

**SOCIAL WORKERS' PERCEPTIONS AND  
EXPERIENCES OF FIELDWORK SUPERVISION IN  
THE BACHELOR OF SOCIAL WORK DEGREE**

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A full thesis submitted in the partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master in Social Work, in the Department of Social Work,  
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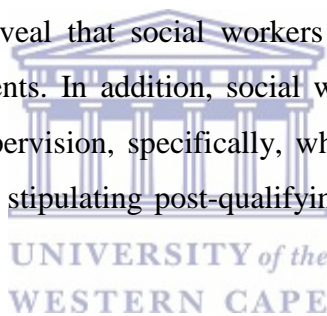
**Supervisor:** Dr Glynnis Dykes

**Date:** 28 May 2018

## ABSTRACT

Generally, studies on social work supervision, in the university setting, has focused mainly on students' experiences. Research on the experience of the supervisor, or agency, providing guidance is scant. This study argues that the narrow focus on students' experiences is disproportionate, and marginalises all the other stakeholders involved in fieldwork education. In addition, the existing studies create blind spots for programme evaluation, as they are not holistic. This current study proposes a broader analysis.

Global and national standards for social work training involve the theory and practice component of the Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) programme. The practice component requires students to conduct fieldwork training at social work organisations, under the supervision of a qualified and experienced social worker. International and local studies on the supervision of BSW students reveal that social workers often consider themselves to be underprepared to supervise students. In addition, social workers often lack post-qualifying training to undertake student supervision, specifically, which is further exacerbated by the dearth of policies, or legislation, stipulating post-qualifying training and experience for the supervision of BSW students.



The purpose of this current study was to explore the perceptions and experiences of social workers, related to fieldwork supervision in the BSW degree, at a selected university in the Western Cape (WC), South Africa (SA). A qualitative research approach was used, as it is attentive to the personal experiences, from the insider's perspective, and aims to understand multiple realities. This approach is relevant to the current study, as it focuses on exploring and describing the perceptions and experiences of the participants, which the qualitative method underscores. A case study design was utilised, as it is descriptive, and is an in-depth study of a single instance of a social phenomenon. The case, in this instance, is the BSW programme at a selected university.

Purposive sampling was used, as the participants, who are most representative of the study, were selected in the sampling process. The sample for this study comprised of twenty four participants: 11 semi-structured interviews were conducted and 13 questionnaires were completed by registered social workers. The following data verification methods were used:

member checking (See Annexure J); triangulation; researcher reflexivity; peer debriefing and an on-going dialogue, regarding the researcher's interpretations of the data, as this aided the accuracy of the findings. Coding was applied by the researcher to create categories within the data, and thematic analysis to further identify the emerging themes and sub-themes, which were subsequently funnelled. Typologies are interpreted and developed, and the data, finally presented. Four themes and sixteen sub-themes emerged from the data (See Chapter 4). The focus of theme four was on continuous professional development (CPD), which reiterates the importance of post-qualifying training of social workers who supervise BSW students, and the importance of this study. This study recommends CPD of all social workers who provide fieldwork supervision in the BSW programme. There is also a need for emotional support for students and essentially fieldwork supervision needs to be viewed as indispensable to academia. An implication of the lack of CPD could be detrimental to students and could lead to stagnation in the field of social work and ultimately affect the standard of the profession.

Permission to conduct this research study was obtained from the institution and the participants. To ensure ethics compliance, the participants' rights to confidentiality and privacy, through anonymity, was ensured by the researcher, the gathered information was secured, and protection from harm was guaranteed through debriefing opportunities. The researcher's biases, regarding the topic, were minimised through self-reflexivity.

## KEY WORDS

Agency supervisors

Campus supervisors

Social work

Social worker

Social work fieldwork supervision

Social work organisation



## ABBREVIATIONS

|         |   |  |
|---------|---|--|
| AC      | - | Abstract Conceptualisation   |
| AE      | - | Active Experimentation   |
| AS      | - | Agency Supervisor  |
| ASASWEI | - | Association of South African schools of social work educational institutions |
| BSW     | - | Bachelor of Social Work  |
| CE      | - | Concrete Experience  |
| CFESS   | - | Federal Council for Social Work  |
| CHE     | - | Council of Higher Education  |
| CHS     | - | Community and Health Sciences  |
| CPD     | - | Continuous Professional Development  |
| CS      | - | Campus Supervisor  |
| CT      | - | Cape Town  |
| CSWE    | - | Council of Social Work Education   |
| DOE     | - | Department of Education  |
| DSD     | - | Department of Social Development   |
| ELT     | - | Experiential Learning Theory   |
| FL      | - | Fieldwork Lecturer   |
| HEI     | - | Higher Education Institutions  |
| IASSW   | - | International Association for Schools of Social Work                         |
| IFSW    | - | International Federation of Social Workers                                   |

|        |   |  |
|--------|---|--|
| NASW   | - | National Association of Social Workers               |
| NGO    | - | Non-Governmental Organisations                       |
| NQF    | - | National Qualifications Framework                    |
| OBE    | - | Outcomes Based Education                             |
| PhD    | - | Doctor of Philosophy                                 |
| RO     | - | Reflective Observation                               |
| SA     | - | South Africa   |
| SACSSP | - | South African Council for Social Service Professions |
| SAQA   | - | South African Qualifications Authority               |
| SWS    | - | Social Work Supervision                              |
| SWSS   | - | Social Work Student Supervision                      |
| USA    | - | United States of America                             |
| WC     | - | Western Cape   |



## KEY CONCEPTS

**Social Worker:** A social worker is an individual, who is registered with the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP), in terms of chapter 2, section 17, of the Social Service Professions Act (Republic of South Africa [RSA]. No. 110 of 1978), to provide social work services.

**Social Work Fieldwork Supervision:** Social Work fieldwork supervision is the process, through which an experienced social worker monitors and evaluates a student social worker, and provides educational, administrative and supportive functions, in terms of the student's professional conduct at organisations (Republic of South Africa [RSA] Department of Social Development [DSD] & South African Council for Social Services Professions [SACSSP], 2012; Kadushin & Harkness, 2014; Moorhouse, Hay & O'Donoghue, 2016). The supervisor also helps the student to integrate learning and practice within the organisation, or intervention with clients. The experienced social worker also provides guidance for the student, and can be held liable by the SACSSP for the ethical practice of the student (RSA DSD & SACSSP, 2012).

**Social Work Organisations:** Social work organisations are social welfare organisations, registered with the Department of Social Development [DSD], and comprise of government, non-government and registered private sector organisations, according to the Social Service Professions Act (No. 110 of 1978).

**Campus Supervisors:** Campus supervisors are registered social workers employed at Higher Education Institutions [HEIs], to facilitate the supervision and assessment of students, based on academic requirements (RSA DSD & SACSSP, 2012; Eible, 2015).


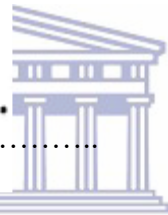
**Agency Supervisors:** Agency supervisors are registered social workers employed at the social work organisations, where students are placed for fieldwork practice (RSA DSD & SACSSP, 2012; Eible, 2015).

## DECLARATION

I declare that the study, *Social Workers' perceptions and experiences of fieldwork supervision in the Bachelor of Social Work degree*, is my original work; that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other University, and that all the sources I have used, or quoted, have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

Leticia Poggenpoel

Date: 28 May 2018

Signature:..........  
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*Gratitude is inevitable.*

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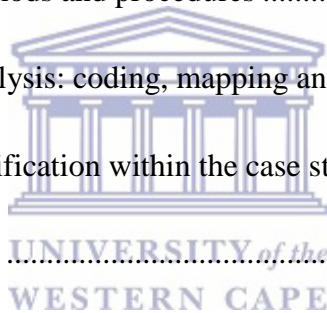
A special thanks to myself for persevering through this process and for not giving up.

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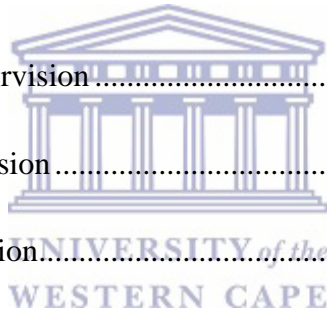
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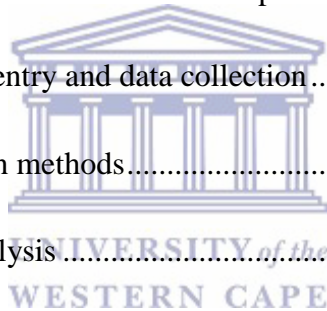
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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background and Rationale

Global standards for social work training involve the theory and practice component of the Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) programme (Carelse & Poggenpoel, 2016; Hochfeld, Selipsky, Mupedziswa & Chitereka, 2009). In keeping with this requirement, experienced social workers (hereafter referred to as supervisors) provide guidance to BSW students (hereafter referred to as students) regarding the practical implementation of their classroom learning. This task is referred to as fieldwork supervision and is viewed as the “heart of social work training” (Homonoff, 2008: 136; also see Dhemba, 2012; Schmidt & Rautenbach, 2016). The placement of students in social work organisations is intended to provide the student with opportunities to integrate theory with practical social work experience, while under the supervision of a supervisor (RSA DSD & SACSSP, 2012). Fieldwork supervision, as a component of the BSW programme, is imperative as it provides students with the opportunity to experience the field of social work directly, which spatially transcends the classroom and the dimensions of theory (Dykes, 2014).

The researcher’s experience of supervising students at two universities in the Western Cape (WC), South Africa (SA), has revealed an assumption that supervisors have absolute knowledge of theory and practice, as well as knowledge of learning outcomes, in the BSW programme. However, this is not necessarily the case, as the researcher has encountered a number of supervisors, who disclosed their lack of current social work theory, and student supervision knowledge. Unfortunately, these are not isolated cases, as confirmed by various international studies (Noble & Irwin, 2009; Wannacott, 2012), as well as local studies (Hochfeld *et al.*, 2009; Petersen, 2010) on fieldwork supervision.

Petersen (2010), conducted a study at a selected university and observed that supervisors considered themselves under-prepared to supervise BSW students. In addition, the author observed that fieldwork supervisors were often not aware of the various theoretical models being taught at universities, and were overly-dependent on the students for their theoretical knowledge. This is of great concern, as supervisors are expected to possess the required

knowledge of theory. Therefore, supervisors, who do not grasp the requisite theoretical knowledge completely, are unable to convey the ‘correct’ message (Petersen, 2010), as they are unable to explain the theory application to the students, which, in turn, implied that students would graduate without adequately understanding the applications of the various theories. The under-preparedness of the supervisors is further exacerbated by the absence of policies, which require formalised training, other than a BSW qualification and practice experience, for the supervision of BSW students (RSA DSD & SACSSP, 2012; Hochfeld *et al.*, 2009). Petersen (2010) recommended that fieldwork supervisors be trained to comply with the university requirements of students’ needs, and that they should be registered assessors. Hochfeld *et al.* (2009), as well as Engelbrecht (2012), also recommend training of fieldwork supervisors, to improve the quality of supervision to BSW students.

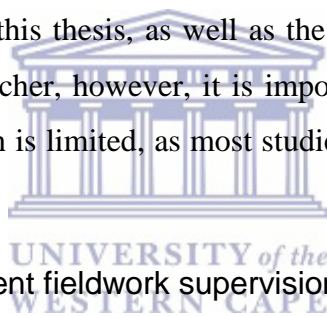
The selected university where this current research was conducted is relatively under-resourced, compared to more affluent universities in SA (Petersen, 2010). In addition, the students at the selected university are mostly from socially challenging backgrounds, and are not adequately prepared for academic study in higher education, due to on-going political ramifications of the apartheid education policy (Bozalek, 2013; Dykes, 2014; Petersen, 2010). These facts also affect the challenges being experienced by supervisors in social work fieldwork supervision, as they too consider themselves under-prepared to facilitate the learning needs of the students. Knowledge about the nature and extent of their opinions and experiences is scant (Carelse & Poggenpoel, 2016). There appears to be a dearth of studies focusing on the experiences of social work fieldwork supervisors (Wannacott, 2012). However, the experiences and perceptions of social work students, have received much attention at the selected university (Beytell, 2014; Carelse & Dykes, 2014; Dykes 2014; Petersen, 2010), as well as internationally (Hamilton, 2015; Moorhouse, Hay & O’Donoghue, 2016), with little, or no voice being given to fieldwork supervisors.

The purpose of this current study, therefore, is to explore the perceptions and experiences of social workers concerning fieldwork supervision for the BSW degree at a selected university in the Western Cape, SA. In addition, this current study aims to provide insight into social workers’ challenges and successes with fieldwork supervision for the BSW degree, while, simultaneously, providing recommendations for fieldwork supervision training. Therefore, the study is linked strongly to the current social work professional milieu in SA, where practice supervision is a major concern, affecting the successful provision of services to communities,

already plagued with overwhelming and varied socio-economic and psycho-social challenges (RSA DSD & SACSSP, 2012).

## **1.2. Preliminary literature study**

Globally, social work practice and supervision is vital in the continuous process of the profession (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014; Haanwinckel, Fawcett & Garcia, 2017). The primary goal of fieldwork supervision is “to provide an opportunity for integration of theory with practical experience under the supervision of an experienced social worker” (RSA DSD & SACSSP, 2012: 23), and, ultimately, to provide best practice for clients (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014). The fact that, for social workers, supervision is a continuous process, from training to practice, distinguishes supervision in social work, from supervision in other professions (Beddoe, 2012). Schmidt and Rautenbach (2016: 591) assert that the “value of field instruction lies in the opportunity to practice the theory taught in class”. The nature and models in supervision will be unpacked in this thesis, as well as the structure of the BSW in SA, and globally. According to the researcher, however, it is important to note that the literature on social work fieldwork supervision is limited, as most studies focused on social work practice supervision.

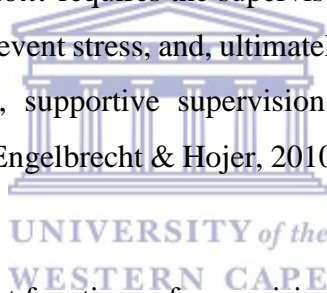


### **1.2.1. The nature of student fieldwork supervision**

Engelbrecht (2013: 457) asserts that the “nature of social work necessitates supervision”. Fieldwork placements represent the physical setting (for example, organisations), where students, not only learn thinking and practice skills, in conjunction with what professional social workers do, but also cultivate their thinking and reflection skills, before, during and after their field placements (Schmidt & Rautenbach, 2016). Fieldwork supervision provides students with “opportunities to assess, plan, intervene” and evaluate interventions with client systems, as well as how to “document” these accurately (Downs, 2017: 1). Therefore, students are responsible for their interventions with client systems; however, it is important to note that students are in training, and are responsible to live up to their institutional obligations; they are not professional social workers yet (Persson, 2017). Consequently, students need to be supervised by an experienced practitioner (RSA DSD & SACSSP, 2012).

Supervisors are required to provide the following supervision services to students (Kadushin & Harkness, 2002):

- **Administrative supervision:** requires the supervisor to ensure the fulfilment of agency policies and guidelines, as well as be responsible to the social work body (SACSSP in SA) with which the supervisor is licensed or registered (Beddoe, 2012; Kadushin & Harkness, 2014). The primary focus of administrative supervision is management and adhering to agency requirements (Caspi & Reid, 2012).
- **Educational supervision:** aims to teach knowledge, skills and attitudes that improve performance (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014). Educational Supervision focuses on “supervisee learning. Knowledge and skill development take priority over administrative and supportive tasks” (Caspi & Reid, 2012: 2).
- **Supportive supervision:** requires the supervisor to assist the supervisee with job morale, as well as prevent stress, and, ultimately, burnout (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014). Additionally, supportive supervision tends to have a person-centred approach (Bradley, Engelbrecht & Hojer, 2010), and promotes reflective practice (Ingram, 2013).



From the above, the different functions of supervision is imperative, as it focuses on the practitioner, holistically, and considers all the aspects of professional development. For example, administrative supervision ensures that the practitioner follows agency protocol and guidelines, while educational supervision is in line with continuous professional development, and supportive supervision provides the needed support to practitioners to ensure their well-being.

#### *1.2.1.1. Structure of the BSW degree internationally*

Internationally, fieldwork supervision is viewed as learning through experience, suggesting that students obtain knowledge and skills under the supervision of an experienced practitioner (Bogo, 2006; Noble, 2011, cited in Moorhouse *et al.*, 2016), which is aligned with experiential learning (Lough, McBride & Sherraden, 2012). Fieldwork supervision provides students with opportunities to practice what they had learnt, through education in an agency setting, which often requires networking between schools of social work and agencies (Bogo, 2006).

While there are generic requirements, such as the theoretical and practice component, as well as registration, in SA, for example, with the SACSSP; different training institutions have different curricula content that is unique to the context of the country, region and community in which it is situated (Bogo, 2006; Spolander, Pullen-Sansfacon, Brown & Engelbrecht, 2011). Sewpaul and Jones (2004: 17) assert that for social work to “meet the global standards will depend on the developmental needs of any given country/region and the developmental status of the profession in any given context, as determined by unique historical, socio-political, economic and cultural contexts”. The following sections, therefore, clarify the BSW degree in these various contexts.

The International Association for Schools of Social Work (IASSW, 2004) established global principles, which have to be adhered to, due to the fact that social work education is varied (Dominelli, 2003). The Council on Social Work Education [CSWE] hosted a summit on field education in 2014 that aimed to improve the pedagogy of fieldwork (CSWE, 2017). In the USA, the Council on Social Work Education [CSWE] approves social work programmes (CSWE, 2017). Bogo (2006: 164) states that “The Council on Social Work Education Accreditation standards requires a minimum of 400 hours of field education for baccalaureate programs and 900 hours for master’s programs”.

However, the CSWE allows schools of social work to develop their own curriculum and does not enforce training (Downs, 2017). Therefore, in order to supervise a BSW student, a fieldwork supervisor must hold a BSW degree, while to supervise a Masters (MA) student, the fieldwork supervisor must hold a MA degree (Bogo, 2006), and be responsible for assisting the student to link theory with practice. Additionally, some schools of social work have opted to have students engage in their fieldwork programme internationally, in order to provide them with a global context (Lough *et al.*, 2012; Nuttman-Shwartz & Berger, 2012). In a study conducted by Persson (2017), students received the same assignments, whether they pursued their fieldwork locally or abroad.

Ultimately, fieldwork is imperative in the teaching and learning of social work students, internationally (CSWE, 2002).



### 1.2.1.2. Structure of the BSW degree in African context

The current BSW in the “South African context are in line with international standards for social work training” and is outcomes based (Carelse & Poggenpoel, 2016: 253). Hochfeld *et al.* (2009) assert that very little is known about social work education in Africa. Various authors believe that social work education is too focused on the Western world, and an indigenous and developmental approach need to be taken, when training social workers in Africa, as Western theories and discourse are not always appropriate for the African and SA contexts (Askeland & Payne, 2006; Gray & Fook, 2004; Osei-Hwedie & Rankopo, 2008). This would be in line with the SA White Paper on Social Welfare (Republic of South Africa [RSA]. Department of Welfare, 1997), which also called for a social development approach in providing social work services (Engelbrecht, 2004). In SA, fieldwork supervision refers to a more experienced social worker mentoring and monitoring a student’s work at a social work organisation, where the student is placed for on-site practical experience. This is often a formal agreement and requires on-going learning and performance from both the supervisor and the supervisee (RSA DSD & SACSSP, 2012). It is, however, important to note that fieldwork supervision (student in training in a BSW fieldwork programme) mostly draws from practice supervision (qualified social worker practising in the field). The distinct differences between fieldwork supervision and practice supervision is the educative function (Moorhouse *et al.*, 2016), and the overseeing of an experienced practitioner over an inexperienced practitioner (RSA DSD & SACSSP, 2012; Moorhouse *et al.*, 2016).

There are three vital role players in fieldwork supervision, namely, campus supervisors, agency supervisors and university fieldwork lecturers (Dykes, 2014). Campus supervisors are based at university campuses to facilitate the academic assessment through a structured supervision programme, while agency supervisors are employed and based at the organisations, where students are placed for fieldwork. These two supervisors work in partnership with the university fieldwork lecturers, who are responsible for the design and facilitation of the fieldwork module. These lecturers ensure that the student is able to integrate theory and practice in relation to theoretical and fieldwork modules in the BSW programme,

in line with Standards for BSW, set out by the Council on Higher Education (CHE) (CHE, 2015; Musson, 2011). Therefore, as confirmed by several authors (Carelse & Poggenpoel, 2016; Nzira & Williams, 2008), there should be collaboration between universities and supervisors on the most effective ways of meeting students' learning needs.

### 1.2.2. Models of student supervision in South Africa

Working with vulnerable communities can be daunting, due to the complexities of their challenges, as well as the responsibilities of the profession. According to Cournoyer (2016: 1), to “serve competently in such circumstances, social workers today need to be knowledgeable, thoughtful, ethical, accountable, and proficient”. Students require learning opportunities, in order to develop effective and efficient competencies as social workers, which will allow them to adapt to different and changing practice environments and practice situations (Engelbrecht, 2004). Supervision, therefore, is an interactive and engaging teaching and learning process between students and supervisors. The three basic supervision models, common to many social work programmes, are the following (Schmidt & Rautenbach, 2016):

- The *apprenticeship model* is structured process learning, where students first observe and watch experienced social workers in practice settings, before they learn the theory in the classroom setting (observe and learn).
- The *academic model* is structured process learning, where students first learn theory in the classroom setting, and thereafter commence their fieldwork practice (learn and do).
- The *articulated model* is concurrent learning, taking place, simultaneously, between the classroom and fieldwork placement learning settings (simultaneous learning and doing).

The social work programme at the university selected for this current study, follows the articulated model, as it provides the strongest learning opportunities for the integration of theory and practice.

