work supervision has remained constant over the past 80 years. Even though social work is more professionalised than ever before, Kadushin (1992) lists 13 reasons related to political accountability, administrative control, the nature of social work, the educational function and the supportive function for supervision to remain and continue into the future.

According to Kadushin (1992), it is the unpredictable, non-routine, non-standardised, highly individualised, unobservable nature of the job of social workers that makes supervision necessary, as long as social work practice is still embedded in an organizational context in its existing form, social work supervision will continue in the foreseeable future.

2.4 Supervision in social work

2.4.1 Defining supervision

Social work supervision is broadly defined as the process by which a skilled person (supervisor) helps a less skilled person (supervisee) with ideas and theoretical knowledge to transfer these

into practice, in order to facilitate clients receive the highest quality services possible (Itzhaky, 2000).

According to Kadushin (1992), supervision is derived from the Latin word *super* (“over”) and *videre* (“to watch, to see”). Therefore a supervisor is defined as an overseer, one who watches over the work of another, with responsibility for its quality. According to Kadushin, supervision can only be fully defined and understood within the context of its functions, objectives, hierarchical position, its relation to service delivery and its interactional process.

Supervision has been defined primarily in terms of the administrative and educational functions. The first social work text on the subject by Robinson (1936), and the first edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Social Work* (1965:785), as cited in Kadushin (1992), defines supervision as an educational process highlighting the educational function of supervision. It is the traditional method of transmitting knowledge of social work skills in practice from the trained to the untrained, from the experienced to the inexperienced student and worker. The second (1971) and third (1977) editions of the *Encyclopaedia* emphasises the administrative functions, in that supervision is a process of getting the work done and maintaining organizational control and accountability.

According to Smith (1996; 2005), supervision is the process of being attached to an expert, of “learning through doing”. This allows for the novice to gain knowledge, skills and commitment as well as enable her/him to enter into a particular ‘community of practice’. By spending time with the practitioners, looking over their shoulders and participating in the routines and practices associated with the profession, trainees become full members of the community of practice. Kadushin (1992) elaborates on supervision being an indirect service, where the supervisor maintains indirect contact with the client through the worker and is able to assist the client through the worker. This is supported by the theoretical framework by Brown & Bourne (1996) and Hawkins & Shohet (2006), on the models for supervision, where supervision is considered to entail the skilful interaction between the supervisor and the supervisee with the goal being to render an effective service to the client. Furthermore, Kadushin (1992) describes supervision as an interactional process, a process of a series of conscious and deliberate activities being

implemented within a context of a relationship that is based on cooperation and democracy and where participation is mutual, respectful and open.

According to (Brown & Bourne, 1996), *“Supervision is the primary means by which an agency-designated supervisor enables staff, individually, and collectively; and ensures standards of practice. The aim is to enable the supervisee(s) to carry out their work, as stated in their job specification, as effectively as possible. Regular arranged meetings between supervisor and supervisee(s) form the core of the process by which the supervisory task is carried out. The supervisee is an active participant in this interactional process”*.

These definitions imply that there is a relationship between the two parties, one having authority over the other, the dual purpose being to ensure that agency policy is implemented whilst simultaneously training and empowering the supervisee, with the main aim being, providing the best possible service to the users of the service. It is an interactional process with the supervisee being an active participant and occurs primarily in formally arranged and regular meetings.

Supervision is therefore regarded as both an event and a process and is based on the following fundamental values.

- i. Supervision needs to be considered in the structural context of the agency and the wider society.
- ii. Social work and community care are essentially collective team-based activities with a high level of interdependence between staff.
- iii. Supervision is a person-centred activity that places as much importance on the supervisory relationship, feelings and staff development as on task implementation, regulation and control functions.
- iv. The content and the process of supervision are to be anti-oppressive and anti-discriminatory, with a commitment to empower both service users and staff.
- v. Supervisees and supervisors are adults who learn best when their learning is self-directed, and a proactive approach is taken to supervision.
- vi. Regular supervision is a resource to which every staff member is entitled.

According to (Brown & Bourne, 1996) good supervision is an entitlement for all staff and should be enshrined in every agency as a policy priority, with a well-resourced and comprehensive training programme for all supervisors.

2.4.2 The functions of supervision

Kadushin (1992) reveals that many writers on supervision, such as Towle (1945) and Burns (1958), refer to its educative and administrative nature. According to Wilson and Ryland (1949) as cited in Kadushin (1992), it is through supervision that an agency's services are improved in quality and its central purposes come nearer to fulfilment. In addition to these two functions, Kadushin (1992) includes the third function of supervision which is the support function.

Kadushin (1992) affirms that several other authors in the field such as Dawson (1926), Taibbi (1995), Rothmund & Botha (1991) and others, also cite these very same functions, whilst other authors such as Hawkins (1982) and Proctor (1988) who write extensively on supervision and term the functions differently, such as Qualitative, Developmental, Resourcing and Normative, Formative and Restorative respectively, but resulting in the same objectives and goals as Administrative, Educational and Supportive.

The administrative function is concerned with the correct effective and appropriate implementation of agency policy and procedures with the primary goal being to adhere to policy and procedure so as to conduct the job effectively. The educational function, which receives the greatest emphasis in the literature, is concerned with developing the skills, understanding and capacities of the supervisee, so as to capacitate the worker to function effectively, grow and develop professionally in knowledge and skills and to eventually function independently. This initially stemmed from the strong influence of psychiatry and psychology on social work where the emphasis was on the development of clinical and therapeutic competencies whilst the supportive function of supervision is concerned with increasing worker morale and ensuring job satisfaction. The support function of supervision is initially aimed at removing blockages and stressors from the worker but ultimately to ensure that the best possible service is rendered to clients Kadushin (1992) and Middleman & Rhodes (1985) as cited in Engelbrecht (2006).

Learning situations for students serve to defuse stress and blockages that arise through unfamiliar new learning material, people and experiences Itzhaky & Aloni (1996) as cited in Engelbrecht (2006). Both the models underpinning this study refer to phases of interaction between significant parties, including the client, team members, agency and supervisor, which is aimed at capacitating the supervisee but also supporting their growth and development.

Finch et al (1997) as cited in Engelbrecht (2006), see the support function of supervision as empowering the student. This can be achieved only through the establishment of a successful supervision relationship where the supervisor displays cultural sensitivity. Kadushin (1992) regards all three functions of supervision as necessary and complimentary to one another. Although there is an overlap between these three functions, they each differ in terms of the specific problem addressed and goals achieved.

The task of supervision therefore requires more than mere experience as a social worker, and special skills and knowledge around supervision is critical. The ultimate objective of supervision is to provide the clients and the recipients of services of the particular organization with the most effective and efficient service.

2.4.3 Definition of a supervisor

A social work supervisor is an agency administrative staff member to whom authority is delegated to direct, coordinate, enhance, and evaluate the on the job performance of the supervisees for whose work he/she is held accountable in the context of a positive relationship within the three identified functions of supervision. The supervisor's ultimate objective is to deliver to the agency clients the best possible services, both quantitatively and qualitatively, in accordance with agency policies and procedures (Kadushin, 1992).

According to Poertner & Rapp (1983), as mentioned in Harkness & Poertner, (1989), the supervisor's tasks in an agency extends from discussing caseload problems and assigning of cases to checking and approving forms. The supervisor is seen as being in a middle management position, having an in-between function. According to Austin (1981:32) as cited in Kadushin,

(1992), “The supervisor has one foot in the work force, and one foot in the management module, not being clearly associated with either.” The supervisor is often a member of both the management and work group and acts as a bridge between them, focusing on the work environment and the job that needs to be done.

2.4.4 The significance of supervision in social work

Supervision is not unique to social work but has always been an important element in social work in contrast to other professions and, according to Kadushin (1992), some distinctive aspects highlight this:

- Social work is a predominantly organizationally based profession, offering services to clients via agencies, resulting in their bureaucratic and hierarchical structure. To ensure coordinated and integrated services a succession of commands exist thus making supervision an integral component.
- Accountability to the community is essential because, the resources and supplies used in the profession are often supplied from community appropriations, making supervision necessary.
- The profession is expected to handle problem situations that are seen to pose a threat to individuals and communities, within the confines of policies that originate at other levels. The community feel impelled to indicate how such situations should be handled especially since decisions made by the agency can affect public policy.
- Social work as a profession has not received the communities’ confidence to implement societies mandate and as such lacks full autonomy.
- Social work activities are often non-uniform, non-routine, non -standardised and unpredictable. Social work is highly individualised requiring personalised, intensive and flexible channels of intervention. This often means that the objectives are not always clear and there can be uncertainty in how to proceed, the worker often requiring direction and support.
- Social work interventions are performed in private where client worker confidentiality is a basic principle of the profession. This prevents direct observation and by its very nature can result in the client being exposed to ineffective and damaging practice if there was no system of supervisory review into the workers activities.

- Clients often do not have a choice in the agency they use thus this reduces their bargaining power in the quality of services they receive. Social workers have no actual need to review their effectiveness or be critical of their outcome since their performance is not a determinant of attracting clients. This therefore dictates a greater need for control.

2.5 Research and literature on social work supervision

According to Harkness & Poertner, (1989), conceptualizations of social work supervision are recorded in a literature that had grown from a few nineteenth century monographs and proceedings to major literature reviews such as 129 references in Burns (1958) to 403 references in Kadushin (1976) to 644 references in Kadushin (1985).

Initially in the practice of social work, it was believed that the worker knew best the needs of the clients, and thus offered clear advice and arranged the necessary services for the client. This was termed the “*Executive Treatment Approach*” (Lee, (1923), as cited in Kadushin (1992). “Similarly the supervisor knowing what was best dictated to the supervisee what needed to be done” (Kadushin, 1992). As social work developed and involved the active participation of the clients in planning and identifying solutions to their problems, the approach to supervision also evolved to encompass greater participation from the supervisee and an increased mutuality in the supervisor-supervisee relationship.

The educational aspect of supervision, being initially strongly influenced by psychiatry on social work, received the greatest emphasis in literature where the focus was on training and growth of a clinician, which resulted in minimal administrative implications. With the development and the introduction of diverse public welfare programmes in the 1950s and 1960s and budgetary shortages in the 1970s the administrative aspect of supervision became prominent. Simultaneously there was the growing interest in burnout of workers which led to the emphasis in literature on the supportive component of supervision.

Between 1920 and 1945 *Family and Social Casework* published 35 articles devoted to supervision. According to Kadushin (1992), a pioneer work published in 1936 by Virginia Robinson entitled “*Supervision in Social Case Work*” was followed by “*The Dynamics of*

Supervision under Functional controls” in 1949. In 1942, Bertha Reynolds focussed on educational supervision in a book entitled, “*Learning and Teaching in the Practice of Social Work*”. In 1945, Charlotte Towles, wrote extensively on social work supervision in her pamphlet, “*Common Human Needs*”, and later in 1954 expanded on her work in, “*The Learner in Education for the Professions*”

According to Kadushin (1992), between 1975 and 1990, there has been a marked increase in the number of books and articles by Westheimer (1977), Abels (1977), Pettes (1979), Powell (1980), Austin (1981), Shulman (1982), Munson (1983), Middleman & Rhodes (1985), Bunker & Wijnberg (1988), Holloway & Brager (1989), Wilson (1981), Shaefor & Jenkins (1982), Bogo & Vayda (1988), Urbanowski & Dwyer (1988) and Schneck, Grossman & Glassman (1990) all dedicated to social work supervision. The interest in the aspect of supervision to date is further demonstrated by the dedicated Journal, *The Clinical Supervisor*”, which began publication in 1983.

According to Harkness & Poertner (1989), despite its growth, social work literature reflects a conservative trend in redefining its major terms and issues. Overall the profession has produced only 2 views on the conceptualization of supervision, that is, “supervision is what social work supervisors do” and “supervision is what social work supervisors should do”.

Tsui (1997) critically reviews the empirical research conducted on supervision for social workers for a period of 25 years from 1970 to 1995. According to Tsui (1997), supervision has come to occupy a unique and important position in social work practice. It is recognised as the major factor in determining the quality of service to clients, the level of professional development of social workers, and of the job satisfaction of social workers. However there is a dearth of empirical research literature on the actual practice of supervision (Loganbill, Hardy, & Delworth (1982) and Erera & Lazar, (1994a) as cited in Tsui (1997)). During this 25 year period, 30 research studies were conducted on the topic of supervision, across USA, Canada, North America, Australia, Israel and Hong Kong.

Despite the range of studies, Tsui (1997) elaborates on the wide gap between practice and research on supervision and recommends the use of more qualitative research methods, longitudinal methods and experiments, as well as the need to investigate the impact of culture on supervision and the impact on client outcome.

Bogo (2006) provides a critical review of the research on field education over a five year period (1999 to 2004) for a special issue of *The Clinical Supervisor journal*. A total of eighty three peer reviewed journal articles on field instructions in social work were located.

According to Peleng-Oren (2007), Macgowan & Even-Zahav (2007), the importance of the field instructor's role in social work education has been investigated in several studies, some of which include, socializing the student to the profession, (Abram et al. 2000; and, Bogo & Vayda, 1987), in terms of guiding and evaluating students (Schwaber, 1994; and, Webb, 1988), being a role model (Fortune & Abramson, 1993; Fortune et al., 2001; Knight, 1997, 2000; and, Lazar & Eisikovits, 1997), as well as the impact of the field instructor's personal and professional characteristics on the practical training (Abram et al. 2000; Raskin, 1989; Shardlow & Doel, 1996; and, Tolson & Kopp, 1988). According to Tsui (1992), studies are available on students' satisfaction with their field instructors and their training (e.g. Cohen & Cohen, 1998; and, Fernandez, 1998) and the impact of the instructor's personality and persistence on student satisfaction (Choy et al., 1998; Meyer & Allen, 1997; and, Raskin, 1982). These findings highlight the role of the field instructor and particularly the quality of interaction between him and the student, as affecting the student's satisfaction.

2.5.1 The practice of supervision: International context

In Sweden special courses were developed since 1982 in the training of supervisors for the field of social work. The course is offered at the University of Göteborg, over three semesters. The course addresses both theoretical and practical perspectives of supervision and develops the competencies of the participants to provide supervision with emphasis on the supervision process, methods and techniques to be used to support a student's progress. This is followed by monthly discussions where supervisors reflect on the ongoing process with the student in

practice. The emphasis on supervision resulted in the social work department in Göteborg developing a course in supervision for qualified social workers to supervise social workers in different agencies and organizations (Fransehn, 2007). In Sweden currently more than 78% of social workers have supervision as a regular part of their work (Höjer & Dellgran, 2005).

As an occupation social work in Sweden has acquired considerable academic standing and professionalism. Two parallel systems of supervision have been functioning. In addition to the internal supervision of new staff by the front line manager within the agency, a second system is used where the supervisor is external to the organization and contracted to do the work. In 2002, 76% of all practicing social workers had supervision and in the areas of child welfare the numbers exceed 90% (Dellgran & Höjer, 2005 as cited in Bradley et al., 2010). The demand for external supervision resulted in specific postgraduate education in supervision for social workers. The aim being to have social workers supervised by those qualified in social work as well as in the supervision of social workers.

Social work in England is characterised by high levels of professional autonomy. Supervision has risen in importance in England mainly due to external concerns triggered by child protection enquiries. Supervision is internal to the agency and is undertaken by line managers with some senior practitioner involvement.

According to Bradley (2006), a typical profile of a supervisor in England is: “A woman in her mid-thirties with five years of supervisory experience in the same agency where she was a social worker. Her promotion is based on the assumption that she was a good practitioner and would therefore make a good supervisor. Her basic introduction into the role is with a series of ‘in house’ training in supervision, with no further training at a higher level. Her skills as a supervisor are mainly from her experience of practitioner and reflecting on the supervision she received. She is aware of the roles and responsibilities of a good supervisor however, due to competing priorities her role is reduced to functional discussions about cases and issues concerning accountability. On average she supervises 13 staff for an hour each on a monthly basis. She often resorts to informal supervision and worries about the lack of time and support for the newly appointed workers”.

The University of Maryland in Baltimore, who train hundreds of social work undergraduate and post graduate students annually, view a field educator's role as integral and critical to the preparation of social work students. Field instructors are required to attend six hours of orientation into the university, its expectations and the role of the field instructor. Regular meetings are held thereafter between the university which relies on a faculty field liaison and the student and field instructor, to lend ongoing support and consultation. However, findings indicate that, although this is a good start, this is insufficient, as argued by many authors, (Abramson & Fortune 1990 and Curiel & Rosenthal 1987 as cited in Fortune et al 2007) "Schools of social work must work closely and on an on-going basis with field instructors, introducing them to the knowledge and skills students are expected to acquire and to the techniques they will need to bridge the gap between classroom theory and practice in the field".

Studies conducted by Knight (2001), Kanno & Koeske (2010) and Peleg- Oren et al (2007) revealed that students' learning in the field was enhanced when there was a clear understanding of the supervisor's expectations and what they could in turn expect from their supervisor, as well as that student supervision is a *process*, with students' learning needs evolving over the course of their placement. Effective supervisors are aware of the changing needs of the students during the placement. This study which is consistent with other research, suggests the value of and need for training for field instructors to assist in moving from social work practitioners to social work educators. The findings also suggest that there are inconsistencies between the students' needs in the placement with that which the supervisor provides. It also suggested that some of the critical learning occurs only once the student settles in at the agency and has a basic understanding of the placement.

In a comparative study of two schools of social work, (University of West Indies and the School of Social Work in Zimbabwe) (Maxwell, 1999), the following was revealed:

Students indicated a need for more educational assistance, direction and emotional support in their field practice, better quality and longer duration of supervision, competent supervisors and training for supervisors in all aspects of their supervisory role, more agency visits by the university coordinator, better preparation of students for their field practice placement, better

communication and interaction between the universities and the agency and increased placement time.

According to Brown & Bourne (1996) several reasons prompted the writing of a book dedicated to social work supervision. The central aim of their book was to demonstrate that there exists knowledge and skill that is specific to the role of supervisor which includes the supervisor's acknowledgement of being ill equipped to carry out the important task of supervision and the overall dissatisfaction with supervision standards. The importance of supervision in the maintenance of high morale and quality service delivery and the rapidly changing context of social work and social welfare services, the need to establish a clear value base for supervision and affirmation of the centrality of the relationship between supervisor and supervisee.

There is evidence from a range of research studies of the dissatisfaction with supervision from both supervisors and supervisees. These studies conducted by Stevenson et al. (1978); Satyamurti (1981); NALGO (1989) and Kadushin (1992), as cited by Brown & Bourne (1996), serves to reinforce the inadequate preparation for the skilled task of supervision. According to Brown & Bourne (1996) , the overall standard and quality of supervision can be raised through increasing its priority within agency policies, identifying the relevant knowledge, skills and values required, creating the space for the necessary training to be undertaken and ensuring that regular supervision is undertaken with all staff irrespective of their role in the organization. The process must consider the supervisees tasks, needs and stage of professional development.

Descriptions from a number of countries indicate a range of commonalities and differences in terms of models of welfare and current practices of supervision. The extensive literature on supervision spanning several decades clearly emphasizes the development of and the importance of the field instructor role in the professional education of students.

2.5.2 Supervision of social work field practice education in South Africa

Social work in South Africa originated after the Anglo-Boer War in 1902 in response to the welfare needs of the poor white. This led to the establishment of the National Department of

Public Welfare in 1937 supported by the provision of social work training at nine universities within South Africa (Muller (1995) as cited in Bradley, et al. (2010)). The dynamics of the profession were fast developing and in 1965 the national Welfare Act made provision for the registration of social workers. This eventually resulted in the introduction of the Social and Associated Workers Act 110 of 1978. Currently, four year undergraduate and post graduate degrees are offered at all South African Universities with some universities offering specialized postgraduate courses in social work supervision. (Bradley, et al. 2010)

According to Engelbrecht (2006), as cited in Bradley, et al. (2010), the first democratic elections in South Africa in 1994 transformed social welfare services and supervision resulting in the introduction of The White Paper for Social Welfare in 1997 and the establishment of the South African Council for Social Service Professions in 1998. For various economic, social and political reasons a “brain drain” of social workers from the country resulted in a significant shortage of social workers and supervisors Engelbrecht (2006). In 2003, the Department of Social Development declared social work a scarce skill and responded to this through the introduction of the extended retention strategy and by offering scholarships to students to study social work. This was an admission that there was a decline in the productivity and quality of social work services, due to high case loads, work related stress and lack of structured supervision. The Department (2006a:20), as cited in Bradley, et al. (2010), also referred to “poor quality supervisors, who themselves also lack capacity to conduct professional supervision.”

According to Botha (2002), as cited in Bradley, et al. (2010), research in supervision in South Africa is not comprehensive. Findings by Engelbrecht (2008) into current practices of supervision at NGOs, suggest the following:

“Supervisors are normally women with a professional social work qualification, aged 30 years and over, with at least five years’ experience in front line work and registered with the SACSSP. She lacks formal training in supervision, but has undergone in-service training as a supervisor.” Despite being considered to be in a middle management position, due to the high turnover and staff shortage, the supervisor also carries a statutory load and oversees the orientation of new workers, and other management tasks, often having insufficient time to attend to her task of

supervision. This is exacerbated in rural areas where the supervisees are stationed a distance away resulting in supervision being telephonic and informal.

Supervision focuses on the monitoring of the worker's activities and guidance on case crises. Whilst greater needs of the supervisee are evident in relation to dealing with trauma and debriefing, the supervisor does not have the capacity in terms of her time constraints to address these issues and experiences burnout herself. In addition, supervisors do not receive structured supervision for their role, and depend on informal support from colleagues.

According to Engelbrecht (2006), it is essential that support to students in the south African context is facilitated in a culturally friendly manner, by supervisors who should view the student in his/her cultural context in order to offer successful support through supervision. This implies that students must be allowed to manage their blockages and stressors according to their own values, principles and expectations. If this is not supported by supervisors who may have a culturally unfriendly disposition, the student is often labelled as being uncooperative, unmotivated, hostile, unresponsive and resistant to change. "The application of culturally friendly support to social work students is beyond the acquiring of a method but is rather a particular disposition and attitude that must be lived, through the display of a sincere and warm attitude, a conciliatory attitude, an understanding attitude, an eager-to-learn attitude, a realistic attitude, and an emphatic attitude" (Engelbrecht, 2006).

"The South African context necessitates that supervisors are equipped to accommodate a culturally diverse student population" (Engelbrecht, 2006). It is quite possible that the supervisor, student and service user are from different cultural backgrounds. The supervisor adopting a culturally friendly disposition will form the foundation of support provided to the student social worker. This will enhance the student's learning experience ensuring that the service user receives the best possible service. It is imperative that cultural friendliness form the foundation of the support function of supervision of social work students in South Africa since providing successful supervision in South Africa is not possible without it (Engelbrecht, 2006).

2.5.3 Legislation

A discussion during August 2011 with Bulelwa Plaatjie, the then Manager of the Education Division of SACSSP revealed that the SACSSP does not have any policy or guidelines in place to address the aspect of supervision of social work students. According to her this was still work in progress and the SACSSP was developing minimum standards for the practical training of student social workers. This appears to contradict the critical component and space that field placement and the required supervision has in the overall academic programme of social work students. Student social workers are expected to register with the SACSSP in order to practice as student social workers. This alone appears to present a huge gap, in terms of expected supervision and professional outcomes for graduate social workers. Despite the absence of policies and guidelines, student field placements and supervision thereof is continuing on an annual basis as part of the academic institutions' social work curriculum and requirements.

2.5.4 Student admission into university

According to Spolander et al, (year 2011) social work is offered at all universities in South Africa which use a National Qualification Framework (NQF), as legislated in the South African Qualifications Authority Act (RSA, 1995), to set their admission criteria. This ensures a unified system for recognising qualifications within professions.

Admission into social work programmes in South Africa require applicants to have the equivalent of a NQF level set by the admission requirements for university study, which includes obtaining a national senior certificate and achieving an aggregate determined by the universities in four subjects designated for university study.