### 1.2.3. Continuous Professional Development of Social Workers

In SA, social workers are required to engage in Continuous Professional Development (CPD), in order to retain their registration with the SACSSP (South African Council for Social Service Professions [SACSSP], 2017), which is in line with global standards (Spolander *et al.*, 2011). This requirement is echoed by Williams and Rutter (2010), who emphasize the importance of continuous learning, self-reflection and self-awareness, enabling social workers to provide students with safe, supportive and trusting environments. These authors stress the importance of keeping up to date with the world of fieldwork education, in order to be effective in supervision. In addition, social workers are bound by the code of ethics of the SACSSP, to continuously engage in professional development (SACSSP, 2017). A key finding by Petersen (2010) was the general lack of post-qualifying training of social workers. Therefore, social workers' access to CPD training on student and practice supervision appear to be crucial.

### 1.2.4. Legislative requirements

In SA, in terms of SACSSP regulations, supervision is mandatory, and BSW students can only be supervised by qualified social workers, who are registered with the SACSSP. Practice supervisors cannot supervise more than 10 students, if that is his/her only key performance area. The ratio is 1:10 for structured supervision, and 1:6, if the supervisor has other duties (RSA DSD & SACSSP, 2012). Supervisors must be registered with the SACSSP, have at least 3 years of practice experience, and, although stipulated that they "...should attend a comprehensive supervision course presented by an accredited service provider recognised by the SACSSP" (RSA DSD & SACSSP, 2012: 40), this stipulation is not always adhered to. Additionally organisations should implement policies that guide practice supervision, while students should be registered with the SACSSP during their second year of study, and again once they are qualified as social workers (RSA DSD & SACSSP, 2012). Students may not engage in fieldwork practice, if they are not registered with the SACSSP, which also applies to social workers, who are practitioners, and who supervise students (RSA DSD & SACSSP, 2012). According to the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) (2003), supervisors should have completed an assessor's course. At present, there are no policies regarding fieldwork supervision in place at the selected university; however, the university is guided by, and comply with the requirements of the SACSSP (Petersen, 2010).

### 1.3. Theoretical framework

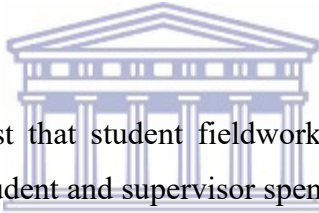
Healey and Jenkins (2000) claim that one of the best known educational theories in higher education is Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (ELT). The theory is based on a four-stage learning cycle (concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation) that is associated with different learning styles. In practice, this implies that students learn by feeling, watching, thinking and doing (Kolb, Boyatzis & Mainemelis, 1999). Individuals differ in their preferred learning styles; therefore, when students identify this approach, it becomes the first stage in raising their own awareness of the way in which they learn, as well as the different approaches that are possible. For example, a student might prefer to learn by doing, and not realise the aspects of feeling or thinking in the learning endeavour, which, in essence, prevents them from holistic learning (Kolb, Boyatzis & Mainemelis, 1999; Kolb & Kolb, 2005). According to Kolb (1984: 38), "Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience". In addition, Kolb (1984: 27) asserts that experience is the source of learning as "knowledge is continuously derived from and tested out in the experiences of the learner" (student). This allows "students to use their own experiences and infuse it with the knowledge of others" (Dykes, 2014: 107). Wehbi (2011: 494) states that learning best occurs when "students are actively involved in their own experiences". Therefore, fieldwork for social work students provides opportunities for students to infuse what they had learnt at university, with practical experiences (including personal experiences).

Without the knowledge of the learning cycle, transformation might not take place, which will negate the purpose of social work supervision, as it aims to bring about transformation by raising students' levels of awareness (Dykes, 2014; Kolb, Boyatzis & Mainemelis, 1999; Kolb & Kolb, 2005; Wehbi, 2011). A student's growth may be stifled if there is a disparity between the style of the student and the approach of the teacher, or supervisor (Healey & Jenkins, 2000). The supervisor, therefore, must be aware of the significance of students' different learning cycles, in order to ensure that all students engage in the learning process, and learn to use the various aspects in their cycles. This kind of learning, therefore, suggests that supervisors should actively engage with their students, and minimise the distance (by using their experience as a form of learning and development) (Healey & Jenkins, 2000; Kolb, 1984). ELT suggests that learning cycles are structures, and supervisors, as well as supervision, need to be organised, to create environments for transformation of experiences, which will increase the conscientisation

of students (Kolb, Boyatzis & Mainemelis, 2001). Feedback and evaluation is the back bone of social work supervision (RSA DSD & SACSSP, 2012); therefore, these tasks would be easily facilitated within the framework of ELT.

ELT is relevant to this study because it focuses on the process of learning (learning cycle), and the integration of theory and practice necessitates a structured learning process (Goldstein, 2001; Kolb, 1984; Kolb & Kolb, 2005). It stresses the focus on the process, and not necessarily the outcome alone (Kolb *et al.*, 2001). ELT strongly relates to both social work professional learning and the student profile within the institutional context (Dykes, 2014), because fieldwork practice is focused on “learning by doing”, and emphasises the use of reflective skills (Schmidt & Rautenbach, 2016). This current study, therefore, focuses on the experiences of the supervisors, as well as the framing of the findings, in terms of experiential and transformative learning.

#### **1.4. Problem statement**



International prescriptions suggest that student fieldwork supervision should be “planned, regular periods of time that the student and supervisor spend together discussing the student’s work in the placement and reviewing the learning progress” (Ford & Jones, 1987: 63). Supervision is regarded as essential to the growth and development of BSW students (Dhemba, 2012; Petersen, 2010; Truter & Fouché, 2015). Supervisors are required to teach and assess BSW students, in order to determine the students’ level of competence; however, prior to 2012, there were no formal training requirements for the supervision of BSW students (Petersen, 2010). The DSD and SACSSP (RSA, 2012) developed guidelines for social work supervision in SA, which included student supervision; however, this document does not clarify the requirements for fieldwork supervisors. Truter and Fouche (2015) concur that supervision practices are under-researched and often too focused on administrative duties. Research findings suggest that social work fieldwork supervision should receive more attention (Carelse & Poggenpoel, 2016), and supervisors should be trained in both theory and practice, implying that supervisors should accumulate CPD points (Petersen, 2010). DSD & SACSSP (RSA, 2012) recommend that supervisors hold a minimum of 3 years’ experience, and should attend a comprehensive supervision course, presented and accredited by SACSSP. This relates to the earlier recommendation by Petersen (2010) that fieldwork supervisors should be registered assessors. Universities and social work organisations, essentially, should work collaboratively,

in order to provide the best possible service to students, who are the customers of the selected university (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014; Race, 2005, cited in Carelse & Poggenpoel, 2016).

The social work department at the selected university requires that supervisors have at least five years' experience as a practitioner; however, they do not require any formal post-qualifying supervision training. The gap is, therefore, that the department does not offer regular training for supervisors, besides feedback meetings with campus supervisors on a weekly basis, before student supervision sessions. Little, or no such input is offered to agency supervisors, unless in response to challenges related to the students' development in their fieldwork placements, or in information sessions at the start of the placement. Consequently, the concern is that the lack of ongoing training would cause fieldwork supervisors to feel inadequate and unable to meet the students' academic needs and professional development. This, in turn, affects the students, who are of the opinion that supervisors are not sufficiently trained to make academic assessments regarding their competence (Petersen, 2010). Therefore, this current study focusses on fieldwork supervision in BSW at the selected university, with specific reference to campus and agency supervisors' perceptions and experiences.

Hawkins, Shohet, Ryde and Wilmot (2012) assert that good supervision cannot simply be acquired in ad-hoc training, but should form part of continuous professional and personal development. The SACSSP concurs with this view and regards CPD as imperative to the growth of the social work profession and social workers. However, of grave concern, is the fact that this challenge appears to have been existent in social work education for decades (Middleman & Rhodes, 1985).

### **1.5. Research aim**

The aim of this research was to explore and describe the perceptions and experiences of social workers, who are campus and agency supervisors, as well as lecturers in the BSW programme, at a selected university in the Western Cape, South Africa.

### **1.6. Research question**

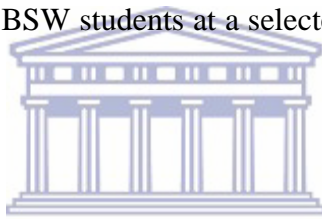
What are the perceptions and experiences of social workers, who are campus and agency supervisors, as well as lecturers, regarding student supervision in the BSW programme at the selected university?



## 1.7. Research objectives

The objectives of this study are:

1. To explore and describe the perceptions and experiences of social workers, who are campus and agency supervisors, as well as lecturers, regarding the educational function of supervision of BSW students at a selected university in the Western Cape, South Africa.
2. To explore and describe the perceptions and experiences of social workers, who are campus and agency supervisors, as well as lecturers, regarding the supportive function of supervision of BSW students at a selected university in the Western Cape, South Africa.
3. To explore and describe the perceptions and experiences of social workers, who are campus and agency supervisors, as well as lecturers, regarding the administrative function of supervision of BSW students at a selected university in the Western Cape, South Africa.



## 1.8. Methodology

Research methodology is a logical way to solve a problem and systematically address a research problem (Jonker & Pennink, 2010; Patil & Mankar, 2016). Chapter 4 provides a detailed explanation of the research methodology of this current research.

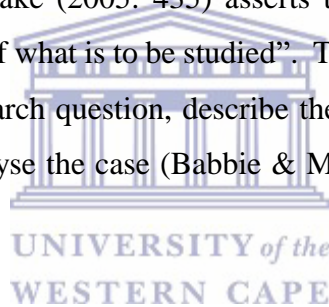
### 1.8.1. Methodological Approach

The qualitative research approach was deemed appropriate for this current study, as it seeks “to understand human experiences from the perspective of those who experience them” (Bonnie, Yegidi, Weinback & Meyers, 2012: 23), and it aims to understand multiple realities (Creswell, 2014). This approach is relevant to the research question, as it focuses on exploring and describing the perceptions and experiences of the participants, which underscores the qualitative method (Babbie & Mouton, 2007; Creswell, 2013; Fouché & Delpont, 2011). This current research study is descriptive, as data are presented in the words of the participants, unlike in quantitative research that provides data in numerical values (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative research involves the use of a variety of data collection methods, which include personal experience, introspection, life stories, as well as materials that describe routine and problematic moments and meaning in

individuals lives (Bonnie *et al.*, 2012). This, however, enables the researcher to explore and understand the research problem, through engagement with the participants in the study, which essentially reduces distance between the researcher and the participants (Fouché & Schurink, 2011).

### 1.8.2. Research design

A case study design was selected because Babbie (2016) confirms that a case study can be exploratory and descriptive, as an in-depth study of a single instance of a social phenomenon. A case study design involves the study of an issue, as in this current study, the perceived gaps in social work fieldwork supervision, which are explored using the participants' perceptions and experiences of a particular case. A case is often a programme, event, activity or process (Creswell, 2013; Fouché & Schurink, 2011). The case in this current study is the BSW programme (where fieldwork supervision is located) at a selected university. Stake (2005: 435) asserts that case study research is “not a methodology but a choice of what is to be studied”. The general principles of case study design are to state the research question, describe the context in detail, to use multiple sources of data and to analyse the case (Babbie & Mouton, 2007; Fouché & Schurink, 2011).



A key characteristic of the case study method is that the study is a bounded system (Stake, 2005), as it is restricted, in terms of time (data are collected from supervisors, who supervise students within the same time frame, across year levels), and context (supervisors supervising social work students at a selected university) (Creswell, 2009). A bounded system “means that the case is separated out for research in terms of time, place, or some physical boundaries” (Creswell, 2002: 485). An explanatory (or single instrumental) case study type will be followed, to centre on one case (the BSW fieldwork programme at the selected university), and explain an issue of concern (social work fieldwork supervision), as this current study aims to generate new knowledge and provide insights into said issue (Creswell, 2013; Fouché & Schurink, 2011).

### 1.8.3. Research setting and population

The population for this current study was all social workers, who offer fieldwork supervision in the BSW programme, at a selected university in the Western Cape, as well as at social work organisations in the Cape Metropole, offering fieldwork placements for




student learning, in the BSW programme. The population encompassed approximately 80 organisations, including government (DSD) public schools, private and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the Western Cape Province of South Africa. The population of the study, therefore, included all fieldwork lecturers at the selected university, and fieldwork (campus and agency) supervisors.

#### 1.8.4. Sampling type and procedures

Purposive sampling was used as the method of sampling to choose the participants, who were the most representative of the study (Babbie, 2016). In terms of agency supervisors, purposive sampling enabled the researcher to recruit social workers, who were fieldwork supervisors at social work organisations for the selected university. These organisations become involved at third and fourth year levels, in accordance with student placements for those year levels (first and second year students are not placed at social work organisations).

The inclusion criteria for the participation of agency supervisors in this current research were as follows:

- 
- Supervisors with experience in student supervision at the selected university for 2016-2017; and
  - Social workers from government, private organisations and NGO's.

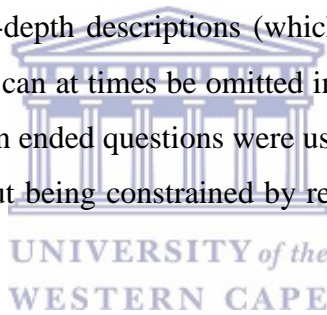
For campus supervisors the following selection criterion was applied:

- Fieldwork supervisors with experience in student supervision at the selected university for 2016-2017.

Regarding fieldwork lecturers from the selected university, convenience sampling was applied. When applying the convenience sampling method, members are generally selected based on easy access, convenience and their preparedness to participate in a research study (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016). Ultimately, only 24 participants (4 fieldwork lecturers, 9 campus supervisors, and 11 agency supervisors) were recruited as the sample for this current research study, because of the lack of available participants.

### 1.8.5. Data collection methods and procedures

Data collection methods in qualitative data generally involve one-on-one interviews and focus group discussions (Gill, Stewart, Treasure & Chadwick, 2008). Two data collection methods had to be utilised for this study because of the challenges with recruitment. Firstly, interviews were primarily selected, as it would have been difficult and time consuming to assemble the participants for focus group discussions. Creswell (2005: 215) claims that “individual interviews are ideal for interviewing participants who are not hesitant to speak, are articulate, and who can share ideas comfortably”. Secondly, written responses to interview questions were thereafter designed especially for participants who were unavailable but willing to participate and share their opinion and experiences. Written responses provide the opportunity for participants to not be influenced by leading questions in interviews constructed by researchers (Turley, Monro & King, 2016). Additionally, written responses also provides an opportunity for participants to give rich in-depth descriptions (which is in line with the focus of this study) in their answers that can at times be omitted in verbal articulation (Turley *et al.*, 2016). In both methods open ended questions were used, which allowed the participants to share their views, without being constrained by restrictive questions where possible responses are curtailed.



The researcher made a formal, written request to the selected university for permission to conduct this research study. In addition, written requests were made to the management of the fieldwork organisations (Appendix E) for consent to recruit participants. The same procedure was followed for campus supervisors and fieldwork lecturers (Appendix F). Written consent and permission were obtained from the selected university (Appendix A) and fieldwork organisations, especially DSD (Appendix C); however, accessing the prospective participants proved challenging; therefore, the researcher endeavoured to contact the participants telephonically. The necessary arrangements were made to interview the participants at their respective agencies, or in a venue at the social work department of the selected university. Subsequently, the interviews were conducted at the agreed upon times.

During the data collection phase, semi-structured interviews, with open-ended questions, were conducted with all the participants (Babbie, 2016). The researcher made use of an

interview guide (Appendix D) to steer the flow of information in the interviews, which lasted 30-90 minutes each. In addition, the interviews were audio recorded, with prior consent from the participants. The interviews were conducted in various offices at the selected university, as well as offices at the various fieldwork organisations.

#### 1.8.6. Qualitative data analysis: coding, mapping and memoing

Cofland (1974, cited in Creswell, 2014) states that data collection and data analysis are similar, but how findings are reported, marks the difference. Qualitative data analysis is defined as “the non-numerical examination and interpretation of observations, for the purpose of discovering underlying meanings and patterns of relationships. This approach is most typical of field research and historical research” (Babbie, 2016: 391). However, searching for themes is referred to as ‘thematic analysis’ (Braun & Clarke, 2006). These forms of data analysis work in conjunction with each other.

The researcher followed the eight steps of analysis, as identified by Tesch (Creswell, 2014; Schurink, Fouché & De Vos, 2011)

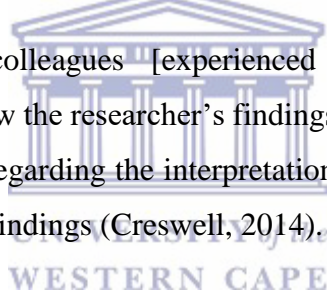
- The researcher considered the entire BSW programme, specifically focusing on the fieldwork supervision component, in terms of the educational, supportive and administrative functions of campus supervisors (1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> years), and agency supervisors (3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> years). As previously stated, first year students were not selected, as they do not engage with clinical work yet.
- The researcher re-read the responses from the participants to get a sense of content and themes; also referred to as emergent coding (Babbie, 2014). Predefined codes (codes stemming from the research) were considered, in conjunction with the emergent coding, as part of data analysis.
- The researcher made use of memos, by writing written notes in margins, as well as journaling important ideas (Schurink, Fouché & De Vos, 2011).
- The researcher made a list of the themes and sub-themes and grouped them together (emergent codes).
- The researcher created categories and coded the data (Babbie & Mouton, 2007; Schurink, Fouché & De Vos, 2011) to identify underlying themes and sub-themes, and, thereafter, funnelled the themes.

- Subsequently, the researcher interpreted and develop typologies, which are presented in Chapter 4 (Creswell, 2013; Schurink, Fouché & De Vos, 2011).

#### 1.8.7. Qualitative data verification within the case study inquiry

Creswell (2013) contended that, in qualitative research, making use of at least four strategies to verify the veracity of the findings were sufficient. The following data verification methods were used:

- *member checking* (See Annexure J), by asking participants to examine the themes and sub-themes for correctness;
- *triangulation*, by making use of a variety of methods, such as interviews, memos and journaling to confirm participants' perspectives and themes (Creswell, 2013);
- *researcher reflexivity*, where the researcher's personal values, especially any biases or prejudices would be reflected and articulated in writing;
- *peer debriefing* (colleagues [experienced researchers] and the research supervisor), to review the researcher's findings and provide critical feedback and *on-going dialogue* regarding the interpretations of the data, which would add to the accuracy of the findings (Creswell, 2014).



### 1.9. Limitations and delimitations

The study was conducted with participants at a selected university, offering fieldwork supervision to BSW students. The findings, therefore, would be unique to the context of this current setting, and could not be generalised to other contexts, for example, other types of programmes at universities, internationally or locally. This is common in qualitative research studies, as well as case study designs, because they are context specific. However, the findings could be considered for other institutions offering social work programmes, with similar contexts.

### 1.10. Ethics considerations

The following ethical guidelines were adhered to in the study (Babbie, 2016; Creswell, 2014; Thyer, 2010):

- Permission was obtained from the Community and Health Sciences (CHS) Faculty's

Higher Degrees Committee and Senate Research Committee at the selected university.

- Upon approval from the above committees, written consent was obtained from the Head of the Social Work Department, in order to commence the data collection with participants, who were staff members in the department.
- Written consent was also sought from the leadership in social service organisations, as well as non-governmental organisations, where agency supervisors were employed.
- All the participants were informed about the study, as well as their role in the study, prior to giving their consent to participate.

Through the provision of the information letter, the following ethics considerations were enforced:

- The participants were informed of their right to confidentiality, and that their identifying information would remain private. The researcher assured the participants that their identities would be concealed, by using Alfa-numerical coding, to prevent readers from identifying them. In addition, their information would be locked in a safe place that only the researcher would have access to.
- The participants were informed that their participation in the research was voluntary, and that they had the right to withdraw from the research, at any time in the process, without prejudice.
- The nature of the study was such that serious emotional trauma was not anticipated to emerge from the type of questions. However, the researcher did have an experienced counsellor on stand-by, whose services were secured prior to the data collection process. The participants did not require the service during, or after, the interviewing process.
- The researcher strove to consciously minimise the impact of personal biases and preferences in the data analysis process, by constant updating her self-reflexivity memos, thereby increasing her self-awareness.

### 1.11. Chapter outline

This research report comprises five chapters, as follows:

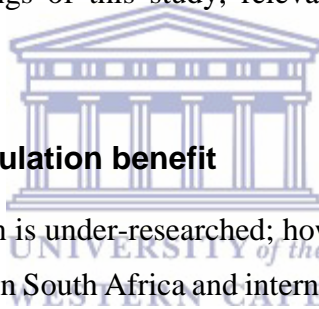
**Chapter 1:** The researcher provides a general overview of this current study.

**Chapter 2:** Comprises a detailed literature review on social work student supervision and experiential learning in social work education.

**Chapter 3:** The researcher provides an outline of the procedure followed to gather data.

**Chapter 4:** The research findings are discussed, in terms of main themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data. These findings emerged from the perceptions and experiences of social workers providing fieldwork supervision to students in the BSW programme.

**Chapter 5:** The researcher concludes this research report and provides recommendations, based on the findings of this study, relevant to social work education and fieldwork.



### 1.12. Value of study and Population benefit

Social work fieldwork supervision is under-researched; however, it is imperative and relevant to the current social work context in South Africa and internationally. The findings of this study will add to the existing social work knowledge and will broaden perspectives of the issue under scrutiny. In addition, this study is valuable, as it will inform practice and policy regarding fieldwork supervision and training in the BSW programme, and, potentially, have a positive impact on fieldwork supervision in South Africa.

The following chapter comprises an expanded literature review and theoretical framework for this current study.

## CHAPTER TWO

### SOCIAL WORK STUDENT FIELDWORK SUPERVISION: KNOWLEDGE, THEORY AND PRACTICE

#### 2.1. Introduction

The previous chapter comprised a synopsis of this current study. In this chapter, the researcher presents the literature review concerning social work student fieldwork supervision, in terms of knowledge, theory and practice. A literature review is central to the research process and enables the researcher to gain insight into the topic under investigation (Creswell, 2013). According to Cronin, Ryan and Coughlan (2008), there are different types of literature reviews that researchers may select. For the purpose of this current study, the researcher selected a narrative literature review, which is used when the aim is to critique and summarise a body of literature, relating to the research topic. Using a narrative literature review allows the researcher to draw conclusions about the topic under investigation (Creswell, 2013). The purpose of a narrative literature review is to provide a comprehensive background, to understand the current knowledge, as well as highlight new research on the research topic (Bryman & Bell, 2014; Cronin *et al.*, 2008). The literature review for this current study, therefore, consists of relevant studies and knowledge in line with the topic.

The chapter is structured as follows: firstly social work supervision knowledge, theory and practice are discussed, in relation to the BSW programme; secondly, social work supervision (SWS) is clarified, in terms of the different types of supervision, setting the premise for the focus on social work student supervision (SWSS), as well as the challenges relating to fieldwork supervision. The theoretical framework ensues with the selection of Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory [ELT] (Healey & Jenkins, 2000), as it relates to SWSS in the BSW programme. The chapter is concluded by way of judgements and interpretations on the points relating to knowledge, theory and practice, in relation to student fieldwork supervision in the BSW programme.

#### 2.2. The Social Work Profession

To understand student supervision and its role in social work education, the requirements of knowledge, theory and practice in the social work profession need to be understood. Kirst-Ashman and Hull (2014) refer to the knowledge of social work as the 'what', and the practice



of social work as the 'how'. In essence, social work practice, therefore, refers to the 'doing' and its "origins lie in religion based philanthropy" (Corby, 2006: 9; also see Horner, 2012; Kadushin & Harkness, 2014; Mito & Noqueira, 2016; Wonnacott, 2012). This implies that, when a social worker practices in the field, the social worker is working on the 'how', and is guided on what to do, based on knowledge and theories mainly taught at university level.

Social work has been functioning for centuries; however, it was not necessarily a profession, but instead, people caring for others (Horner, 2012), which, Corby (2006) argues had contributed to the slow start in developing theories and ideologies. The fact that social work is a practice-based profession, as well as an academic discipline (International Federation of Social Workers [IFSW], 2014), concurs with the articulated model, as mentioned in Chapter 1, and, therefore, essential for fieldwork supervision. Social work is also deemed a unique and intrinsic (contextual) practice, as it focuses on a variety of challenges, and considers a variety of interventions to assist people (Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2014). The functioning of social work is highly dependent on its "professional knowledge" (Cournoyer, 2016: 4). Social work is, therefore, context-specific (Danso, 2014), and knowledge is therefore also context-specific, which is why the articulated model is important, as it brings the practice of the profession together with the knowledge, implying that the practice is dependent on the knowledge of the profession.

The SACSSP's Scope of Practice Document (2017) also explicates social work's uniqueness, because it is the only profession with a mandate to undertake the statutory functions of adoption and foster care, and is a well sought-after skill (Rautenbach & Chiba, 2010, cited in Nicholas, Rautenbach & Maistry, 2010). Despite the unique nature of social work, social workers are often underpaid, with little resources to accomplish their interventions (Proctor, 2017). This view was purported by Earle (2007), who argued that, locally and internationally, social work salaries are low, and links this anomaly to the fact that social work is a female-dominated field.

Ultimately, social work relies on direct intervention with clients (Hepworth, Rooney, Rooney, Strom-Gottfried & Larsen, 2010) and attention to empowering the beleaguered (Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2014; Hepworth *et al.*, 2010; Proctor, 2017). Social work's strengths and distinctive characteristics are that various areas of specialisation are documented, such as adoption work, clinical welfare work (medical and psychiatric social work are usually used synonymously with clinical social work), forensic social work, management and supervision, probation services,



school social work, policy and planning, social work education, and social work in health care (SACSSP, 2017). Therefore, social work supervision may be a specialised form of practice.

### **2.3. Social Work Supervision (SWS)**

Social work supervision exists since the profession's genesis in the United States (Tsui, 2004). Supervision derives from the Latin language, which essentially means 'to oversee' (Hoque, Subramaniam, Kamaluddin & Othman, 2016; Kadushin & Harkness, 2014). Supervision is the process of overseeing, directing, coordinating, enhancing, and evaluating the "on-the-job performance" of workers for whom the supervisor is responsible (Kadushin & Harkness, 2002: 23). Underlying these functionary tasks is the notion that supervision is a process of interaction between a supervisor and supervisee, to assist in indirect practice, in the areas of teaching (education), administration (record keeping) and helping (supporting) (Munson, 2012). Therefore, the platform for these functions and engagements regards supervision as a formal arrangement, utilised to evaluate and reflect on practice (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014). It relates to continuous professional development (CPD), through which an experienced social worker provides educational, supportive and administrative functions to promote competent and proficient services to a novice social worker (RSA, DSD & SACSSP, 2012). Supervision safeguards clients, supports practitioners, and ensures that professional standards and quality services are delivered by competent social workers (National Association of Social Workers [NASW], 2013).

Supervision requires a registered social worker to evaluate the work of another, which involves observing, coordinating and evaluating the work of a supervisee (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014). In SA, this would imply that all social workers must be registered to practice, through membership to the SACSSP. Therefore, it is a process through which an experienced social worker is given the responsibility by an organization, to coach and mentor another, less experienced social worker, in order to meet certain organizational, professional and personal objectives, which together, promote the best outcomes for service users (Republic of South Africa [RSA], Department of Social Development [DSD], 2015). Supervision commonly refers to a process, which aims to support, assure, and develop the knowledge, skills and values of the person being supervised, team or project group (Scottish Social Services Council, 2016). Therefore, Assis and Rosado (2012, cited in Haanwinckel *et al.*, 2017) aver that supervision is an educational tool, responsible to guide the practitioner, monitor and evaluate practice and

develop the skills and abilities required, while concurrently taking a critical stance on social reality.

In the context of direct practice, the intent of supervision is to provide clients with “the best possible service in accordance with agency policy and procedures. Supervisors do not directly offer services to the client, but they do indirectly affect the level of service offered through their impact on the direct service supervisees” (Kadushin & Harkness, 2002: 23). Wonnacott (2012: 175) asserts that “social work supervisors are one of the ‘cornerstones’ of the organization” and perform key roles, which affect their service users, social workers and organisations. For example, Kadushin (1992) asserts that supervision allows supervisees to review and reflect on their work, through a structured process. Page and Wosket (2013) describe supervision as an opportunity to reflect, seek guidance and question social work practice on a regular basis.

In the USA, the NASW (2013) recognises that the supervisor is as responsible for the client, as the social worker, and could be held liable for any challenges experienced with a particular case. Likewise in SA, the SACSSP’s Code of Ethics Policy Document (2017), states that social workers, who provide supervision, could be held accountable for services provided by a supervisee, and should set clear boundaries, instructions, and, at all times, remain professional. For example, should a social worker in practice neglect to follow up on a case, and a child is hurt, that social worker could face disciplinary action from the SACSSP, and the social worker’s supervisor may also be held accountable for the social worker’s actions. When adhering to ethical practice guidelines, the social worker remains professional and abides by the ethics of the profession. Consequently, this serves as a managing tool that contributes to the proficiency and accountability of the profession, and could limit burn out in social workers (Adams, Dominelli & Payne, 2002).

The afore-mentioned definitions of supervision are rooted in different perspectives and, therefore, focused on different concepts. For example, some of the definitions focus on the functions of supervision, while others focus on CPD and/or on a supervisor-supervisee relationship (Walker, Crawford & Parker, 2008). Underlying these elements, however, is a profession whose practices are based on values and ethics, as well as knowledge and skills. Within these functions, elements, values and ethics, social workers, as well as social work students, become acculturated. Naidoo and Kasiram (2014) assert that supervision, however,

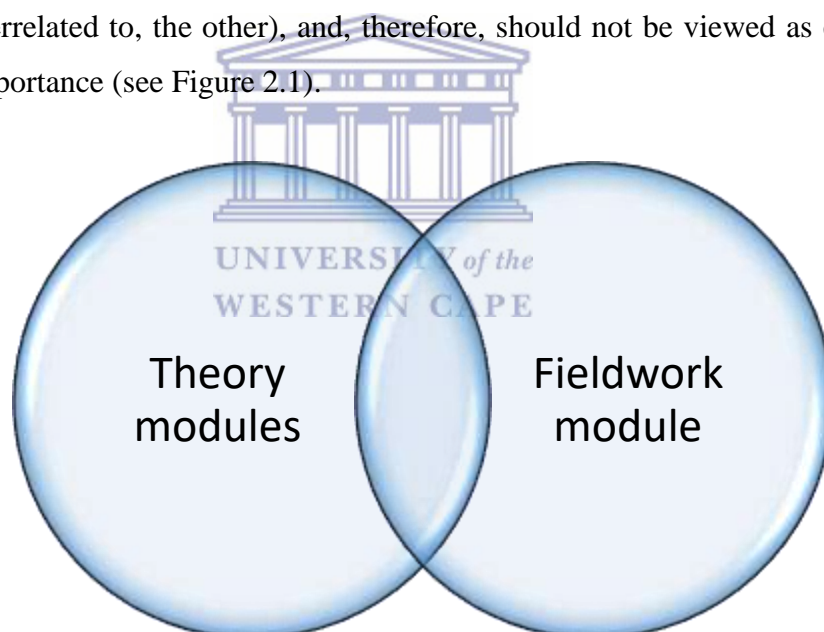
still needs to become an essential element of social work in SA, as it too often becomes sidelined by financial constraints, in particular.

## 2.4. Social Work Student Supervision (SWSS)

Social work student supervision (SWSS) has also been recognized as an important dimension in the training of social workers (Petersen, 2010). The purpose of this section is to further explicate the roles, responsibilities and functions of this teaching tool.

### 2.4.1. The role of fieldwork education

Social work training standards globally, nationally and locally, involve a theory and practice component of the BSW programme (Dhemba, 2012; RSA, DSD & SACSSP, 2012; Haanwinckel *et al.*, 2017). In the BSW programme, theory and practice are equally important, and should ideally be seen as reciprocal (meaning that the one is dependent on, and interrelated to, the other), and, therefore, should not be viewed as either/or, in terms of importance (see Figure 2.1).



**Figure 2.1: Illustrating the ideal relationship between theory and fieldwork learning**

This figure illustrates that there are distinct parts of theory and fieldwork on each year level, which are stand-alone, but also interrelated; therefore, a constant engagement among theory and fieldwork modules should be present on specific year levels (Petersen, 2010; Dykes, 2014). However, Kaseke (1990) asserts that academia is often privileged in comparison to fieldwork. Additionally, previous research suggests that university-based training is overly theoretical and insufficiently geared to practice needs (Corby,

2006; Dhemba, 2012), which leads to an over emphasis of theory and a neglect of practice, as well as implementation learning opportunities. Various studies on social work student supervision suggest that fieldwork supervision should receive equal attention, as do classroom learning (Mupedziswa, 1997, cited in Dhemba, 2012). Fieldwork, therefore, is an essential part of theory and practice integration (Hemy, Boddy, Chee & Sauvage, 2016).

Therefore, at the selected university, the theory and practice components are usually distributed, in balanced proportions, with specific guidelines for fieldwork education in the BSW programme (Petersen, 2010), as per SAQA and SACSSP requirements (see Table 2.1).

**Table 2.1: Theory and practice relationship in selected university**

| Year Level  | Total credits: Theory   | Total credits: Fieldwork                   | Total social work credits | %   |
|-------------|---|--|---------------------------|-----|
| First year  | 3 theory (semester based) modules = 30 credits                | 1 fieldwork module (yearlong) = 15 credits | 45                        | 33% |
| Second year | 4 theory (semester based) modules = 40 credits                | 1 fieldwork module (yearlong) = 30 credits | 70                        | 43% |
| Third year  | 4 theory (semester based) and 1 yearlong modules = 60 credits | 1 fieldwork module (yearlong) = 40 credits | 100                       | 40% |
| Fourth year | 5 theory (yearlong based) modules = 60 credits                | 1 fieldwork module (yearlong) = 60 credits | 120                       | 50% |

Table 2.1 illustrates that fieldwork is a yearlong module on all four levels at the selected university. Additionally, even though fieldwork is perceived as being marginalised by some (Dhemba, 2012), it does count for more credits than individual theory modules, and averages 43% of the combined social work credits. Consequently, it could be assumed that theory and practice have equal importance to advance theory-practice integration at the selected university.

Although the DSD and SACSSP (RSA, 2012) developed guidelines for social work supervision in SA, which included student supervision, this document, however, does not clarify the requirements for fieldwork supervisors. The following section explores student supervision and what it involves.

#### 2.4.2. The nature of student supervision

In the standard BSW programme, the theory and practice components are usually distributed in balanced proportions (Dykes, 2014). In the fieldwork modules, experienced social workers are approached by lecturers, or fieldwork lecturers, to supervise students' fieldwork placements in formal organizations; to mentor and teach them about the implementation of their knowledge in a real-world context. This is termed *fieldwork supervision*.

In the BSW programme, student supervision forms the foundation of the fieldwork module. Fieldwork supervision is imperative in the context of BSW training/teaching and learning (Carelse & Poggenpoel, 2016; Dhemba, 2012; Hemy *et al.*, 2016). In addition, Walker *et al.* (2008) state that supervision is crucial in the experience of a student's fieldwork education. Internationally, research suggests that practice, teaching and learning in qualifying social work degree programmes, help to turn social work students into qualified practitioners (Haanwinckel *et al.*, 2017). Importantly, Kaseke (1990 cited in Dhemba, 2012:2) affirms that the knowledge of social work fieldwork supervision is inadequate, "which leaves social work educators, students and fieldwork supervisors without a meaningful and comprehensive guide to fieldwork supervision". The purpose of fieldwork supervision is to provide students with hands-on training in the field of social work, under the supervision of qualified and registered social workers (RSA DSD & SACSSP, 2012). International prescriptions denote that student fieldwork supervision should be "planned, regular periods of time that the student and supervisor spend together discussing the student's work in the placement and reviewing the learning progress" (Ford & Jones, 1987: 63 cited in Parker, 2010: 78).

SWSS and social work education have been deemed specialised fields in social work, according to the SACSSP (2017). A specialised field, according to the SACSSP (2008: 1), is "a particular field of practice in Social Work in which specific activities take place for which additional specialised and in-depth knowledge, skills and expertise in the specific field of practice are required and which could be regarded as the domain of the Social Work profession". Social work education is a specialised field and refers to the education, training and development of students by professionals, who have expert knowledge regarding educational policies, methods of learning and the assessment of

learners (SACSSP, 2017). This substantiates the purpose for SWSS and this study, therefore, covers two areas of specialisation, in accordance with the prescripts of the SACSSP (2017), namely social work education and supervision. Additionally, fieldwork supervision is crucial, as it provides students with the opportunity to experience, as well as apply the knowledge and skills obtained in class, and explore alternative knowledge, due to the diversity of people they encounter (Dhemba, 2012).

### 2.4.3. Responsibilities in fieldwork supervision

It is imperative that there is mutual understanding of the role and responsibilities of the supervisor and student in the supervisory relationship. Nzira and Williams (2008) provide guidelines regarding the supervisory relationship, presented in Table 2.2.

**Table 2.2: Responsibilities within the Supervisory Relationship**

| SUPERVISOR  | STUDENT  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure safe space for laying out expectations and challenges</li> <li>• Help with exploration and thinking</li> <li>• Challenge unsafe or incompetent practice</li> <li>• Share knowledge, experiences and skills appropriately</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be open to receiving feedback</li> <li>• Implement feedback in reports and practice</li> <li>• Develop self-awareness</li> <li>• Identify challenges in practice</li> <li>• Monitor effectiveness of supervision</li> </ul> |

Source: Nzira and Williams (2008: 167)

Table 2.2 indicates the key roles and responsibilities of the supervisor, as a facilitator of learning, as well as the student social worker in the supervisory relationship. Self-awareness is emphasised as important for the student, as well as the ability to monitor and evaluate supervision practice. The supervisor is required to create a conducive environment for learning and development. However, these roles and responsibilities can be vague, as they do not set clear boundaries and allocate specific tasks, considering that the SACSSP views the supervisory relationship as important. Lit and Shek (2007) confirm the importance of the supervisory relationship, and have a critical and reflective attitude towards the importance of knowledge, on the part of the supervisor and supervisee, to enhance student development. In addition, enhancing the student's interpretation of theory, as well as critical and reflective thinking, should be prioritized, while, simultaneously, creating an awareness of historical and cultural relativity (Lit & Shek, 2007). The focus of the learning in supervision must be on the students' strengths



and motivation to perform tasks, while addressing the continued challenges of fieldwork practice, and, therefore, supervision (Peterson, 2010).

#### 2.4.4. Roles in student supervision

In chapter 1, three vital role players were identified as instituted in fieldwork supervision at the selected university, namely, campus supervisor, agency supervisor, and fieldwork lecturer (Dykes, 2014). However, Dimo (2013) assert that a key component is missing, and that is the student. Therefore, this section describes the tasks and requirements of all four key role players. According to the Social Work Intermediate Fieldwork Outline (University of the Western Cape [UWC], 2017), at third year level, the following role players and responsibilities are delineated:

- **The fieldwork lecturer** is generally a permanent employee of the selected university, unless the fieldwork lecturer is contractually employed. The fieldwork lecturer is responsible for the design and facilitation of the fieldwork module, to ensure that the student is able to integrate theory and practice. In addition, s/he is responsible for coordinating the fieldwork programme in interactive and creative ways, using various teaching methods (UWC, 2017). These methods are, for example, role plays, teaching, self and peer study, blending learning, workshops and seminars. The fieldwork lecturer is also responsible to find fieldwork placements (social work agencies) that fulfil the needs of both the student and the agency. Additionally, the fieldwork lecturer coordinates the relationship and functioning of the campus and agency supervisor, especially their respective roles with the students. The administration of agency placements, student matters, as well as formative and summative assessments of students relating to fieldwork, are also other responsibilities of the fieldwork lecturer.
- The student is responsible for attending weekly fieldwork training (one full day a week) for practical experience at a designated agency, as well as attending bi-weekly compulsory campus supervision with a designated campus supervisor (UWC, 2017). Additionally, the student is responsible for submitting weekly reports, on the work accomplished at the agency, to his/her campus supervisor, who subsequently, monitors and evaluates the students' progress and development. Importantly, the student is responsible for identifying supervision

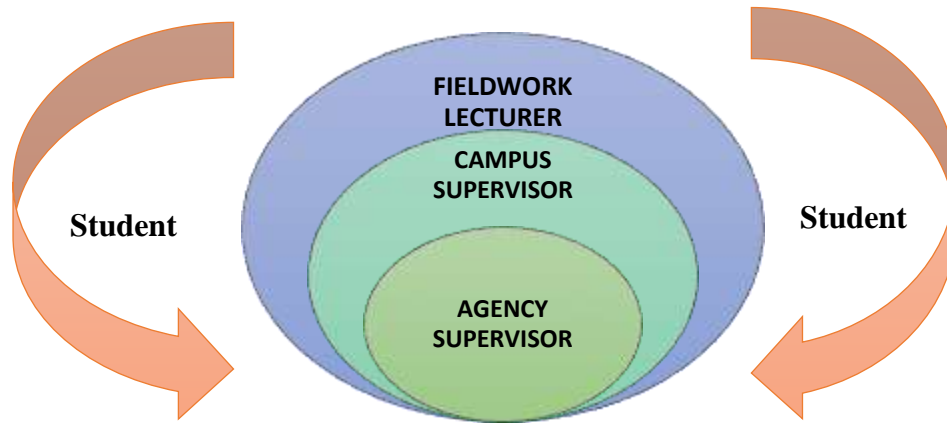
needs and requesting supervision from either campus or agency supervisor. Supervision needs could likewise be identified by the respective supervisor.

- **The campus supervisor** is employed by the selected university on a part time basis, to meet with 10-12 students for hourly sessions every week from April-November each year (UWC, 2017). In these sessions the campus supervisor provides a conducive environment for the student to consult with him/her regarding fieldwork experiences, and most importantly where the link between theory and practice is made. Besides the afore-mentioned, the campus supervisor is responsible for active participation in administrative, educational and supportive functions of supervision, as well as the facilitation of personal growth and experiential learning, through various teaching and learning methods. Finally, the campus supervisor is required to assist the student to link theory and practice, and assesses the student's practice.
- **The agency supervisor** spends more time with the student than the campus supervisor, as the student is required to complete a full day's work (normally from 8am-4pm), 4 days a month (32 hours) (From March-October each year), for their fieldwork placement (UWC, 2017). The agency supervisor must be a registered and qualified social worker, who guides the student, and who needs to ensure that the student receives the required practice experiences. In addition, the agency supervisor is responsible for ensuring ethical practice in their fieldwork placement. This entails all three methods of social work, which is micro (individual clients), mezzo (group work) and macro (community work) practice. Additionally, the agency supervisor is also required to attend mid- and final-year presentations of students, regarding their fieldwork placement evaluation.

Eible (2015) distinguishes between agency supervision, which focuses on educational, supportive, and administrative functions; and campus supervision, which emphasises educational and supportive supervision, and is less likely to focus on administrative functions.

It is important to note that a student's fieldwork experience will ultimately inform a student's practice (See Chapter 4).





**Figure 2.2: The relationship between the different role-players**

Figure 2.2 illustrates a nested relationship with the fieldwork lecturer, the overseer, and the relationship of campus supervisor, juxtaposed with the agency supervisor and the fieldwork lecturer. The student is inevitably involved with all of the role players. Firstly, the fieldwork lecturer is the students' first point of contact, secondly, the agency supervisor provides the students with valuable practical experiences, and lastly, the campus supervisor is responsible to ensure that the student understands the link between theory and practice, and supports the student in the learning process.

#### 2.4.5. Challenges in social work student supervision

SWSS globally and locally faces various challenges. These challenges have been summarised in Table 2.3 as direct and indirect influences of student supervision (Beddoe, Davys & Adamson, 2014; CSWE, 2017; Eible, 2015; Engelbrecht, 2013; Hay, Dale & Yeung, 2016; Petersen, 2010).