There is however no national agreement on the number of hours required for practice education in South Africa, unlike countries such as England and Canada. The Association of South African Social Work Education Institutions (ASASWEI) recently carried out an audit in South Africa and found that both the duration and the nature of field education vary considerably across institutions. In South Africa students must be registered with the SACSSP annually from their second academic year onwards. Registration as a student social worker carries the same

requirements for professional conduct and code of ethics and rules as for qualified social workers.

The South African Integrated Service Delivery Model (RSA, 2006) requires that practice learning includes and exposes students to opportunities for direct and indirect interventions in real situations as experienced by service users. In South Africa however there are no stipulations or provision for placement settings with particular service user populations (Spolander et al 2011).

Only professional social workers registered with the SACSSP may function as supervisors during the education and assessment of student social workers. Regulations for professional suitability for social work education and practice are maintained at the university level. In South Africa suitability is based solely on academic merit as it is assumed that unsuitable students will not pass the modules during the course of the social work programme.

2.5.5 Gaps and the need for research on social work supervision

Research into the satisfaction of students with their professional training and field instruction remains the most examined in literature, (Cohen & Cohen (1998) and Fernandez (1998). According to Harkness & Poertner, (1989), an evident gap in the literature is the impact of supervision on workers, clients and their respective problems. Research has focused on professional development rather than client outcome. According to Peleg-Oren, et al. (2007), there is existing literature that clearly examines the importance of the field instructor's role in the professional education of students. However, the field instructors' attitude towards their supervisory job and their commitment to it has not been investigated. According to findings from studies by Cuzzi & Holden (1997), Kissman & Van Tran (1990), Raskin (1994) and Vayda & Bogo (1991) social work educators are of the opinion that the processes and outcomes of field instruction must be examined, particularly those related to integrating theory and practice. Despite many studies elaborating on the critical role field instructors' play in preparing social work students for practice, (Cavazos, 1996; Collins, 1993; and, Rohrer, Smith, & Peterson, 1992) not many studies focus on what constitutes effective field supervision. This creates a greater

challenge for social work practitioners in their role as educators (Abraham & Fortune, 1990; Collins & Kayser, 1994; Livingston, Davidson, & Marshack, 1989; Rogers & McDonald, 1992; and, Taub, Porter, & Frisch, 1988 as cited in Knight, 2001).

“Supervision has received little attention in social work research, even though it is characterised as one of the most significant factors in job satisfaction and a precondition for the delivery of quality service to clients (Kadushin & Harkness, 2002 as cited in Karpetis, 2010). Many authors, such as Kadushin & Harkness (2002), Munson (2002), Shulman (1997), Tsui (2005), Tsui & Ho (1997) and Bennette (2008) all contend that empirical studies on supervision is scarce and limited to evaluating supervisees perceptions of the supervision process. There are many gaps, particularly the impact and outcome of supervision on the client, the psychological context of social work supervision and the building of the supervisory relationship. The emphasis of supervision has thus far been on building practice skills and on meeting concrete goals rather than building on the process of the supervision relationship (Karpetis, 2010)

2.6 Supervision theories and models

Several authors such as, Kaslow et al. (1997), Latting (1986), Lowy (1983) and White & Russell (1995), argue that there are numerous competing models of supervision in the helping profession, to the point of Rich (1993) even describing the field as a “supervisory jungle”. However, according to Kadushin (1992a), Middleman & Rhodes (1995), Munson (1993) and White & Russell (1995 as cited in Tsui & Ho, 2008), there is no empirically grounded theory of social work supervision. Much of the theory has been borrowed initially from psychology and later on sociologists to describe, explain and predict the behaviour of the supervisor and the supervisee in the supervisory process. “Although none of the models focused solely on social work supervision, they provided insights into the conditions and components of a model of social work supervision” (Tsui & Ho 2008).

According to Munson (2002), and supported by Tsui (1997), there are 130 social work practice theories, but no consensus on which is most appropriate. The profession, therefore, uses numerous practice and supervision theories and models which express differing definitions of

their meanings, methods and purposes. Resulting in the “vagueness and complexity” of ‘supervision’, and interpretation of the term, ‘supervision model’ (Karpelis 2010).

Knowledge of Models are identified as fundamental to ethical practice, according to the Standards for Supervision (1990) and the curriculum Guide for Counselling Supervision (Borders et al. 1990) as cited in Leddick (2001)). Supervision is regarded as the construction of individualized learning plans for supervisees. The systematic manner in which supervision is applied is called a “model” (Leddick 2001).

According to Smith (2009) although clinical supervision started as an “apprenticeship”, this is not the case. Although counselling and supervision appear to have much in common, the two tasks are seen to utilize separate and distinct skills. It is also documented that clinical knowledge and skills are not easily transferrable as the apprenticeship model suggests. Whilst observation of the work is a useful training tool, it is seen as insufficient to provide students with the skills required to become skilled practitioners themselves. “Development is facilitated when the supervisee engages in *reflection* on the counselling work, relationship and the supervision itself” Smith (2009). Thus supervision is recognized as a complex exchange between supervisor and supervisee, with supervisory models/theories developed to provide a frame for it.

Engelbrecht (2006), Leddick (2001), Smith (2009) and Tsui & Ho (2008) write about the different types of models. They refer to:

Psychotherapy-based supervision model: Psychodynamic approach, Feminist model, Cognitive-behavioural and Person-centred are all models of supervision guided by the underpinning theoretical orientation informing the observation and selection of data for discussion in supervision as well as the meaning and relevance of the data.

Developmental model: is aimed at developing strengths and identifying areas for growth, working towards competence, motivation, awareness and autonomy. This model defines progressive stages of supervisee development from novice to expert, where each stage consists of discrete characteristics and skills. A supervisee’s progression to the next stage is assisted by the supervisor’s ability to accurately identify the supervisee’s stage of development and provide

feedback and support through the use of interactive processes. (The models used in this study, a Model for Practice and the Seven-Eyed Supervision Model, are developmental models).

Integrative model of supervision relies on more than one theory or technique and is widely practiced due to counsellors adopting more integrative counselling methods.

Agency model reflects the structure of the agency and reflects on the different levels of accountability and professional autonomy within the agency, such as the casework supervision model, group supervision model, peer supervision model, team service delivery model and autonomous practice model.

Having reviewed the various models and approaches to supervision Tsui (1997) proposed a model that stresses the importance of the interactional relationship between the supervisor and supervisee as the core of supervision.

Tsui (1997) conceptualizes social work supervision into the following three approaches:

The Normative Approach (which seeks to identify a norm or standard, and asks the questions, “what should supervision be” and “what should the supervisor do”, The Empirical Approach which asks the question, “what does the supervisor do?” and tries to answer this by collecting empirical data about the roles and behaviour of social work supervisors, and finally The Pragmatic Approach which aims to provide guidelines for a supervisor that is interested in the functions and tasks of social work supervision in order to identify its nature and characteristics.

According to Dechert (1965) and Galt & Smith (1976) as cited in Tsui & Ho (2008), a model is a simplified picture which serves to explain and understanding reality. Sergiovanni (1993), as cited in Tsui & Ho (2008), suggests that in developing models the focus should be on the reality of the context, the ideal, the components and the action guidelines for supervisors. Models add clarity to the supervisory process: they should be easy to implement, more flexible and specific than theories. A model of supervision can be just a package of interrelated ideas or techniques that are useful in the practice of supervision.

“In supervisory practice, models can serve as a common language between the supervisor and supervisee. It is possible for a supervisor to learn how to supervise through imitation or by “trial

and error”, however without a model he/she might not understand the process of supervision in a holistic manner” (Tsui & Ho 2008).

In constructing a model for supervision the authors, Tsui & Ho (2008), used as their philosophical base the ideals and beliefs of supervisors and identified seven underlying principles that govern model of supervision building.

1. It is an interpersonal transaction between two or more persons, where the more experienced and competent supervisor helps the supervisee thus ensuring the quality of service to the client.
2. Through the supervisor the supervisee’s work must be related to the agency objectives.
3. There is a use of authority, exchange of information, and an expression of emotion in this interpersonal transaction.
4. Supervision indirectly reflects the professional values of social work
5. The supervisor monitor’s job performance teaches knowledge and skills and provides emotional support to the supervisee.
6. Supervisory effectiveness is evaluated through staff satisfaction with supervision, job accomplishments and client outcomes.
7. Supervision involves four parties, the agency, the supervisor, the supervisee and the client. The authors state all of them are strongly influenced by the context of supervision, that is, the prevailing culture. (Tsui & Ho 2008)

According to Tsui (2005), the most mentioned models in social work are the individual and group supervision models. Both entail scheduled meetings between supervisor and supervisee where the aim is to teach professional skills to advance the supervisee’s understanding of his/her professional self, of the clients and of the services offered. The focus is on the relationship between the supervisor and supervisee, which consists of three major components, the supervisory contract, the choice of format for supervision, and a development process with different stages. The contract focuses on the goals, expectations and tasks, with each party understanding the roles and responsibilities, and secondly to evaluate the supervisee’s progress towards meeting the requirements of field practice , successful course completion and ultimately

graduation (Karpetis 2010); whilst the responsibility of the supervisor is the protection of the client's interest (Page & Wosket, (2001) as cited in Karpetis (2010).

According to Tsui & Ho (2008), "a supervisory contract serves as a plan, an agreement and standard for evaluation". Karpetis (2010) looks at the aspect of assessment in social work, as a key focus of supervision, a process and a prerequisite for planning and conducting interventions with clients. Assessment is, therefore, a critical aspect in the supervision process which aids in determining a suitable plan of action and intervention. The process includes what is referred to as 'reflective practice', a process of reflection upon professional practice that leads to practice improvement. The supervisor's stance and practice is seen to be influenced by his training and professional experience.

2.7 Supervision: essential for effective social work practice

According to Karpetis (2010), since field practice is an emotionally intense experience and it brings students in touch with the client's helplessness, pain and anxiety, it is critical that the supervisor understands the student's emotions, thoughts and feelings to establish a positive learning environment that will facilitate client assessment.

Peleg-Oren, et al. (2007), discuss the importance of the field instructor's/supervisor's commitment which is linked to job satisfaction. In examining the job commitment of field instructors the authors conclude that commitment to the field instructor's job may lead to persistence in the activity and job satisfaction. According to Knight (2000) and McChesney & Euster (2000), as cited in Peleg-Oren, et al. (2007), various aspects influence commitment to supervision and these include the agency, the relationship between the field instructor and the academic institution, the field instructor's sense of duty in imparting knowledge to the student and the field instructor's need for personal and professional development. Some studies highlight that greater job commitment leads to higher levels of involvement and investment in the workplace and thus to student supervision (Becker & Billings (1993), Cox et al. (1997) and Meyer & Allan (1997) as cited in Peleg-Oren, et al. (2007).

Due to the fact that field education is such a critical component of the education of social workers, it is imperative that social workers at agencies be suitable for the task of field supervisors. In most agencies supervising students is seen as a senior position, which entails acquiring teaching skills and competencies. Field instructors generally have to cope with organizational structures, high work load, a diverse student population and various challenging situations. This could lead to burn out, impacting negatively on their job commitment and job satisfaction, resulting in a decrease in their commitment to supervisory tasks, (Peleg-Oren, et al. 2007).

Many studies as cited in Kanno & Koeske (2010) confirm that anxiety and negative student emotions and burnout in field placement result in students not learning as effectively or performing as competently as they should. There is however evidence that good support in the field placement environment and particularly positive supervisory communication can reduce a student's negative feelings, anxieties and levels of burnout (Ben-Zur & Michael (2007), Kim & Lee (2007), Koeske & Koeske (1989) and Mor Barak, Nissly, & Levin (2001).

Kanno & Koeske (2010), cite studies where the quality of instruction and supervisory relationship during field placement, was related to the students' overall satisfaction of their experience (Alperin (1998), Bogo & Vayda (2000), Giddings, Vodde, & Cleveland (2003), Knight (1996, 2000, 2001) and Raskin (1982)). Whereas the opposite, i.e. conflicts between supervisor and student and lack of proper instruction and guidance resulted in problems in the placement and students' distress in their fieldwork (Barlow & Hall (2003), Barlow et al. (2006), Giddings et al. (2003) and Tepper (2000) as cited in Kanno & Koeske (2010).

Studies therefore concur with the fact that social work education will be enhanced through high quality supervision in the field resulting in a higher level of preparation of students for the field.

2.7.1 Challenges associated with field placement

Changes in the funding and management structure have compromised the availability of field placement opportunities, impacting on the exposure to learning opportunities for students.

Studies by Lytre & Smith (2008) confirm that there is an absence yet a critical need for the link between the academic programme and field education. The authors in their roles as field education directors discovered that there was a disconnection between the competencies and skills emphasized in the curriculum and those desired by the field agencies. Though students are exposed to the best of both worlds there appears to be poor integration and limited intersection between the two. Both field educators and field supervisors are aware of the prominence of the goal of integration, however, “most social work programmes place the major responsibility for the integration of class and field on the liaison person” (Royse, Dhooper, & Rompf 2003).

Lyter & Smith (2008) recommended that collaboration and communication within and among the members of the academy and the field community be reinforced. In addition, the gaps preventing integration need to be identified and filled in order to empower field education supervisors to integrate the curriculum and field work through sharing their experiences, becoming a proactive link between the student, the curriculum and the field and to grant field supervisors opportunities to influence the curriculum and conduct on-going field related research and evaluations.

According to Fortune, Lee, & Cavazos (2007), the more students practice their skills the more proficient they become, especially if experiential learning is encouraged which is regarded as an ideal way to engage with students and help them with the process of integrating knowledge and skills. According to Fortune, et al. (2007), these findings support the basic premise of social work education that experiential learning contributes to performance. Education through experience began in the 1890s with social work education’s first training programme and it is now fully institutionalised as an accreditation requirement throughout the world within the various councils and programmes that govern the practice of social work (Schiller (1972) as cited in Fortune, et al. (2007).

2.7.2 Recommendations for the future of field practice education

There are a great number of social workers involved in the aspect of social work education. According to Bogo (2006), field practice and standards have evolved over time and have not

been subject to empirical testing. “Those responsible for field programmes report that the challenges of administration leave little time to engage in the reflective and empirical work of building a knowledge base” (Wayne, Bogo, & Raskin 2006). “ When field directors join with faculty colleagues interested in understanding the educational processes and dynamics that lead to effective outcomes, programs of research can be developed and maintained” (Bogo 2006).

If the factors that influence supervision can be determined this could aid in building a network of supervisors who are willing to impart knowledge of the profession to the younger generation, aid in creating a system of reward for professional staff committed to student supervision, and serve as a means of selecting and retaining professionals for this purpose.

“One must learn by doing the thing; though you think you know it, you have no certainty until you try.” Sophocles

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the research methodology implemented in this study. Research methodology refers to everything that the researcher has to do in the process of the study. Any study depends on collected data. Data are pieces of information that any particular situation *gives* to an observer (Leedy & Ormrod 2005:88). Research methodology is a term used to extract meaning from data (Ibid p. 93). Thus data dictates the research method.

Research methodology considers and explains the logic behind research methods and techniques (Welman, Kruger & Mitchell 2005). Social research is defined as the systematic observation and/or collection of information to find or impose a pattern, to make a decision or take some action (Alston & Bowles 2003). According to Babbie & Mouton (2001), research methodology focuses on the research process and the kind of tools and procedures to be used, the focus being on the individual steps in the research process and the most objective procedures to be employed.

Data was collected to determine the experiences and subsequent challenges the agency supervisors experienced in their role as supervisors, their expectations of the university or academic coordinator of the programme as well as to offer suggestions to enhance the learning experience of the students. It is envisaged that the data will serve to enhance the collaboration between the universities and the supervising agencies. Although not the primary intention of this study, the findings may serve to inform the SACSSP of pertinent aspects surrounding the critical and compulsory requirements of the supervision of student social workers.

The following aspects are essential in uncovering the steps and processes of this study:

- The setting of the study
- Research method
- Research design
- The Research process

- Sampling strategy
- Data collection techniques
- Data analyses
- Ethical consideration
- Limitations of study

3.2 The setting of the study

The study was conducted at social work agencies and institutions within Durban and surrounding areas where social work students from universities within KwaZulu-Natal are placed for the duration of their field practice placement. A diverse range of agencies was targeted, so as to obtain feedback across a variety of organizations, ranging from government organizations, non-government organizations, faith based organizations and community based organizations. Both health and welfare organizations were targeted. A total of 18 participants from 14 agencies from urban, semi urban, townships and rural areas, including both generic and specialist fields of service participated in the study. The students referred to in the study are from three Universities as outlined in chapter one.

3.3 Research method

The study explored the experiences of supervisors who supervised student social workers' field placements. The researcher found the qualitative method to be the most appropriate to gain the subjective experiences of the participants.

According to Babbie and Mouton (2001:270), the qualitative approach always attempts to study human action from the perspective of the social actors themselves. This is reiterated by Alston & Bowles (2003:9), who state that the qualitative researchers begin the research with no preconceived ideas. They allow the patterns and themes to emerge from their experiences, careful observations and the use of specific techniques to obtain data. According to Marshall & Rossman (2006), qualitative research usually begins with observations in the real world that raise questions such as:

1. Why don't the everyday experiences I am hearing about fit with existing theory?

2. Why haven't policy and practice led to the predicted results?
3. How do existing theories, models and concepts apply to this new or different population or setting?

It was therefore the researcher's intention to understand the experiences of the current supervisors, to obtain an inside perspective of their daily experiences which in turn could result in rich data that can be used to provide guidelines for understanding their challenges and making recommendations for an improvement in the field practice experience for the student, the supervisor, the university and the council on minimum standards governing the practice.

The primary goal of qualitative research is defined as describing and understanding, rather than explaining, human behaviour. Qualitative research according to Leedy & Ormrod (2005:95) is often exploratory in nature and seeks to attain a better understanding of a complex situation. To accomplish this, it is necessary to dig deep. In-depth Interviews according to Alston & Bowles (2003:9) form an important component in obtaining data in qualitative research. Qualitative studies typically use qualitative methods of gaining access to research subjects and subsequently qualitative methods of analysis.

3.3.1 Research design

The research design provides the overall structure for the procedures the researcher follows, the data the researcher collects and the data analysis the researcher conducts. Research design is simply planning (Leedy & Ormrod 2005:85). Qualitative researchers are often described as *being* the research instrument because the bulk of their data collection is dependent on their personal involvement (interviews, observations) in the setting.

This research will be based on an empirical study using primary data, sourced mainly through conversational interviews. According to Leedy & Ormrod (2005:88) data are manifestations of reality; it is transient and ever changing. Primary data are closest to the truth, as this is often most valid, the most illuminating, and the most truth manifesting.

The study will combine elements of exploratory and descriptive designs. Schutt (2007) explains that exploratory research “seeks to find out how people get along in the setting under question, what meaning they give to their actions, and what issues concern them”. The goal is to learn, “what is going on here”, and to investigate social phenomena without explicit expectations. According to Babbie and Mouton (2006:80), exploratory research usually leads to insight and comprehension, rather than a collection of detailed, accurate and replicable data. They further state that exploratory research is typically done to satisfy the researcher’s curiosity and desire for better understanding, to test the feasibility for undertaking more extensive research, to develop the methods to be employed in any subsequent study, to explicate the central concepts and constructs of a study, to determine priorities for future research and to develop a new hypothesis about existing phenomena.

In a similar vein, descriptive studies focus on describing a problem or issue and moving beyond description to observe why the observed patterns exist and their implications (Babbie and Mouton 2001). A descriptive design provides an accurate portrayal of behavior, opinions, beliefs and knowledge of individuals.

This research design was most appropriate because a study of this nature had not previously been conducted with the organizations that participate in field placements of students in KwaZulu-Natal. The exploratory descriptive design served to allow the participants the opportunity to explore and describe their experience as supervisors as it naturally occurs within their contexts.

The use of an open and flexible research strategy and method such as in-depth interviews led to insight and comprehension. Individual supervisors from the various agencies and organisations formed the units of analysis for this research. According to Bless & Higson-Smith (1995:64), the unit of analysis is the person or object from whom the social researcher collects data. Qualitative research methodologies allows for data to be collected in numerous forms, and to be examined from various angles to construct a rich and meaningful picture of a complex, multi-faceted situation (Leedy & Ormrod 2005:133).

3.4 The research process

The research process consisted of several different stages, as discussed below.

3.4.1 Negotiating permission to conduct the study

To conduct this research permission was sought from the Provincial Head of the Department of Social Development, Boards of Management and Heads of offices of the respective organizations and agencies that participated in the study. A letter of request outlining the purpose of the study, a brief overview of the aims and objectives of the study (refer to Annexure A) and an informed consent form (refer to Annexure B) was forwarded to social work organizations throughout Durban. A total of 47 agencies and organizations were contacted and invited to participate. This included five hospitals, one correctional services department, 22 NGOs in the fields of generic and various specialized fields of social welfare services (ranging from children's institutions, the various organizations servicing the mentally and physically challenged, to working with the elderly) and 19 Department of Social Development district offices and institutions (including places of safety, a rehabilitation centre and a secure care facility). Each organization was also contacted telephonically to discuss the purpose of the research and to secure participation. Written consent was granted from every organization individually prior to undertaking the study.

3.4.2 Sampling

Sampling is defined as who or what was chosen to answer the research questions (Alston & Bowles 2003). Rather than sample a large number of people with the intent of making generalizations, qualitative researchers tend to select a few participants who can best shed light on the phenomenon under investigation, through verbal and nonverbal data (Leedy & Ormrod 2005: 96). The sample for this study therefore consisted of social workers who were supervising or have supervised 4th year social work students for a minimum period of two years. The study was not limited to students from any one university but aimed to include the supervision of students from various universities placed at agencies in and around Durban. The province of

KwaZulu-Natal is serviced by at least three higher education institutions and this study encompassed students from three universities.

According to Alston & Bowles (2003:80) qualitative researchers use non probability sampling because of the largely exploratory nature of their research. The non-probability sampling method was used whereby units of analysis were deliberately selected to focus on a specific feature. The non-probability sampling techniques most suitable to this study were purposive and convenience sampling which, according to Leedy & Ormrod (2005), Babbie & Mouton (2001) and Alston & Bowles (2003), makes no pretense of identifying a representative subset of a population. It takes people who are readily available for a particular purpose. Individuals were selected for their ability to share the most information about the topic under investigation. The following criteria were used to select the sample of supervisors for this study:

- The supervisor was in the employ of the agency/organization within Durban and the surrounding communities.
- The supervisor was from agencies that were willing to participate in this study.
- They were at the time supervising and/or have supervised 4th year social work students for a minimum period of two years.
- Depending on the number of students at the organization, a maximum of two supervisors from each organization were targeted.
- The researcher requested permission to conduct this study at 47 agencies/organizations/institutions within the greater Durban area. These included health and welfare agencies. Only those agencies/organizations/institutions that responded were included as part of the study.
- The first positive response constituted the pilot study.
- The other 17 supervisors that expressed their willingness to participate and were available for interviews formed the sample for this study.

The criteria did not include race, age, gender, or number of years of service as a social worker or educational background. Since this was a new study of the supervision status at agencies in and around Durban, these demographics were unknown and learning more about this formed part of the study.

3.4.3 Research instrument

According to Alston & Bowles (2003), interviews, especially in-depth interviews, are the most flexible type of research instrument and are used in qualitative research. The purpose of qualitative interviewing is to capture how those being interviewed view their world, to learn their terminology and judgments and to capture the complexities of their individual perceptions and experiences (Patton 2002). The fundamental principle of qualitative interviewing is to provide a framework within which participants can express their own understanding in their own terms (Patton 2002).

The researcher compiled an in-depth interview schedule, comprising the main questions and related probes to collect data from the participants. (Refer to Annexure C). Whilst open ended questions with probes helped to explore and describe that which the researcher aimed for, the in-depth interview allowed for more of a discussion on the aspects being researched and was guided by the participant rather than the researcher. Planning a loose structure, however, enabled data analysis to address comparisons of different responses about the same issues (Alston & Bowles 2003). “The aim of an in depth interview is to see the world from the eyes of the participant as far as possible, to explore with them their thoughts and feelings and to thoroughly understand their point of view. Whatever structure is planned before the interview is less important than capturing the ‘reality’ of the person being interviewed, including their own language and use of words” (Alston & Bowles 2003). The quality of the data collected is dependent on the skill of the interviewer as well as the interviewer’s ability to develop an understanding of the issues being researched (Alston & Bowles 2003:117).