**Table 2.3: Direct and indirect influences on student supervision**

| Direct influences  | Indirect influence  |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Securing and maintaining quality fieldwork placements that provide students with opportunities to develop their skills;</li> <li>• Changes in higher education and the overall practice of social work;</li> <li>• Lack of training of fieldwork supervisors;</li> <li>• Little to no remuneration for supervising students.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social workers maintaining 'professional optimism' in the light of severe social issues;</li> <li>• Caring for the professional and the notion of self-care;</li> <li>• High caseloads and uncondusive office environment;</li> <li>• Agency politics and stress brings about relational challenges;</li> <li>• Managerial lack of support.</li> </ul> |

It is clear from Table 2.3 that fieldwork placements and the training of fieldwork supervisors is imperative. It can also be deduced that a lack of support for supervisors

increases job stress, and adds to their other workload challenges. Similarly, research has determined that social workers often found the profession daunting because of high caseloads, which precipitated their migration to other countries (Engelbrecht, 2014; Naidoo & Kasiram, 2014).

Even though social work has ‘unique features’ the challenges experienced, call for restructured pedagogical attention (Eible, 2015; Hay *et al.*, 2016). Eible (2015) provides useful distinguishing features of agency and campus supervision (see Table 2.4).

**Table 2.4: Distinguishing features of campus and agency supervision**

| <b>Functions</b>      | <b>Campus supervision</b>  | <b>Agency supervision</b>   |
|-----------------------|--|---|
| <b>Educational</b>    | providing the student with the knowledge regarding theories and modules relating to practice   | providing the student with the knowledge regarding theories and modules relating to practice of agency and opportunities to practice                            |
| <b>Supportive</b>     | providing support when needed regarding personal or professional matters   | providing the student with emotional or psychological support if the social worker is experiencing challenges with practice or personal aspects of his/her life |
| <b>Administrative</b> | providing the social worker with constructive feedback regarding report writing and making the student aware of policies and legislations regarding administrative tasks | ensuring that the student adheres to the administrative requirements regarding report writing   |

Agency supervision is less likely to focus on educational supervision, often because social workers are too busy with administrative tasks, while campus supervision tends to focus on all three functions of supervision. However, campus supervision may focus on too many theories and modules that are not necessarily related to the agency where the student is placed for fieldwork practice. In conclusion, the importance of a balance between the different functions of student supervision is important to ensure that all functions receive equal attention.

#### 2.4.6. Understanding students’ learning profile

The notion that students will learn better if their learning challenges are addressed, is now accepted wisdom (Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007; Ramsden, 1992). Consequently, it becomes necessary for supervisors to adapt to the students’ learning style and pace, in order to address their educational needs best. Students should be part of the planning of supervision sessions, to address such challenges. It is also obvious that

students' learning styles differ, and are often dependent on their personal identities (Dykes, 2014; Hawk & Shah, 2007). These personal identities are formed, based on genetics, ethnic and social factors, emotional and social influences, educational exposure and learning preferences (Dykes, 2014). This implies that students' profiles differ, based on bio-social attributes, such as gender, age, class, motivation, and religion (Dykes, 2014). Therefore, the task of the lecturer is to, firstly, repeat the cycle of learning, to ensure that the students grasp the knowledge, and complete various tasks, based on their varied learning styles (Tomlinson, Brighton, Hertberg, Callahan, Moon, Brimijoin, Conover & Reynolds, 2003). Teaching staff (including fieldwork supervisors) should be acquainted with students' learning profiles as part of their routine teaching practices in the BSW programme (Dykes, 2014). This is especially relevant for the profile of students at the selected university, as discussed in this chapter.

The student profile at the selected university emerged in the 1980's, when the university started to amend its admissions policy (Bozalek, 2013), and a different student profile began to take shape. The majority of the students at the selected university originate from underprivileged communities (Carelse & Dykes, 2014; Engelbrecht, 2004; Schenck, 2009). Previous studies suggest the following about current social work student profiles at the selected university:

- ***Academically under-prepared:*** The bridge between secondary school and higher education has held serious consequences for students from historically under-resourced secondary schools, which has resulted in students being labelled as *academically under-prepared*, and highlights that poor secondary schooling and educational system are directly linked to under-preparedness (Bozalek, 2013; Collins & Van Breda, 2010; Carelse & Dykes, 2014; Petersen, 2010). Collins (2013) suggests that students be provided with the required skills (writing, researching, critical thinking and referencing), to successfully link theory and practice. Learning satisfaction for under-valued students often originate from a good mentoring (in this case supervision) relationship (Maton *et al.*, 2011). Earle (2008, cited in Schenck, 2009), however, attributes being academically under-prepared, not only to the poor secondary schooling, but also to social challenges experienced by students.

- ***First generation tertiary students:*** The majority of students are first generation, tertiary students, with little or no role models for learning or professional practice (Carelse & Dykes, 2014). In essence, this means that students from previously disadvantaged communities may not progress as well as anticipated, due to the lack of predecessors (social role models), who are able to guide them.
- ***Personal and social contexts:*** These students often face various challenges, relating to their personal contexts and academic responsibilities (Dykes & Green, 2016; Van Breda, 2013). Schenk (2009) clarified that students whose personal contexts exert strong emotional demands, often struggle to focus on their studies. Brussow and Wilkinson (2010) confirm that academic challenges affect academically under-prepared students even more. This may result in high dropout rates, as students are not adequately prepared for the demands of higher education (De Beer & Van Der Merwe, 2006). In addition, students from previously deprived communities may not possess the socio-economic resources to complete their studies (Engelbrecht, 2004).

Research suggests that students be adequately assessed on their prior learning (Collins, 2013), as well as being previously disadvantaged, as this may affect their studies and dropout rates (De Beer & Van Der Merwe, 2006). In addition, De Beer and Van Der Merwe (2006) assert that adequate psychometric testing needs to be considered, but also indicate that one form of testing is not sufficient and various forms of testing need to be conducted.

Therefore, the student's profile at the selected university can be described as one of under-preparedness, often linked to poor schooling and entrenched with personal challenges, which provide a premise for student supervision to address.

## **2.5. Approaches and models in Social Work Supervision**

The previous section established the general student profile at the selected university; therefore, it is essential that requisite supervision approaches and models be explored.

### 2.5.1. Student supervision approaches

The influence of international approaches and theories has compelled social work in SA to join the call for ‘indigenous’ social work (Gray, 2010: 75). Gray (2010) asserts that the developmental approach to social work may be the most indigenous in SA. The developmental approach to social work is linked to the White Paper on Social Welfare (RSA, Department of Welfare, 1997), which highlights the importance of skills and training development, eradication and prevention of poverty, partnering with communities to bring about change, and essentially, empowering people to be their own change agents (Gray, 2010).

An approach is a viewpoint or perspective, and is dependent on known knowledge and theories (Gray, 2010). For example, Gray (2010) argues that a developmental approach is relevant to SA, and not necessarily western approaches. This is mainly because of the SA context, which is rooted in poverty, unlike the western context, which is generally seen as affluent. Engelbrecht (2004) also argued that a western approach is not relevant to the SA context, with its varied student learning profiles, socio economic statuses, and the indigenous profile of its population. Naidoo and Kasiram (2014) concur and also contend that social workers, who migrated to other countries, were convinced that their social work training was based on the Western world, and not the current SA context, which is overwhelmed with various social challenges.

Social work supervision, without a specific approach, is without a philosophical and academic context, and, therefore, does not provide a holistic framework (Tsui & Ho, 1997, cited in Engelbrecht, 2004). Engelbrecht (2004) argues for a *developmental approach* to supervision in SA, instead of a *traditional approach*. A *developmental approach* involves the student in learning, while with the *traditional approach*, the teacher is the expert, and the student is a novice. With the *developmental approach*, professionals are continuously learning and developing within the practice (Walker *et al.*, 2008). In contrast, with the *traditional approach*, the lecturer as the only expert (Engelbrecht, 2004).

The developmental approach is imperative for fieldwork supervision, as it is not only the student, who is continuously learning and developing, but also the fieldwork supervisor.

This coincides with requirements of the SACSSP that encourages practitioners to comply with CPD on an annual basis. In addition, it focuses on working in partnership with the student for mutual benefit and learning (RSA, DSD & SACSSP, 2012; Engelbrecht, 2004; Engelbrecht, 2013).

Conversely, Davys and Beddoe (2009) assert that fieldwork supervisors are responsible for assisting students to reflect on the genesis of their practice. Reflective Learning is defined by Ruch (2000: 108) as "...an holistic, creative and artistic phenomenon which endeavours to hold theory and practice together in a creative tension. It also allows for uncertainty and mistakes and acknowledges the humanity of practitioners and clients. Reflective learning which acknowledges the complexity, diversity and emotionality of situations offers more scope for student practitioners to reach informed decisions which, by embracing the breadth of knowledges which influence decisions, could help avoid defensive, routinised and ritualistic responses". The *reflective learning approach* is based on the premise that supervision serves as a platform for reflection. This platform is dependent on the student's experiences and reflections, and not necessarily on the knowledge and skills of the supervisor (Davys & Beddoe, 2009). Davys and Beddoe (2009: 920) assert that the supervisor needs to provide structure and guidelines for reflection, which some individuals find difficult to execute. Ingram (2013) adds an emotional dimension to this model, as integral to social work practice and supervision, by stating that social work cannot be separated from emotion, and implying that accepting emotion in practice will enhance reflective learning. The selected university values the reflective learning approach, as self-reflection forms the basis of its training; however, the developmental approach is more relevant, as it involves the student, which, consequently, informs theory and practice. It is also linked to ELT, as students' experiences are valued as part of the learning experiences.

### 2.5.2. Student supervision models

A model refers to a method of transforming knowledge into practice, as well as providing steps to accomplish a task (Gray, 2010). There are different models of supervision for social workers, which could apply to SWSS as well (Botha, 2000; Engelbrecht, 2004; Kadushin, 1992; Shardlow & Doel, 1996). There are seven models for social work supervision (and, therefore, for SWSS), initially proposed by Botha (2000), particularly relevant for this study, which are illustrated in Table 2.5.

**Table 2.5: Models of supervision**

| <b>MODEL</b>                   | <b>CHARACTERISTICS</b>  |
|--------------------------------|---|
| <b>STRUCTURAL MODEL</b>        | The focus is on the relationship between the supervisor and the supervisee  |
| <b>DEVELOPMENTAL MODEL</b>     | Mastering skills are emphasised and particularly the application and self-awareness of the supervisee are amplified.  |
| <b>GROWTH-ORIENTATED MODEL</b> | The supervisee's personal and professional development and growth is the focus.   |
| <b>THEORY MODEL</b>            | Theoretical frameworks, discourse, programmes and practice frameworks are central to the process of supervision.  |
| <b>HOLISTIC MODEL</b>          | The relationship between theoretical frameworks and academic material as well as the real-life experiences in the day to day practice context is paramount.   |
| <b>ORGANIZATIONAL MODEL</b>    | The organization's autonomy in terms of supervision and administrative function of the supervisee is prioritized.   |
| <b>TASK-CENTRED MODEL</b>      | The supervisee and supervisor select the supervision objectives and structure the tasks together in an attempt to achieve the supervision and learning goals. |

**Sources:** Botha (2000); Caspi and Reid (2012); Lit and Shek (2007).

Table 2.5 above displays the various emphases and foci in each of the models. Each model has a unique orientation that will depend on the particular socio-learning context and objectives of the academic programme. For example, in the context of the selected university, two models that would be most appropriate are the Developmental and Holistic models. The former emphasises the importance of self-awareness, in conjunction with the requisite skills set; and the latter combines theory and practice components within a real-world context (Petersen, 2010). In the Structural model, the focus relates to the principle of collaboration (Lit & Shek, 2007). The Developmental model and the Growth orientated model are both concentrated on the growth and development of the supervisee (student social worker) (Botha, 2000; Lit & Shek, 2007). The Theory model, on the other hand, is focused on the theory aspect of education, which, as discussed in this chapter, receives more attention than practice (Dhemba, 2012). The Holistic model is different to the Theory model, as it encompasses both theory and practice (Botha, 2000). The Organizational model is centred on the organization's autonomy, in terms of the supervision and administrative functions of the supervisee (Botha, 2000). In addition to the Developmental and Holistic models, the Task-centred model appears to be best suited for educational supervision, in the context of OBE, as it relates to the principles of learner-centeredness, and, when structuring supervision, focuses on particular knowledge, skills and values that the student social worker is required to apply in the real world context (Rust, 2002: 150). Central to this model of educational supervision, is the planning and organizing of supervision, to such an extent, that it meets the stated learning



outcomes. It helps supervisees to understand social work philosophy better, become more self-aware, and refine their knowledge and skills (Barker, 1995; Munson, 2002; Bogo & McKnight, 2006). What all these models have in common, is the critical, reflective and collaborative engagement between the supervisor and the supervisee (Lit & Shek, 2007; Botha, 2000; Caspi & Reid, 2012).

In addition to the models listed in Table 2.5, there are three models specific to social work student supervision, referred to by Engelbrecht (2001). Firstly, the Role-system model focuses on communication, expectations, delivery, contact and flexibility (Forder, 1976). Secondly, the Integrated Theory and practice model aims to facilitate learning (Fook, 2002; Lishman, 1991; Noble, 2001), and thirdly, the Competency-based model, which is essentially the outcomes of all the above-mentioned models, as they are all aimed at competence development (Guttman, Eisikovits & Maluccio, 1988; Shardlow & Doel, 1996). The Competency-based model, developed by Shardlow and Doel (1996), is relevant in the SA context of fieldwork supervision, because of the White Paper on Social Welfare (RSA, Department of Welfare, 1997), as well as the Higher Education Act (Republic of South Africa, Act 101 of 1997), respectively, and promotes outcomes-based practice and learning. In terms of this model, outcomes, rather than process, are emphasised, and must be demonstrated in particular learning areas (Engelbrecht, 2001).

At this point, it is important to remember that various authors have different views of which model is relevant to the context of Social Work in SA. However, at present, no one model is sufficient for the various contexts and varied population in SA (RSA, DSD & SACSSP, 2012). The researcher is of the opinion that the Developmental and Holistic models would be appropriate for the selected university, as mentioned earlier. Although, one model may not be sufficient for the diversity at the selected university, and a few models may need to be combined, in order to cover all functions of supervision.

## **2.6. Functions of Student Supervision**

Kadushin (1992) differentiates the three functions of supervision; namely administrative, supportive and educational supervision. The NASW (2013), however, contends that the types of supervision may overlap, and therefore, a combination of educational, administrative, and supportive supervision is necessary for the development of competent, ethical, and professional



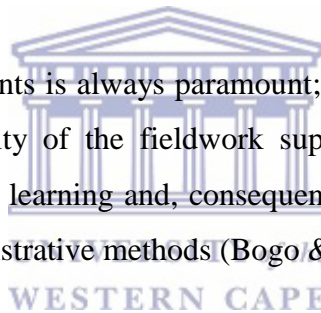
social workers. Supervision is not unique to social work, but has received more significance in social work, because of the functions and processes of supervision (Kadushin & Harkness, 2002). The three functions of supervision are discussed in the following three sections.

### 2.6.1. Administrative supervision

Botha (2000: 37-79) distinguishes three functions of administrative supervision, namely, planning, organising, activating and control. In SWSS this would entail:

- (1) Establishing the overall supervision sessions for learning, preparation, orientation and debriefing that links with their fieldwork tasks;
- (2) Structured assistance with students' implementation of intervention (with clients), professional behaviour, values and ethics, and management of students' workload;
- (3) Monitoring and termination of their intervention and overall learning in the fieldwork programme.

The best interest of the clients is always paramount; therefore, student supervision and learning is the responsibility of the fieldwork supervisor. Therefore, administrative supervision ensures student learning and, consequently, effective service to clients, by implementing sound administrative methods (Bogo & McKnight, 2006).



### 2.6.2. Educational supervision

According to Botha (2000), educational supervision involves appropriate knowledge, attitude/values and skills to provide effective service delivery to clients. The emphasis of educational supervision is on concepts, theories, research, skills and teaching techniques/methods/strategies (Strozier, Barnett-Queen & Bennett, 2000). Educational techniques are purposefully facilitated, mostly during the implementation phase of the supervision process, as key learning takes place during this process. Knowledge must be transferred in such a way that the learning objectives are met (Goldstein, 2001). In the context of this current study, this means that learning should be invigorated, so that the student is motivated, to ensure optimal fieldwork learning. The student must understand the purpose of the new knowledge, and how to apply it in a real world context. In educational supervision, group supervision is encouraged, as it increases the need to learn more. It is the responsibility of the supervisors to explain the importance of the knowledge that is to be acquired (Kadushin & Harkness, 2002: 176-192). Learning is

most effective, when students are actively engaged in learning; therefore, supervisors should ensure maximum interaction with their students.

### 2.6.3. Supportive supervision

The purpose of supportive supervision is to provide support (mostly emotional) and motivation to the supervisees, enabling them to perform their fieldwork duties and responsibilities. It is aimed at enabling the supervisee to execute tasks, as effectively and productively, to serve the best interest of clients (Kadushin & Harkness, 2002). Therefore, it cannot be separated from administrative and educational supervision, as, similar to the other two functions, supportive supervision enables students to deliver effective service to clients, but is strongly focused on the personal strengths, motivation and resilience of the student, throughout the learning process (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014; Munson, 2002). Social work values, such as warmth, acceptance, empathy, positive regard, encouragement and a safe space to ventilate, are key in supportive supervision (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014; Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2014). This means that a positive, mutually respected supervisory relationship is required (Botha, 1985). Supportive supervision is underscored by a climate of safety and trust, where supervisees can develop their sense of professional identity (Payne, 2008). Supervisors should provide practical and psychological support (Walker *et al.*, 2008), to enhance team work, and maintain moral, as well as job satisfaction (Bogo & McKnight, 2006), which, essentially, decreases job stress and burn out (Caspi & Reid, 2012). Caspi and Reid (2012: 3) further assert that ‘quality’ supervision requires the supervisor to focus on all three functions of supervision, especially, when the supervisee experiences ‘strong reactions’ regarding practice.

## 2.7. Policy Framework for Fieldwork Supervision

The development of policies and legislation often stem from a need, identified by a group of people (often in power), subsequently used to bring about change, which, ultimately, influences practice (Thompson, 2015). The social work profession is governed by various policies that stipulate the rules and regulations for practice and, consequently, govern the training of social workers (Schenck, 2009). SWSS is governed by various policies and legislation, including, but not limited to:

- **The White Paper for Social Welfare** (RSA, Department of Welfare, 1997): According to Van Delft (2002, cited in Schenck, 2009) this policy document changed the approach of supervision from the residual to the developmental model, to cater to the needs of the less advantaged, and is based on the complex context of SA, and not the Western World.
- **Social Service Professions Act** (RSA, Act 110 of 1978), as amended: This Act provides the mandate for the supervision of social workers.
- **Code of Ethics** (SACSSP, 2017): The Code of Ethics states that supervisors need to be experienced in their field, are accountable for services provided by a supervisee, and need to set clear boundaries. Additionally, supervisors should be fair when assessing and evaluating students.
- **Children's Act** (Republic of South Africa [RSA], Act No. 38 of 2005): This Act provides the mandate for supervision of social workers
- **Supervision Framework for Social Work** (RSA, DSD & SACSSP, 2012): This framework highlights the importance of supervision of social workers.
- **Policy for Social Service Practitioners** (RSA, DSD, 2015): Supervision is key to social work practice and must be performed by a qualified practitioner

What these policies have in common are:

- the protection, worth and dignity of the client is paramount;
- the knowledge, skills and values of the social worker (student social worker) should aimed at meeting clients' needs and aspirations; and
- social workers and students should be supervised by a more experienced and knowledgeable social worker.

Alarming, these policies do not explicate the requirements, or guidelines for fieldwork supervisors; therefore, each university utilising fieldwork supervisors, can do so at its own discretion, which creates challenges, in terms of accountability, even though supervisors are accountable to the SACCSP.

However, the policy requirements are linked to the supervision framework in SA, which recommends that supervisors have a minimum of three years' experience, and attend a

comprehensive supervision course, presented and accredited by SACSSP (RSA, DSD & SACSSP, 2012). Current supervision practices are based on studies, which suggest that universities and social work organizations work collaboratively, to provide the best possible service to students (Carelse & Poggenpoel, 2016; Petersen, 2010; Nzira & Williams, 2008). However, research affirms that relatively inconsequential training has been provided to social work supervisors, regarding supervisory issues (Dhemba, 2012; Eible, 2015; Petersen, 2010). Carelse and Poggenpoel (2016) also argue that retaining good quality social workers will remain a challenge, without an effective education and/or training programme for social work supervisors. Therefore, we can deduce that supervisory training is imperative in effective fieldwork education and training.

A study by Dhemba (2012) determined that agency supervisors are often inadequately 'resourced' as fieldwork supervisors, even though they are expected to offer a conducive learning environment for students to grow and develop. Therefore, the imperative question is whether supervisors can be expected to supervise without training, resources and opportunities. Similarly, international studies suggest that social workers, effectively, need to keep pace with growing trends, and incorporate these into learning environments (Perlmutter, 2006, cited in Applewhite, Kao & Pritzker, 2017). In addition, Hochfeld, Selipsky, Mupedziswa & Chitereka, (2009) concur that keeping abreast of theory and practice would improve the quality of supervision to students. The SACSSP (2017) also clarifies that social workers need to keep abreast of the latest trends and developments in society. In a study conducted by Petersen (2010), the findings revealed that supervisors were not updating their knowledge of the latest educational, academic theories and models, which seriously affected fieldwork learning, in terms of integration and the application of theory. Engelbrecht (2013) concurs that supervisors needed training and CPD.

## **2.8. Theoretical Framework**

The Federal Council for Social Work (Conselho Federal de Serviço Social [CFESS], 2013, cited in Haanwinckel *et al.*, 2017) requires social workers in Brazil to understand the relevant theories and methodologies in teaching and learning fully, and to have technical and operational skills that are framed by ethical principles. Linked to ethical principles in teaching and learning are the learning styles of students (Sims & Felton, 2005). Therefore, academics

and, in the context of this current study, field supervisors, should have knowledge of students' learning styles, which are discussed in the following sections.

### 2.8.1. Student learning styles and experiential learning

Individuals have preferred learning styles, and acknowledging this is imperative in raising students' awareness of the possible alternative approaches (Sims & Felton, 2005). For example, a student might prefer to learn by doing, and consequently, neglects the aspect of feeling, which in essence, prevents them from holistic learning. The transformation of knowledge into an experience, is described as the process of learning by Kolb (1984, cited in Healey & Jenkins, 2000). Students, therefore, learn by "getting actively involved in their own experiences" (Wehbi, 2011: 494). This allows students to permeate the understanding of scholars with their own life experiences (Sieminski & Seden, 2011).

A student's growth might be stifled if there is a disparity between the style of the student and the approach of the teacher (supervisor in this current study) (Healey & Jenkins, 2000). Therefore, the supervisor must be aware of the significance of students' different learning cycles, in order to ensure that all students engage in the learning process. This implies that supervisors need to actively and flexibly engaged with their students, and not be detached. As a rebuttal to this point, in ELT, learning cycles comprise a structure; therefore, supervisors and supervision need to be organized to create environments for the transformation of experiences, which will at times compromise flexibility (Kolb *et al.*, 2001). Feedback and evaluation is the backbone of social work supervision; therefore, these tasks have to be structured and facilitated within the framework of ELT.

Vince (1998), as well as Healey and Jenkins (2000) claim that one of the best known educational theories in higher education is Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (ELT). ELT gained academic status in the 1970s and 1980s, due to the research of David Kolb (1984), who contributed exceptionally to an existing body of knowledge on adult education (Mughal & Zafar, 2011). The early pioneers (William James, John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, Carl Jung, Paulo Freire, and Carl Rogers) of ELT assigned the experience a prominent role in theories pertaining to human learning and development (Passarelli & Kolb, 2012).

Experiential learning implies learning from experience (Kolb, 2014). Kolb (1984, cited in Atherton, 2005) argues that experience is the input, and learning is the output. Whadwa (2008) asserts that adult education and experiential learning is “closely” linked. This link exists because adults are seen as persons with experience, who could add to the learning environment, and who are not vacuous, which in essence means that their experience aids their learning (Collins, 2012; Haung, 2002; Kolb *et al.*, 2001). Adult learning is best facilitated through engaging the adult learner in dialogue (Vella, 1994). ELT is viewed as important in the “theoretical underpinnings of field education” (Wayne, Bogo & Raskin, 2010: 330). In the context of this current study, the supervisory relationship needs to be developed, in which the adult learner can create and reflect on his/her experiences in fieldwork practice, in an engaging way, together with fieldwork supervisors; is at liberty to interrogate assumptions of his/her own, as well as others’ knowledge, while simultaneously, critiquing and reflecting upon such knowledge. Therefore, in order for learning to ensue, experience (input), in isolation, is not sufficient, as reflecting on such experiences (output) is required for learning (Kolb, 1984, as cited by Dykes, 2009).

The value of experiential learning is that it provides a benign space for education, while students are allowed to deal with diversity, by engaging directly with others (Carelse & Dykes, 2014). Students are assisted to deal with experiences by interpreting feelings, and making sense of it. Students are able to manage sensitive issues at cognitive and affective levels, learning more about themselves, while a safe environment is provided to confront sensitive issues (Garcia & Von Soest, 1997, cited in Von Schlicht, 2003). A safe environment is based on respect for diversity, affirmation by the facilitator (Green & Von Schlicht, 2003), as well as the student’s experience that his/her opinions are valued and respected (Collins & Van Breda, 2010). It is also about focusing on students’ strengths (Green & Von Schlicht, 2003), and not their deficits (what they know, or do not know). Ultimately, in a safe environment, assessment is open and transparent (Rust, 2002).

Kolb developed a four-stage model of experiential learning (Atherton, 2005; Moore & Van Rooyen, 2002), illustrated in Figure 2.1 (Adapted from Kolb & Kolb, 2005). The main theoretical premise underpinning ELT is that it is a “dynamic view of learning based on a learning cycle driven by the resolution of the dual dialectics of action/reflection and experience/abstraction” (Passarelli & Kolb, 2012: 4). Learning, therefore, is continuous, as it occurs in a cycle (Zafar, 2011). Teaching and learning



methods should also consider the learning styles of students (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). Students, generally, have difficulties with linking the content taught to practice implementation [real-world context] (Clapton *et al.*, 2008; Vaicekauskaite, Algėnaitė & Vaičiulienė, 2010; Wrenn & Wrenn, 2009). These authors determined that students were overwhelmed by assessment tasks, which could explain their challenges with finding the link between theory and practice (Gravett, 2004; Hay *et al.*, 2016; Vella, 2000). ELT, however, has positive educational results in studies on teaching and learning (Wehbi, 2011).

### 2.8.2. Characteristics of Experiential Learning Theory

Kolb (1984, cited in Passarelli & Kolb, 2012: 4-5) proposes six characteristics of experiential learning (see Table 2.6) by assimilating the work of pioneers.

**Table 2.6: Characteristics of experiential learning theory**

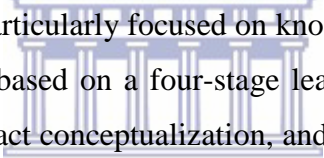
|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>1. Learning is a Process, not an outcome.</b>  | Learning, therefore, occurs through linked experiences, whereby knowledge is amended and reconstructed.   |
| <b>2. All learning is re-learning.</b>  | Knowledge derives from the student's experiences, as well as ideas, and beliefs are tested; also known as constructivism. The students' understanding of the world is based on their own experiences. |
| <b>3. Learning requires the resolution of conflicts between dialectically opposed modes of adaptation to the world.</b> | The learning process is driven by dissimilarities and is resolved in reprises of a back and forth between conflicting modes of reflection and action and feeling and thinking.                        |
| <b>4. Learning is a holistic process of adaptation.</b>   | Learning encompasses students holistically.   |
| <b>5. Learning results from synergetic transactions between the person and the environment.</b>                         | Learning is dependent on the student in the environment. The environment, therefore, plays a pivotal role in the students learning the process.   |
| <b>6. Learning is the process of creating knowledge.</b>  | Knowledge is based on social and social-historical context and subjective experiences of the student  |

Source: Passarelli and Kolb (2012)

In Table 2.6, it is evident that the most effective learning is rooted in real experiences, which everyone undergoes, including students (Askeland, 2003, cited in Collins, 2012). Knowledge, while important, always follows experience, and central to experiential learning is the capacity to reflect critically on, and apply learning to the real world (Collins, 2012).

### 2.8.3. Cycle of Experiential Learning Theory

Kolb (1984: 41) defines learning as “the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience”. The process of taking in information implies that the student grasps the experience, and, consequently, transforms the experience, by interpreting and acting on the information (Kolb & Kolb, 2005; Passarelli & Kolb, 2012). Creating knowledge by transforming experience, requires the use of the whole brain (Zull, 2004), which implies that learning best occurs when students are able to experience a phenomenon, to create knowledge, and not necessarily when knowledge is merely given. Therefore, experience, in isolation, is not enough; the student must be able to “reflect, develop abstractions and test those abstractions” (Zull, 2002: 17), which is particularly relevant to fieldwork supervision, as the main purpose of fieldwork is to provide students with opportunities to experience what they learnt, and to reflect on it.

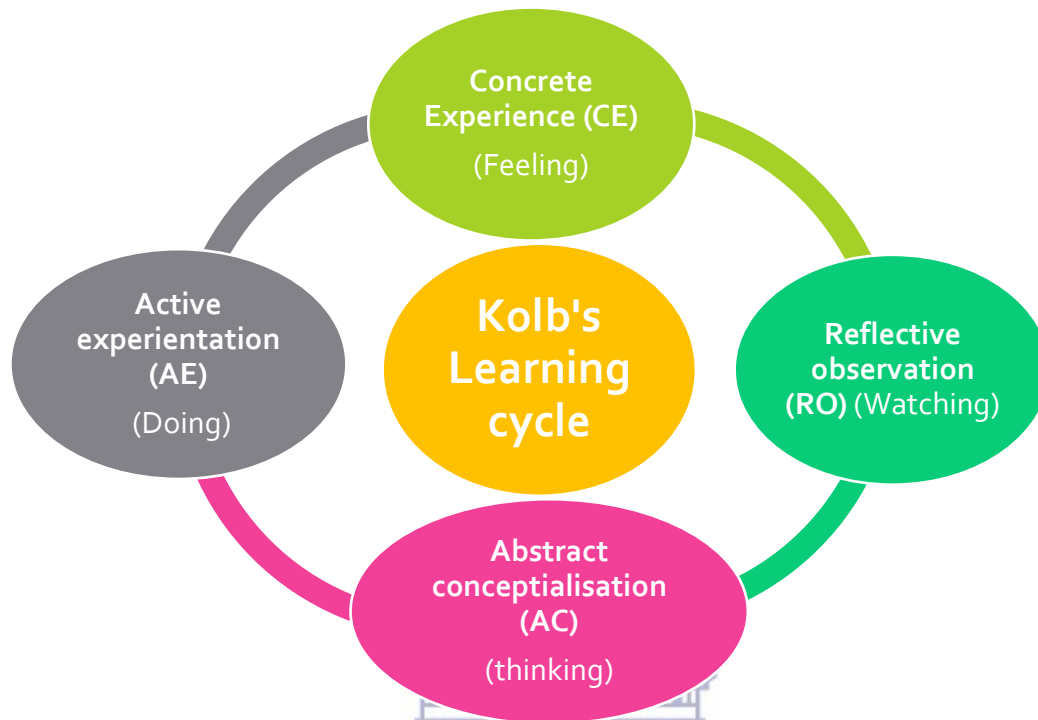


The selected university is particularly focused on knowledge, experience, reflection and testing experience. ELT is based on a four-stage learning cycle (concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation), which is associated with different learning styles (Kolb, 1984; Kolb & Kolb, 2005; Passarelli & Kolb, 2012). Zull (2002: 18-19) states that “concrete experience comes through the sensory cortex, reflective observation involves the integrative cortex at the back, creating new abstract concepts occurs in the frontal integrative cortex, and active testing involves the motor brain. In other words, the learning cycle arises naturally from the structure of the brain”. Regarding the learning cycle in fieldwork supervision, the following process unfolds: firstly, the student will obtain information in the classroom through hearing or seeing (concrete experience); secondly, the student will reflect on the information by remembering what was learnt (reflective observation); thirdly, the student will create new ideas from what they had learnt (abstract conceptualization); and finally, the student will act on what they had learnt (active experimentation) (Zull, 2002). Zull (2004: 72) emphasises that learning is the business of the brain, and it will occur “when students find the right connections”.

Walker, Crawford and Parker (2008) consider Kolb’s learning cycle as dynamic, because students re-learn by critically reflecting on their experience. This expertise is only



developed after experiencing several cycles. The learning cycle is depicted in the Figure 2.3.



**Figure 2.3: Kolb's four-stage learning cycle**

Source: Kolb *et al.* (2001); Dykes (2014); Passarelli & Kolb (2012)

In the cycle of learning, illustrated in Figure 2.3, students learn by feeling, watching, thinking and doing (Dykes, 2014). In addition, the illustration of the cycle suggests that students use all their senses in learning; however, importantly, they also engage with the knowledge, and understand it in their own way. Ultimately, the cycle offers a structured and transparent way of working with students (Walker *et al.*, 2008), and shows the value of reflecting on the experience, as well as considering alternative interventions (Zafar, 2011). Boyatzis & Kolb (1997, cited in Yeo & Marquardt, 2015) assert that questioning and reflection is an integral part of this process. Zafar (2011) argues that this is a cycle in itself, in which the student learns from his/her experiences, and develops different approaches, or strategies, to intervene in situations. This often means that implicit knowledge is translated into overt knowledge, which allows students to apply knowledge, which often leads to concrete experience (Michailova & Wilson, 2008).

Kolb's ELT has a holistic approach to learning that changes a student: by human adaptation through the transformation of experience into knowledge (Passarelli & Kolb,

2012). Therefore, students need to find solutions to problems through communication in their surroundings (Jackman, 2011; Vince, 1998). The aim is to provide students with real clients, and for them to intervene based on theories learnt (Brown *et al.*, 2011; Yardley, Teunissen & Dornan, 2012). The clinical educator (the supervisor in this current study) needs to be present to guide, support and ensure safe practice (Meyer, 2013). Dellany and Molloy (2009) state that knowledge is an amalgamation of the experience of the client, student and supervisor, which cannot be perceived as separate experiences.

Passarelli and Kolb (2012) assert that the ELT cycle (Figure 2.3) depicts two conflicting connected styles of grasping experience (Concrete Experience [CE] and Abstract Conceptualization [AC]), and two conflicting connected styles of transforming experience (Reflective Observation [RO] and Active Experimentation [AE]).

**Table 2.7: Experiential learning techniques for fieldwork supervision**

| TECHNIQUE                             | DESCRIPTION  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Role-plays</b>                     | Demonstration of students' knowledge, skills and values, by acting out an illustration (Toseland & Rivas, 2001).   |
| <b>Skills training / development</b>  | Demonstration of students' life skills, basic skills, professional skills and personal skills, during laboratory sessions (Van der Horst & McDonald, 2001: 9), as well as writing skills (Taibbi, 1995). |
| <b>Socio-drama</b>                    | Similar to role-plays, in which the student illustrates a particular situation by demonstrating knowledge, skills and values (Berk, 2000).   |
| <b>Modeling and self – disclosure</b> | A technique that encourages students and supervisors to share their thoughts and feelings, through which learning is constructed (Jacobs, Masson & Harvill, 2002).                                       |

It is evident from Table 2.7 that the use of experiential techniques help students to learn new behaviour, which they could apply in a real-world context. Students engage with manageable tasks by following the techniques presented in Table 2.7, which provide a platform for them to engage in future tasks that may be more complex, as they develop and achieve learning outcomes. In the supervisory relationship, the supervisor assists the student by being a guide on the side, by re-enforcing knowledge, skills and values, through which learning is constructed.

Brookfield (1983 cited in Zafar, 2011) indicated two contrasting ways in which experiential learning has been implemented. Firstly, learning takes place when students

are encouraged to “acquire and apply knowledge, skills and feelings in an immediate and relevant setting” (Borzak, 1981: 9 cited in Zafar, 2011). Consequently, students directly encounter an environment created by academics, and facilitated by an institution, to assist them to interpret a phenomenon, rather than think about it (Brookfield, 1983 cited in Zafar, 2011). Secondly, learning results from the active participation of students in their learning environment (Dreeben, 2010).

Similarly, the Theory of Constructivism implies that the learners, or individuals, are constructors of their own knowledge, which is generated by interacting with their socio-cultural environment (Vygotsky, 1978, cited in Zafar, 2011; Walker *et al.*, 2008). The aforementioned point implies that educators (supervisors in this current study) need to understand that students construct their experiences from childhood to adulthood; therefore, educators need to find ways of assisting students to engage with the knowledge, using a constructivist approach (Wrenn & Wrenn, 2009; Zafar, 2011).

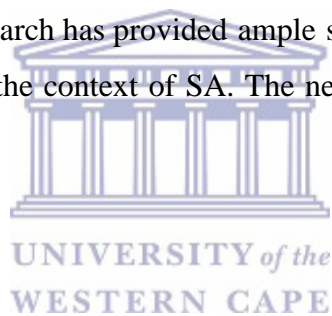
Critics of Kolb’s ELT argue that it does not consider the student’s inner (emotional) and outer (cultural) environments (Zafar, 2011), which might not reflect a holistic experience. Zafar (2011) asserts that students are valuable, but vulnerable, and need assistance to reflect and share their experiences for learning. ELT, therefore, has been criticized for assuming that all students have the cognitive and behavioural awareness to intervene, based on their experience (Simpson & Bourner, 2007). These authors argue that all experience may not lead to learning, and that learning is a choice; it does not happen automatically (Simpson & Bourner, 2007). In addition, ELT has been critiqued for labelling and categorizing people (Walker *et al.*, 2008). However, despite the criticism of ELT, it is argued that it can assist to explain how students learn, as well as how to improve their learning (Walker *et al.*, 2008).

While not negating the criticism against ELT, the researcher is convinced that ELT is relevant to this current study because it focuses on the process of learning (learning cycle). In addition, the integration of theory and practice necessitates a structured supervisory process and relationship in social work fieldwork education. It emphasises the focus on the process, and not necessarily the outcome alone (Kolb *et al.*, 2001). ELT strongly relates to both social work professional teaching (Walker *et al.*, 2008), as well as to the student profile, in the institutional context (Dykes, 2014). Principally, it seems

pertinent to recall that ELT is student-focused, with a holistic approach, which requires the supervisor to continuously develop and adapt to ensure that the student is taught in the way the student learns.

## **2.9. Conclusion**

In this chapter, the researcher contextualized the development of SWSS (internationally, and in SA specifically), emphasized the current situation of SWSS, as well as the challenges and scope of practice of SWSS. Additionally, the role of SWSS, in the context of the fieldwork programmes for the BSW degree at the selected university, was clarified. SWSS is an established field of social work practice. On the basis of the evidence currently available, it seems fair to suggest that SWSS is still under-researched. The literature reveals little to no consensus on SWSS, which implies that institutions providing fieldwork supervision can adapt their programmes to the needs of the students, or the context of teaching and learning. It is evident, in recent years, that research has provided ample support for the development of an SWSS framework, especially in the context of SA. The next chapter comprises the research methodology.

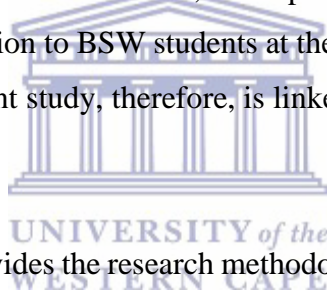


## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. Introduction

In Chapter 1, the dearth of research on social work student supervision in higher education was highlighted. In Chapter 2, the background of social work and social work fieldwork supervision, as well as the theoretical framework relevant to this study, were provided. The discrepancies in previous studies on this topic (Chapter 1), as well as the inconsistencies in structured supervision and training of supervisors (Chapter 2), have provided the rationale for this current study. The objectives of this current study are to explore and describe the perceptions and experiences of social workers, who provide educational, supportive and administrative fieldwork supervision to BSW students at the selected university in Cape Town (CT), SA. The need for this current study, therefore, is linked firmly to the objectives and aim of the study.



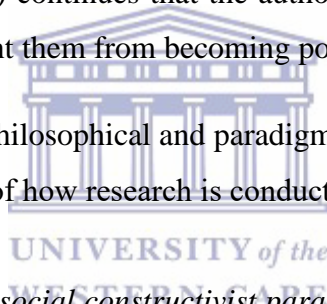
In this chapter, the researcher provides the research methodology and ethics considerations that are applicable to this current study. The arguments, rationale, and applications, therefore, are structured as follows; firstly, the research philosophy and assumptions that underlie the study are addressed, laying the foundation for the research methodology that ensues; secondly, the research methodology, including the research approach, research design, the qualitative data collection and analysis, as well as the verification methods are discussed; thirdly, the ethics considerations and limitations of the study are presented. Finally, the researcher reviews the key points of the chapter in the conclusion, in preparation for the findings chapter that follows.

#### 3.2. Research philosophy and assumptions

Creswell (2013) avers that it is imperative for researchers to understand their philosophical assumptions, when embarking on any research, as it helps us locate where it fits in the research process. Creswell (2013: 16) adds, "...philosophy means the abstract ideas and beliefs that inform our research". Huff (2009, cited in Creswell, 2013) regards philosophy as important for the following reasons:

- It appraises the formulation of a problem and how answers are sought.
- Assumptions are rooted in the researcher's training and scholarly communities in which s/he works. For example, some disciplines (such as social work) are eclectic and may borrow work from others, while some disciplines are limiting and purist in their approaches (Creswell, 2013). Creswell (2013) emphasises that assumptions change because researchers may change their discipline, or may work in a multidisciplinary setting.
- Philosophical assumptions are made when a researcher evaluates the work of another researcher, for example, a graduate student submitting work to a committee, or an author submitting work to a scholarly journal (Creswell, 2013). Creswell (2013) argues that an author's work may not receive a diligent and impartial hearing, because of the evaluators' philosophical assumptions, and asserts that this is a biased hearing. However, Creswell (2013) continues that the author needs to understand and resolve these differences to prevent them from becoming points of critique.

Finally, understanding personal philosophical and paradigmatic assumptions is important as it determines the 'what' and 'why' of how research is conducted.



This current study is located in a *social constructivist paradigm*, as it seeks to understand the world people live and work in (Creswell, 2007; Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Poth, 2017), and is concerned with meaning (Terre Blanche, Kelly & Durrheim, 2006). Similarly, social constructivism “develops subjective meanings to their experiences - meanings directed towards certain objects or things” (Creswell, 2013: 24), which relates to the aim of this current study, which is to explore and describe the perceptions and experiences of the participants. These meanings are varied, not narrowly focused, and examines the complexity of views (Creswell, 2013). Maclellan and Soden (2004) postulate that knowledge constructed by individuals, or groups, by making sense of their pragmatic worlds, and is not passively established from the world, or from imposing sources. The social constructivist paradigm was selected, instead of the social constructionism paradigm, as the researcher considered the social constructivist paradigm more suitable to truthfully answer the research question (Fouché & Schurink, 2011). Additionally, the social constructionism paradigm was not selected for this study as the paradigm assumes that truth cannot be extracted from individuals' accounts of their experiences, which always change (Fouché & Schurink, 2011). Essentially social

constructionism aims to construct reality, unlike social constructivism, which is based on reality itself. Social constructivism is usually cited as interpretivism (Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Poth, 2017; Fouché & Schurink, 2011), and assumes “that the globe is consistently being made through cluster interactions, and thus, social reality is often understood via the views of social actors tangled in meaning-making activities” (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011: 5). The interpretive position is relevant to this current study, as the BSW programme will be understood through the perceptions and experiences of the participants (Fouché & Schurink, 2011). Therefore, social constructivism is impartial, as it is not concerned with explaining a social phenomenon, but rather with understanding the worldview and opinion of the participants (Fouché & Schurink, 2011). Consequently, these perspectives and experiences are not in competition with one another, or contesting for the top spot in hegemonic relationships. The paradigmatic assumptions of constructivism are explicated as follows:

- a) Research is value-laden and influenced by personal, cultural and socio-political influences in social constructivism (Neuman, 2000). Similarly, the field of social work is a value-laden profession. From an *axiological* perspective, being aware of personal values, the researcher (also a fieldwork supervisor) ensured that her role was unambiguous, through reflexivity. Conversely, the researcher’s position, values, and experiences are valuable to the research process, and adds to the richness of data generated. The personal voice, language, and decisions, are imperative in social constructivism, and was important in the writing of this current study (Appendix H).
- b) *Epistemologically*, the researcher did not approach the participants as an expert, but valued the experiences of the participants, and aimed to listen (Terre Blanche, Kelly & Durrheim, 2006) to their perceptions and experiences, in order to understand, and not explain their realities (Fouché & Schurink, 2011). Similarly, the researcher’s relationship in this current study was one of equivalence (Terre Blanche, Kelly & Durrheim, 2006), as the researcher has fulfilled the role of campus supervisor for four years, and has functioned as an agency supervisor for one year. Therefore, the researcher’s role in this current study assisted in the production of data.
- c) *Ontology* refers to the nature of reality, subjective, and relative to who is involved in the construction of reality and can be known (Terre Blanche, Kelly & Durrheim, 2006). *Ontologically*, the researcher “aimed to generate knowledge about the social world” in which supervisors work and experienced (Mouton, 2006: 46). The researcher could



accept the multiple realities and experiences that emerged from the participants by means of an “interactive methodological approach” (Fouché & Schurink, 2011: 311).