The researcher was confident in her ability to establish rapport with the participants and her extensive interviewing skills and experience in the field equipped her to conduct the interviews such that the participants were able to clarify their views, explore them in more detail and become specific about the issues and themes being investigated.

The interview schedule comprised both open-ended and closed-ended questions. The closed-ended questions sought to obtain factual demographic data about the participants. The open-

ended questions were framed in a way that allowed the participants to express their views, opinions and beliefs as well as to elaborate on their answers.

Due to the personal nature of the data and experiences being shared, participants' informed consent was secured prior to the interview. It was anticipated that huge amounts of data would be collected. The interviews were, therefore, audio taped allowing for more attention to be placed on the interviewing process and to ensure that important information was not lost.

The interview duration ranged between 60-90 minutes.

The interview schedule was divided into the following sections in keeping with the research questions (refer to appendix C)

Section A: Identifying/background/demographic details.

This section focused on obtaining data such as the participant's name, age, gender, years of experience as a social worker and as a supervisor, number of students supervised in the past three years and highest academic qualification achieved.

Section B: Comprised 18 questions focusing on the following aspects:

The agency supervisor's experiences, perceptions, needs and challenges in supervising social work students. Their views on, student performance and their experiences of the partnerships with universities in advancing student development. Supervisors' suggestions were sought on what they regarded as the best practice model to enhance the field practice education experiences of students.

3.4.4 The pilot study

According to Welman, et al. (2005), when a new instrument is developed, it is useful to "test it out", before administering it to the actual sample. This administering of the instrument to a limited number of participants from the same population that the eventual study is intended is termed a 'pilot study'. The pilot study is regarded as a "dress rehearsal" for the actual research investigation. The purpose of a pilot study according to (Welman, et al. 2005) is to detect possible flaws in the measuring procedures, identify unclear or ambiguously formulated items and provide an opportunity for researchers to notice non-verbal behaviour.

The instrument was, therefore, piloted on the first willing participant (who has extensive experience both as a social worker and a supervisor). At the beginning of the interview the researcher explained the content of the interview schedule to the participant. During the pilot study, additional comments were asked by the researcher about the types of questions asked, any difficulties experienced in understanding the questions and any gaps that might be apparent. The pilot study confirmed that the instrument was comprehensive and the themes covered all aspects of relevance to the topic being researched. It was also revealed that more than 60 minutes was required to do justice to the interview and obtain comprehensive responses to all the questions. The interview schedule was not amended, however participants were informed that between 60-90 minutes of their time was required for the interview.

3.4.5 Data collection process

The researcher arranged to meet supervisors at their respective agencies where supervision was conducted. Each supervisor was interviewed once. Data was collected through in depth interviews guided by the use of a semi-structured interview schedule. It was expected that the interview would provide the most direct evidence of the experience of supervisors and the use of a semi-structured interview schedule would allow the interviewees the flexibility to share their thoughts and experiences. This also provided an opportunity for the researcher to probe and clarify initial responses.

The process of collecting the data from setting up the interview to completing the interview occurred as follows:

3.4.5.1 Arranging the interview

Apart from the introductory letter covering aspects for the study being sent to every organization, several telephone calls to the respective managers and supervisors were made to clarify the purpose and aim of the interview and to confirm a contact date and time. Several appointments were cancelled or postponed due to the sudden unavailability of the supervisor or a crisis that needed attention. All except for two interviews were conducted in the offices where the

supervisors were employed. The two interviews were conducted at a neutral place away from the office on a Saturday due to the work commitments of the supervisors.

3.4.5.2 Beginning the interview

The researcher commenced every interview with a clear re-statement of the aims and purpose of the interview, a general outline of the process, the required time frame and the confidentiality precautions. Written consent was sought for the use of the tape recorder and the participants were assured of its purpose and safe keeping of the data thereafter. The researcher's experience of having practiced as a social worker for many years assisted in developing rapport and in maintaining general conversation which paved the way for a relaxed and informative interview.

3.4.5.3 During the interview

All the interviews were conducted in English and none of the participants requested otherwise. The researcher ensured that she unpacked every question so that it was easily understood by the participants. This was followed by attentive, respectful listening and accurately reflecting back what was said by the participants. This resulted in the participants gaining clarity and the freedom to answer the questions from their frame of reference. Once the participants had answered the questions the researcher explored further points, if these were not touched on in the response from the participants, through the use of probes (Alston & Bowles 2003). The researcher was able to sense when the participants had exhausted their responses. The researcher was frequently able to link responses that were made earlier in the interview to other related aspects that followed. This served to reiterate the participant's views and opinions.

3.4.5.4 Terminating the interview

The participants were thanked for their participation. They were encouraged to contact the researcher should they have any questions or wished to elaborate on any of the aspects discussed. They were informed that the recordings would be transcribed. A few participants requested to know the findings of the research and the researcher agreed to make these available to them.

3.5 Data analysis

According to (Marshall & Rossman 2006), data analyses is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data. It is a messy, ambiguous, time consuming, creative and fascinating process. Qualitative data analysis is a search for general statements about relationships among categories of data. Data collection with the use of the semi structured interview schedule inevitably results in a large body of information which, during the data analysis, requires the researcher to sort, categorize, and search for “meaning units” and major themes. The instrument with its main question and probes enables data analysis to address comparisons of different responses about the same issues. The process of qualitative data analysis involves looking at the similarities and differences that arise and drawing conclusions from these emerging themes. According to Sarantakos (2005), there are three general stages in qualitative data analysis:

- During *data reduction*, the data are coded, summarized and categorized in order to identify important aspects of the issue being researched. The main aim of data reduction is to identify the main themes emerging.
- *Data organization* is the stage where the information is assembled in text around certain themes and points.
- *Interpretation* entails identifying patterns and trends followed by explanations of findings and developing conclusions.

In analyzing the data, the researcher aimed at capturing the rich and lived experiences of the supervisors, focused on her (the researcher’s) experiences both before and during the research. The three general stages of analysis, data reduction, data organization and interpretation were applied.

3.6 Ensuring reliability (dependability) and validity (credibility)

Although some researchers refer to issues of reliability and validity, there is increasing recognition that these terms may apply more to quantitative studies where data are facts not influenced by the subjective values of the researcher. Qualitative data, on the other hand, are

open to multiple interpretations of situations and therefore tend to be subjective. The researcher used dependability and credibility as essential criteria to ensure quality in this research (Ulin et al 2002).

Dependability, the methodological parallel to reliability, refers to whether the results are dependable and that the research process is consistent and carried out according to qualitative methodological principles (Ulin et al 2002). To ensure consistency in data gathering, the researcher personally conducted all in-depth interviews. This served to avoid the problem of different interviewing styles and approaches influencing the type of information elicited. It also allowed for continuity, relevant questioning and appropriate probing to obtain the required information. Questions were explained in detail and clarified to prevent misinterpretation by participants.

While validity focuses on correct operational measures for the concepts being studied, in qualitative research, credibility focuses on confidence in the truth of the findings, including an accurate understanding of the context. Knowledge produced by research, particularly qualitative research, is inevitably partial. There cannot be absolute confidence concerning credibility, mainly because constructs are abstract ideas (Neuman 1997). However, Golafshani (2003) and Ulin et al (2002) suggest that steps should be taken to ensure that the findings are consistent in terms of the explanations they support. According to Alston & Bowles (2003:48), one way of ensuring validity or credibility of findings in qualitative research is to re-visit and confirm the findings with the participants. In order to enhance the validity of the results, the researcher was aware of her own biases in interpreting the data and made every effort to separate her personal values from those of the participants.

3.7 Ethical considerations

As a member of staff at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, the researcher is governed by and adheres to The UKZN Research Ethics Policy which applies to all members of staff, graduate and undergraduate students who are involved in research on or off the campuses of the University. In addition 'research' is included nationally and internationally within social work

codes of ethics with explicit practice standards in place. Ethical clearance to undertake this study was obtained from the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The ethical practice of research involves a system of morals, rules and behaviours which need to be followed. According to Alston & Bowles (2003:21), social research must meet five ethical criteria to be considered ethically acceptable. These include self-determination, consent and confidentiality, preventing harm and doing good, being just and contributing positively to the knowledge in the field. This was used to guide this research process as follows.

Permission was obtained from the management of all the participating agencies/organizations as well as from the Provincial Head of the Department of Social Development. The researcher informed all participants that the research was being conducted as part of her academic studies. Participants were given sufficient and accurate information on the study and their informed consent was obtained prior to the interview (refer to appendix B). They were assured of confidentiality and anonymity and were made aware that their participation was voluntary and they had the right to withdraw at any stage. (Alston & Bowles 2003: 21). All those who contributed to the study have been acknowledged. The management of the agencies in this study were assured that this study would not disrupt the schedule of the staff members concerned. The findings of this research will be disseminated to the authorities and participants.

3.8 Limitations to the study

The following limitations may have influenced this study:

Many of the participants assumed that the researcher was a member of staff of the Social Work Department of the University of KwaZulu-Natal and initially appeared cautious of their feedback. Participants were repeatedly reassured that this was an independent research in the researcher's capacity as a Master's Student at UKZN and confidentiality and anonymity were highlighted.

Data was collected from a limited sample and this was a methodological limitation as the input from the participants was not representative of the entire spectrum of possible opinions from

supervisors of student social workers field placement. The sample size was small so these findings cannot be generalized to the larger community (Babbie and Mouton 2001).

Many social workers and agencies contacted acknowledged experiencing challenges in the aspect of student supervision; however, they were reluctant to commit themselves to engaging in this study.

3.9 Conclusion

This research was undertaken to explore the experiences of agency supervisors who supervise student social workers' field practice placement. The study focused on the experiences, perceptions and challenges faced by supervisors at social work agencies in their role as supervisors. This research used an exploratory and descriptive research design which was most appropriate in exploring the experiences of the said supervisors. Qualitative research methodology was utilised since it was the most appropriate approach to unravel the experiences and rich data at which this study was aimed. Convenience sampling was used since the availability of the supervisors was dependent upon in the study. A pilot study was undertaken to test the content of the interview schedule for its appropriateness to the study. The researcher developed an in-depth interviewing schedule to obtain the data which was audio recorded for transcription and analysis. In keeping with the principles of social work research, ethics were adhered to. A brief outline of the limitations to this study is shared. The following chapter presents the results and analysis of the findings.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter contains the presentation and analysis of data of the study which focused on examining the experiences of social workers as supervisors of student social workers' field placements. The information was obtained primarily from using an interview schedule that was administered to 18 social work supervisors employed at 14 agencies and organizations situated within the greater Durban area of KwaZulu-Natal. The participating agencies were diverse in respect of the type of organization ranging from government to non-government and including health and welfare, the nature of work, and location including urban, semi urban and rural. The students supervised were placed at these agencies from three universities in and around KwaZulu-Natal. Anonymity regarding the participants, agencies and universities will be maintained throughout the analysis. Pseudonyms (e.g. Participant 1, 2, 3 etc. or University A, B or C) will be used when reference is made to the supervisors or universities.

The data from the interview schedule was manually analysed according to broad themes related to the objectives of the study which are, the roles of the supervisors, student performance, collaboration with the university and challenges faced by social work supervisors.

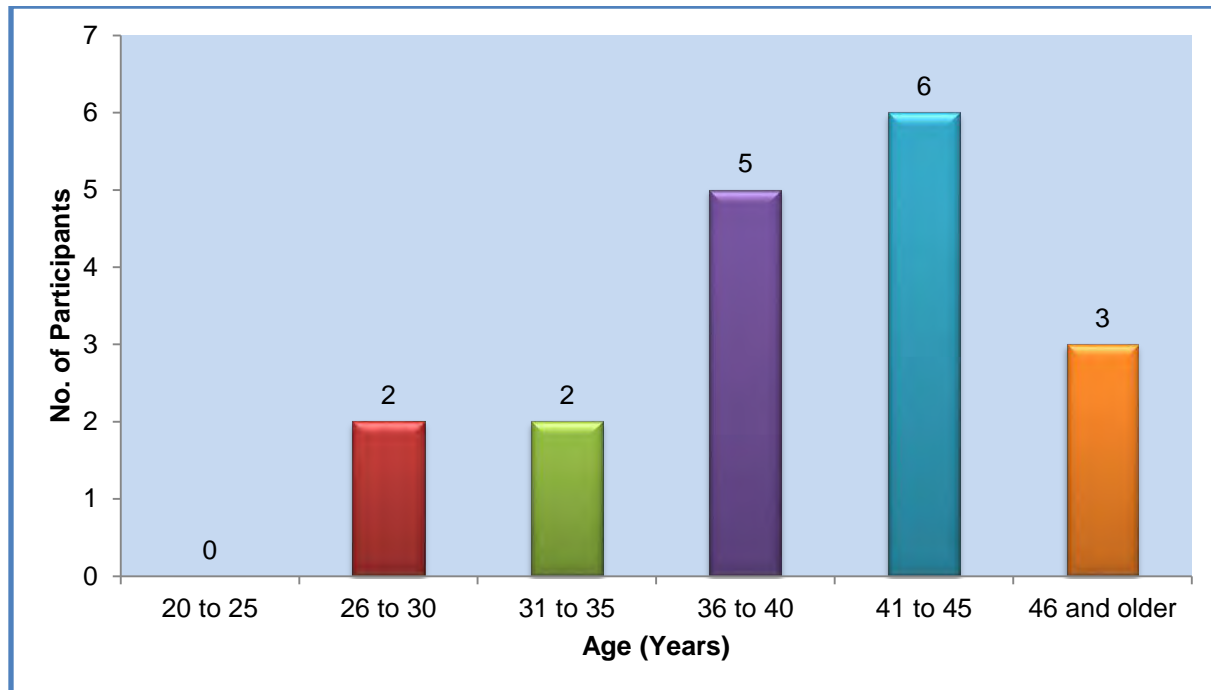
The purpose of this study was to collect data to answer the following questions:

- How do agency supervisors experience their role of supervising social work students?
- How do agency supervisors view student performance?
- How do agency supervisors experience the partnership and interaction with universities?
- What do supervisors suggest as the best practice model to enhance the field practice education experience of students?

This chapter, therefore, presents the results and the analysis of the data arising from a qualitative study. The Data is presented in the form of graphs, verbatim responses, interpretation and discussions.

4.2 Demographic data

4.2.1 Graph 1: Participants Age



The category with the most participants was in the age group 41 to 45, whilst the majority, i.e. 14 participants were older than 36 years of age, and four were between 26 and 35. This indicates that the supervisors in this sample were senior staff with the majority having many years of experience, resulting in a wealth of knowledge and skills in the field, thus capacitating them in their role as supervisors. This pattern is consistent with studies by Engelbrecht (2008), who found that the demographics of social work supervisors in South Africa are usually women (refer to 4.2.2 below) over the age of 30 and with at least five years of experience as a front line social worker.

4.2.2 Gender

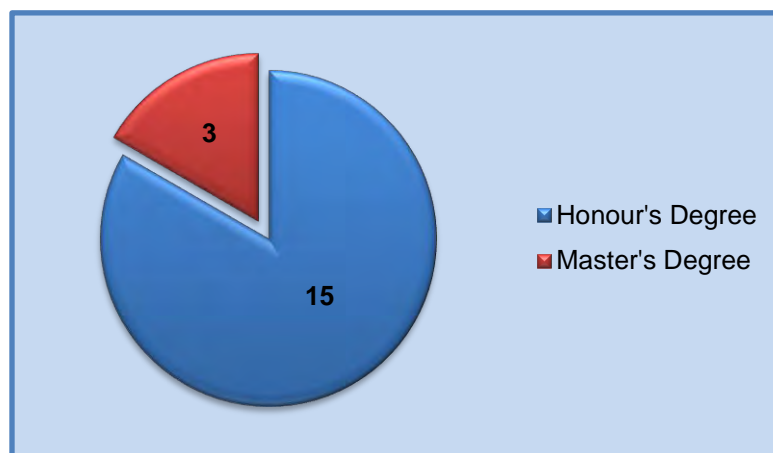
All 18 participants were female.

In a study by the SACSSP in October 2005, it was reported that there was a total number of 11 111 registered social workers with the majority being female. This is also supported by other research findings regarding social work practitioners, where the majority in the profession, almost 89%, are female (Engelbrecht 2003). According to the Scarce & Critical Skills Research Project (2008), social workers are consistently overwhelmingly female.

4.2.3 Race

The largest number of participants was Indian (11), followed by Black (6) and White (1) who supervised students' placements. According to the findings of Census 2001 and the Scarce & Critical Skills Research Project (2008), there is an evident change in the race profile of social workers and available data suggests that roughly half of all social workers are African, one third are White, one tenth are Coloured and the remainder are Indian. These findings therefore suggest that despite the lower number of Indian social workers nationally, there is a higher number of practicing Indian social workers/supervisors in the area that the study was undertaken. This finding is consistent with Statistics South Africa (1996) which stated that KwaZulu-Natal has the highest population of Indians in South Africa. In addition, despite the researcher contacting a broad range of agencies across various demographic aspects the sample in this study was based on the willingness of the participants.

4.2.4 Graph 2: Qualification

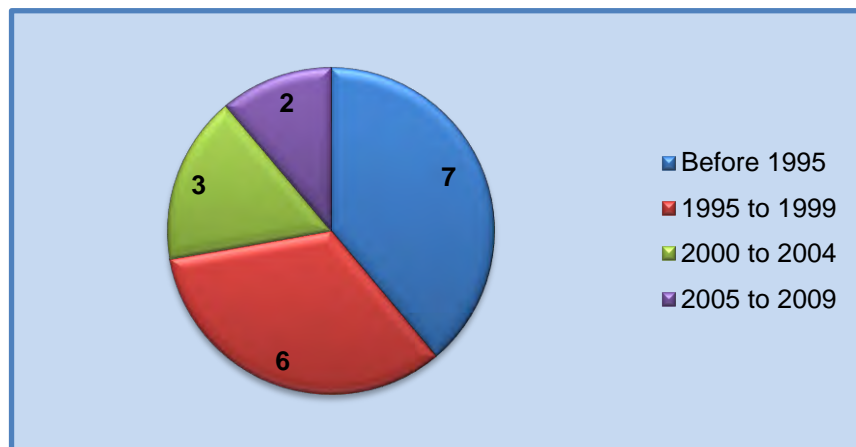


Fifteen participants had an honours degree in social work, whilst three had completed a postgraduate degree. Several participants confirmed that the majority of the social workers/supervisors, once they qualified as practitioners, did not pursue a postgraduate qualification. Participants did cite reasons for their failure for this as being their poor salaries, the high cost of the qualification and minimal support from agencies or universities for them to pursue additional qualifications. One of the suggestions made through this study was that supervisors be compensated for their role by being granted the opportunity by the universities to study for their Master's and PhD in social work.

4.2.5 University from which the qualification was obtained

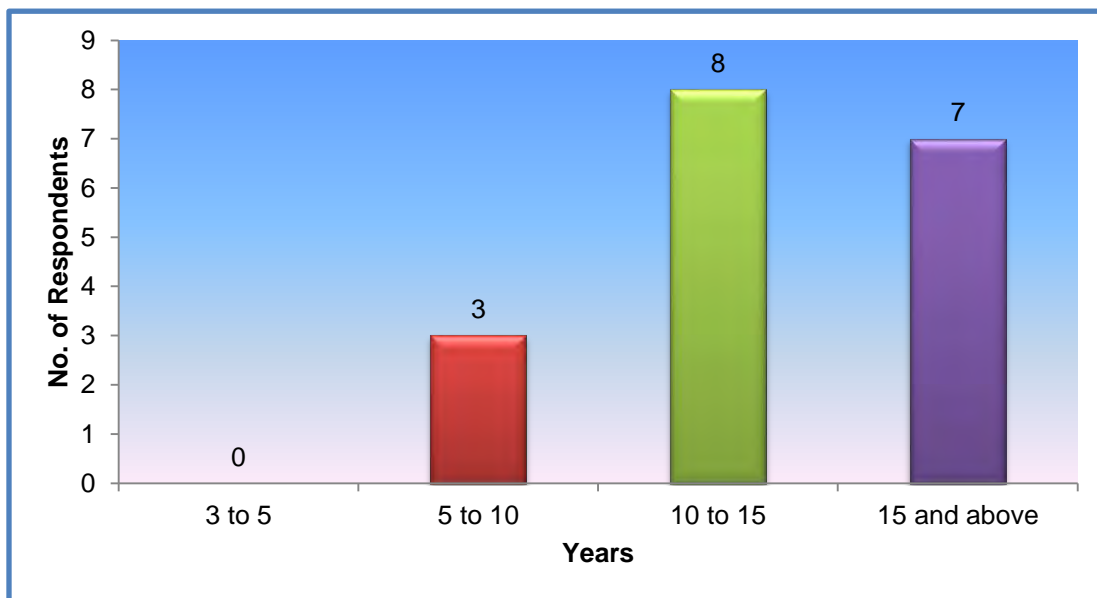
The majority of the participants; (12) were graduates of University A, a full time university, followed by three who graduated at University B, a correspondence university and three at University C. Universities A and B are situated in the Durban Metropolitan area whilst University C is situated on the north coast of the province. This indicates the diversity that exists within the staff structure at agencies which is important in providing guidance and support to students who are placed at agencies for their field practice from universities throughout the province.

4.2.6 Graph 3: Year of qualification as a social worker



The majority of the participants qualified before 1995, with 13 having qualified prior to 1999, indicating that the majority of the supervisors in this study had more than 10 years' experience in the profession. Hawkins and Shohet (2006) and Kadushin (1992), suggest a minimum of two years of front line experience before taking on the task of supervision.

4.2.7 Graph 4: Years of practice as a social worker

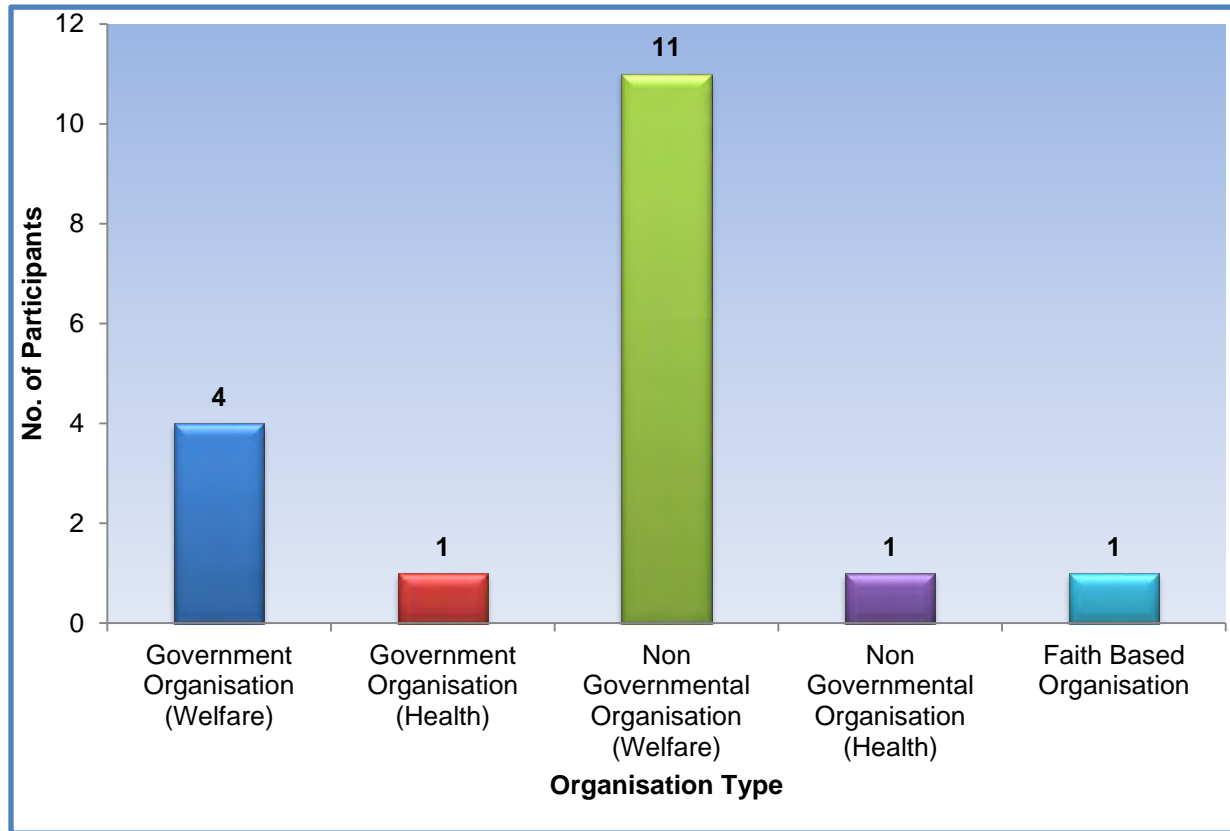


The majority of the participants (15) had been practicing as social workers for over 10 years, with seven having more than 15 years of social work experience. This further reinforces and supports the seniority status of those who assume the role of supervisor in this study.

4.2.8 Type of organization

The researcher invited 47 organizations comprising non-governmental, community based and faith based organizations, covering a broad range of services, generic and specialist, from child and youth care to working with couples and families, people with special needs and the elderly. In addition governmental organizations, (both health and welfare) were invited to participate. Every district office and institution of the Department of Social Development in Durban and surrounding areas was invited to participate.

Graph 5: Type of Organisation

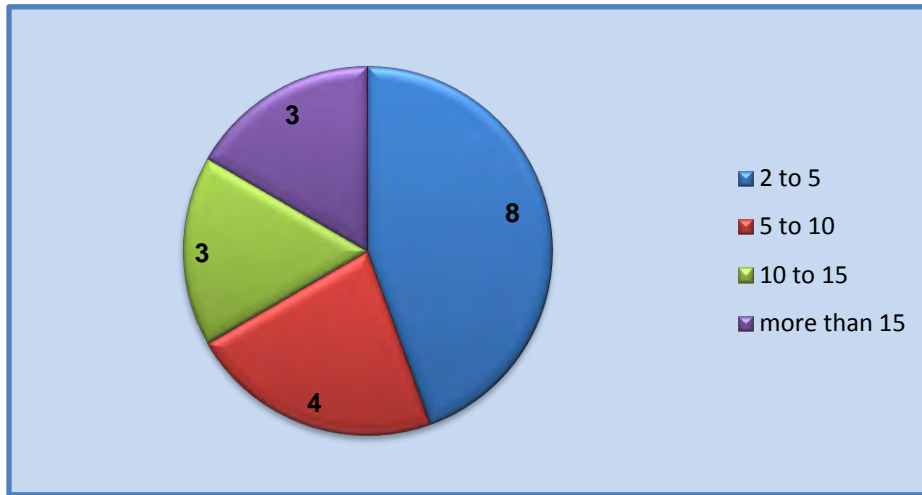


A positive response to participate and contribute to this study was received from the non-government sectors which made up 12 of the responses, whilst four of the participants were from two district offices at the Department of Social Development and one from the health and Faith based organisations respectively.

4.2.9 Type of services

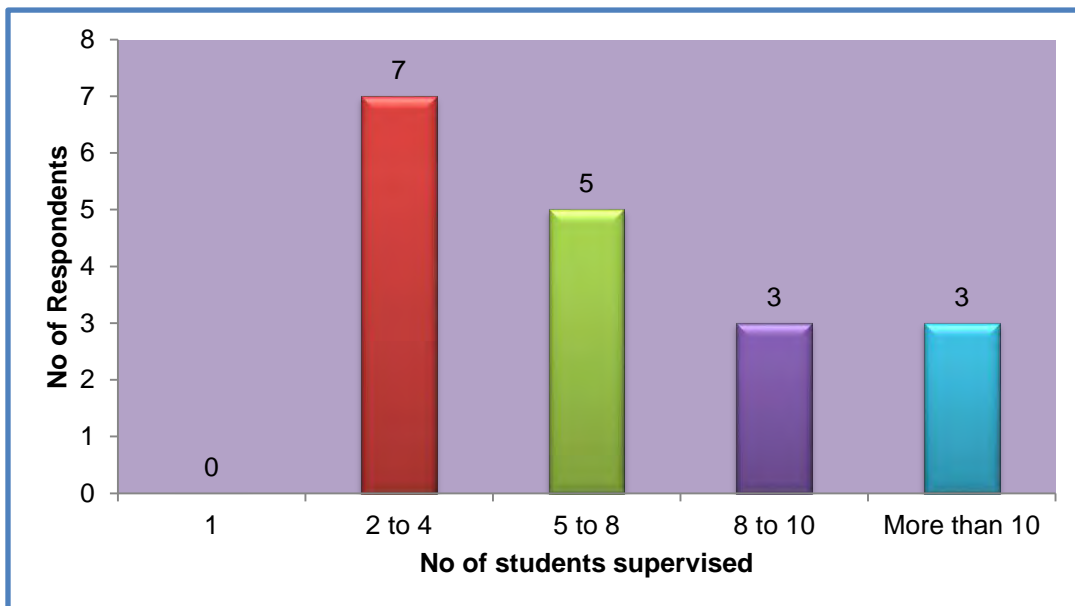
The majority of the participants, (10) were employed at organizations that rendered a specialist service, whilst eight participants were from organizations that provided a generic service.

4.2.10 Graph 6: Years of supervising students



The largest number (8) of participants reported being supervisors for between two to five years, with a noticeable decline in the number of participants and years of supervision. This is consistent with the findings of the Scarce & Critical Skills Research Project (2008), where the emigration, death, retirement and resignation of senior staff from the profession are highlighted.

4.2.11 Graph 7: Number of students supervised



The majority of the supervisors (7) have supervised between two to four students, with a steady decline in the number of supervisors who supervised a large number of students. In 2005, the ratio of registered social workers (11 111) to the population (4 700 745) was 23.6 per 100 000. According to the Scarce & Critical Skills Research Project (2008) in order to maintain this ratio in the face of population growth and the loss of social workers through retirement and death, a total of 3282 additional social workers will be needed by 2015. This implies that the number of students being supervised ought to increase rather than decrease.

4.3 Experiences in supervising social work students

4.3.1 Criteria for selecting supervisors

The emphasis on student field placement and its critical function has been highlighted in several studies as indicated in Chapter 2. Together with a sound academic programme, field practice placement and training is seen to complement the development of a competent social worker. To achieve the objectives of field practice, it is important to be guided by and exposed to a solid supervisory programme and experience. This necessitates good selection criterion for supervisors. But in practice, exactly how are supervisors selected?

The draft policy on supervision by the SACSSP indicates that the supervisor of a student social worker should be a qualified social worker registered with the SACSSP and have at least two years' experience, and should have completed an academic module in supervision of at least 30 hours at a higher education institution and/or a course recognised by the SACSSP.

Whilst all of the participants in this study had a degree in social work, subscribed to the registration requirements of the SACSSP and were employed at the agency at which the student was placed, the criteria for selecting them as supervisors differed. This question therefore sought to determine how student supervisors were selected or appointed.

83% (15), of the participants in this study indicated that *Experience* as a social worker was an important quality in selecting them as a supervisor and this is evident from graphs 3, 4 and 7, in section 4.2, which depicts the level of experience of the participants. Experience in this context refers to the number of years spent practicing as a social worker as well as experience in

supervising staff members (including practicing social workers) and students, and the years spent at the agency. These participants confirmed that they were requested to supervise students due to their number of years of work experience and seniority at their agencies.

A few participants indicated that passion and willingness to contribute to the growth and progress of student social workers was the quality considered when they were requested to supervise. The majority of the participants elaborated on the additional load that supervising a student entails since it adds to their existing workload exerting pressure on them in carrying out their day to day routines. They expressed that it was essential for a supervisor to maintain high work ethics, competency, be active within the agency, reliable, nurturing, passionate about supervision and have a high level of motivation. The competency and reliability of a supervisor is important as emphasized by participant 14 who stated that:

...managers and directors know which social worker is capable of handling the load, if a social worker is not handling her own caseload, the manager will not select or nominate her to take on the additional task of supervising a student.

This response coheres with Peleg-Oren, et al (2007), who found that the agency social worker must be suitable for the task of field instructor. The authors compare programmes in Western countries such as USA and Israel and find that it is common that supervisors of field placement must have at least a BA degree in social work, between four and five years of social work experience, and undergo a process of selection. Furthermore, the field instructor must be employed at the agency, be familiar with the procedures in that agency and the specific tasks and needs of the population served by that agency. In a document compiled by ASAWEI and SACSSP in 2009 entitled *Situation analyses of current social work practice training in South Africa*, 17 higher education institutions provided feedback in terms of understanding the current practices in field practice placement. One of the indicators referred to the criteria used, in selecting field practice supervisors. Universities varied in terms of the minimum years of experience that the supervisor should have, with some stating two, others three and yet another five years of experience. Supervisors must be employed at the agency; with a minimum of a BSW degree, however one university had a minimum requirement of MSW degree. One university indicated that availability and willingness to supervise was a criteria.

It is evident that social workers' knowledge and skills derived through years of practice were the main criteria used in selecting them as supervisors. It is encouraging to note that supervisors recognise that they have been selected due to their passion, commitment and high quality of work. This serves to acknowledge and reinforce their professional contribution to the field.

Participant 17 regarded supervision of students, "*as an opportunity for promotion and other senior posts*". As indicated by Davys & Beddoe (2009), supervising of students is often seen as a developmental step in the career path of social work practitioners, and this is reinforced by Smith (1996, 2005, 2011), who states that "practice teachers can regard themselves as having come full cycle in their careers", in that their journey commenced as a student in training to a practitioner and finally to acquiring the competence and confidence to undertake the role of student supervisor.

Three participants indicated that they were the only social workers at their agencies and thus had no choice but to assume responsibility for the management of the agency and the staff, including supervising the student. They were however all senior staff with extensive experience in their varying roles.

Two participants indicated that at their agencies, selection of student supervisors was done through a process of rotation amongst staff members which provided every social worker the opportunity to gain experience in supervision. However, this selection criterion did not usually work because some staff members were not willing to supervise students; Participant 13 stressed this by saying:

...staff refuse to supervise, therefore I am stuck supervising all the time. I take it on because no one else wants to do it, and I think it's necessary, and I remember being a student.

Whilst it is clear from this quotation that some supervisors are passionate and committed to the needs of the profession and are assets in their role as supervisors, caution must be exercised that these individuals are not overloaded. As in this case, this was the only participant who stated that

she would not want to continue to supervise students in the future (Section 4.7.2.1 page 118). On probing further it was evident she was a caring, passionate and committed supervisor who indicated feeling overworked and constantly rescuing the agency because staff were allowed to say no to the task of supervising a student.

In some agencies there was no need for a selection process because there was only one social worker available. In such cases, the social worker automatically assumed the responsibility to manage the agency and supervise the student. As was evident from this study, these social workers were of the opinion that accepting students, particularly 4th years, at their agencies would benefit them and the agency in terms of human resources. Some supervisors, however, indicated that this was not the case due to the students' lack of skills and need for intensive supervision and monitoring.

The belief that the transition from student to supervisor is a well-planned and supported exercise appears to be different from the reality of the situation as indicated by Davys & Beddoe (2009). For many student supervisors their initiation into the role is a compassionate response to the universities' fieldwork coordinators' desperate attempts to secure student placement. Whilst agencies juggle their ongoing dilemmas regarding lack of resources and high turnover of staff, they do offer student placements (Davys & Beddoe 2009).

4.3.2 Role of supervisors

All 18 participants viewed their role of supervising social work students, as a mentoring process, where students were nurtured to become functioning social workers through the development of their capacity and strengths. As reiterated by Participant 3, a supervisor is “a *facilitator, educator, role model, mentor, and advisor*”

The feedback from participants in this study in respect of their roles is consistent with that outlined in the Seven-Eyed Supervision: A Process Model by Hawkins & Shohet (2006) where the roles essential for effective supervision are highlighted and this was reiterated by Brown & Bourne (1996) in their Model for Practice.

The participants were consistent in their feedback that the key responsibilities of the supervisory role encompassed teaching students to relate social work theory to practice and to enable them to analyze and solve problems independently. Their role was seen to include exposing students to the social work environment both geographically and demographically, allowing opportunities for students to think critically, conduct needs analysis of the areas of work, and identify gaps or services required. Most of the supervisors agreed that critical to their role was the exposure of students to the nature and dynamics of case work, group and community work. Clearly these views were congruent with those of the two theorists in this study, Brown and Bourne (1996) and Hawkins and Shohet (2006), who highlight the need for supervision to be developmental in nature. According to Marion Bogo (2005) the aim of field education is to promote practice competence through students learning to integrate and apply the knowledge, values and skills of social work while also offering services to individuals, families, groups and communities. The participants were clear that the experiences awarded to students at the agency should transform them from being competent in basic counseling skills to the more intensive counseling and therapeutic skills essential for practice.

Both the models of supervision, that is, “A Model for Practice”, and “The Seven-Eyed Supervision Model” as per the theoretical framework in Chapter 1 indicate that supervision entails the skillful interaction between the supervisor and the supervisee with the general goal being to make the supervisee more effective in helping people and integrating theory into practice. Ultimately, the supervisor’s role is to expose the student to what it entails to be a social worker, as stated by participant 3; *“My role is to bring out the best in the student, to ensure that the client gets the best quality of service.”* and Participant 4, *“my role is to ensure that the student meets the agency requirements”*

This is consistent with the systems that form the basis of Brown and Bourne’s (1996) Model for Practice and the quotations above speak directly to the practice system, the worker system and the agency system as highlighted in the Model for Practice. In addition, participants mentioned that critical to the profession and supervision in particular is the quality of service and benefits to the client, as well as the upholding of the agencies’ policies and procedures at all times.

Furthermore, the majority of the participants indicated that the role of supervisors is to conduct ongoing monitoring, evaluation and assessment of the students' progress in order to meet the academic requirements of the practice placement. In addition, they agreed that the supervisor ensures that the student carries out the day to day roles and duties at the agency, through the supervision process which allows the supervisors to teach students about resources, guiding legislation, regulations, protocols and code of conduct of social work practice in order to ensure quality service to clients. The participants reiterated their role in providing assistance and guidance to students in report writing skills and reporting structures and formats as used by the agency. In this way the supervisors ensured that students met the agency requirements as well as those considered by the university during the final assessment of the student.

In order to achieve success in their role, a small number of supervisors made reference to guiding the students in their expected conduct through a contract set out at the beginning of the placement period which would help the supervisor discipline the student in case of any problems. To this extent, Participant 5 stated, *"if a student flounders I will contact the university urgently"*. According to Bogo (2005), field education is expected to be systematic, with educational objectives, or outcomes specified as practice behaviours, and to provide relevant learning activities and assessment of students' mastery of practice competencies. Participant 5 further adds in terms of her role:

"I take social work very seriously, we are infrastructure builders and social work is a serious job. They (students), need to see at the beginning what the role of the social worker is all about. If they lose it at the beginning, they will not get it."

It is encouraging to note that supervisors view their role and responsibilities with such seriousness. According to Kadushin (1992:37), "the objective of professional training is not only to teach the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that would enable the student to do a competent job, but also to socialize the student to the ways of the profession, to develop a professional conscience." According to Sewpaul (2011), social work as a profession is concerned with immensely complex sociopolitical and economic issues, such as poverty, disease, hunger and starvation, human rights abuse, natural disasters etc., all of which contribute to an extremely difficult and complex world with which students must be groomed to grapple.

The role of a supervisor was therefore acknowledged and described by participants as being quite complex such that some of the duties performed were done subconsciously and students learnt through observation. This sentiment was reiterated by Participant 3, a supervisor who said, “*Our role is too broad to be confined to a few labels*”.

The supervisor’s role, as emphasized in Hawkins & Shohet (2006), is not just to reassure the supervisee, but to allow the emotional disturbances (from their interaction with their clients) to be felt within the safer setting of the supervisory relationship, where it can survive, be reflected upon and learnt from. Supervision is thus seen as the container that holds the helping relationship together and strengthens its potential.

It is evident that the roles of the supervisor are very broad and varied. The participants have an understanding of the responsibility awarded to them and this is also reiterated through the theory and literature on supervision.

4.3.3 Supervising social work students

The majority of the participants reported that their experiences of supervising students varied according to the uniqueness of each student and their needs. A range of experiences from being enjoyable and rewarding to demanding and frustrating were highlighted and described.

A significant number of participants described supervision as enjoyable and believed that students contribute their fresh skills and knowledge which facilitates growth and progress within agencies. They furthermore stressed that it was enjoyable to work with students who were able to implement theory into practice, and use the opportunity to learn from other social workers. In this regard, Hawkins & Shohet (2006), in their Seven-Eyed Supervision Model, comment on the supervisor being able to identify the readiness of students to secure different levels of supervision. Students were also seen as valuable in providing support to supervisors as they attended to cases in the field, assisted with intake and general office queries. This is what the Model for Practice alludes to (Brown & Bourne 1996), as the collaborative interface between the worker and team systems, where the student through the supervision process moves from the

primary induction phase into the more sophisticated connection phase and explores the ambits of the profession, by extending him/herself in terms of roles and capacity.

Consistent with the observations by Davys & Beddoe (2000), some participants perceived supervising older students much easier than supervising younger students since older students' life experiences enable them to have more insight into the clients' problems and they are able to integrate their life experiences into their field work; whilst other supervisors expressed their preference to working with younger students because they believed they were easier to mould into social workers.

However some factors beyond the students control were regarded as presenting challenges in the supervisory process. Several of the participants indicated that their own heavy workload and agency expectations placed demands on them which often resulted in them grappling with time management in respect of the multiple roles and responsibilities within the agency on one hand, whilst still having to accommodate crises on the other. These responses cohere with the findings by Poulin et al (2006) where changes in funding, management structures, staff turnover and high caseloads impact on field practice placements and the supervision process.

Due to the minimal time to attend to all the activities, the majority of the participants reported that supervision remains largely on an "Ad Hoc" basis and often planned supervision sessions are postponed to accommodate crises, staff and management issues and court appearances, as revealed by Participant 16,

"I don't like to supervise in this manner, because it conflicts with my ethical values because I really do believe that students should get a fair amount of supervision and it is my role to be there and available, but unfortunately, due to the workload and time constraints, it is not possible, not humanly possible".

It is encouraging to note that supervisors are committed to the process; however it seems that they do feel a sense of helplessness regarding their capacity to do more.

Despite this, approximately 50% of the participants indicated that structured supervision once a week is diarized and non-negotiable, often putting aside their own tasks and prioritizing the needs of the student. One respondent indicated that due to the very specialized services provided, supervision of students is a high priority and can take up to three to four hours per day, whilst the remaining majority revealed that supervision occurs once a week for up to 90 minutes.

This clearly indicates that these participants recognise the importance of their role as supervisors and award it the priority they would to their other responsibilities. In addition it appears that these supervisors acknowledge that student's preparation and knowledge in terms of specialist services is limited and this demands more intensive supervision.

A number of participants reported that students' personal problems such as their financial and family crises impact on the supervisory process and become issues to be dealt with by the supervisor. However, Participant 1 had the following to say about this experience, "*it is enjoyable to overcome the challenges and see the fruits of progress and perseverance against all odds*". Several supervisors supported this notion and claimed to find fulfillment in seeing students progressing and developing in the profession. Their reasoning as stated by one of the participants is that this is a two way process, "*when they teach, they also learn*".

This is highlighted in the Model for Practice, where Brown & Bourne (1996), emphasize the need for the supervisor to acknowledge the supervisee's personal and professional resources and limitations in carrying out social work tasks and activities. Supervision in this system within the Model for Practice is seen as critical to address the effects of these factors and encourage self-examination on the part of the supervisee to enable professional development and progress within supervision as competence increases through different levels of supervision.

Several participants indicated that students entered the field practice setting with differing perceptions and expectations which presented with challenges for them. On one hand there were students who entered the placement with clear and realistic expectations of the agency and what was required of them. They were passionate about the profession and this was evident in their willingness to learn, accept every task as an opportunity for their development and were certain that this was the profession for them. The screening of such students for the profession appeared to be spot on, as described by participant 2:

“...they are *passionate* hence *tend to fit in*, they want to do their best, are *enthusiastic, hardworking, hand in work on time, meet return dates and want to learn...*”

However several supervisors reported that all too often, they have to contend with students who arrived with a poor attitude, preconceived ideas and high expectations that they could dictate their requirements. According to Kanno & Koeske (2010), the absence of adequate preparation for field work, impacts on students entering the field with apprehension, anxiety, unclear expectations, confusion and negative emotions that interfere with effective learning. Often these students expect very low caseloads, and abundant funds and resources to address all their field placement needs, which is not practical in many agencies. This was elaborated on by participants stating that often students, who lacked passion for the profession, were in it as a last resort and only because of being awarded a bursary to study. They did not take their field practice learning seriously because they believed that they could do whatever they pleased and would not fail. Particularly related to the Department of Social Development were two issues, that of the attitude, *“I can do as I please and will still pass and get a job”*.

This attitude was frequently commented on by supervisors in almost every interview. These students have a sense of job security and believe that they can get by with doing the minimum. This has far reaching implications for the practice of social work and commitment to the profession.

In addition, some participants reported experiencing challenges around diverse factors such as race discrimination (being supervised by an Indian), students with psychiatric disorders and those who presented with passive-aggressive behaviour. On probing further it was found that almost all students supervised were black students and whilst most students were respectful of the supervisory process and relationship, there were a few students who subtly undermined the process, did not follow the instructions of the supervisor and befriended the young, newly employed social workers and discussed aspects related to their work with staff other than their supervisor. This defied the protocol and boundaries which students were expected to observe. This was clearly interpreted by supervisors as an issue based on their different race. The issues of

students with psychiatric disorders were raised by 2 participants who claimed that the students were not suitable for the profession and “*fell through the cracks*”. Supervising such students was personally draining and almost a futile exercise. Such students lacked respect, professionalism and work ethics. These issues were brought to the attention of the university supervisors who tried to address them appropriately; however supervisors attributed this kind of behavior to poor screening for the profession and field work. The scope of practice for social work outlines clearly the roles, functions and characteristics of the profession. It is essential that those recruited into the profession are capable of conducting their responsibilities appropriately in that they impact on the lived experiences of clients both at the micro and mezzo levels.

In addition Participant 12 stated,

“Supervising students has been a difficult and challenging experience, students are very unprepared for field work and haven’t a clue of what is expected of them, they lack independence and have to literally be spoon-fed”.

This aspect of a student’s dependency on the supervisor was frequently raised by supervisors. Supervisors consistently expressed student’s inability and lack of preparedness for the field. They lacked basic skills and had no idea how to function at an agency.

Participants from agencies that render specialist intervention such as working with terminally ill clients, child and youth care or working with the elderly stated that students placed at their agencies were ill prepared for what to expect and experienced difficulties coping and some ended up dropping out before they had completed their field work. It is evident that all specializations do not form part of the universities curricula. The failure of students to withstand such level of crises and specialization is attributed to poor screening by the university. Supervisors also believe that universities do not take time to get to know the agencies and thus do not understand the kind of work students engage in once they are placed in these agencies. This is attributed mainly to the fact that universities are desperate for student placement and access placements that are available. This is supported by findings by Poulin et al (2006) in that the availability of adequate field placement opportunities that provide a range of placement experiences is compromised and thus securing viable placement sites and supervisors is a challenge for universities.