- d) *Methodologically*, the qualitative approach was selected as most relevant to this current study, as the researcher sought to explore and understand the participants’ realities. This was accomplished through participant observation and interviewing (Terre Blanche, Kelly & Durrheim, 2006). Creswell (2013) asserts that reasoning about a research question must be either inductive or deductive. Deductive reasoning refers to the process of testing various theories through observation and reflection, and is based on logic, whereas inductive reasoning uses observations to generalise a certain phenomenon, which is based on pragmatic evidence (Babbie, 2013). The researcher employed inductive reasoning by analysing the data collected, extracting various themes and sub-themes, and substantiating the themes and sub-themes with relevant literature (Creswell, 2013). These processes highlight an understanding of the phenomena being studied, which is imperative in qualitative research (Creswell, 2013).

It is clear that the social constructivist paradigm and the qualitative approach are aligned, with the qualitative approach viewed as being embedded within the constructivist paradigm. Both are focused on how individuals understand the world they live in. Knowledge, therefore, is constructed based on the experiences and surroundings (Bellefeuille, Martin & Buck, 2005; Blunt, 2008; Collins & Van Breda, 2010; Dykes, 2014). The social constructivist paradigm becomes important to this current study, as its aim is to explore and understand how people perceive their surroundings (Creswell, 2013; Fouché & Schurink, 2011), and the constructivist research question and objectives of the study, consequently, is linked to the qualitative approach.

### **3.3. Research methodology**

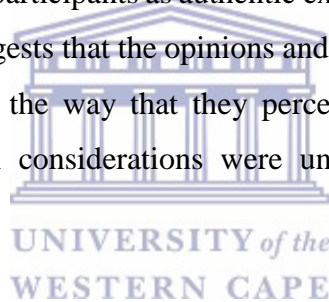
Research methodology is a logical means of solving a problem (Patil & Mankar, 2016), and is concerned with the scientific methods of obtaining data (De Vos, Delport, Fouché & Strydom, 2011; Welman, Kruger & Mitchell, 2005). According to Jonker and Pennink (2010), research methodology is a process of systematically addressing a research problem, in order to answer, or solve, a research question, by employing specific methods and techniques, while conducting a study. Methodology, therefore, refers to the process, framework, and design, utilised to acquire knowledge to answer a particular research question. Another key characteristic is that



it enables the researcher to follow a reliable and valid process for the collection and analysis of the required data (Babbie & Mouton, 2007). This current study followed a qualitative research approach, with an explorative and descriptive case study design.

### 3.3.1. Research approach

The focus of this study is on exploring and describing, which necessitated the use of a qualitative approach, as it “seeks to understand human experiences from the perspective of those who experience them” (Bonnie, Yegidis, Weinbach & Meyers, 2012: 23). Similarly, qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals ascribe to a social challenge (Babbie & Mouton, 2007; Creswell, 2013; De Vos *et al.*, 2011; Maree, 2007). According to Welman *et al.* (2005: 3), the qualitative approach is defined as a way to “emphasize meaning and experiences related to the phenomena”. To emphasise meaning, a qualitative approach aims to understand the multiple realities of the participants as authentic experiences (Creswell, 2014; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). This suggests that the opinions and experiences of the participants are vital as true reflections of the way that they perceived their reality. Therefore, all subsequent methodological considerations were under the ambit of the qualitative approach.



The qualitative approach aims to understand a social phenomenon, instead of explain it. (Creswell, 2013; Fouché & Schurink, 2011). This approach affords the researcher the unique opportunity to explore people’s lives, in detail, as well as their challenges from their own perspectives. This approach also provides descriptive data that offers the researcher insight into how people understand the worlds they live in (Hatch, 2010); unlike the quantitative approach that provides numerical data (Babbie, 2010; Creswell, 2014). Therefore, qualitative approach explores the why and how of a phenomena and not only the what, which is typical of the quantitative approach. By contrast, quantitative approaches are often used to determine trends and explain the relationship between variables (Creswell, 2009). Qualitative research can be differentiated from quantitative research by certain distinct characteristics, as illustrated in Table 3.1.

**Table 3.1: Differences between Qualitative and Quantitative approaches**

| <b>QUALITATIVE APPROACH</b>   | <b>QUANTITATIVE APPROACH</b>  |
|---|---|
| Occurs in natural setting and reflects real-world results, which provide a more realistic view of the world.  | Often in sterile testing contexts, for example, Labs and might reflect laboratory results.          |
| The researcher is the primary instrument in data collection and interacts with the participants in their own language and familiar setting through immersion of the situation of context. | Inanimate mechanisms are used to gather data, but can provide a greater sample.                     |
| Multiple sources of data (interviews, observations, documents) provide a holistic view of the phenomena.  | Collects numeric data and can be done through various sources, and over time.                       |
| Data is descriptive (pictures, words) and the researcher can be more flexible in the data collection process, to either extend fieldwork observation or shift the focus of the study.     | Data is not descriptive (numbers). Data is less descriptive of behaviour, attitudes and motivation. |
| Specifics of the study are identified.  | Generalizations are made and personal bias can be avoided.  |

Sources: Anderson (2010); Babbie (2010); Creswell (2014); Denzin & Lincoln (2005); Merriam (2009)

Table 3.1 illustrates the distinct differences between qualitative and quantitative studies. The two approaches differ in the type of setting, data collection, and analyses. A key factor is that qualitative research covers an extensive range of methods and techniques to ensure that the findings of the research are legitimate (Hennick, Hutter & Bailey, 2011). In addition, qualitative research uses a variety of data collection methods, such as personal experience, introspection, life stories, as well as materials that describe routine or problematic moments, and the essence of individuals' lives (Bonnie *et al.*, 2012). These methods allow the researcher to explore and understand the research problem through communications with the research participants, which inevitably decreases the detachment between them (Creswell, 1994). This occurs by studying the meaning of people's lives in real-world situations (Yin, 2011: 7), through exploring, contrasting, comparing, replicating, cataloging and classifying the object of study (Creswell, 2014). Essentially, this process involves collecting data in the participants' setting and being engaged in the everyday life of the setting (Anderson, 2010; Creswell, 2014). This research process does prove to be flexible due to this approach being characterized as unstructured (Anderson, 2010; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Kumar, 2005; Merriam, 2009).

It is also imperative to note that qualitative approaches are criticised for being slanted, as the data collected could be misinterpreted and are open to observer bias (Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2011). The possibility of the researcher unwittingly interpreting data, based on what they wish to demonstrate, is not the case with quantitative data (Anderson, 2010; Babbie, 2010; Merriam, 2009). Additionally, the subjectivity of qualitative research means that the findings cannot be generalized, if not in the same context (Yin, 2011). Despite these criticisms, this approach allowed the researcher to explore the participants' experiences of the study phenomena.

Ultimately, the qualitative approach was considered best suited for this study, as the researcher aimed to explore and understand the individual perceptions and experiences of the participants involved in fieldwork supervision in the BSW programme, from an insider perspective. The researcher selected the qualitative research approach, based on the following characteristics that supported the claim for the validity of the study:

- Data are collected where the participants experience the problem under investigation (Anderson, 2010; Creswell, 2014; Durrheim, 2006). The researcher engages in face-to-face interviews with the participants, instead of conducting research in a lab (Creswell, 2013). The selected university is the *natural setting* of the participants, from which the research question originates.
- Data are collected by observing behaviour, but, mostly, by interviewing the participants. The researcher, actually, gathers the data, and is not dependent on a questionnaire, as is the case with a quantitative research approach; therefore, the researcher serves as a *participant observer*, who is immersed in the study, in this role (Bryman, 2011). However, some of the participants were unable to avail themselves for an interview, and provided written responses to the questions via email.
- Multiple sources of data are used, namely, interviews and observations, instead of only depending on one source of data (Hennick, Hutter & Bailey, 2011). Subsequently, the data from all the data sources are reviewed, comprehended, coded and categorised into themes (Creswell, 2014). The researcher used in-depth interviews and written responses.

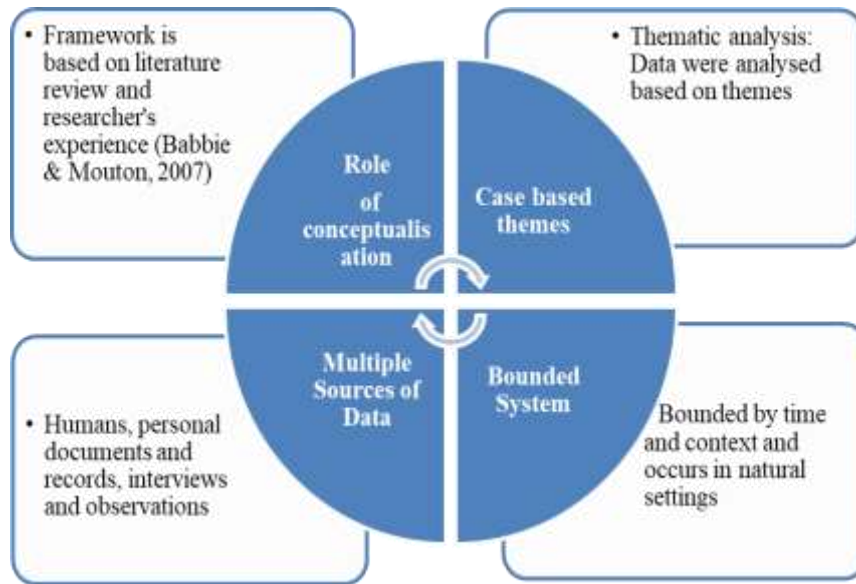
- Inductive data analysis allows themes to emerge from the data, while deductive data analysis uses an already existing framework (Durrheim, 2006). In this current study, the researcher employed *inductive analysis* by managing, reading, interpreting, reducing and testing the data until themes and sub-themes were established (Durrheim, 2006). Deductively, the researcher used concepts that arose from the literature, as a guide for themes and sub-themes. The researcher also searched for evidence to substantiate the themes, and determine whether more evidence was needed. Therefore, while the “process begins inductively, deductive thinking also plays an important role as the analysis moves forward” (Creswell, 2013: 186).
- According to Creswell (2013), in *participant meanings*, researchers remain focused on uncovering the participant’s meanings, and not their own. Therefore, in this current study, the researcher was mindful of the participants’ views throughout the research process, and not that of the researcher or the literature.
- The researcher is aware that some of the initial plans would change, and that the process could not be tightly prescribed (Creswell, 2013). For example, in this current study, the researcher’s initial idea was to conduct focus groups with the participants, but this had to change; and the researcher also had to include written responses; both because of the availability and cooperation of the participants.
- The researcher personally reflected on how the role of researcher in the study possibly shaped the interpretations of the data, such as the themes that emerge and the meanings ascribed to the data (Creswell, 2013).
- A *holistic* complex picture of the research problem is developed (Durrheim, 2006). For example, in this current study, the researcher reported various perspectives by using multiple sources of data, and considered the perspectives of fieldwork lecturers and fieldwork supervisors, as well as the BSW programme as a whole (Creswell, 2013; Durrheim, 2006).

The characteristics of qualitative research, as stipulated above, continuously clarifies the research setting as the most natural to the participants, inductive and holistic.

### 3.3.2. Research design

Research design involves identifying and deciding on a process to follow, in order to answer the research question (Babbie & Mouton, 2007). Research designs are selected, based on the identification and formulation of the problem and research question, or hypothesis (Mooi & Sarstedt, 2011). Fouché and Schurink (2011) define a research design as a blueprint, or detailed plan, on how to conduct a research study. This coincides with the objectives of this current study, as the researcher aimed to explore the perceptions and experiences of the participants. Research design, therefore, focuses on the plan and structure of how the research will be conducted and identifies the procedure that will be followed.

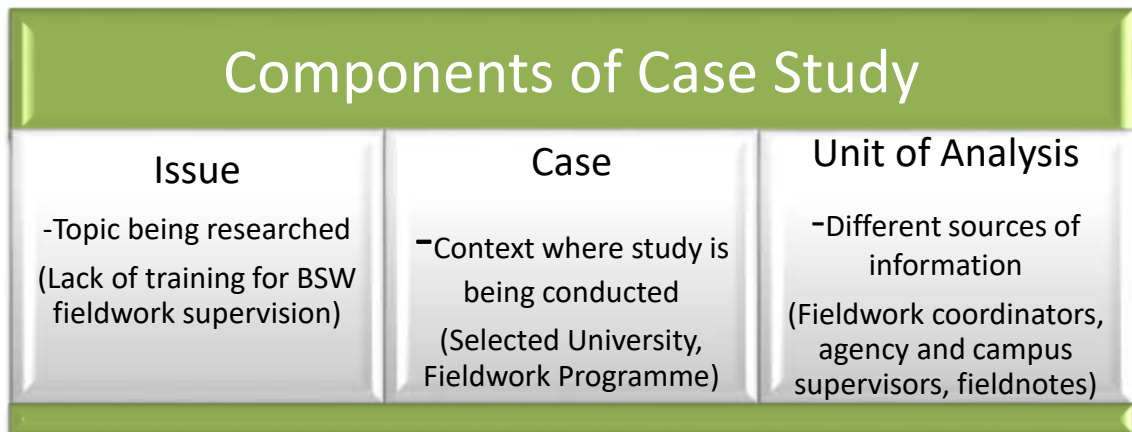
Creswell (2013) differentiates between five types of research designs: narrative, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study. The researcher opted to use a *case study design*, as it could be both exploratory and descriptive (Babbie, 2010), which concurs with the purpose of qualitative research, as well as the purpose of this current study. Case study design refers to one or more cases that are bound by time and activity (Creswell, 2007), and focuses on a specific setting [in this instance the selected university] (Bryman & Bell, 2014). It involves stating a research question, based on an issue, describing the context in detail, and using multiple sources of data to analyse the case (Babbie & Mouton, 2007). In turn, it affords the researcher the choice to decide what needs to be studied (Creswell, 2013). In addition, case study research is directed at understanding the uniqueness and idiosyncrasies (Bryman & Bell, 2014) of a particular case, in all its complexity (Welman *et al.*, 2005: 25).



**Figure 3.1: Principles of case study design**

Source: Babbie & Mouton (2007)

According to Figure 3.1, case studies need not only include humans, and could include personal documents and records that enhance the richness of the research findings (Babbie & Mouton, 2007). However, case studies should be conducted in the natural circumstances of a specific case, and should be demarcated (setting clear boundaries), search for recurring patterns, as well as consistent regularities, utilising triangulation to discern between the patterns (Welman *et al.*, 2005). Consequently, this current study was bound by time [data was collected from supervisors, who were supervising students within the same time frame, across different year levels] and context [supervisors who supervise social work students at a selected university] (Bell, 2011; Creswell, 2007). Figure 3.2 further delineates the components of the design.



**Figure 3.2: Components of Case Study Design**

Source: Creswell (2013)

Case study design involves an in-depth study of an issue, or phenomenon (Babbie, 2010; Creswell, 2013). For this current study, the researcher focused on the lack of training for social work fieldwork supervision (issue of concern) to aid in generating new knowledge and providing insights into the topic of discussion (Creswell, 2013). The researcher explored participants' perceptions and experiences of the particular case. Examples of case studies are families, groups, institutions, communities or projects/programmes (Creswell, 2013, 2014; Welman *et al.*, 2005). A programme (BSW programme at the selected university) was the case in this current study. Denscombe (2014) identified the following advantages of using case study designs: a flexible approach, the natural setting of participants, multiple data collection methods, a holistic view, and focused small-scale research.

### 3.3.2.1. Types of case study designs

Babbie (2016) asserts that research has three purposes; to explore, to describe and to explain. Additionally, three types of case study designs (Babbie, 2016; Lee, Collier & Cullen, 2007: 173, also cited in Bell, Kothiyal & Willmott, 2017: 112) are described in literature, as follows:

- **Exploratory case study:** The purpose of exploratory studies is to explore a relatively new phenomenon and focus groups are often employed to collect data.
- **Descriptive case study:** Descriptive studies are often used to observe and describe certain events and to report on it thereafter.



- **Explanatory case study:** Explanatory studies aim to explain a phenomenon through a detailed exposition of the issue, to explain aspects within the issue.

This current study aimed to explore and describe the BSW programme at the selected university, by using the perceptions and experiences of the study participants. The researcher chose to combine the *exploratory and descriptive case study designs* which she considered to be most suitable to this current study, as it provided the researcher with the opportunity to explore and describe the perceptions and experiences of fieldwork supervisors and lecturers, which is presently a deficiency in the BSW programme, at the selected university.

### 3.3.3. Case and research setting

The Population Registration Act (Republic of South Africa, Act No. 70 of 1950) negatively affected certain race groups, providing white South Africans with more privileges (Nicholas, Rautenbach & Maistry, 2010; Wolpe, 1995) than the rest of the population (Patel, 2007), which was evident in the unequal distribution of resources (Brown & Neku, 2005). In addition, the majority of South Africans regarded the educational system as illegitimate (Allais, 2007; Dykes, 2014). The selected university was established in 1959, for people classified as Coloured; however, the university introduced an open door admissions policy to allow access to people, who were negatively affected by the policies of apartheid (Subotzky, 1997; Wolpe, 1995). In addition, traditionally, higher education pre-apartheid was “divided across racial and ethnic lines” (Davies, 1996: 321), and post-apartheid was mirrored by disparities (Fisher, 1998).

Dykes (2014: 4) contends that students from the selected university, who were negatively affected by the harsh and inhumane policies of apartheid, “mirror the social history and experiences of the communities from which they stem”. The effects of discriminatory educational levels during apartheid left many of these first-generation university students with disparities in their learning, which hampered their epistemological access (Morrow, 1993). Social work students, especially, encountered difficulty with practice and theory integration (Carelse & Dykes, 2013; Collins, 2012; Dimo, 2013). Dykes (2014: 65)

argues that the selected university “links university education to real life community problems which university educational programmes and curricula address to find solutions”. This is directly linked to the social constructivism paradigm (Creswell, 2014), as well as the qualitative approach, which utilises the participants’ natural setting by getting close to them, uses smaller sample sizes and applies in-depth data collection.

The selected university was the primary focus of this current study. In addition, the researcher was familiar with the setting, had access to, and credibility with, the population under study. The researcher obtained ethics clearance from the university and, thereafter, permission from the Social Work Department to conduct the study. The selected university (context of study) is imperative to this current study, as previous studies have highlighted the need for research on fieldwork supervision in the BSW programme, while there is a dearth of literature on the experiences of fieldwork supervisors (Carelse & Poggenpoel, 2016; Petersen, 2010). In the context of the selected university, campus supervisors are required to teach and assess BSW students, in order to determine the students’ level of competence. However, prior to 2012, there were no formal training requirements for the supervision of BSW students (DSD & SACSSP, 2012; Petersen, 2010). The researcher recalls that, in 2012, the selected university initiated online training and conversations for fieldwork supervisors. This, however, was never formalised and fieldwork supervisors had the option of attending the training. This contradicts the requirements of the SACSSP, as stipulated earlier in this chapter (RSA DSD & SACSSP, 2012).

### 3.3.4. Population and sampling

#### 3.3.4.1. Population

A population refers to a group of people, who share common characteristics (Cunningham, Weathington & Pittenger, 2013), and about whom the researcher wants to draw conclusions (Babbie & Mouton, 2010). The researcher has to identify a population most able to respond to the research question (Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2011). In this current study, the most common characteristic of the *research population* was that they were all qualified and professional social workers, who had extensive experience in a broad range of social work practice. They provided fieldwork supervision in the BSW programme at the selected university (Campus

Supervisors on a part-time contractual basis), as well as at Social Work Organisations and Agencies in the Western Cape (WC), offering fieldwork placements for student fieldwork learning in the BSW (Agency Supervisors as part of their overall social work duties in the work place). Fieldwork Lecturers (full-time staff members) on all 4-year levels, also formed part of the population, as they were primarily responsible for coordinating and setting the teaching and learning agenda for the fieldwork programme. All participants for this current study were involved in the fieldwork programme at the selected university. The participants were Fieldwork Lecturers, and Agency and Campus Fieldwork Supervisors in the BSW programme.

#### 3.3.4.2. *Sampling*

This refers to the process of selecting a portion of the population as participants, who will form part of the research study (Monette, Sullivan & De Jong, 2010). There is a distinction between probability and non-probability sampling, depending on whether the study approach is quantitative or qualitative (Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2011). In quantitative studies, probability sampling is used, when all members of the population stand an equal chance of being included in the sample, while non-probability sampling cannot specify the population (Bryman & Bell, 2014). Probability sampling can estimate sampling error, which cannot be estimated in non-probability sampling, and often leads to unrepresentativeness of the sample (Babbie, 2016). Sampling error often occurs, because a researcher may interpret data, even though limited observations were made (Meenakshi, Girija, Cauvery & Sudha Nayak, 2003). Despite these disadvantages, non-probability sampling is often less complicated and more economical (time and cost) (Welman *et al.*, 2005).