Most of the participants revealed that supervising students from different universities, all who have different expectations and requirements pose a challenge. A common theme that emerged was the demands and frustrations of having to accomplish all the field work requirements within a period of three months at one of the universities. In addition failure on the part of universities to maintain contact with and interact with the agency leaves many uncertainties for the agency and the supervisor. The negative impact of this was evident on not only the student but the supervisor and the client in terms of service delivery. Another huge challenge expressed by several of the participants was the lack of skills with which students entered the field, particularly basic counselling skills and report writing skills. As revealed by participant 11, *“The lack of basic skills is consistent with all students I’ve supervised from the various universities around KZN”*. This finding is reiterated by Lyter & Smith (2008) who, through extensive research on the aspect of implementing theoretical knowledge into practice skills, discovered that students were underprepared in several practice areas and therefore stated that, “there is a disconnect between the competencies and skills emphasized in the curriculum and those desired by the field agencies”.

Supervisors expressed repeatedly that students enter the field with minimal writing or counselling skills. In addition they experience difficulties in establishing rapport and settling into the agency routine. They cannot function independently and need to be literally shown what to do throughout their placement, leaving little room for the supervisor to attend to other responsibilities. Supervisors were of the opinion that competencies in terms of the practical component should be a part of the academic curriculum.

4.4 Supervisors’ perception of student performance

4.4.1 Academic preparation

In terms of academic preparation for field placement, the majority of the supervisors agreed that students were well prepared, in regard to the theoretical understanding of social work. Some supervisors believed that the universities place a lot of emphasis on theoretical knowledge and this was evident in students’ display of it, as was expressed by Participant 10, who stated, *“My*

experience is that students come in with a lot of knowledge, a lot of theory and with the enthusiasm to get into the field”; and participant 7, “The university is doing a fantastic job because the student is able to rattle off the theory”.

Some participants benefited from students’ advanced technological skills which they found exciting and useful. However, the main concern expressed by the majority of the supervisors was students’ lack of practical preparedness to carry out tasks in the field. To elaborate further as shared by Participant 16, *“preparation for the actual field practice does not come close to the theoretical preparation”* and Participant 3:

“Universities should prepare students more for the realities and practical aspects of social work”.

Most supervisors believed that universities did not adequately prepare students for the realities of field work, that is, the theory taught at universities was not contextualized into practice resulting in students becoming overwhelmed when they entered the agency and discovered that it was not what they expected it to be. This sentiment was also expressed by Participant 3 who stated that:

“there is need for more practical preparation for the field, so you are not alarmed when you are in the field...often social work students come from a protected environment, and field work is often a rude awakening...students need to have a feel for the experience of field work.”

This quote highlights the gaps in equipping students with skills for the field. Hawkins (2007) highlights the importance of fully understanding the client and the client’s situation before applying theory to bring about changes. The students in this study were all level 4 students who within a few months would be employed at agencies. It seems that this was the students’ first exposure to the practice of social work, and was quite an overwhelming experience. In addition to having to comply with the university and SACSSP requirements in terms of the Exit Level Outcomes, within this short period at the agency, the student must also become accustomed to and comfortable with field work.

There is evidence that being well prepared for the field enhances student's self-efficacy thus alleviating the stressors associated with field placement and working with intensive encounters with people, thus facilitating higher student satisfaction with field placement (Cohen & Gagin (2005), Corrigan, et al (1997) and Ewers et al (2002).

Furthermore, supervisors expressed that students did not research the agencies that they were placed at. To elaborate on this, Participant 15 stated that *“many students who are placed with us haven't researched us and have no clue what we are all about and what we do”*.

The lack of exposure to the various organizations and variety of services offered in the practice of social work results in students entering an agency with no idea as to the kind of work or specialization the agency undertakes. This often resulted in students' shock and feelings of being overwhelmed and they eventually experienced difficulties in adjusting to the agency context. Supervisors requested that students become familiar with the range of services and the extent of interventions at organizations before being placed with them. It was suggested repeatedly that students' exposure to the field should commence much earlier in their training programme. Earlier exposure to field work, extension of the university curriculum to include a variety of specialist services and interventions and a more varied experience in the field would certainly provide opportunities for the student to become accustomed to the various contexts of the practice of social work.

The majority of the supervisors expressed concerns regarding academic preparedness in terms of students' writing skills and abilities. Despite having theoretical understanding of social work, the majority of the students lacked basic writing skills. Examples highlighted by participants were students' inability to express themselves in writing, poor record keeping and the inability to write a simple letter of appointment. It is however noted that English is not the first language for the majority of the students and a major challenge would inevitably be that of writing skills. This often resulted in supervisors having to dictate letters, or as Participant 16 stated, she is forced to *“Write a three line letter in pencil and get the student to ink it in”*. In addition to this Participant 11 stated that, *“students do not write out verbatim reports like we used to, I cannot trust or rely on a precise format of a session”*

On probing further it was discovered that some universities in the past had required students to write out their interviews verbatim, thus allowing the supervisor the opportunity to guide them based on their skills or lack of them. Although supervisors acknowledged that students were in field placement to learn, they were strongly of the opinion that the development of basic writing and counselling skills should have occurred at the university. There was however a huge gap. The supervisors reported that the process of the interview could not be followed and as a result they experienced difficulties in guiding the student in the use of their skills etc. and “*students inevitably get stuck*”. One participant indicated that she did discuss the previous method of verbatim reporting with the university lecturer and was given a response as follows: “*great if that could happen, but we recognize that that will never happen*”.

In addition to the inadequate preparation regarding basic counselling and writing skills, many supervisors believed that students were inadequately prepared in terms of basic professional etiquette at the agencies. Regarding this matter, Participant 9 stated the following:

“...majority of the students need a lot of preparation as to expectations of the agency, like mindful of dress code, no revealing clothes, tight fitting, when working with elderly...”

Many participants reported on student’s inappropriate dress code. Whilst this is documented in the code of conduct and at some agencies discussed at the initial contracting stage or during the orientation programme, it seems that students lack awareness of the inappropriateness of their dress for the type of work at agencies. Examples were cited where students insisted on wearing high heeled shoes and elaborate clothing when going out to poor communities or wearing tight and revealing clothing when working with the elderly or at a faith based organization.

4.4.2 Attitude towards work

Students’ attitude towards their work is regarded as an important aspect of their field work experience and therefore, when students reported for their first day at agencies, some supervisors explained the importance of attitude towards their field practice placement. More than 80% of the supervisors revealed that, initially students’ attitude towards their work was positive. They

came in confident and were able to get on with the work. To elaborate on this, Participant 2 expressed the following sentiment, *“most have a very enthusiastic attitude...very idealistic; they come in with the intention of changing the world”*. However, as indicated by Participant 8, *“Initial enthusiasm does wane with time as workload grows, the time factor and pressure from university and agency”*

Supervisors described a positive attitude as an advantage for students as it is easy for them to learn and adjust to challenges faced in the field and at the agency. To elaborate, Participant 5 stated that, *“can’t have an attitude, we are dealing with death, chemotherapy, radiation, child given a few days to live...we lose all our barriers”*

This supervisor was reflecting on the importance of an open and positive attitude especially when working at an organization that specializes in highly sensitive issues. Experience is recognised as a teaching and learning platform. Attitudes change and develop with life experience. This response highlights the difficulty in students who lack life experience to deal with issues of this nature. In reference to Hawkins & Shohet’s (2006), Seven-Eyed Supervision Model, the relationship between the client and supervisee is a challenge for supervisors in the process of supervision. The model reiterates that the differences in the supervision experiences lay in the choices that the supervisor makes in terms of where and what to focus on.

According to Fortune et al (2007), *“field practice includes experiential learning that helps student’s master professional skills and integrates knowledge and skills from the classroom”*. This idea is documented in several studies, which emphasize that experience is well established as a principle of social work education. It has been found, that more frequent practice of professional skills is associated with better student outcomes. The results support the usefulness of repeatedly practicing skills in the field.

A few of the supervisors indicated that they encountered students with negative attitudes towards their work from the outset, who did not take their work seriously. Their personalities or personal issues interfered with assuming their responsibilities and their overall performance. Participant 6

elaborated on this by stating that, *“some allow their personal situations to impact on their working environment e.g. students do not come in due to problems with transport”*

Whilst students’ challenges with transport and finances are rife, and cannot be equated with poor attitude, the issue that supervisors experience is students’ poor commitment to their work, often blaming and finding excuses through other factors without making attempts to work around these issues. The complacent attitude, ‘everything must be handed to students’, is what supervisors’ interpret as a poor attitude.

Some participants reported that students displayed non-commitment to their work and spent their time engaging in activities that were unrelated to their field practice and when confronted about their behavior they displayed a ‘*don’t care*’ attitude stating that they *“only attended the field placement because they had to”*. In some cases, supervisors informed that students were selective of the areas they requested to conduct field work in, and they displayed a negative attitude when their requests were not adhered to, for example, going out into rural communities, or informal areas were regarded as too dangerous, even though transport was arranged. Students have to be exposed to the realities of the profession since a major part of social work intervention is conducted outside of the office in the space of the client irrespective of their living circumstances. The code of conduct and ethics that serves as a guide to the profession must be inculcated from early in the career, similar to first year medical students who take their professional oath of practice at the beginning of their first year.

Many of the participants expressed that 4th year students appeared to be under pressure from the university and agency to accomplish all that was required within a limited time frame, which resulted in their being unable to complete their tasks as expected. This was exacerbated by the fact that supervisors did not usually have enough time for supervision. This resulted in some students adopting a *“cheeky, arrogant and moody”* attitude. Whilst it is acknowledged that students do have their own expectation to meet, it must be reiterated that agencies also have expectations of students. This sentiment was expressed by Participant 16 who stated that:

“...it’s very challenging on both sides, the student has certain expectations and the agency has certain expectations...the agency is obviously looking for the fact that as

much as they want to train and groom the students they also want some kind of support and give back...many agencies like mine for example, we actually depend on student social workers, I don't have any frontline SWs, so we depend on student SWs, especially third and fourth years, because you are expecting that they are at a point where they are almost ready to get into practice, but they are so not ready for the realities of field work"

This quote clearly indicates that whilst agencies offer universities and students the opportunity of a training ground, they also want to benefit in the process. This results in the students being in a position where they are being tugged at both ends, by the university to perform according to the field practice requirements and by the agency for support and capacity in terms of service delivery. Agencies that accept students because they lack human resources and expect students to fill in the gaps seem to impact on students' time and ability to function according to all the expectations, resulting in students' frustration which in turn is interpreted as a negative attitude. In being guided by Brown and Bourne's Model for Practice (1996), students' progress through the various systems depends on their interaction within these systems in the context of the practice, the agency and the team. Through building in the model of supervision and contracting at the outset, the requirements and expectations of all parties will be clearly defined.

Some supervisors believed that students developed a negative attitude as a result of how they were treated by their supervisors. They tend to adopt the behavior from how their supervisors treated them, reacted to situations and generally how they groomed the students. According to Engelbrecht (2006), "Attitudes towards social work practice are often acquired and established during social work training". This sentiment was expressed by Participant 7 who stated that:

"...it depends largely on the attitude of the supervisor, her approach and mannerism toward the student...if students are treated well, they do not become angry, antagonistic, frustrated and emotional...supervisors must lead by example and be a role model...if you show your students that you can accomplish anything irrespective of how hectic it is, your students learn from you...attitude on both parties very important. If a student is perceived as a burden or just a task allocated to you as a

supervisor, this impacts on the relationship, process and attitude...the way you as a supervisor grooms a student will impact on how they perform out in the field.”

It is encouraging to note that supervisors have this level of awareness of the impact and influence they have on the student in training. Supervisors have, in this study, described their role as being a mentor and role model and as such it is critical that they portray behaviour and attitude that can be modeled by their students. The aspect of modeling is highlighted in the study by Davys & Beddoe (2000) and is regarded as inherent in the supervisor's role and a potent aspect in the supervisor's functions. The criticism raised by these authors in this respect is that very little is invested in ensuring good quality models for this profession. The importance of a positive relationship between the supervisor and supervisee, one that can enhance growth and development has been highlighted in several studies. This is also elaborated on in Mode 5 of Hawkins & Shohet's (2006) Seven-Eyed Supervision Model, where attention to the quality of the working relationship between the supervisor and supervisee is paramount. If students are regarded as burdens it is highly unlikely they would enjoy a positive learning opportunity or develop a positive feel for the profession.

4.4.3 Dedication to the profession

In terms of dedication to their training, the majority of the supervisors believed that very few students were dedicated to being social workers and hence committed to their work in the field and at the agency, but according to Participant 3, some students were perceived to be, “*very dedicated, complete tasks, if help is needed they will ask... gain a lot of experience in the agency*” However, Participant 12 expressed the following sentiment:

...generally I have come across only one or two students that show dedication and motivation and keenness to work, the rest no. Very few are dedicated, majority are not.

To elaborate on this, participants indicated that initially students displayed high spirits and dedication; however, exposure to the field and the realities of the profession dampened their initial attitude and this had implications for their long term aspirations as social workers. Their

enthusiasm waned especially after learning about the challenges and constraints experienced as a social worker such as limited resources, high caseloads, and other complex situations they would have to face in the field. A significant number of supervisors indicated that some students were not dedicated to their work since social work was not their first choice, and the uncertainty regarding this profession was maintained as late as in their 4th year of study. They indicated that many students claimed to be in the profession since it was the only way they could enter a university programme. Their points were too low to allow them into any other field. Entry into social work was seen as an easy option and as a result many students entered the profession for the wrong reasons.

If the intent of the profession remains to ‘promote human dignity and social justice of those we serve’, then according to Lyter & Smith (2008), “Social work as a profession has lost its compass”.

This sentiment was expressed by Participant 16 who stated that:

“...there is a sense that it is so easy to get into the faculty, because there isn’t a high criterion, and it’s not as difficult to get into social work. I had one student who told me she wanted to get into BComm but couldn’t, and it was much easier to get into social work ...I had another student who told me she wanted to be a Radiographer and couldn’t get in and the points she had were only suitable for her being a social worker...It’s become like a last resort job or profession, just to say I’ve been to university and I have a degree, no passion, no commitment, no dedication...”

This quotation has serious implications for the screening process for admission into the profession. If students are allowed entry only because they want to state they are at university, the repercussions of this for the profession in the long term can be devastating. Social work as a profession has been repeatedly termed as “*a calling*” by participants in this study since the profession is entrenched in deep human values, principles and ethics. If students are allowed to enter the programme as a last option into university and for other wrong reasons, it is highly unlikely they will develop or fulfill the requirements expected of an individual in this profession. Apart from having unhappy, apathetic social workers, the impact on the lives that this profession serves will have far reaching consequences in the years to come.

Several participants raised the issue of the awarding of bursaries, since students were perceived to be pursuing social work because of the bursaries offered which was regarded as an easy way to study and be guaranteed employment. One participant indicated that of the 12 students she supervised during the period of this study, 80% indicated that social work was not their first or even their second choice; they chose the profession only because of securing the bursary. To elaborate on this, Participant 2 stated that:

“...Social work students already come in with a dampened aspiration; many already hear that social work is not a well-paid profession. They know that progress is very limited, promotion only if posts are available. The structure of the social work profession does not allow for easy upward mobility especially in the Department of Social Development. Students are very aware of this. Students enter the field because they come from previously disadvantaged backgrounds, bursaries are offered and one can earn a salary. Social work does not offer great career pathing but it does offer a stable salary and this is looked at in terms of own personal development. Dedication and commitment maybe absent but students come in because of the earning potential.”

Comments such as these emphasize that social work as a profession and its core values demands a lot of an individual in terms of personal integrity. The feedback from participants is concerning in terms of the reasons for students' choice but especially for the calibre of professionals our universities are churning out. Whilst the offering of bursaries by the Department of Social Development is part of their retention strategy, the consequences of poor screening for the profession can counteract the efforts of this strategy. There appears no point in increasing the number of professionals in the field if these very professionals are unsuitable for practice or are in the field for so many wrong reasons. Participants, especially those employed at NGOs, report suffering the repercussion of this retention strategy in many ways, including training of students and not being able to employ them or losing newly employed students to the better paid government sector following the conditions of being awarded bursaries to study.

Since the majority of the participants agree that social work students lack dedication to the profession, supervisors question the selection criteria used when admitting students into social

work studies. Participants emphasized the unique psychosocial, political and economic needs of individuals and families in South Africa. Participant 16 emphasized the following,

“Social workers in the South African context work with individuals who are highly traumatized, in the example of street children, who are seen as the most highly traumatized group of individuals and our profession is resorting to utilizing the most uncommitted undedicated and unprofessional group of people to work with this group that requires a high quality of care”.

This quote serves to prompt a relook at the basic objectives and principles of social work. Social work in South Africa is by no means a glorified profession; it is one of very few professions that is concerned with social justice and improving the quality of life for the less fortunate. In order to promote the well-being of individuals, families and communities, especially in an era with so many factors that threaten basic survival it is necessary to ensure that the recruitment and training of committed and dedicated social workers to be agents of development and transformation is maintained. If social workers are to be relevant in the South African context they have to be willing, committed and capable of responding to the various conditions and challenges that plague the vulnerable (Bernstein & Gray 1996).

4.4.4 Interpersonal skills

One of the issues probed was students' interpersonal skills and abilities. The general consensus by participants was that the field placement was initially very intimidating to students; however with an intensive orientation programme, regular supervision and supportive environment, supervisors were able to socialize students into the place of work and guide them to establish rapport and integrate themselves with the staff and the agency requirements. Much depended on the individual student's personality and most students adapted quickly and were able to cope professionally and socially within the agencies and in the field. Participant 4 stated that students generally have:

“...good interpersonal skills, get on with all at the organization...can function in a team as well as in a leadership role...can function independently...”

In addition, Participant 8 stated that students can:

“...interact positively with clients and staff are courteous and professional...can manage conflict...can accept criticism...”

A few participants indicated that some students experienced difficulties in developing relationships and lacked confidence when interacting with clients. Establishing rapport is regarded as the essential starting point for any successful intervention particularly with vulnerable groups such as street children, young children in need of care (using play therapy), mentally challenged individuals and the elderly. Supervisors believed that students need to take advantage of opportunities to develop interpersonal and communication skills; however some shy away and fail to take the initiative. This is seen to have a negative impact on their progress and growth in practice. Some supervisors tried to create opportunities for students to integrate into the organization. To elaborate on this Participant 9 stated that:

“...some students are very weak, timid, shy...we try to break this right at the outset from orientation...get students to sit with the elderly cleaning a bag of potatoes – this helps to strike up a conversation, establish rapport, break the ice...get students involved in meetings, chit-chats before and after meetings, to involve them from the outset.”

Many factors can impact on students' interpersonal skills and development. As pointed out by Engelbrecht (2006), the changing dynamics of the profession in South Africa demands that supervisors exercise what is termed “cultural friendliness” to support and help develop a student's skills, abilities and competencies. Apart from the academic factors that were discussed at length, social and cultural aspects are known to impact on communicating effectively and establishing rapport. It is therefore encouraging to note that these factors were considered by supervisors and creative yet relevant techniques were adopted to aid the students in establishing relationships and integrating into the organization.

In addition supervisors assisted students in developing their interpersonal skills by granting them access to agency procedures and policy documents, discussions with and observation of staff members, including them in meetings and agency programmes. However many students struggled with challenges in terms of basic communication and lack of confidence which resulted in their behaving inappropriately and unprofessionally. Some concerns repeatedly cited

were that of students' poor work ethic, poor dress code and basic telephone and face to face etiquette. Over a period of time students can be helped to gain confidence and through supervision learn communication and interpersonal skills. Engelbrecht (2006) maintains there are numerous reasons why the supervisors of social work students in South Africa should espouse cultural friendliness. The cultural backgrounds of supervisors of students and of service users in South Africa will in all probability be different. Since the support function of supervision is aimed at addressing students, a positive foundation of cultural friendliness is required to become accommodating, sincere, respectful etc. to the needs of the student.

4.4.5 Ability and competence

In discussing student competence, the majority of the supervisors' view was that students lacked the competency required as fourth year students to practice social work. They indicated that students did have the ability; however competency develops through nurturing, exposure and practice as stated by Participant 5, students:

"...become very competent in dealing with therapeutic work...competencies are shaped very quickly due to the nature of work,"

and participant 15 felt strongly that

"...competency can be developed through consistent practice and motivation as an individual and there is always room for growth and development as a student, however many agencies expect students to function at 100%. It must be accepted that they (students) are still learning."

From the above it is clear that some supervisors recognise that students are in learning and require time and opportunity to practice before being recognised as competent. In keeping with Hawkins & Shohets (2006), Supervision Model, modes 2 and 4 refer to the support given by the supervisor in recognition of the need for the supervisee to develop essential skills to increase his/her capacity to engage effectively with the client.

A general consensus by supervisors was the difficulty to assess student competence in the short time spent in field practice. This sentiment was expressed by Participant 2 who stated that:

“...it is very difficult to assess competency in three months, alongside monitoring and supervising all three methods of work...it takes at least a year to get to know an agency and this is difficult on a student because it doesn't allow for time for students to get involved in groups and community projects with ideas and topics they are passionate about ... therefore difficult to assess competency, this is overwhelming for students and demanding on supervisors...”

The models of field practice placement used by universities were regarded by most of the participants as problematic, since the period was too short with too much to accomplish and this impacted negatively on student competency. Many studies as cited in Kanno & Koeske (2010) confirm that anxiety and negative student emotions and burnout in the field placement result in students not learning as effectively or performing as competently.

“The universities might be oblivious to this but as field supervisors the challenges are evident”. This quote highlights the gaps between curriculum and field practice. Many studies highlight the importance for the university and the agency to collaborate their efforts to enhance the training and experience for the student, however it appears that this remains a challenge and in the absence of this collaboration there is a sense of helplessness on the student and field supervisor which in turn impacts on the competency assessment of the student. Extensive research was undertaken on the aspect of collaboration between the university and field practice agency/supervisor by Lyter & Smith (2008) and Maxwell (1999), and the gaps in the failure to accomplish this has resulted in their recommendations for “collaboration and communication within and among the members of the academy and the field community to be reinforced”.

Another concern raised by participants was the placement of students at agencies that specialize in services, since this prevented students from being exposed to the broader context of social work. *“One cannot then assess competency but progress can be determined”.* The limitations of being placed at a specialist agency prevented the student from learning about the broader aspects of social work services. Most of the students will be employed by organizations that render a generalist service, thus indicating the lack of preparedness and competency on the part of the student.

Studies by Lyter & Smith (2008) reveal results that support the need for systematic assessment of the fit between curriculum and the actual practice arena to empower field supervisors to better promote a fit between, and integration of class and field.

4.5 Challenges and needs of supervisors in supervising social work students

4.5.1 Training for the role of supervisor

It has been established that field practice placement is as important as the academic curriculum in social work. The role of the field supervisor is highlighted in many studies as being critical in preparing a student to become a practicing social worker (refer to Chapter 2). It is therefore assumed that some form of training is provided to serve as guidelines of how students should be supervised.

The majority (17 of the 18) of the participants were clear that they received no training for their role as the field practice supervisor. One of the supervisors explained that she received training on the 'person centred approach' to supervision which was mainly to prepare her in her role as the university supervisor (this supervisor therefore was employed by the university in addition to practicing at an agency). Her role as the agency supervisor thus differed. Formal training for this responsibility of supervision was not provided, neither from the agency nor the universities despite the high expectations for supervisors to deliver in supervising students. According to (Peleg-Oren et al 2007), the agency social worker must be suitable for the task of field instructor. In comparing programmes in the USA and Israel they found that prospective field instructors attend a one day a week, year- long training and after becoming a field instructor, they participate in occasional workshops sponsored by the universities. This intensive exposure to the requirements and qualifications of supervisors is also supported by studies in Sweden and other countries as indicated in Chapter 2.

Whilst a few supervisors stated that they attended an orientation meeting at the beginning of the year as planned by the universities, they maintained that this did not serve the purpose of training them for their role in supervision. This orientation merely served to discuss the universities'

procedures and expectations of supervision in terms of their model of working. This was a once off meeting with the universities and no further training or discussions on the aspects of supervision was made available. A few supervisors indicated that although they undertook the supervision, their managers or other staff attended this orientation visit to the university. This further disadvantages them in their role.

According to the draft supervision framework within the social work profession in South Africa (2011), the supervisor of a student social worker should have completed an academic module in supervision of at least 30 hours at a higher education institution and/or a course recognised by the SACSSP. The document however acknowledges that the majority of social work supervisors are not adequately trained to supervise and there is a lack of management and supervision legislative framework from National Department of Social Development and SACSSP.

In keeping with this, supervisors were unanimous in their feedback that the universities and agencies they served did not provide training for their role as supervisors. Supervisors viewed this as, “*disadvantageous and detrimental to the students*” (Participant 1), in addition to them being inadequately prepared for their role. Research undertaken by Tsui (2008) over a 25 year period confirms that although in-service training is recommended for the enhancement of knowledge and skills for supervisors, “such training is often not received”. As a key person supporting the supervisee, the role requires supervisors to reduce psycho social stress, relieve burnout and improve job satisfaction. Training is therefore regarded as essential in the preparation of supervisors to address their various roles and functions.

In response to their approach adopted in supervision, 16 (89%) of the participants revealed that they had no knowledge or skills on the application of any particular method, approach or technique. Participants relied on their experience in the field and their intuition. A typical supervision session entailed talking about the student’s experience, discussing any challenging issues, going through cases and discussing group work, community work and progress in terms of return dates.

Participants were unanimous in their feedback that it was risky for students to be placed for supervision at agencies without prior preparation of supervisors for the role. In stressing this point, Participant 11, said:

“...I could be the most hopeless supervisor in the world but they are entrusting these students to me...”

The repercussions of the lack of training are believed to eventually be detrimental to the clients and communities whom students will serve. The draft supervision framework within the social work profession in South Africa (2011) was unknown to all the participants. The implications are clear that these supervisors were not aware of the current trends in supervision. The absence of a standardized training programme or model/approach for social work supervisors translates into supervision becoming a subjective experience and dependent on the attitude, skills knowledge, personality and intuition of individual supervisors.

Supervisors relied on their own field experience and academic knowledge to supervise students. Some supervisors relied on their managers as role models whilst others used books on supervision to equip themselves for this role. As indicated by Participant 11,

“Supervisors are pretty much ignored, we are just expected to do it and do it from our own knowledge ... the university is just interested in obtaining a placement for the student”

Supervisors believe that they should be trained for their role as experience alone is not sufficient. Emphasizing this, Participants 7 and 5 stated (respectively) that:

“...years of experience in the field are helping, but ongoing training is essential to offer better service...”

“I work instinctively.... Fly by the seat of my pants...I think we need it desperately...”

It is very clear that supervisors have carried out their responsibility in preparing future generation social workers with no support to capacitate them in their role. Whilst they do believe that their experience has placed them in a good position to train students, they realize that, that is insufficient and they could provide a much better service if they received training in this respect.

Supervision is a specialized function, and this is recognized by the SACSSP, however the implementation of a policy in this respect remains unresolved.

4.5.2 Students, agency, and professional challenges

The impact of various aspects on supervision was explored to obtain a clearer understanding of the dynamics involved.

4.5.2.1 Students

Several challenges with students were highlighted as impacting on the role of the supervisor in 4.4.1 above. Whilst it is accepted that students are in a learning programme, at fourth year level, it is also expected that students enter the field with the basic knowledge, skills and understanding of the profession. In addition, students are perceived to lack professionalism and this is expressed in the attitude and commitment they exhibit towards work, poor work ethics, and failure to adhere to or comply with ethical and professional values and code of conduct. Students often allowed their personal challenges to impact on their field practice placement, and expected the supervisor to overlook their absenteeism. This was expressed by Participant 7 who indicated that students have:

“...personal and family commitments – students tend to stay away from the agency without prior arrangements...financial challenges prevent students from calling to inform they cannot come.”

This clearly indicates that students themselves experience several challenges that impact on the field practice placement. Whilst this can be understood from the context of the student, supervisors do have a responsibility both to the university and the agency. Failure on the part of the student to account to the supervisor can be interpreted as incompetency on the part of the supervisor.

Furthermore, many supervisors indicated that students lacked understanding in terms of the history, politics and dynamics of the communities and agency they worked in. This impacted on their ability to integrate into the organization and community structures. Despite being awarded

opportunities to do more at the agencies that could add value to their growth and development in the profession, students were content to do less and merely meet their minimal requirements.

As mentioned previously the awarding of bursaries appears to be meeting the Department of Social Developments retention strategies; however the initial screening and selection of students into the academic programme appears to be very relaxed, which is seen to be a challenge in terms of the caliber of professionals being churned out. Supervisors revealed that several students did not appear to meet the basic criteria of being a social worker. Whilst skills and knowledge can be taught and learnt, the basic attitude for this profession has to echo commitment and passion for the improvement of the quality of lives of the people. Seeing the profession as a job with an earning potential is insufficient to sustain the values demanded by this profession.

A significant number of participants indicated that the issue of the bursary has resulted in animosity amongst qualified staff whose entry into the profession was not an easy one. Their comparison revealed that current students benefit in many ways, including their earning potential as qualified social workers. Participants claimed that social work students were being employed without a valid driver's license (a previous pre-requisite for employment) and the cost incurred to obtain the license is covered by the organization. Due to the automatic absorption of newly qualified social workers into the Department, students were not employed on merit or through an interview process and many senior workers lose opportunities in moving from an NGO to the Government sector, which is regarded as more lucrative in terms of salaries and benefits. Animosity is bound to influence supervisors' attitudes towards students. The views of many participants are reflected in the statement by Participant 17:

“It is amazing that all the newly appointed social workers, are the ones who received the scholarships, are in the profession only because of what the Government has done for them, but they are so careless”

The participants declared their passion for the profession and welcomed any improvement that would benefit the profession; however it is the caliber of students who are entering the profession that they appear to be discontented with.

4.5.2.2 Agency and professional challenges

Whilst agencies do offer field placement opportunities, several factors impact on the supervisor's role posing as challenges for them. According to several of the participants student supervision is an additional responsibility that is assumed by a few social workers in an agency. Participants however assert that this additional role is not recognized in terms of the performance management of social workers, who are rated no differently to their counterparts who do not supervise. The additional workload places a lot of strain on them as student supervisors, a sentiment expressed by Participant 15, who stated that:

“Too caught up and difficult to follow up with the student and spend the time as expected”

The results of the studies by Peleg-Oren et al (2007) reveal that the more rewarded field instructors feel, the greater their investment, commitment and job satisfaction. Research has found that field instructors' satisfaction from their job greatly affected the way they imparted knowledge to their students and facilitated its internalization. (Bennett & Coe (1998) and Itzhaky & Lazar (1997).

In addition to the lack of reward and recognition, the time constraints do not allow for consistent and effective supervision, resulting in one of the reasons social workers refuse to take on the additional responsibility. The majority of the participants particularly from the NGOs reported that their agencies are constantly in a dilemma regarding scarcity of resources. Limited access to transport, stationery, photocopying, telephones, computers and office space were cited by most supervisors as impacting on their supervision of the field practice placement. The situation is exacerbated for supervisors who lack human resources and are the only professional staff at the agency. Participant 12, stated that, *“There is a lack of understanding from management on the demands on one social worker”*

Furthermore participants indicated that students placed at agencies that specialize in child and youth care need to be flexible in terms of their hours at the agency, since spending an entire day from 8h00 to 16h00 is not productive because the children are at school until at least 14h00 and

then have their set routines to follow thereafter. This highlights the need for a more flexible approach to field practice placement and the need to work closely with the academic sector to determine a way forward. As stated by Sewpaul (2011), establishing of minimum standards and recommendations to field practice training is as much an academic issue as it is a practice based one.

A few supervisors indicated that their roles were exacerbated by the red tape involved in decision-making. Participant 7 elaborated on this by stating that:

“...too much red tape – very restrictive – rigid communication channels...from student to supervisor – to manager (several levels of management) before a decision can be taken...many lines of communication tend to hold up the timelines. Students have a set programme with time frames to meet, management meetings are held once a month, delays are encountered in making decisions regarding the student or their work.”

This quote highlights the bureaucracy and rigid lines of communication that supervisors have to endure, that impact on their ability to render effective and efficient supervision, especially considering the constraints of the time factor that they face.

In addition to the rigid lines of communications, several supervisors stated that they were not awarded autonomy in their role and they experienced constant interference from their management. For four of the supervisors the decisions to accept students at their organizations are made via their Regional and Head offices. Supervisors felt coerced into the role due to their organizations’ commitment to student development, particularly due to awarding of the bursaries. The impact on these organizations and supervisors are heightened by the fact that many organizations (NGOs) are not willing to accept students who are awarded bursaries since they will inevitably be absorbed into the Department of Social Development. They do not see the need to train and invest in students who may never be in their employ.

This situation appears to impact gravely on the profession since there could soon be a situation where only one sector is benefiting whilst the many other organizations struggle with human

resources thus impacting on service delivery and eventually perhaps the loss of specialised services to the extent it is practiced currently.

4.6 Supervisors' experience of partnerships with universities in advancing student development

Since the partnership between the university and the agency impact on the overall practical experience of students (Maxwell 1999), their relationship with the universities was discussed with participants.

4.6.1 Challenges with the universities

Six of the participants indicated that the university provided good support to agency supervisors, through visits, joint assessments and attending to all the reports regarding their field work. Participant 10 indicated:

“...there is good support and I have never felt isolated...I was offered clarity whenever I needed it and was told to contact them at any time.”

Some university or external supervisors pay weekly visits to agencies where they provide intensive supervision for students. During the same time, they provide guidelines on how to carry out tasks and also restructure the programme depending on how students are coping. Thus participants at these agencies felt supported.

The majority of the supervisors (12) indicated experiencing challenges with the universities which is seen to impact negatively on their role. A huge concern from almost all of the supervisors interviewed was the lack of contact and communication with the universities. According to Knight (2000) and McChesney & Euster (2000) (as cited in Peleg-Oren, et al. (2007), various aspects influence commitment to supervision, one of which is the relationship between the field instructor and the academic institution. Visits from the universities were regarded as important and should have occurred several times during the placement, although this did not materialize. As stated by Participant 14,

“...it’s like taking a child and saying ‘you go and live with that family, I’ve got nothing to do with it thereafter...Not even a letter explaining what you are doing and what is expected in terms of caring for the child.’”

It is evident from this quote that supervisors felt abandoned and unsupported in their role by the universities. It was often raised that universities forget that the students are still very much their responsibility.

According to participants when the university supervisors do eventually decide to meet, they do not take into account the agencies’ commitments and constraints in terms of their time, meetings, planning etc. This has led to misunderstandings and often failure to meet. Contact was at times maintained via telephone and email.

Supervisors indicated feeling very divorced from the students’ academic work and progress. The field placement is conducted in a very isolated and independent manner. They indicated that feedback from the university on the academic progress of the student is critical, to provide holistic support to the student, however they (supervisors) also requested feedback on their performance as supervisors which could help them correct their mistakes and become better supervisors. Participants repeatedly stated that there was no evidence that universities were preparing students adequately for the field. The output is still very academically orientated with the emphasis remaining on academic and written work. Studies conducted by Maxwell (1999) in the African context, reinforce the need for the university coordinator to play a more significant administrative and supportive role, to be an agent of quality control and to be involved in regular monitoring through personal visits and assessment of placements. Their support of the interaction between the supervisor and student will demonstrate their emphasis on the practical component of the programme.

Observations by Royse, Dhooper, & Rompf (2003) indicate that although field education is viewed as integral, the education environment is increasingly inhospitable to curriculum changes. A distinct power differential exists between the staff in academia and field education. Studies prove that there are barriers to the integration of curriculum and field practice arising

from the differing expectations between the academy and field regarding the mission of social work. The authors discovered an absence of fit between the classroom and expected competencies in the field. Students were judged as being underprepared in critical areas of case management, client assessment, enhancing client coping capacities, enhancing client problem solving capacities, culturally sensitive interviewing and problem solving.

The majority of the participants indicated that the poor screening of students by the universities impacted on the supervisory process since they had to contend with students who were unsuitable for the profession or in the profession for the wrong reasons. No proper guidelines were received from the university in terms of how to address student's misbehavior, code of conduct or absenteeism.

Supervisors claimed that they received no preparation for their role from the university and would have appreciated consultations prior to student placements, more support from universities through a guide or a manual on supervision and they needed to be exposed to the theory, models etc. that students were using. The lack of preparation and training of supervisors has been highlighted in several studies (already mentioned in this study). The one session that the university invites them to is merely a session to outline their procedures and not an intention to offer training in any way.

Participants stated that some universities employed external supervisors who received payment for their role, however they rarely visited or maintained contact. External supervisors have to be chased up by the agency to find out what is happening. They often do not keep their appointments with students and expect students to meet them at odd times, over weekends often in public places such as malls. Several of the participants indicated that the university supervisors get paid and therefore should be more involved and do more for the student. Participant 7 stated,

“I find myself assuming all the responsibilities that are clearly the tasks of the external supervisor such as, report writing, incorporating theory into practice, helping the student meet deadlines, to function in context”

This quote indicates the commitment of the agency supervisors to their roles. Despite not receiving remuneration they do go the extra mile to prepare the students. However it is also clear that participants feel somewhat short changed in their role. There is evidence in recent literature on social work education, regarding the changing academic expectations of the academic staff members, where they are less involved in field liaison due to the employment of part time personnel for this role. This arrangement has raised concerns by researchers who are of the opinion that it will undermine the integration of theory and practice, lessen the importance given to field work and the practice of social work and create a system of two tiers (full time faculty/academic and field faculty system) (Bennette & Coe 1998) and Kilpatrick et al (1994) as cited in Bogo (2006).

With regard to specialized services participants felt that the university coordinator had minimal knowledge about the organization's functioning and they employ external supervisors who have no idea either about the unique culture of the organization and context of practicing the different social work methods. As stated by Participant 7,

“Is she the right person to supervise within this really specialized setup? I am with the student and know exactly what the student is doing and how she is functioning and what more needs to or can be done. I should be more than a mentor.”

Agencies in KwaZulu-Natal are requested for field practice placements by at least three universities in the province. Another issue mentioned was that all the universities have different expectations and requirements of the field practice, the agency and the supervisor. Whilst not all of the agencies had students from all the universities, a number of the agencies had students from at least two different universities simultaneously. Supervisors indicated that, “it becomes a challenge working around all the different requirements” and as stated by Participant 17,

“Universities themselves don't seem to communicate about the placements of students, they all just send students without sitting down as institutions and agreeing on it, e.g., the period of placement, the number of students sent to a region or agency, each university is interested in placing their students, very few supervisors and we are expected to give the opportunity to learn. Too much expectations on us to deliver”

This quote serves to highlight the challenges agencies experience in accommodating the requests of the different universities. It is clear that supervisors are committed to the process of supervision; however they would prefer a more uniform method that can be applied to supervising any student from any university in the province.

In addition the universities are regarded as being insensitive in some cases as to where they place students, as stated by Participant 9,

“The university is not sensitive to the needs of the student with regard to placements, where they live, what their family situation is, how far they have to travel to get to the agency, university becomes more concerned with placing students and sometimes students drop out because they are too afraid to negotiate with the university or share their difficulties.”

Supervisors have repeatedly indicated that the universities’ priority is placing a student at an agency. There have been criticisms from supervisors that the intricate details of the placement are not considered and often the student is left to pay the price. It has been discovered through this study that it is not an easy task to secure placement for students and that is one of the reasons the university takes advantage of the opportunities offered by institutions irrespective of geographic area or type of service. Universities have even adopted a flexible approach in terms of students’ exposure to the methods and intervention that agencies specialize in, without insisting that students be exposed to the university requirements. This is certainly one of the gaps that need to be addressed. However one of the universities in this study actually encouraged the students to secure placements that were convenient to their circumstances. It is apparent that very little is known by the agencies and supervisors regarding the universities’ challenges and limitations regarding FPP, the increasing number of students in the programme, staff shortages and financial resources. Whilst this is beyond the scope of this study it is certainly an area that requires more focused dialogue.

Several supervisors expressed concerns that the universities’ arrangement regarding the annual evaluation and assessment meeting did not always materialize. In many instances the final evaluations did not take place leaving the practice placement supervisor unsure of what had become of students and how they were passed etc. without their actual involvement. This has

resulted in many of the supervisors feeling exploited and removed from the final assessment of the student. In addition these supervisors questioned the authenticity of the placement and the student's readiness for the world of work.

The concerns expressed by these supervisors concur with the findings of studies on the retention of field instructors conducted by Peleg-Oren & Even-Zahav (2007), which revealed that the main reasons for instructors dropping out of student supervision were related to their disconnection with the universities. Given this, schools of social work internationally invest their efforts in selecting, training and supporting field instructors. They strive to maintain a stable network of instructors who can be professional models to their students, have strong commitment to their jobs and to the social work profession. This network is strengthened through on-going training and support to field instructors.

4.7 Supervisors' suggestions on a best practice model to enhance field practice education

There seems to be much debate and discussion on the best practice model within the academia. Changes in the model over the recent years (including those at the universities that formed part of this study) are implemented on a more or less trial and error basis, although the regulating bodies (ASASWIE and SACSSP) are engaged in trying to address this aspect. It does appear critical to hear the voices of the people responsible for the field practice training component and this therefore formed a part of this study.

4.7.1 Best practice model

According to supervisors, students concentrate more on passing the theoretical aspect of their studies with little concentration on field work thus minimizing its critical role and function in social work training. To this end 16 (89%) of the participants proposed models that intensify exposure to the field and all categories of social work services. The majority of these participants proposed that students spend their entire fourth year doing field work after which they can be assessed. In addition, Participant 1 added that students should thereafter serve an internship in the fifth year after qualification. This was reiterated by Participants 2-6 who stated that:

“...at least one year should be allowed for field work. This will allow exposure to administration, SW functioning, and other things done by an office.”

The three month period for placement was regarded as too short and undermining to the importance of field work and inadequate to internalize that required to practice effectively. Some supervisors expressed the importance of introducing field work as early as possible and to this end, Participants 3 and 9 suggested the following model,

“Field work should start in 1st year...in second and third year, students should spend one, or two days a week at an agency for field...in fourth year, there should be intensive practical placement.”

Another model suggested is that which incorporates both number of days and block placement. There was an overwhelming support for exposure to the field to commence from as early as first year. Participants suggested that social work students should receive a wide range of exposure from their first year, spending one week at a time at various agencies, observing and becoming aware of the expectations of the profession. Field work should intensify in second and third years and commencing in third year students should be implementing their skills into practice.

The system where both theory and field work were simultaneously conducted (two days at the university and three days at the agency) has worked well in the past. Participants 8 and 9 indicated that this method allows the student to touch base with both aspects of their work on an ongoing basis and are not expected to practice what was taught six months earlier.

Two supervisors were in support of the block placement method where students spend a certain period exclusively in field work. However, they believed that the current period of three months was too short and should be increased to at least six months to give students enough time to do their field work and internalize the skills. Supervisors believed longer periods of placement would reduce the pressure students experience from having to do field work and exams within three months. In addition, for more exposure and preparation it is seen as important for students to spend more time at the agencies, possibly using their vacations to do full-time field work. It was strongly suggested that students should take more initiative to get to know the agency, by researching it adequately prior to their placement.

One of the organizations has employed the students as social auxiliary workers, thus increasing their staffing structure but also providing a solid training experience for the students. Students therefore get paid whilst learning, a situation that serves the interests of all parties. They have successfully merged an internship programme with a learnership programme.

4.7.2 General suggestions

4.7.2.1 Willingness to continuing supervision of students

Seventeen out of the 18 participants indicated that they were in favour of continuing to supervise students in the future. However they were all of the view that the university could have and should have equipped them further for this role and offered more support and structure, as indicated by Participant 16,

“there is potential for both the university and the agency to work together to give the student a much better experience ...practice is the place where you define what social work is for the student”.

According to Bogo (2006), the motivation for field instructors to voluntarily offer field education is based on personal/professional factors, agency support factors and connection to the university programme and its faculty members. The role of the field instructor is consistently highlighted in literature as being critical to the preparation of students; however there exists a universal concern in maintaining a core of committed experienced instructors. It is essential that models of supervision be developed that respond to the factors that motivate supervision. The difficulty in obtaining field instructors was reported as the most critical issue in an international comparative survey of 163 schools of social work (Skolnik et al 1999).

4.7.2.2 Requests and suggestions by supervisors

In recognizing the critical role of field placement and supervision in the overall preparation of social workers, as well as the enormous responsibilities the agencies and universities have in

producing competent social work practitioners, it was regarded as essential to explore suggestions and recommendations to optimize this learning opportunity for students. Supervisors used their extensive experience in this aspect to share their thoughts and make suggestions that could only serve in the best interest of the profession of social work. These are elaborated on as follows:

i. To continue with supervision included:

- **Capacitating supervisors**

Every participant in this study indicated that the university should invest more in capacitating them in their role, through training, ongoing workshops and short courses on supervision. They reiterated the need for learning “how to supervise” and to be exposed to the various models of supervision. Participants suggested that ongoing support in their role was paramount and recommended the setting up of supervision forums and opportunities to engage in peer supervision themselves, to prevent them from functioning in isolation. The majority of the participants indicated functioning in seclusion to the theory and course work and suggested that they should be made aware of the different theories used by students and universities which would empower them to utilize and to reinforce the integration of theory into practice.

- **Structuring of supervision**

All supervisors felt that more structure was needed to be introduced into the supervision process, firstly by developing uniformity across universities and secondly by the setting of minimum standards for supervision across universities and field placement organizations. This would serve to clarify the expectations of supervisors and would prevent their confusion in terms of their roles and responsibilities. This could also serve to enhance the status of supervision and assist in maintaining a high standard of supervision for all students at all agencies from all universities.

- **University input**

It was regarded as critical for there to be more involvement from the university once the student was placed at the agency. Participants urged the universities to recognise and understand the challenges supervisors experienced. One of the

greatest challenges with the field practice placements was the limited period that students spent at the agency and a plea was made for this to be extended. Participants indicated that universities should provide an intensive orientation programme for all agencies and supervisors. This would certainly serve to prepare them in their role and encourage agency support in the process. It was regarded as essential for the university to maintain more communication and contact with the agency, the supervisor and the students by planning and implementing more structured visits to the agencies. Participants regarded it as necessary for them and their agencies to be given constructive feedback on their role and contributions which they could then use to improve and develop in terms of their services.

ii. To optimize the learning opportunity for students and the experience of supervision:

- **Policy and procedures**

Field practice placement and supervision thereof is a huge and critical component of the overall academic programme in social work, as discovered through this study. It therefore becomes clear that measures need to be in place to ensure and support this core component.

Participants were of the opinion that a policy should be developed making supervision of students mandatory by all social welfare organizations. This will obviate a situation where agencies absolve themselves from this critical role. It would also serve to ensure that an adequate number of field placement options and supervisors would be available.

It was repeatedly raised that norms for supervision have to be established. This would serve to ensure that the students benefit from the placement through a high quality of structured supervision, and that supervisors would have clear directions and expectations of their role. It was also suggested that universities align their models so that a more standardized programme could be developed which all universities subscribe to.

- **Criteria for selection of students**

Participants were passionate about the profession and appeared disillusioned that the standards were being compromised by taking in individuals who were not as

passionate about being a social worker. They requested that the criteria for entry into the profession should not be minimized merely to increase the numbers, *“it’s very important that the right people enter the field for the right reasons”*. One of the critical areas to be addressed was the criteria for awarding bursaries and the impact this has on the profession and organizations.

- **Securing agency supervisors**

Although the role of agency supervisors are regarded as critical to the professional growth and development of student social workers, it is also acknowledged that it is challenging to maintain a core of committed and willing supervisors due to a variety of factors as discussed. Participants made valuable suggestions that can contribute to ensuring their ongoing willingness to participate in FPP.

It was evident that some supervisors were not passionate about their role, and participants were clear that the universities should utilize agency supervisors who are committed to the growth and development of student social workers and who offer the best guidance and supervision possible. This translates into not only being concerned about placements for students but also being concerned about the quality of supervision.