This current study employed *non-probability, purposive sampling*, as the participants, who were knowledgeable of, and could best inform an understanding of the research problem, were purposively selected (Babbie, 2010; Bryman & Bell, 2014; Creswell, 2009). Non-probability sampling refers to any kind of sampling, where the selection of elements is not determined by the statistical principle of randomness (Durrheim & Painter, 2006), but rather in a ‘strategic way’ to determine a linkage to the research question (Bryman & Bell, 2014). Non-probability sampling is the term used for a method of drawing a sample in such a

way that the findings will require a judgment and interpretation before they are applied to the population (Strydom & Delpont, 2011). This method was employed in this current research, as the researcher was interested in the perceptions and experiences of the participants.

Purposive sampling is viewed as the most important type of non-probability sampling in qualitative studies, as researchers “rely on their experience, ingenuity and/or previous research findings” to obtain data that is truly representative of the relevant population (Welman *et al.*, 2005: 69). Purposive sampling was deemed appropriate, given the confined context of social work fieldwork education. Additionally, purposive sampling was utilised as the sampling method for this current study, as “purposive sampling is synonymous with qualitative research” (Palys, 2008: 697).

Gathering data is crucial in research, as the data are meant to contribute to the understanding of the theoretical framework utilized in this study (Tongco, 2007). However, according to the researcher, it is difficult to evaluate whether the sample is representative of the relevant sample. A researcher could select the entire population, but this would defeat the purpose of sampling, which is to make an inference about a population, based on a smaller sample (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Bryman & Bell, 2014; Welman *et al.*, 2005). Purposive sampling is the selection of elements that contain the most characteristics, representative of the population (Bryman & Bell, 2014; Strydom & Delpont, 2011), and seeks to maximize information gathered, by purposively selecting participants and contexts (Babbie & Mouton, 2007). Purposive sampling is often used to obtain and share participants’ knowledge regarding the research question (Bryman & Bell, 2014; Maree, 2007). In this current study, it was utilised to obtain rich data, and an in-depth understanding of social workers’ perceptions of the research question.

The following sampling procedures were followed:

- **Fieldwork lecturers:** Initially, four fieldwork lecturers at the university were selected; however, after this current study had commenced, one participant’s role changed, after being in the position of field lecturer for

many years, and, therefore, is referred to as a key informant, whereas the other three were representative of the four year levels.

- **Fieldwork (agency and campus) supervisors:** To secure participants who were representative of the sample, inclusion criteria were used to purposively select appropriate participants.
  1. Participants were selected based on their availability and willingness to participate in this study.
  2. Participants had to be employed as social workers at government, private organizations and NGOs.
  3. Participants had to be supervising fieldwork students at the selected university between 2015 and 2017.

The final sample of the study is illustrated in Table 3.2. A more detailed sample is provided in Chapter 4.

**Table 3.2: Final sample of study**

| Gender | Key Informant | Fieldwork Lecturers | Agency Supervisors | Campus Supervisors | Total Participants |
|--------|---------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Female | 1             | 3                   | 9                  | 6                  | 19                 |
| Male   | 0             | 0                   | 2                  | 3                  | 5                  |

The majority of the participants were female, which can be expected in the field of social work. Also, most of the participants are agency supervisors, with the minority being fieldwork lecturers, which is not uncommon, but a representation of the BSW programme.

### 3.3.5. Qualitative data collection methods and procedures

Welman *et al.* (2005: 134) state that “each data collecting method and measuring instrument has its advantages and drawbacks”, and what may be an advantage for one method, could be a drawback for another, and vice versa. There are four common methods in the qualitative approach, namely, participant observation, observation, in-depth interviewing (individual interviews or focus groups), and field notes (Marshall & Rossman, 2010). The initial data collection method for this study was focus groups, as

the researcher believed that rich data could be gathered from a group context. However, due to participant availability, in-depth, individual interviews were used for this study instead, as it too assists with obtaining rich data (Kelly, 2006). Additionally, the researcher's role, as a fieldwork supervisor, facilitated a unique opportunity to attend a fieldwork lecturer meeting for the BSW programme, at the selected university, where the collective challenges of the programme were discussed.

#### *3.3.5.1. Preparing for entry and data collection*

While preparing to enter the research field, the researcher had to build a rapport with the participants, in order to gain their trust (Bryman & Bell, 2014). This was easy to do as the researcher was familiar with the research site and the majority of the participants. The researcher adhered to the following steps with each interview:

1. Emailed all the participants regarding the study, along with the relevant documents (ethics clearance, consent form,) as attachments (Appendices A & G);
2. Upon their willingness to participate, appointments with each participant for a time that suited them was made;
3. Booked a venue in the department at the selected university. Interviews with the lecturers were conducted in their respective offices in the department, and with the other participants in alternative venues;
4. Arranged chairs to enhance face-to-face interviewing;
5. Prepared two recording devices to ensure that the interviews were captured on audio tape;
6. Saved the recordings on a personal laptop, which was only accessible to the researcher, and was password protected.

#### *3.3.5.2. Data collection methods*

Greeff (2011) posits that interviews are the main method of data collection in qualitative research; however, it could also be used in quantitative research (Kelly, 2006). Interviews are present in everyday life (Edwards & Holland, 2014), and refer to structured or unstructured communication between a researcher and participants, which improves with practice (Babbie & Mouton, 2007). It requires

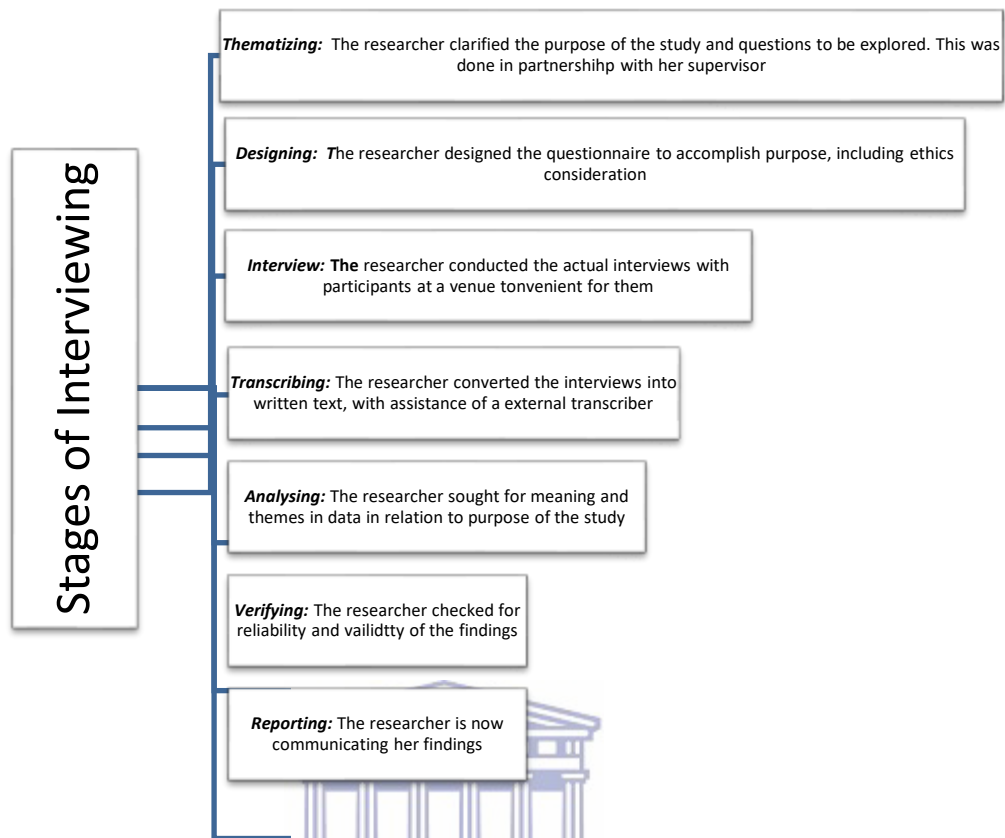
an unparalleled degree of engagement from the researcher, as an instrument of data collection that “favour naturalistic observation and interviewing” (Padgett, 2017: 2). The interviews are conducted because of the researcher’s interest in the stories of the individuals (Seidman, 1998, cited in De Vos, 2005). The data originate from the participants’ responses to the researcher (Denscombe, 2014).

In this current study, the professional role of social worker assisted the researcher in the interviewing process, having been trained to interview people, using open-ended questions. A semi-structured interview schedule (Appendix B) was employed to guide the interview process and elicit open and honest responses from participants (Babbie, 2016; Creswell, 2014). The questions in the interview schedule (Appendix B) related to the research objectives of this current study. The questions were explained to participants, after the researcher obtained signed consent from each participant (Appendix E) to conduct the interview. The participants also verbally agreed to have the interviews audiotape recorded, when they were asked.

Some of the participants were interviewed in the Department of the BSW programme, at the selected university, in a safe, private, quiet venue. Similarly, other participants were interviewed at their respective agencies, where necessary. The interviews were conducted for a duration of 30-90 minutes. The participants responded well and respected both the researcher’s roles as fieldwork supervisor and researcher. Ultimately, this form of interviewing allowed the researcher the option of probing and clarifying information, when answers seemed incomplete. Subsequently, the interviews were transcribed, verbatim (Appendix I) before it was processed for coding.



Kvale (1996: 480) highlights seven stages of interviewing:



**Figure 3.3: Stages of interviewing**

Source: Babbie & Mouton (2007)

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The importance of structure, as part of the interviewing process, is highlighted in Figure 3.3. Firstly, the researcher identifies the purpose of the study and obtains ethics clearance from the institution of higher learning. Secondly, the researcher obtains permission from the participants to participate in the research, and, thereafter, conducts the interviews to gather the data. Thirdly, the researcher transcribes, analyses and verifies the data. On conclusion of the study, the researcher reports the findings.

However, in this current study, despite the researcher's genuine efforts to create a safe, private and quiet environment for the interviews, the following challenges were still experienced, while conducting the interviews:

- Interruptions (including telephone calls being answered, knocks on the door, as well as participants being called away to deal with emergencies);

- Venue (even though the interviews were conducted in private offices, the noise levels outside some venues were still very high, which were distracting); and
- Time (although the participants controlled their own time, their duties were still a priority, and securing time for some of the interviews seemed more daunting than others, because of the time constraints, as well as unforeseen emergencies of some participants).

The above-mentioned obstacles hampered the continuity of the interview process. The researcher, however, maintained focus on the interview process and endeavoured to ignore the interruptions, to the best of her ability. In addition, some of the participants, who were unable to meet for face-to-face interviews, were encouraged to provide emailed responses. Despite the challenges, the quality of the data was not compromised the participants still provided rich and detailed information.

### 3.3.6. Qualitative data analysis

Creswell (2009) states that, to verify the findings and provide answers to the research questions, the data need to be analysed and interpreted by drawing conclusions. For example, data collection methods can be similar, but the findings and how they are reported could be markedly different (Creswell, 2014). The voice recordings were played back and transcriptions of interviews became the primary documents on which an analysis was performed, to identify codes, and then assembling into themes and sub-themes. Additionally, the researcher made notes on the transcriptions, which were used as part of the data analysis (Babbie, 2016). The researcher utilised thematic analysis because the focus was on finding out “themes or patterns, and in relevance totally different epistemic and metaphysics positions” (Clarke & Braun, 2006: 7).

The researcher used the 8 steps of data analysis and implementation, as proposed by Tesch (Babbie, 2016; Babbie & Mouton, 2007; Creswell, 2014; Schurink, Fouché & De Vos, 2011), encapsulated in Table 3.3:

**Table 3.3: The 8 steps of data analysis and implementation**

|    |   |   |
|----|---|---|
| 1. | The researcher <b>reads all transcripts</b> carefully to obtain a sense of the whole and makes some notes, based on what was read.            | The researcher read all the transcripts and highlighted repetitions and wrote down her first thoughts.  |
| 2. | The researcher also makes use of memos by <b>writing written notes in margins</b> and journaling important ideas.                             | The researcher wrote down her thoughts in the margins of the transcript.  |
| 3. | The researcher looks at the <b>underlying meaning of information</b> by selecting one case and asking herself what the information was about. | After reading all the interview transcripts, the researcher created a listing of themes and topics and clustered similar topics together. These were conjointly done subject to what appeared most and least.   |
| 4. | The researcher <b>re-reads the responses</b> from all the participants to get a sense of content and themes.                                  | The researcher applied the list of themes or topics to the data. <b>The themes or topics were abbreviated as codes</b> , which were written next to the appropriate segments of the transcripts. The researcher tried out this preliminary organizing scheme to see whether new categories and codes emerged. |
| 5. | The researcher <b>creates categories and codes the data</b> to identify undercurrent themes and sub-themes and then funnel the themes.        | The researcher found the most descriptive wording for the themes or topics and categorized them for both data sets (interviews). Lines were drawn between categories to show the relationships.   |
| 6. | The researcher <b>interprets and develops typologies</b> and presents the findings in the ensuing chapter                                     | The researcher made a final decision on the abbreviation for each category and alphabetized the codes in the data sets.   |
| 7. | The data are assembled and a preliminary analysis performed.  | As an example, every theme and class was analysed.  |
| 8. | Existing knowledge is recoded, if necessary.  | The researcher recoded existing data, wherever necessary.   |

Sources: Babbie (2016); Babbie & Mouton (2007); Creswell (2014); Schurink, Fouché & De Vos (2011)






Data analysis involved accessing the data, transcribing it and then re-reading the data. Subsequently, the researcher identified the most common themes and sub-themes through the process of coding, which is discussed in the ensuing section (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

### 3.3.6.1. The process of Coding

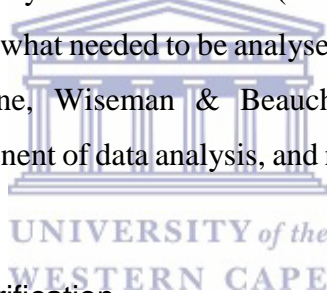
Coding is viewed as important to data analysis as it makes the data richer to the researcher (Bryman & Bell, 2014; Theron, 2015). However, coding can be interpreted differently by researchers, as it is an interpretive process (Theron, 2015). Coding involves organizing “individual pieces of data” (Babbie, 2010: 340). The researcher re-read the transcripts and used open coding to highlight the different codes that occurred most in the data (Theron, 2015). Codes were colour coded; for example, each time the researcher read a different code, a different colour would be used, until the different colour codes became dominant themes

(Bryman & Bell, 2014). The researcher identified these themes in the following colours (Table 3.4):

**Table 3.4: Colour-coding themes**

|                |   |   |
|----------------|---|---|
| <b>Theme 1</b> | Social Workers role in pink                 |  |
| <b>Theme 2</b> | Training in yellow                          |  |
| <b>Theme 3</b> | Recommendations in green                    |  |
| <b>Theme 4</b> | Challenges in orange                        |  |
| <b>Theme 5</b> | Highlights in fieldwork supervision in blue |  |

It was interesting to note that the data linked strongly with predefined codes, which, in essence, justifies the need for this study at the selected university. The researcher selected codes based on the literature review and personal experience as a fieldwork supervisor (predefined codes), as well as what emerged from the data that was not necessarily in the literature (emergent codes), which assisted the researcher to focus on what needed to be analysed (Babbie, 2014; Weston, Gandell, Beauchamp, McAlpine, Wiseman & Beauchamp, 2001). Finally, coding is imperative as a component of data analysis, and not separate from analysis (Weston *et al.*, 2001: 397).



### 3.3.7. Qualitative data verification

Creswell (2013) asserts that data verification is a process of ensuring that the data are trustworthy and reliable. Reliability is an indication of consistency between two measures of the same thing (Gray, 2010). Similarly, Gibbs (2007, cited in Creswell, 2013: 201) alludes to qualitative reliability, indicating that the researcher's approach should be consistent across different researchers, as well as different projects. This raises the expectation that the same results would be provided, even if studied at different times (Roman & Lenders, 2016). The validity of the data was verified by using Creswell and Poth's (2017) validation strategies: the researcher's lens, the participants' lens, and the reviewers' lens.

The following data validation strategies and applications were used by the researcher (Creswell, 2013; Creswell, 2014; Creswell & Poth, 2017):

a) **The researcher's lens:** Understanding the researcher's role is imperative and clarifying researcher bias is important in data validation strategies (Creswell & Poth, 2017). *Triangulation* is a powerful technique that facilitates validation of data through cross verification from *multiple sources* (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Denzin, 2006; Mouton, 2001). Triangulation in qualitative research increases the trustworthiness and credibility of the findings (Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Poth, 2017). Triangulation is beneficial to studies due to “increasing confidence in analysis information, making innovative ways that of understanding a development, revealing distinctive findings, difficult or integration theories, and providing a clearer understanding of the problem” (Thurmond, 2001: 254). The researcher used various methods to obtain rich data, namely, interviews, journaling, and participant observation to confirm the participants' perspectives and themes, which, in essence, validate the findings (Creswell & Poth, 2017) and forms part of the credibility of the study. Participant observation provides the researcher with the opportunity to experience with the participants their day to day (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). The researcher was able to do as she too is a fieldwork supervisor and could therefore engage in dialogue with participants regarding their experiences.

Klenke (2008) states that researcher *reflexivity* involves self-awareness and critical self-reflection by the researcher on his/her potential biases and predispositions, as these may affect the research process and conclusions (Haynes, 2012). In addition, Gilgun (2010) argues that, if the researcher can account for reflexivity, it adds to the integrity of the research. This study adopted reflexivity, in order to ensure that the researcher's assumptions and interpretations were accounted for, as they would influence the researcher, which inevitably would influence the research findings (Haynes, 2012). Simply put, reflexivity involves the “ability to reflect on the causes and consequences of one's own and other people's actions” (Howe, 2009), and values (Patton, 2002).

The researcher reflected and articulated personal biases and prejudices, in writing (journaling), throughout the research process, as well as how this could impact the findings of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2017). The researcher strove, at times, to remain objective, and was tempted to not pass judgments on the participants'

interest in the research process. Being aware of the possibility of these challenges prior to the interview process, assisted the researcher to remain unbiased.

This also formed part of ethics considerations of the researcher. Additionally, this aided the researcher to ensure that her findings were authentic (following the theoretical and ethical guidelines, which assisted this process) and representative of the participants' experiences and perceptions.

- b) **The participants' lens:** The participants played as important a role, as the researcher did, in the validation strategies (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Creswell (2003; 2013) maintains that feedback and discussions (also known as *member checking: See Annexure J*) with the participants, ensure the trustworthiness of the study, assists with data verification and insight, and is critical in ensuring *the credibility* of a study (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Strydom & Delpont, 2011). *Confirmability* was achieved as the participants and the researcher's supervisor (experienced researcher/peer review) was asked to examine the analysis of the data to ensure correctness and credibility (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Ringsted, Hodges & Scherpbier, 2011). The researcher's supervisor challenged the findings through an on-going dialogue, by asking questions, giving critical feedback and checking the interpretations of the researcher. This was imperative to ensure that the data was agreed upon to confirm the findings. The researcher, who is also an insider in the study (being a campus supervisor), could determine the problems, could access the data collection, and had support from colleagues (Unluer, 2012), having spent a prolonged time in the field as fieldwork supervisor (Creswell & Poth, 2017).
- c) **The reviewers' lens:** Having external persons involved in the study aids in the validation strategies. The purpose of qualitative research is to obtain rich data and to describe the findings in detail (Creswell & Poth, 2017). This was supported by using qualitative data collection methods and a case study design. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, the researcher's supervisor reviewed the findings to determine accuracy and richness.

The researcher made use of a variety of measures to ensure that the data collected is trustworthy and reliable. This is supported by Creswell and Poth (2016), as well as

Creswell and Creswell (2017), who propose that researchers make use of at least two verification strategies; however, the researcher of this current study made use of three verification strategies.

### 3.4. Ethics considerations

Ethics is an integral part of human life, and ethics considerations are, therefore, as important for research, especially where human participants are involved (Goddard & Melville, 2001; Kumar, 2005; Strydom, 2011; Welman *et al.*, 2005). Additionally, ethics is a fundamental part of the social work profession (Healy, 2008). Research should, however, never be conducted at the expense of the participants (Strydom, 2011). Ethics involve the concepts of plagiarism, honesty and the respect of the rights of human participants (Welman *et al.*, 2005). The researcher was guided by the following ethical issues, as described by Strydom (2011):

- **Minimising risk:** Risk to the participants could be physical, emotional or psychological (Bryman & Bell, 2014; Strydom, 2011). The participants of this current study were not placed at any risk, but would rather benefit by the knowledge gained from the study (Bryman & Bell, 2014; Denscombe, 2014), as the findings of the study could make positive contributions to the current knowledge base, at the selected university, and could influence future research. No personal data was ascertained from the participants, to have elicited any discomfort, or painful memories.
- **Debriefing of participants:** Debriefing refers to the process of discussing issues that may have arisen after the data collection process (Strydom, 2011). Should there have been a need for debriefing, the necessary referrals would have been made to an appropriate counsellor, with whom arrangements were made prior to the commencement of the data collection. Fortunately, none of the participants indicated a need for debriefing, after the completion of the study, and no information was shared that needed to be reported to authorities. However, the researcher had a professional on standby, in case the need arose for debriefing.
- **Voluntary participation:** De Vos (2002) asserts that emphasis should be placed on accurate and complete information, to ensure that the participants will fully comprehend the investigation, and consequently, be able to make a voluntary, thoroughly reasoned decision about participating in the study. Therefore, participants were informed that participation in the study was completely voluntary (Strydom, 2011), and that they had



the right to withdraw from the study, at any point, without prejudice, should they so desire. Additionally, the participants were formally invited (via email or telephonically) to participate in the study, and were informed that all recorded interviews would be destroyed, after study was completed.