Agencies and supervisors should be involved with the university and students from their first year onwards. Supervisors should be invited from various agencies to address first to third year students so that they become familiar with the different organizations and services rendered which would facilitate their knowledge of the agencies, and possible employment, when they have to serve their placement. This will also serve to establish a closer working relationship with the agencies and strengthen the partnership.

Many participants were clear that they offer to supervise through their passion for the profession and not for monetary gain, however in light of the challenges that agencies experience and the low morale of supervisors, participants did suggest that agencies be paid or compensated in some way for the training of students. They also compared themselves with the external supervisors who secured an additional income for the supervision of students and requested that this be

considered. They were of the opinion that this would serve to motivate social workers and increase the number of supervisors. In addition they suggested that the universities should compensate the agencies in different ways, through training, sharing current trends, sharing latest research, team building, capacity building and opportunities to engage in postgraduate studies.

- **Funding for students**

Although this was not an aspect that participants were directly involved in, it presented regularly in their responses and seemed to impact significantly on the caliber of students, their commitment and passion for the profession.

Many participants suggested that the awarding of bursaries should be a well thought out and fair process and not distributed based on race only. In addition to this, the majority of the participants were of the opinion that bursaries should not be distributed for the sake of increasing numbers of social workers but rather for commitment to the profession. They further suggested that funding be made available to students during their practical work through a stipend to cover transport costs etc., which is where many students seem to experience challenges.

Some participants suggested that universities provide the agencies with a small budget or donation to attend to the students' basic expenses of photocopying, telephone etc. This would ease the pressure off some of the agencies in terms of the lack of resources. *“One of the reasons agencies are hesitant in taking students, is that they drain on already depleted resources...the cost to study is around R 30 000 per year, give at least 10% of the fees to the agency...”*

4.8 Conclusion

This chapter presented an overview of the findings of the study. Participants shared challenges and benefits they had encountered in their role as supervisors of students' field placements. The participants certainly appeared to embrace this study and used the opportunity to share extensively their experiences. This has served to highlight the many gaps and challenges experienced in their critical role especially with regard to their partnerships with the universities,

student preparation for FPP and the absence of policies and procedures to guide them appropriately. Chapter 5 will provide the conclusions and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the issues discussed and draws conclusions based on the findings and analyses of the data in the preceding chapters of the research. Finally, recommendations are made regarding supervision and student practice. As this is an area that has not been researched in Durban and the broader area of KwaZulu-Natal, it is hoped that these comments and suggestions will provide some useful points for consideration.

Although previous research and literature within the South African context is not extensive, the aspect of supervision has been documented extensively and researched throughout the world for over a decade as is evident from Chapter 2. The confirmation from SACSSP that the policy on supervision is still in its draft form and the implications of this for the critical function of supervision is far reaching. This area of research was therefore imperative since between 800 to 1000 students seek placements and supervision annually within the province.

5.2 The research

The study set out to explore the experiences of agency supervisors who supervised social work students' field practice placements. The study was conducted at social work agencies and institutions in and around KwaZulu-Natal.

The study combined explorative and descriptive aspects and a qualitative research design was utilized. An in-depth interview schedule with main questions and related probes was used as a data collection tool. Two different supervision models and theories were used to identify and relate to the experiences of social workers in their role as supervisors. To ensure that the study did not harm the participants in any way, the anonymity of participants, agencies and universities was assured and ethical standards were adhered to.

The sample population comprised 18 supervisors based at 14 different agencies within KwaZulu-Natal. The participants ranged in age from 26 years to over 46 years, with the majority (11) being in the age group between 36 and 45. All 18 participants were female, which is strongly supported by literature on this female dominated profession. In considering the racial distribution of participants the larger proportion (11) was Indian, followed by six Black and one White. Whilst the majority (15) of the participants had more than 10 years of experience, only three of them had a postgraduate qualification. Thirteen participants were employed at a non-government organization and more than half (10) of the participants rendered a specialist service.

A greater number of supervisors indicated supervising for between two to five years (8), followed by (7) indicating that they have supervised between two to four students each.

The objectives of this study were as follows:

- To explore with agency supervisors their experiences, perceptions, needs and challenges in supervising social work students.
- To ascertain from supervisors the experience of partnerships with universities in advancing student development.
- To obtain supervisors' suggestions on what they regarded as the best practice model to enhance field practice education experiences for students.

The study sought to answer the following questions:

- How do agency supervisors experience their role of supervising social work students?
- How do agency supervisors view student performance?
- How do agency supervisors experience the partnership and interaction with the university?
- What do agency supervisors suggest as the best practice model to enhance the field practice education experience of students?

It is evident, that the objectives have been met and the research effectively addressed the questions relating to this study. The experiences of the supervisors with regards to their roles and their partnership with the universities have been explicitly expressed and suggestions for a best practice model have been stated.

5.3 Conclusions of the study

Based on the findings the following conclusions can be drawn from the study.

5.3.1 Supervisor profiles

From the research, it was evident that the more senior and experienced social workers are engaging in the supervision of students, in accordance with the SACSSP and authorities in the field of supervision such as Hawkins & Shohet (2006) and Kadushin (1992) who advocate for a minimum of two years' practical experience before assuming the role of supervisor. Whilst the majority of the supervisors had more than 10 years of experience only three of them in this study had obtained a postgraduate degree. This could be as a result of the cost of studying, the huge work/caseloads and/or the lack of support from the agency managers to advocate for this. The study found that the majority of the supervisors aspired to furthering their qualifications and requested the universities that place students with them to offer this as an opportunity. Universities do want to produce more postgraduates and this could be an opportunity that serves in the best interest of both parties.

Whilst a range of agencies were targeted with a higher number of government organizations being invited to participate, it appeared that the non-government sector was more open and positive to participating in the research. The non-government sector appeared more enthusiastic about this study and showed a keen interest in the findings. Due to the poor response from the government sector, who more often offer a generalist service there was a higher number of participants from organizations rendering specialized services.

5.3.2 Experiences in supervising social work students

Whilst it seems that some of the basic criteria in selecting supervisors employed in the South African context compares with that of international standards, such as qualification, years of practice experience and registration with a professional body, (Peleg-Oren et al. 2007) within South Africa there are differences amongst the 17 higher education institutions that offer the

social work degree. The findings highlighted that universities differed in their criteria in terms of the number of years of experience and qualification of the supervisor. It was also established through this study that the selection of the field supervisor was left entirely to the agency. The majority of the agencies used the experience of the social worker as a criteria, some agencies advocated for the passion and willingness of social workers to supervise, whilst a few supervisors had no option but to undertake the supervision due to their lack of human resources, and at a few agencies a system of rotation was employed that did not work well and the responsibility to supervise inevitably fell on the shoulders of a few staff members.

It was evident that the supervisors carried multiple roles in supervision which ranged from education to monitoring, evaluation and assessment to ensuring that the student was getting exposure to the profession and becoming proficient in all methods of social work and engaging in opportunities to integrate theory with practice. Their role entailed meeting the requirements of the university, the agency and ensuring the delivery of good quality services to clients. The majority of the supervisors confirmed that their role went beyond merely education in terms of the practice of social work, but included instilling in students essential values and attitudes that were essential in coping with the vastly complex issues that impact on human lives.

Contracting with a student which is a significant aspect in the supervision process was generally overlooked and was mentioned by a handful of supervisors only. These supervisors were very clear in their plans of action and indicated feeling supported by the universities. Having such structures in place creates a more positive supervisory experience.

Supervisors' experiences differed and ranged according to the uniqueness of individual students and their approach to the FPP. Students that took the initiative and were willing to learn were experienced in a positive light as compared to those who showed no initiative or passion for the profession.

The study concluded that agencies generally did not have specific requirements or a specific structure for the supervision of students. Most supervisors adopted an ad hoc method of supervision much to their dissatisfaction due to their own work constraints, which often took priority. However, it was noted that supervisors at specialized agencies devoted dedicated time

and prioritized the task of supervision. These supervisors recognized that students placed at specialized agencies required intensive supervision to cope with the nature of the work and demands of specialized services.

5.3.3 Supervisors' perception of student performance

The research aimed to ascertain supervisors' perceptions and experiences of students in terms of their academic preparation, attitude to their work, dedication to the profession, interpersonal skills and their ability and competence. The following can be concluded on these aspects.

5.3.3.1 Academic preparation

The general consensus was that students were well equipped with theoretical knowledge about social work; however they were inadequately prepared for what to expect in the practice of social work which resulted in feelings of stress and was overwhelming for students. In addition, the majority of the supervisors felt that the exposure to field work was too late in the academic programme (at fourth year level), was too short (three months) and there was too much to be accomplished in the given period. Students lacked insight into the type of work and services provided by the agency and were thus unable to adjust and function at an agency. They became totally dependent on the supervisor. A major challenge highlighted by the majority of the supervisors was students' lack of basic counselling and writing skills and the absence of basic professional etiquette.

5.3.3.2 Attitude

Students initially portrayed positive attitudes, however, with the intensive field work and expectations from the university and agency they became stressed and reacted in ways that were perceived as negative. Negative attitudes reinforced the students' inability to cope with the pressures of FPP and the demands of the profession.

In many instances the lack of proper preparation for field work resulting in students "not knowing", was interpreted as a negative attitude by the supervisor. Students had encountered

personal issues impacting on their ability to function adequately which was interpreted as a poor attitude.

5.3.3.3 Dedication

Dedication to the profession is a critical factor for success, and the term, “it’s a calling” was often referred to by supervisors. Students who enter the profession with enthusiasm and dedication soon become de-motivated due to the reality of the nature of work and the constraints of the profession with regard to low salaries, difficult working conditions, lack of resources and limited upward mobility. A large number of students enter the programme for the wrong reasons and regard social work as an easy entry into university despite it not being their choice of profession. The screening process for entry into the social work programme appears to be very relaxed, resulting in unsuitable students (in terms of psychiatric disorders, race discrimination, lack of passion, seen as a last resort profession) being allowed entry into the programme. Students may qualify in terms of meeting the minimum university requirements; however admission into a programme such as social work goes beyond the scoring of points. Students who are not suitable for the profession impact negatively on all aspects of the programme and pose a risk to the vulnerable clients and status of the profession.

This is seen to negate the retention strategy that the Department of Social Development has implemented to address the scarcity of social work skills. Furthermore, it can be concluded that whilst many skills can be taught and learnt, the human qualities that a profession like social work demand is based at the very core of a person’s values and principles, which leads to dedication and aspiration in this field. Therefore, if students choose this degree for the myriads of wrong reasons and are not adequately screened by the university the chances are that they will not remain in the profession. This can have a huge and devastating impact on the retention strategy and quality of professionals.

5.3.3.4 Interpersonal skills

There were mixed responses to this aspect. Some supervisors were of the opinion that students possessed good interpersonal skills and were willing to integrate into the agency structures, and a solid orientation programme aided the process, other supervisors regarded students as struggling in this aspect to the point of not being able to establish rapport with clients and staff. Whilst it was evident that some supervisors went the extra mile to assist students to integrate into the agency, there were others who were consistently negative about their FPP experiences with students and did not seem to consider aspects such as cultural differences which impact significantly on interpersonal abilities. It became very apparent in this study that supervisors who were frustrated in their role saw all aspects regarding students in a negative light and this could not have translated into a positive experience for the student.

5.3.3.5 Ability and competence

Supervisors were unanimous that competency could not be determined whilst at the agency due to the students' short stay at the agency, lack of experience and opportunities and the limited exposure to a variety of services.

5.4 Challenges and needs of supervisors in supervising social work students

5.4.1 Training for the role of supervisor

The study concluded that supervisors did not receive additional training for their role as the agency supervisor. The orientation meeting that the universities host at the beginning of the year does not adequately serve to train or orientate them in their role as a supervisor. There was unanimous feedback that the agency also did not provide training opportunities to capacitate them for this role. The majority of the supervisors relied on their own experience and intuition to supervise. Their knowledge on models and approaches to supervision was absent. The council's draft supervisory framework was not familiar to any of the participants, as a result they were not aware of the current trends or structures that supervision entailed. All participants emphasized

the need for training and capacitating them in their role which would have a positive impact on the student and the status of the profession overall.

5.4.2 Challenges facing supervisors

5.4.2.1 Students

The aspect of the bursary was raised by all participants although it was not an area planned for discussion in the interview. Whilst the strategy is an excellent one that can address the retention issue, the aspect around its implementation needs to be relooked at, to address the critical concerns of commitment to the profession and the impact on NGOs. Concerns were also raised that although many students received exposure to specialist services during their FPP they were eventually absorbed into generalist organizations with no exposure, training or experience in such services.

5.4.2.2 Agency and professional challenges

The findings point clearly to the fact that the task of student supervision is not recognised as “an over and above” function that staff engage in, in terms of their performance rating, yet only a few social workers assume the responsibility. Supervisors’ work load is no less than their counterparts which place additional strain on them. Agencies that lack human resources should not be overtaxed with the responsibility to supervise. The decision to supervise students must be a consultative one and not one that is dictated to by the agency management. This results in animosity and poor quality of supervision because it is a responsibility that supervisors do not want to assume. The supervisor’s role was made more challenging through agency managers who did not allow them autonomy or where too much bureaucracy was present.

5.5 Supervisors' experience of partnerships with universities in advancing student development

5.5.1 Challenges with the Universities

Whilst a few supervisors felt supported by the university, it can be concluded that the majority confirmed that there was not much contact or communication between them. This appeared to be an area that required some attention. There was consensus that once the student was placed at the agency the university seemed to absolve their responsibility to that student. The agency supervisors were expected to be available at the request of the university with little consideration to their busy schedules. The two components that is the academic and field, operate in isolation which negates the whole concept of integrating theory with practice. The agency supervisors emphasized that operating in isolation and the absence of interaction with the university prevents them from learning about the students' academic progress. Furthermore, feedback in terms of their role as FPP supervisors is absent which prevents them from identifying their own areas for development. The university failed to provide preparation or guidelines to supervisors on what is expected of supervisors or/and the protocol to follow should students present with personal challenges or/and unprofessional conduct. The employment of external supervisors who obtain a salary for their role, whilst a bulk of the work is facilitated by the agency supervisor with no benefit is regarded as unfair. Supervising students from the different universities poses challenges in terms of the varying expectations of the student, the agency and the supervisor. Different universities function in isolation with no interaction, planning and negotiating around FPP. The programmes and models differ between universities creating confusion in the supervision process. Universities seem preoccupied with merely securing agencies for the students to conduct FPP at, with very little thought into the students' personal circumstances etc. There appeared to be an apparent gap during the 2010/ 2011 period, where supervisors consistently reiterated not having heard from the university or contact person and in addition not having met to consult on the final evaluation of the students. This was contrary to the agreement between the university, student and agency. In addition, the input from the agency seemed unimportant and irrelevant despite the critical role they served. Without discussing the students' progress in terms of their practical component, supervisors were uncertain how students passed.

5.6 Best practice model

Supervisors were of the opinion that there is more emphasis on the theoretical training of social workers and passing than there is on the practical preparation, which is so critical. Recently the university approach has contributed to this mindset since the models being used currently devote minimal time to this aspect of the course. A once-off three month period or a once a week placement during the final year devoted to FPP is insufficient to internalize that which is required to practice effectively and enter the world of work. In addition there was too much pressure on students to comply with requirements that actually negate the learning experience. There was overwhelming support for the extension of students' exposure to the field.

The general consensus was that students should be introduced to the aspects of field work from as early as their first year and this should increase in intensity over the years. Almost every supervisor interviewed mentioned, "*The way it used to be was better*". This was in reference to many years ago and particularly when these very supervisors were students, when much more time was spent at agencies and conducting field work.

A unique model shared was one that has been adopted by one of the agencies in this study. This served the agency, the student and the university well. This entailed employing the student over a period of two years in the capacity of a social auxiliary worker (during the fourth year of study). The student assisted at the agency by providing human resources but was also exposed to opportunities to learn in the process. Students such as these become a part of the staff establishment and acquire a solid foundation of training whilst receiving an income.

5.7. Recommendations

Based on the above conclusions, the following recommendations are made:

5.7.1 Selection of supervisors

In selecting supervisors, it is recommended that experience in the field and a willingness to supervise students must continue to be the criteria considered. Social workers who aspire to further their growth and development and/or engage in postgraduate studies and/or additional training programmes should be recognised for their initiative and encouraged to participate in supervision and training of students.

Supervisors, who are designated to supervise, should be awarded time by the agency to do so. This should entail reducing their work/caseload and obtaining the support of the management. Social workers who lack the time for supervision or who do not prioritize supervision as a task on their agenda should not be awarded the responsibility since this devalues the critical role of supervision and does not serve in the students' best interest. Furthermore, agencies that do not have the human resources should not be requested to supervise, because in addition to overloading the one staff member, the quality of the supervision is compromised. A data base of supervisors should be maintained, and their services acknowledged nationally, they should be recognised for their contribution to the field in terms of the number of students they guide through the process, for example, be rewarded after five or ten students pass through their supervision.

5.7.2 Supervisor qualifications

Universities desire to increase their rate of postgraduate degrees. Supervisors from agencies should be granted opportunities to further their qualification, and the university could consider offering an incentive to those supervisors in terms of fee remission or a significant discount. This will certainly serve to add to and contribute to the existing body of knowledge and would serve in the best interest of the university, the supervisor and the agency.

5.7.3 Academic preparation

It is necessary for students to be exposed to field work concepts early in the academic programme, preferably from their first year and should be introduced earlier to field placements enabling them to spend more time integrating theory with practice. This is an aspect that universities urgently need to consider. Students should be encouraged to research the different agencies and have a clear understanding of the functioning of the organizations before being placed for field practice. This could also allow for their requirements in terms of the ELO to be spread across a longer period of time, thus enabling them to focus on mastering one aspect at a time rather than everything within a short period. The university should introduce a module on report writing; invite agencies over a period of time to share the basic reports required and how to structure the information that is required. A module in English specifically designed for the profession of social work must be included in the curriculum from level one to address the challenges that students who are not English first language speakers experience. Overall, it is recommended that a module on field practice placement (outlining the expectations, dynamics and various aspects related to field work) be introduced into the curriculum and the academic staff should work closely with the social workers in the field to develop such a practical module.

5.7.4 Attitude

It is recommended that the aspect of students' attitude to the FPP be addressed through more exposure to the practice of field work, as more frequent practice will build understanding, tolerance and confidence which students lack and is often interpreted as a poor attitude. It is recommended that more stringent screening processes be introduced that will ensure the students recruited into the profession possess the quality and attitude that the profession demands.

5.7.5 Dedication

It is critical that students are screened appropriately for entry into this field. Passion, dedication and a spirit of volunteerism must be evident. Previously, aspirant students needed to fulfill a period of community service or voluntary work prior to their application for acceptance in

certain degrees. It is highly recommended that this be considered as a requirement for admission to the social work programme.

The awarding of bursaries by the Department of Social Development appears to have compromised the dedication and commitment to the profession. Students are entering the field for the wrong reasons with the career of social work not being their first choice. It is recommended that the purpose of the retention strategy and the issuing of bursaries be revisited. It is also recommended that the impact of this strategy on the profession be investigated in terms of a way forward.

5.7.6 Interpersonal

Students must be afforded opportunities of developing their interpersonal skills, whilst at university through training and workshops. It is recommended however that the screening and proper selection of supervisors for their role is also essential. A good social worker does not necessarily make a good supervisor. Students must be assisted to develop in their interpersonal skills which are critical skills for their success in this profession. Engelbrecht (2006) maintains that there are numerous reasons why the supervisors of social work students in South Africa should espouse cultural friendliness. The cultural backgrounds of supervisors to students to service users in South Africa will in all probability be different. Supervisors through the support function of supervision must aim to address students' stresses, provide an intensive orientation and ongoing opportunities to create a positive and nurturing environment of cultural friendliness to become accommodating, sincere and respectful to the needs of the student which they would certainly model in their interaction with clients.

5.7.7 Competency

It is recommended that students be exposed to more frequent and varied opportunities to the practice of social work to develop an ability and competence. It is recommended that all supervisors engage in an initial contract with the student outlining all the aspects and

expectations of the FPP that need to be noted. This could be a measure used to guide students' development in competency and ability and aid in the assessment process.

5.7.8 Training of supervisors

It is essential that intensive training programmes, workshops and courses be made available for supervisors through the universities and SACSSP. Supervisors must meet a minimum requirement of having attended a basic course before being selected to supervise. The selection of supervisors needs to be given more thought and importance (as stated in 5.7.6). In this way those requested to conduct the supervision are recognized for their skills, ability and competence which would improve their professional morale. The draft supervision policy which states that "The supervisor of a student social worker should have completed an academic module in supervision of at least 30 hours at a higher education institution and/or a course recognised by the SACSSP", must be implemented.

On-going forums for supervisors hosted by the universities, SACSSP or agency coordinators within designated areas, to meet and discuss their challenges etc. should be developed. This could serve as an opportunity for peer supervision and support, as well as growth and development in the role of supervision. Becoming a supervisor and attending training programmes should present the opportunity to be awarded with CPD points. This will serve as an incentive to further skills but especially to realise the critical nature of the responsibility attached to this role. This will serve to add structure and minimum standards to the specialized task of supervision, as well as improve the status of this role and function.

5.7.9 Acknowledgement of supervisory role by agency

Reward and recognition is essential to improve supervisors' investment, commitment and job satisfaction. Supervision of students should be recognized as an additional activity for those who undertake it. Supervisors' work/case load should be reassessed and reduced to allow for consistent and effective supervision to occur. Perhaps agencies should consider dedicating one staff member solely to the task of student supervision. This role can then be rotated on an annual

basis or bi-annually. Whilst the one supervisor is engaged in the role, the supervisor elect could be offered the opportunity of being trained and prepared for the role through the council, university and agency input. This will serve to increase the capacity of staff members but also ensure priority and high standard of supervision being maintained.

5.7.10 University – agency liaison

It is recommended that the universities conduct situational analyses with individual agencies, get to know more about them and their services and determine their challenges and concerns regarding FPP. The university and agency should contract at the outset on the expectations in terms of the amount of contact expected, how to address unprofessional conduct and dates for visits and assessments.

The agency supervisor should be orientated to the academic programme, the students' progress and gaps, the theories and models used by the university. A manual or guidelines in this respect should be developed for supervisors to refer to. This will ensure that the supervisor is familiar with the academic expectations and guide students to integrate their theory with practice. Constructive feedback should be provided to the agency and supervisor on their strengths and weaknesses to help in their growth and development in this role. The roles and requirements of the external supervisor need to be clarified, furthermore the university should not differentiate between the two roles to the extent it is practiced currently since this breeds tension and is regarded as unfair (particularly in terms of the monetary gain). It is recommended that the various universities in the province meet, and collaborate on FPP, a uniform model to be adopted and consensus should be reached by all universities in terms of the process of placement of students, thus ensuring that all students and all universities benefit equally. It must be mandatory for the agency supervisor to be included in the final assessment of the FPP. It is critical that the university ensures regular contact and collaboration with the agency; this will serve to strengthen their partnership and secure placement options for future students.

5.7.11 Practice component in the curriculum

More time and attention needs to be awarded to the practice component. Students should be exposed to agencies and the practice of social work from their first year. In considering and combining the contributions of the supervisors the following model is proposed or recommended.

During the first year students should research and compile reports on at least four different agencies. The research should encompass their visits to these agencies and discussions with the various staff members. This will expose them to the different types of organizations and the variety of services in the field, as well as to the general functioning of organizations. Or alternatively, the universities should arrange with a host of agencies to provide information on their field of work during lectures at university in the course of the first year. This initial exposure will also serve to enhance students' understanding of the profession and their willingness to pursue in the career.

During the second year students should be placed at an agency once a week or once in two weeks to observe, sit in on case interviews, group work programmes, accompany workers on field visits and get exposed to the basics of case, group and community work. This should then be intensified in the third and fourth years where students are expected to handle cases, groups and a community project for assessment. A mixture of block placement and concurrent placement throughout the term of the four year degree, would serve in the best interest in preparing the student for the field and integrating theory with practice.

A one year internship programme after the four year degree can be beneficial, where the newly qualified social worker is awarded the opportunity to be in an extended 'learnership programme', whilst in employment.

5.7.12 Legislation

It is of critical importance that SACSSP, finalise the aspects regarding supervision and that the draft policy becomes legislated urgently. This will serve to clear up any confusion experienced

and most importantly serve to provide a structured and focused approach to student supervision nationally. The finalization of the minimum standards will ensure that a high quality of training occurs and the professional status improves.

5.8 Implications for further research

This study focused on social workers in the Durban and surrounding areas of KwaZulu-Natal. In order to draw conclusive findings this study could be extended to the rest of this province as well as to the other provinces. Further, a comparative study between social work supervisors in practice at agencies and external social worker supervisors and possibly university coordinators could be undertaken to explore their experiences, understand the gaps and challenges that exist in addressing the aspect of supervision of student field practice placement holistically. The challenges experienced by universities in the aspect of placing students need to be investigated, considering the number of students requiring placement concurrently from several universities, and the limited number of field practice placements. This study could contribute to new and creative ways of exploring the preparation of students for the profession. A larger sample will certainly raise further discussion and bring to the fore additional issues and suggestion to improve student field practice placement.

5.9 Conclusion

It is clearly evident that even though there are several challenges that supervisors experience in their role of supervising students' field practice placement, there are many aspects that they do enjoy and find beneficial. Whilst it is an additional task that they accept, there does appear to be a high level of commitment and passion in their role. Student supervision, however, has not been awarded the priority it requires from the professional body governing its practice (SACSSP) or the universities, in keeping with its critical contribution to preparing a student holistically. The need to capacitate and nurture a core network of supervisors is essential for the ongoing task of student supervision since field practice placement will always be a core component of the curriculum for the profession. If anything it seems that more emphasis should be devoted to this aspect which in essence will require more intensive investigation and measures to be put into place to support supervisors.

REFERENCES

- Alston, M. & Bowles, W. (2003). *Research for Social Workers: An Introduction to Methods*. (2nd edition) Oxon: Routledge.
- Anfara, V. J. & Mertz, N. (2006). *Theoretical Frameworks in Qualitative Research*. California: Sage.
- ASASWEI, (2011). Field Practice Education: Programme and Abstract Book. *Abstracts of Conference Field Practice Education held in Gauteng on 7th – 9th September*.
- ASASWEI, (2011). Field Practice Education: Programme and Abstract Book. *Welcome Message of Conference Field Practice Education held in Gauteng on 7th – 9th September*.
- Astin, A.W. (1999). Student Involvement: a Developmental Theory for Higher Education. *Journal of College student Development*, 40(5), 518-529.
- Babbie, E, & Mouton J. (2001). *The Practice of Social Research*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press Southern Africa.
- Baglow, L. (2009). Social Work Supervision and its Role in Enabling a Community Visitor Program that Promotes and Protects the Rights of Children. *Australian Social Work*, 62(3), 353-368.
- Bennett, S., BrintzenhofeSzoc, K., Mohr, J. & Saks, L.V. (2008). General and Supervision-Specific Attachment Styles: Relations to Student Perceptions of Field Supervisors. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 44(2), 75-94.
- Bernstein, A. & Gray, M. 1996. *Social: A beginner's text*. Durban: Juta & Company Ltd.
- Bless, C & Higson-Smith, C. (1995). *Fundamentals of Social Research Methods: An African Perspective*. (2nd edition). Kenwyn: Juta.
- Bogo, M. (2006). Field Instruction in Social Work: A Review of the Research Literature. *The Clinical Supervisor*, 24(1), 163-193.
- Borders, L. DiAnne. A (year). Pragmatic Research Agenda for Investigating Developmental Models of Supervision. More details here depending on whether it is a journal or book
- Borders, L.D. (1988). A Pragmatic Research Agenda for Investigating Developmental Models of Supervision. *Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision*, St. Louis, MO, October 7th -10th .

- Borzak, I. (1981). *Field Study. A source book for experiential learning*. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.
- Botha, N.J. (2002). *Supervision and Consultation in Social Work*. Bloemfontein: Drufooma.
- Bradley, G., Engelbrecht, L. & Hojer, S. (2010). Supervision: A force for change? Three stories told. *International Social Work*, 53(6), 773-790.
- Bransford, J. Vye, N. Reed, S. (year). *Learning Theories and Education: Towards a Decade of Synergy*. Handbook of Educational Psychology. (2nd edition). Manwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Brown, A. & Bourne, I. (1996). *The Social Work Supervisor: Supervision in community, day care and residential settings*. Philadelphia: Open University Press.
- Brown, A. (1996). *The Social Work Supervisor: supervision in community, day care and residential settings*. United Kingdom: Open University Press.
- Burns, M.E. (1958). *The historical development of the process of casework supervision as seen in the professional literature of social work*. PhD Dissertation, School of Social Work, University of Chicago.
- Cohen, B-Z, (1987). The Ethics of Social Work Supervision Revisited. *Social Work*, 194-196.
- Cohen, J. & Cohen, B. (1998). 'Graduating social work students' communication competencies and motivations: their effects on satisfaction with social work.' *International Social Work*, 41(3), 357-370.
- Davys, A. & Beddoe, L. (2000). Supervision of students: a map and a model for the decade to come. *Social Work Education*, 19(5).
- Davys, A. M. & Beddoe, L. (2009). The Reflective Learning Model: Supervision of Social Work Students. *Social Work Education*, 28(8), 919-933.
- Dellgran, P. & Hojer, S. (2005). Privatization as professionalization. Attitude, motives and achievements among Swedish Social Workers. *European Journal of Social Work*, 8(1).
- Denzin, N. & Lincoln, Y. (2000). *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. (2nd Edition). California: Sage
- Department of Social Development, (2011). *National Department of Social Development Scholarship for Social Work: Student Guide 2011*. Department of Social Development, Republic of South Africa.
- Dirgélienè, I. (2010) Contexts of Supervision in Social Work. *Bridges / Tiltai*, 52(3), 27-38.

- Eisenberg, S. (1956). *Supervision in the changing field of social work*. Philadelphia: The Jewish Family Service of Philadelphia.
- Engelbrecht, L. (2006). Cultural friendliness as a foundation for the support function in the supervision of social work students in South Africa. *International Social Work*, 49(2), 256-266.
- Fernandez, E. (1998). 'Student perceptions of satisfaction with practicum learning', *Social Work Education*, 17(2), 173-201.
- Fortune, A. E. Lee, M. & Cavazos, A. (2007). Does Practice make perfect. *The Clinical Supervisor*, 26(1/2), 239-263.
- Fransehn, M. (2007). *The importance of supervision in social work-the example of Sweden*. Sweden: Goteborg University.
- Freeman, J. Vidgen, A. & Davies-Edwards, E. (2011). Staff experiences of working in crisis resolution and home treatment. *Mental Health Review Journal*, 16(2). 76-87.
- Giddens, M.M., Cleveland, P.H. & Smith, C.H. (2006). Responding to Inadequate Supervision: A model Promoting Integration for post MSW Practitioners. *The Clinical Supervisor*, 25(1/2).
- Glesne, C. & Peshkin, A. (1992). *Becoming Qualitative Researchers: An Introduction*. New York: Longman
- Glosoff, H. L. & Durham, J. C. (2010). Using Supervision to Prepare Social Justice Counseling Advocates. *Counselor Education & Supervision*, 50(2), 116-129.
- Golafshani, N. (2003). Understanding validity and reliability in qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report*, 8(4), 597-607.
- Harkness, D. & Poertner, J. (1989). Research and Social work Supervision: A Conceptual Review. *Social Work*, 34(2), 115-119.
- Hawkins, P. & Shohet, R. (2006). *Supervision in the Helping Profession*. (3rd edition). Maidenhead: Open University Press
- Henderson, K. J. (2010). Work-based Supervisors: The Neglected Partners in Practice Learning. *Social Work Education*, 29(5), 490-502.
- Itzhaky, H. (2000). "The secret in Supervision". *Families in society*, 81(5), 529-537.
- Kadushin, A. (1992). *Supervision in Social Work*. (3rd edition) New York: Columbia University Press.

- Kanno, H. & Koeske, G. F. (2010). MSW Students' Satisfaction with their Field Placements: The Role of Preparedness and Supervision Quality. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 46(1), 23-38
- Karpetis, G. (2010). Field Practice Supervision of Social Work Students: a psychodynamic view on the emotional context of the process and the setting during the client assessment phase. *European Journal of Social Work*, 13(4), 503-522.
- Knight, C. (2001). The Process of Field Instruction: BSW and MSW Students' Views of Effective Field Supervision. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 37(2), 357-379.
- Koeske, G.F. & Koeske, R.D. (1989). Work Load and Burnout: Can social support and perceived accomplishment help? *Social Work*, 34, 243-248.
- Laird, S.E. (2006). Social Work Practice to Support Survival Strategies in Sub-Saharan Africa. *British Journal of Social Work*, 38(1), 135-151.
- Leddick, G. R. (2001). Supervision Models. *The International Child and Youth Care Network*, (24).
- Leedy, P. D. & Ormrod, J. E. (2005). *Practical Research: Planning and design*. (8th edition). New Jersey: Pearson Educational International and Prentice Hall
- Lincoln, Y. S. & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Beverly Hills: Sage.
- Lit, S-w. & Shek, D. T. L. (2007). Application of Social Constructionist Principles in Field Practice Teaching in a Chinese Context. *Social Work Education*, 26(4), 359-375.
- Lofmark, A., Moberg, A., Ohlund, L.S. & Illicki, J. (2009). Supervising mentors' lived experience on supervision in teaching, nursing and social care education. A participation-oriented phenomenological study. *High Education*, 57, 107-123.
- Lyter, S. C. & Smith, S. H. (2008). Connecting the Dots from Curriculum to Practicum. *The Clinical Supervisor*, 23(2), 31-45.
- Maidment, J. & Cooper, L. (2002). Acknowledgement of client diversity and oppression in social work student supervision. *Social Worker Education*, 21(4), 399-407.
- Marshall, C. & Rossman, G. B. (2006). *Designing Qualitative Research*. (4th edition). Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Maxwell, J. A. (1999). Student Assessment of Supervision in Social Work Field Practice in the Caribbean and Southern Africa: A Comparative Study and Commentary. *Journal of Social Development in Africa*, 14(1), 85-100.

- Mayer, M. (2002). Field Placement Issues: From theory to practice. *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling*, 24, 115-122.
- McGregor, K. (2011). Towards better supervision. *Community Care*, (1850), 30-32.
- Mda, T. & Erasmus, J. (2008). Scarce and critical skills Research Project. Research commissioned by Department of Labour South Africa. Research Consortium, Educators.
- Mouton, J. (1996). Understanding social research. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.
- Mouton, J. (2001). *How to succeed in your Masters and Doctoral Studies. A South African guide and resource book*. Pretoria: Van Schaik.
- Munson, C. (1993). *Clinical social work supervision*. (2nd edition). New York: The Haworth Press, Inc.
- Murgatroyd, W. (1997). Application of the Triad Model in Teaching Counselling Process, Multicultural Sensitivity, and Providing Immediate Supervision. *The Clinical Supervisor*, 16(2), 167-180.
- Neuman, W. (1997). *Social research methods: qualitative and quantitative approaches*. 3rd edition. Needham Heights MA: Allan and Bacon.
- O'Donoghue, K. (2003). *Restoring Social Work Supervision*. Palmerstone North: Dunmore Press.
- Patton M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods*. (3rd edition). Thousand Oaks: Sage
- Peleg-Oren, N., Mark, J., Even-Zahav, M. & Even-Zahav, R. (2007). Field Instructors' Commitment to Student Supervision: Testing the Investment Model. *Social Work Education*, 26(7), 684-696.
- Poertner, J. & Harkness, D. (1988). Research and Social Work Supervision: A Conceptual Review. *Social Work*, 34(2), 115-118.
- Poulin, J., Kauffman, S. & Silver, P. (2006). Serving the community and training social workers: service outputs and student outcomes. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 42(1), 171-184.
- Reamer, F.G. (1989). Liability Issues in Social Work Supervision. *Social Work*, 445-448.
- Reisch, M. & Jarman-Rohde, L. (2000). The Future of Social Work in the United States: Implications for Field Education. *Journal of Social Work*, 36(2), 201-214.
- Royse, R. Dhooper, S.S. & Rompf, E.L. (2003). *Field instruction: A guide for social work students*. (4th edition). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

- Sarantakos, S. (2005). *Social Research* (3rd edition). Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan,.
- Schutte, R. K. (2006). *Investigating the social world: the process and practice of research*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE.
- Scope of Practice: Social Work
- Sewpaul, V. & Lombard, A. (2009). Situation analysis of current social work practice training. Association of South African Schools of Social Work Education Institutions (ASASWEI)
- Simpson, B. & Sathiparsad, R. (2011). A University-Community Outreach Initiative: An Innovative Approach to Social Work Practice Education. *Social Work*, 47(4),405-415.
- Smith, I.V, (2011).Request to Feature Social Workers on the SA Heroes Reality Segment on eTV Letter to the members of SACSSP and Professional Board for Social Work, Employers of Social Workers, Professional Associations and Educators.
- Smith, K. L. (2009). A brief summary of supervision models. [http://www.gallaudet.edu/Documents/Academic/COU_SupervisionModels\[1\].pdf](http://www.gallaudet.edu/Documents/Academic/COU_SupervisionModels[1].pdf) (Accessed on 31 July 2012).
- Smith, M. K. (1996, 2005). ‘The functions of supervision’, the encyclopedia of informal education, Last Update Date: May 29, 2012.
- South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP), (2011). *Draft Policy on Continuing Professional Development (CPD)*.
- Spolander, G., Pullen-Sansfacon, A., Brown M. & Engelbrecht L. (2011). Social work education in Canada, England and South Africa: A critical comparison of undergraduate programmes. *International Social Work*, 54(6), 816-831.
- Statistics South Africa, (2001). Census 2001: Census in Brief. Pretoria: Statistics South Africa, 2003.
- Thomlinson, B., Rogers, G., Collins, D. Grinnel, R. Jr. (1996). *The social Work Practicum-An Access Guide*. (2nd edition). Itasca, Illinois: F.E. Peacock.
- Tsui, M. & Ho, W. (2008). In Search of a Comprehensive Model of Social Work Supervision. *The Clinical Supervisor*, 16(2), 181-205.
- Tsui, M. (1997). Empirical Research on Social Work Supervision: The State of the Art. *Journal of Social Service Research*, 23(2), 39-54.
- Tsui, M. (1997). The Roots of Social Work Supervision: An Historical Review. *The Clinical Supervisor*, 15(2), 191-198.

- Ulin, P. Robinson, E. Tolley, E. & McNeill, E. (2002). *Qualitative methods: a field guide for applied research in sexual and reproductive health*. Charlotte NC: Family Health International.
- Vithal, R. & Jansen, J. (2006). *Designing your first research Proposal*. Cape Town: Creda Communication.
- Waldfogel, D. (1983). Supervision of students and practitioners. In A. Rosenblatt & D. Waldfogel (Eds.), *Handbook of clinical social work*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Wayne, J., Raskin, M. & Bogo, M. (2006). Thinking out of the box: The Need for Radical Change in Field Education. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 42(1), 161-169.
- Welman, C., Kruger, F. & Mitchell, B. (2005). *Research Methodology*. (3rd edition). Cape Town: Oxford University Press.

ANNEXURE A

The Director/ Social Services Manager
Name of Organization
Date

Mam/Sir

Re: Interviewing Social Work Student Supervisors

My name is Wulganithi Thaver (aka Wulli) and I am currently enrolled for a Master's degree in Social Work at the UKZN Howard College Campus. My topic for my dissertation is, "*The experiences of social workers as supervisors of social work student's field placements*".

Given that your organization has over the years consistently served the academic institutions in this capacity and played a significant role in the academic programme of social work students, the input of the staff concerned is regarded as critical and will certainly add value to this research.

The outcomes of this research will certainly be beneficial to both the university and the agency, since field placement is a critical component of the social work curriculum.

I therefore write to you seeking permission from your organization to interview the social workers who have supervised 4th year students (over the last 2 years), or are currently supervising students practical/field placement.

I will ensure that proper arrangements and appointments are in place to minimize any disruptions that may impact on the clients that your organization serves.

For any queries you are welcome to contact me on: 0837884650 or thaverw@ukzn.ac.za

I look forward to a positive response from you as I am confident that the findings from this research will be useful to you and your organization in your role in the training and development of future social workers.

Please confirm your participation with me as soon as possible.

If you wish to obtain information on your rights as a participant, please contact Ms Phumelele Ximba, Research Office, UKZN, on 031360 3587.

Many thanks and kind regards

W. Thaver (Mrs)

Informed Consent Form

I am currently registered for a Master's Degree at the School of Social Work and Community Development at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College Campus. As part of the programme my dissertation topic focuses on, "*The experiences of social workers as supervisors of social work students field placements*".

The purpose of this document is therefore to obtain your consent for participation in this study. My Supervisor/Project Leader for this dissertation is Dr Reshma Sathiparsad, from UKZN Howard College Campus: School of Social Work and Community Development.

The Following represents a brief overview of the nature of the study.

1. Project Title

The experiences of social workers as supervisors of social work students field placements

2. Statement of the Projects Aims

It is proposed that the aims of this research would be:

- To conduct an exploratory study focusing on the experiences, perceptions, needs, and challenges of agency supervisors.
- To identify the issues that agency supervisors face in their role of supervising student social workers.
- To share a descriptive account of their experiences as supervisors.
- Of assistance to the universities in offering a better quality of services and greater support to the agencies and supervisors whose role in the overall grooming of social workers is essential and critical.

This study will be located at social work agencies within Durban and surrounding areas that social work students from Universities in and around KwaZulu-Natal are placed at for the duration of their field placement and the compulsory practical training required.

The aim of conducting this study is to identify and improve the issues that agency supervisors face in their role of supervising student social workers. It is envisaged that this study will be of assistance to the universities in understanding the experiences of agency supervisors and thus offer a better quality of service and greater support to the agencies and supervisors whose role in the overall grooming of student social workers is essential and critical.

3. Critical Questions

This Research Study will answer the following questions:

1. The experiences of agency supervisors.
 - b) How do agency supervisors experience their role of supervising social work students?
 - c) How do agency supervisors experience student performance?

- d) How do agency supervisors experience the partnership and interaction with the university?
- e) What do agency supervisors regard as the best practice model or guidelines for student placement and supervision?

2. What suggestions do agency supervisors have to enhance the learning experiences of students

4. Autonomy of Participants

By virtue of your role at your organization and the relationship you share with the University/ies and Social Work Students you have been identified as a key participant to be interviewed for the purpose of this study. The duration of the interview will be approximately 60 minutes long, during which you will be given the opportunity to share your experiences, concerns and recommendations which will add value to the critical aspect of Student placement and Supervision. These interviews will be recorded for the purposes of compiling a comprehensive report on the findings of this study. All interviews will be conducted by the researcher and information retrieved will be strictly confidential and no names will be mentioned. Responses to the interview will not be made available for public consumption and the data will be destroyed after a period of 5 years. Anonymity of the participant and the organization/agency represented will be ensured at all times. There will be no payment or reimbursement for participation in this study. Your participation is voluntary and as such you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without being prejudiced.

I..... (Full name), do hereby confirm that I understand the content of this document and the nature of this research study and I consent to participate in this study. I fully understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from this study at any time should I so desire.

Please print your name and sign to confirm your participation in this study.

Name : Signature :
Signed on thisday of.....2012

Signature of witness:

1. 2.

Should you require any further information or wish to discuss aspects of this study, you are welcome to contact either the Researcher or Supervisor on the following Numbers.

- Wulganithi Thaver (aka Wulli) 083 788 4650 or 031 2621888 (a/h)
- Dr Reshma Sathieparsad 031 2602430/2391/7430

If you wish to obtain information on your rights as a participant, please contact M Phumelele Ximba, Research Office, UKZN, on 031 360 3587.

Thank you for your time and participation in this study.

Yours Sincerely
W. Thaver

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

**THE EXPERIENCES OF SOCIAL WORKERS AS SUPERVISORS OF SOCIAL WORK
STUDENTS FIELD PLACEMENTS**

The purpose of this interview is to obtain information about your experiences as the agency supervisor of fourth year social work students' field/practical placement. This will help me, as the researcher, to understand your experiences and enable me to make suggestions. It is hoped that the findings of this research will be beneficial to universities and organizations that Social Work students are placed at for the duration of their field placement.

Your time and effort in this study is most valued and appreciated.

I wish you and your agency all the best in your future endeavors.

Should you have any queries regarding this study please feel free to contact me on the number below.

W.Thaver (Mrs)

0837884650

SECTION A

1. Background/Demographic questions

1.1 Name of Organization/ Agency: _____

1.2 Supervisor's name (Participant): _____

1.3 Age:

20-25	26-30	31-35	36-40	41-45	46 and older
-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	--------------

1.4 Gender:

Male Female

1.5 When did you qualify as a Social Worker?

Before 1995	1995-1999	2000-2004	2005-2009
----------------	-----------	-----------	-----------

1.6 For how many years have you been practicing as a social worker?

3-5 years ago	5 –10 years ago	10-15 years ago	15 years and more
------------------	--------------------	--------------------	----------------------

1.7 How many years have you been a Student supervisor?

2-5 years	5-10 years	10-15 Years	More Than 15 Years
-----------	------------	-------------	-----------------------

1.8 How many students have you supervised over the past 3 years?

1	2-4	5-8	8-10	More than 10
---	-----	-----	------	--------------

1.9 What is your highest academic qualification?

Honours'	Masters	Doctorate	Other: Explain
----------	---------	-----------	-------------------

SECTION B

1. How do you see your role as the Agency Supervisor?

Probes: Exposure to context, practice of methods of SW, intensive guidance, planning, assessment of students, liaising with the university. Act as a role model.

2. What criteria did your agency use in selecting you as a student supervisor? *Explain*

3. Describe your experiences of supervising social work students

Probes:

- What was most enjoyable/ useful/demanding/frustrating?
- How was time for supervision managed?

4. How would you describe the students you supervised?

Probes:

- Academic preparation for field placement
- Attitude towards work
- Interpersonal skills
- Dedication/aspiration
- Ability and competence

5. What were some of the challenges you experienced in your role as the agency supervisor?

Probes: Students, Agency, University, Personal, Professional

6. In your role as the agency supervisor elaborate on some advantages that you or your agency benefitted from as a result of having a student placed at your agency?

Probes: Financial and workload, exposure to academic work and theory in relation to service delivery.

7. Did you receive any additional skill and training to equip you for this role?

Explain

8. Describe the support you received in your role as supervisor.

Probes: Agency, University

9. Describe the support that the student received.

Probes: Agency and university

10. Is there any particular approach to supervision that you've adopted?

Explain

11. Have you managed to keep yourself updated with the changing trends and dynamics in the field of Social Work?
Probes: Attending workshops, conferences, short courses, academic study.
12. What is your understanding of the Universities expectation of the agency supervisor?
Probes: Student training and development, Collaboration with the university, Skills and Expertise, Assessment of competency of the student
13. What would have assisted you or equipped you further in your role as a supervisor?
Explain:
14. What role did the university/academic co-ordinator play once the student commenced their placement at your agency?
Probes: Meetings, mentoring, availability.
15. How do you feel about continuing to supervise students in the future?
Explain response
16. Upon termination of their fieldwork placement at your agency, what is your opinion of the students' readiness for practice and employment?
Probes: Understanding of context, functioning of agency, competencies in methods, ability to link theory and practice. Engage in critical analyses of situations – individually and in communities.
17. What model of supervision is preferable? (Number of days, block etc.)
Explain response
18. Student's field placement and supervision are a critical component of the overall academic Programme, The universities and agencies together share an enormous responsibility to produce competent Social work practitioners. Do you have any comments on changes/recommendations that may be considered in optimizing this learning opportunities for the students?
Probes: The universities approach to student supervision, Agency approach and attitudes to supervision, Student preparation

Thank You

W. Thaver (Mrs)