- **Informed consent:** Berg, Appelbaum, Lidz & Parker (2001) refers to informed consent as a process of obtaining permission from a participant, while s/he is fully aware of the possible consequences of participating in a study. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) emphasize that informed consent can only be established if: (i) Participants are in a position, or old enough, to understand the choice that they are making, while children need to have parental, or guardian consent, to participate; (ii) Disclosure for purposes of research are established; (iii) Disclosure of any risks to participants are done and participants are allowed the provision to withdraw at any time. The participants agreed, and written consent (Appendix G) was obtained to ensure that they were informed about their rights as research participants.
- **Deception of participants:** Intentionally misrepresenting information, or withholding information from participants, is, inevitably, deceiving them (Strydom, 2011). The researcher endeavoured to be as honest and transparent with the participants and, therefore, did not deceive them. Authorisation letters from the various bodies were obtained to ensure that the researcher was accountable, or could be held accountable for matters of unethical conduct, during the research process (Welman *et al.*, 2005). Ethics approval for the study was granted on 18 August 2016 by the Senate Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee at the selected university. This process was undertaken to ensure that the researcher complies with ethics in the study. The ethics clearance certificate (Appendix A) with the ethical clearance registration number, HS/16/2/12.
- **Compensation:** Compensating participants for participating is debatable. While some view compensation as unethical, others argue that the time and effort of the participants as compensational (Strydom, 2011). However, it is important to note that the participants in this current study were not remunerated for participating (Denscombe, 2014; Strydom, 2011).
- **Assurance of Confidentiality:** The participants and the relevant organisations were assured that all data captured would remain completely anonymous and confidentiality

would be maintained throughout the research process. In addition, this forms part of the confidentiality of the profession of social work (RSA, DSD & SACSSP, 2012). To ensure confidentiality, the transcribed interviews were numbered, while the recordings were transcribed anonymously and password protected to ensure the participants' anonymity (Babbie, 2014). Importantly, the afore-mentioned precautions were applied to protect the identities of the participants. In addition, the recordings were uploaded to the researcher's OneDrive (online storage system), with sole access for the research period, to ensure that the study information was accessible in the event of a computer crash, due to a virus, or be lost. The researcher, however, allowed access to an independent assistant, who transcribed all the recordings. The findings were made available for member checking (See Annexure J), and hard copies of the data were kept in a safe place at the researcher's home. Additionally, all the participants were aware of the process and limits of confidentiality, as they were all social workers and, therefore, aware of the ethics of confidentiality. All the participants were adults, according to the South African law (Republic of South Africa [RSA], Act No. 108 of 1996), and voluntarily agreed to participate in the study. The researcher also obtained permission from the Head of the Social Work Department (Appendix B) and the Registrar at the selected university to conduct the study.

- **Publication of the findings:** Research has to be made available to a reading audience, or else the findings would have no real meaning (Strydom, 2011). The findings of this current study will be made available to the Social Work Department at the selected university, and the participants could also obtain access, should they so desire. The researcher will also hope to publish the findings of the study in reputable journals.

### **3.5. Limitations**

This current study's main limitation is that it is context specific, and therefore, cannot be generalized to other contexts. In addition, qualitative research and case study designs are context specific, which is customary in qualitative research. However, institutions with similar contexts, offering BSW programmes, could consider the findings.

### **3.6. Conclusion**

A qualitative approach and case study design was deemed the most appropriate research methodology for this current study, as the researcher aimed to explore and understanding the

experiences of the participants. The qualitative approach strongly supported the investigation of the topic, and provided a base for the researcher to extract the personal and professional experiences of the participants, in their own words, and manner in which they were comfortable to express themselves. The researcher maintained an ethical stance and attitude throughout the data collection and analysis phases, in order to respect the authenticity of the data and the findings. The findings of this current study, as well as the discussion of the findings are presented in the next chapter.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1. Introduction

In this chapter, the findings from the analysis of the data gathered in the interviews and questionnaires with social workers, regarding their experiences of providing fieldwork supervision services to social work students, are presented and discussed. As discussed in Chapter 1, the aim of this research was to explore and describe the perceptions and experiences of social workers, who are campus and agency supervisors, as well as lecturers in the BSW programme, at a selected university in the WC, SA. The findings, therefore, respond to the research goal and the research question: What are the perceptions and experiences of social workers, who are campus and agency supervisors, as well as lecturers, regarding student supervision in the BSW programme at the selected university? The research objectives were as follows:

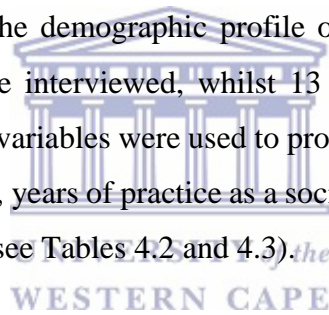
- 1. To explore and describe the perceptions and experiences of social workers, who are campus and agency supervisors, as well as lecturers, regarding the educational function of supervision of BSW students at a selected university in the Western Cape, South Africa.*
- 2. To explore and describe the perceptions and experiences of social workers, who are campus and agency supervisors, as well as lecturers, regarding the supportive function of supervision of BSW students at a selected university in the Western Cape, South Africa.*
- 3. To explore and describe the perceptions and experiences of social workers, who are campus and agency supervisors, as well as lecturers, regarding the administrative function of supervision of BSW students at a selected university in the Western Cape, South Africa.*

The data analysis was discussed in Chapter 3 as a process that involves segmenting and reducing the data, by rearranging it into patterns. To do this, understanding the essentials of the participants' narratives in the study is imperative (Creswell, 2013). Creswell (2013) compares this process to peeling an onion. This implies that the data needs to be evaluated in layers, while

the researcher evaluates the particulars, by using logical and analytical reasoning to scrutinise the data (Bendat & Piersol, 2011). Furthermore, Creswell (2013) contends that data analysis and data collection are interrelated, which often necessitates continually moving back and forth between the two stages. For example, the researcher started analysing some of the interviews and questionnaires while still conducting interviews. Thematic analysis was used in this study, as it is the most common method of qualitative analysis, and refers to “a search for themes or patterns and in relation to different epistemological and ontological positions” (Clarke & Braun, 2006: 79). The findings of the data analysis are presented (in themes and sub-themes), discussed and substantiated by literature, which supports, or contrasts, the themes and sub-themes. The researcher followed the steps submitted by Tesch to analyse the data (Babbie, 2016; Babbie & Mouton, 2007; Creswell, 2014; Schurink, Fouché & De Vos, 2011).

#### 4.2. Demographic profile of the participants

In this section, the focus is on the demographic profile of the participants. There were 24 participants (11 participants were interviewed, whilst 13 participants responded in written form) (Table 4.1). The following variables were used to provide the demographic details of all the participants: gender, age, race, years of practice as a social worker, and years of practice as fieldwork lecturer or supervisor (see Tables 4.2 and 4.3).



**Table 4.1: Total number of participants**

|                                      |             |    |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|----|
| <b>Number of key informants</b>      | <b>[KI]</b> | 1  |
| <b>Number of fieldwork lecturers</b> | <b>[FL]</b> | 3  |
| <b>Number of campus supervisors</b>  | <b>[CS]</b> | 9  |
| <b>Number of agency supervisors</b>  | <b>[AS]</b> | 11 |
| <b>Total number of participants</b>  |             | 24 |

The number of fieldwork lecturer participants comprised all staff members, who were tasked with the responsibility of the fieldwork modules in the BSW programme, at the selected university. The number of campus and agency supervisors were almost equal and, therefore, it represented a good mix of data from these two data sources, serving to balance the findings, and aiding its trustworthiness.

#### 4.2.1. Demographic profile of fieldwork lecturers

**Table 4.2: Demographic profile of Key informant (KI) and Fieldwork lecturers**

| Participants | Gender | Race     | Age | Years as SW | Years as Fieldwork Lecturer |
|--------------|--------|----------|-----|-------------|-----------------------------|
| 1            | Female | Coloured | 49  | 26          | 2                           |
| 2 (KI)       | Female | Coloured | 45  | 15          | 10                          |
| 3            | Female | Coloured | 44  | 10          | 10                          |
| 4            | Female | Black    | 41  | 18          | 4                           |

**Table 4.3: Demographic profile of Campus and Agency supervisors**

| Participant number                   | Gender | Race   | Age      | No of years as SW | No of years as supervisor |           |
|--------------------------------------|--------|--------|----------|-------------------|---------------------------|-----------|
| <b>Profile of Campus supervisors</b> |        |        |          |                   |                           |           |
| 5                                    | 1      | Female | Coloured | 49                | 23                        | 2         |
| 6                                    | 2      | Female | Coloured | 58                | 35                        | 2         |
| 7                                    | 3      | Female | Coloured | 44                | 10                        | 10        |
| 8                                    | 4      | Female | Coloured | 50                | 26                        | 2         |
| 9                                    | 5      | Male   | Coloured | 27                | 5                         | 2         |
| 10                                   | 6      | Female | Coloured | 37                | 15                        | 10        |
| 11                                   | 7      | Male   | Coloured | 66                | 40                        | 4         |
| 12                                   | 8      | Female | Coloured | 62                | 33                        | 2         |
| 13                                   | 9      | Male   | Black    | 30                | 3                         | 1         |
| <b>Profile of Agency supervisors</b> |        |        |          |                   |                           |           |
| 14                                   | 1      | Male   | White    | 44                | 14                        | 1         |
| 15                                   | 2      | Female | Coloured | 50                | 26                        | 2         |
| 16                                   | 3      | Male   | Coloured | 27                | 5                         | 2         |
| 17                                   | 4      | Female | Coloured | 36                | 10                        | 2 ½ years |
| 18                                   | 5      | Female | Coloured | 44                | 6                         | 3         |
| 19                                   | 6      | Female | Coloured | 43                | 19                        | 1         |
| 20                                   | 7      | Female | Black    | 35                | 7                         | 6 months  |
| 21                                   | 8      | Female | Coloured | 31                | 9                         | 1         |
| 22                                   | 9      | Female | Coloured | 37                | 15                        | 10        |
| 23                                   | 10     | Female | Coloured | 30                | 8                         | 1         |
| 24                                   | 11     | Female | Coloured | 34                | 4 months                  | 2 months  |

The demographic details of all the participants in this current study are illustrated in Tables 4.2 and 4.3. The importance of establishing the demographic profile of participants are threefold: to establish whether the topic of discussion is experienced in the same way by all the participants, regardless of race, culture and gender; to allow other researchers to ascertain the generalizability of the findings to other populations; and to establish whether there are disparities in the commonality and variations in the population (Hammer, 2011). Three main variables (gender, race, and years of experience) are individually discussed.

#### *4.2.1.1. Gender of participants*

Traditionally, social work is perceived to be a feminine profession (Earle, 2008; Khunou, Pillay & Nethononda, 2012; Leskošek, 2009). Historically, patriarchy has been influential in the discrimination of women, and is the basis for the social position of women, as well as the restriction in the labour market, in terms of women's jobs being limited to caring roles (Beneria & Sen, 2010; Dozier, Sha & Shen, 2013). Why women earn less than men, as well as their different professions compared to men, are directly linked to the aforementioned (Dozier *et al.*, 2013). According to Witz (2013: 1), patriarchy is seen as a “social system of gender relations of male dominance and female subordination”. Therefore, females are regarded as less than men, which often leads to low remuneration and uncondusive working conditions (Earle, 2007). Social work is deemed a feminine profession, not only due to its predominantly nurturing role, but also because females were fundamental in the establishment of the profession (Leskošek, 2009). Hochfeld (2002, cited in Khunou *et al.*, 2012) asserts that gender in SA was influenced by colonialism, and apartheid strengthened the conceptualisation and institutionalisation that men occupied privileged positions, compared to women. In this current study, 19 of the participants were female, while only five of the participants were male, which concurs with the literature, in this instance.

#### *4.2.1.2. Race of participants*

In SA, race is mirrored by the properties of apartheid and policies that were developed to segregate people, which, therefore, affected higher education as well (Reddy 2004; Wolpe, 1995). Race and ethnicity in SA were viewed as defining features for the development of universities, and spearheaded racial inequality in



education and resource provisioning (Reddy, 2004). For example, the selected university was developed for people classified as Coloured and Indian (Reddy, 2004). In essence, this implied that the majority of the students and staff at the selected university would be classified as Coloured, due to the aforementioned socio-political and historical roots. This substantiates why 75% of the fieldwork lecturers and key informant identified themselves as Coloured, while 25% (1) of the participants identified herself as black. It was likewise not surprising that 85% of the fieldwork supervisors were Coloured, 10% were black and 5% were white. As has been established, the selected university was established for people classified as Coloured and Indian, therefore, the literature supports the demographic profile, in terms of race.

#### *4.2.1.3. Professional experience of the participants*

Streubert, Speziale and Carpenter (2011: 30) assert that “individuals are selected to participate in qualitative research based on their first-hand experience with a culture, social process, or phenomenon of interest”. The participants’ inclusion in this study was based on their employment as fieldwork lecturers, or fieldwork supervisors, in the BSW programme at the selected university.

**Fieldwork lecturers as participants:** These participants have been involved with the fieldwork programme from 2 to 10 years, averaging 3 years. Half the number of the participants have been involved in the fieldwork programme across year levels, whereas the experiences of the other half have been located solely in their respective year levels, as fieldwork lecturers. The former can be interpreted as reflecting inter-curricula experiences across year levels, whereas the latter is attributed to relative newness to academia; however, with good exposure, albeit to one year level.

**Fieldwork supervisors as participants:** Social work is a complex profession and, therefore, is practiced in various sectors, ranging from NGOs, Government departments, hospitals and private companies (Thompson, 2015). The participants of this current study were employed in various sectors of social work practice. The practice experience of the campus supervisors ranged from 3 to 40 years, and the agency supervisors’ experiences ranged from 4 months to 26 years. Five participants (25%) functioned as campus, as well as agency supervisors. This

means that supervisors functioned, either as campus or agency supervisors, respectively, for different year levels, or on different year levels, simultaneously. For example, one of the participants started out as an agency supervisor for 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year levels, and was currently functioning as an agency supervisor for 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year levels, as well as campus supervisor for 3<sup>rd</sup> years. Three participants (15%) had also functioned (at different times) as previous fieldwork lecturers at the selected university. The professional experiences of the participants represented a cross-section of practice, and the number of years as practicing social workers, provided depth for both supervision services, as well as rich, thick findings.

In conclusion, the demographic profile of the participants revealed that their gender and racial classification, conformed to the status quo and literature. Their years of experience in academia was sufficient, and they were able to offer valuable data as they were experienced in social work practice and fieldwork supervision.

#### **4.3. Discussion of main themes and sub-themes**

Denscombe (2014: 189-190) asserts that people's responses to questions will depend on how they perceive the researcher, for example, "...the sex, the age and the ethnic origins of the interviewer have a bearing on the amount of information people are willing to divulge and their honesty about what they reveal". This implies that the social context and experiences of the researcher, affect the data collected (Denscombe, 2014). This interplay and interaction between the researcher and the participants are important elements in qualitative interviews (Creswell, 2013). Confirmability (as discussed in Chapter 3) assisted the researcher to focus on the perceptions and experiences of the participants and not personal biases, which added to the trustworthiness of the findings.

The researcher, therefore, was meticulous in adhering to the trustworthiness strategies and ethics considerations. Thematic analysis and coding involved searching for themes, or patterns (Clarke & Braun, 2006; Creswell, 2013) to reduce the data. The following themes and subthemes (see Table 4.4) were identified and are discussed in the ensuing section.

**Table 4.4: Main themes and sub-themes of study**

| Main theme 1  | Main theme 2                                      | Main theme 3                           | Main theme 4                               |
|---|---|--|--|
| <b>Educational supervision</b>                          | <b>Supportive Supervision</b>                     | <b>Administrative Supervision</b>      | <b>Continuous Professional Development</b> |
| 1.1. Agency supervisors are not always social workers.  | 2.1. Emotional support.                           | 3.1. Appropriate fieldwork placements. | 4.1. Little to no training                 |
| 1.2. Maintaining standards in training and social work. | 2.2. Students' emotional intelligence (maturity). | 3.2. Time for fieldwork learning.      | 4.2. Training from other sources.          |
| 1.3. Notions of supervision competence.                 | 2.3. Support for fieldwork supervisors.           | 3.3. Time for fieldwork supervision.   | 4.3. Experiential learning (Self-taught).  |
|   | 2.4. Collaboration between all parties.           | 3.4. Student interest in social work.  | 4.4. Existing training and preparation.    |
|   |   |  | 4.5. Structure/training needs.             |

Four main themes emerged from the data as well as 16 sub-themes. The main themes were commensurate with pre-defined coding that arose from the literature, in terms of the different types of supervision practiced. It is imperative to understand the different types of supervision in fieldwork supervision, as it assists the supervisors to understand their roles and functions. As discussed in Chapter 2, supervision consists of educational, supportive and administrative supervision, and understanding these functions is important, considering the focus of the research question. Understanding the participants' perceptions and experiences of the different types of supervision, therefore, was important. The fourth theme focused on CPD, which underscores the importance of training, continuously and regularly.

#### 4.3.1. Main theme 1: Educational supervision

Blackledge (2017) contends that social work education needs to keep pace with the changing times, in order to be current and effective in educational social work. In addition, Munson (2012) asserts that agencies are fundamental in the training of supervisors. Another addition to the stable of supervision models is Kadushin's (1992) model of 5Ps, which are *place*, *person*, *problem*, *process* and *professional*. The 5Ps model is part of the education and evaluation function of supervision, as it allows supervisors to conduct educational assessments, as well as develop educational programmes and assessment tools. The learning areas are *place* [social service organisation], *person* [client system on micro, meso or macro level], *problem* [the

challenge that the client system is confronted with], *process* [intervention process] and *professional person* [the social worker or social work student] (Kadushin, 1992).

In the 5Ps programme, the supervisor and supervisee are in a partnership, and are guided by principles of Adult Learning Principles (Kadushin, 1992). A study conducted by Tsien and Tsui (2007) on participative learning and teaching, determined that fieldwork supervisors and students formed a partnership that was inclusive, collaborative, built on mutual trust, and a strong relationship. The relationship between fieldwork supervisors and students was strengthened when teaching and assessment methods were negotiated between them. It reduced the power dynamics and made assessments less anxiety provoking (Tsien & Tsui, 2007). However, in order to be able to assess a student, a supervisor needs to be familiar with the required knowledge, in order to ensure that the student receives the best possible service.

#### *4.3.1.1. Sub-theme 1.1: Agency supervisors are not always social workers*

This sub-theme emerged during one interview, when it was revealed that one participant, who had identified herself as a social worker, was well known in the community as social worker, and also functioned as an agency supervisor for the BSW programme. However, during the interview, the researcher realised that the participant was not a social worker. Unfortunately, the researcher did not check the participant's identification and registration as a social worker; however, this could be a recommendation for future research. Consequently, the data from this participant was not included in the analysis. This concern was further supported by other participants:

*“So you do find many of the agencies out there who are under staffed and especially the schools that don't have social workers so they now wanting students to come in and to fulfill the role of the social worker but we make that right from the beginning clear that ... that they must not expect ... that the student is a social worker it's a student that is still in the learning process.” (Participant 1 FL)*

*“The biggest challenge I believe is when the agency is ill-prepared for the student-especially agencies not managed by social workers and*

*they are not bound by the Code of Ethics that social workers have to adhere to.” (Participant 12 CS)*

The narratives of the participants revealed that some agencies were challenged with not having registered social workers, especially schools where students were placed. However, it could be argued that the selected university did not follow policy, and placed students at agencies without registered, or qualified social workers, which could, in essence, affect the students’ fieldwork training and development. Internationally fieldwork placements also require a qualified social worker to supervise a student (Zuchowski, 2016).

According to the SACSSP Scope of Practice document (2017: 5), “...the term ‘social worker’ in the SA context is a protected title in that no person without the requisite qualification and registration with the SACSSP may use the title or practice as a social worker; any person who violates this is liable to prosecution”. This indicates that an individual is only allowed to be referred to as a ‘social worker’ once s/he has graduated with a relevant BSW degree. The fact that individuals refer to themselves as ‘social workers’, when they are not qualified, leaves this document with good objectives only. However, this is not only a challenge in SA, but globally as well (Yadav, 2016; Zuchowski, 2016).

Conversely, Dhemba (2012) states that in some countries, for example, Lesotho, a social work degree is not required to practice as a social worker. Dhemba (2012) confirms that non-social workers are unable to supervise students as they have no idea what is expected of them. This implies, therefore, that the supervisor may not be able to assist the student, in terms of linking theory with practice, which is the foundation of fieldwork supervision. If students are being supervised by non-social workers, it reinforces the need for training of supervisors, to ensure that the best possible service is provided to the student (Dhemba, 2012). In addition, Schmidt and Rautenbach (2016) contend that financial challenges may prevent agencies from employing social workers. In a study conducted by Cleak and Smith (2012), the researchers established that many agencies utilised off-site social workers (as in the case of schools). These authors, however, determined that students preferred to be supervised by social workers, who were based at the agencies.

#### 4.3.1.2. Sub-theme 1.2: Maintaining standards in training and social work

A few participants expressed their dismay at the standard of social workers in the field, and seemed to be concerned about the students' focus on their training in social work, as a profession. This concern about the standard of social work was directed at students, as well as qualified social workers.

*“...the agency would say that your student is not strong and the other challenges that our students are compared to other students from other universities. The other challenge that we have is that the supervisor might not have come from (naming the selected university) background ...or don't even have expectations from a (naming selected university) student. So the challenge for me as a coordinator [fieldwork lecturer] is to assert and to validate our students here constantly to say how important you are... students still go out with a lot of fear they are still not sure, they not confident enough for what they have here and to implement it and that's where the comparison I think happens... many of my students come from a background I think their background plays a big role .... so I think as part of our teaching and learning we need to instill this validation of our students that you good, you just as good as...” (Participant 1 FL)*

*“I feel that unless you as a supervisor have a standard you cannot be a supervisor because you need to have a standard and you cannot have the basic standard you have to be above the basic standard to be able to fulfill that role and I think it's a difficult role because you need to take in account professional identity, personal development your own stuff and your own struggles uhmm but I think it's then that if you can do those three things for a social worker I think we will then create an excellent pool of social workers.” (Participant 6 CS)*

*“I'm glad I don't have to help them with reports anymore but obviously feel the obligation that they have good standards in terms of writing good reports, concepts of what they have to write and also to record work done.” (Participant 8 CS)*



*“Yes I’ve been talking to social workers in practice about the young social workers coming in, being cheeky because they think they know it all and yet they don’t have the competence, they don’t hold this profession in high esteem as we would want to and it really brings a bad name on our profession which I try so hard to uphold and promote. So yes, I’m definitely concerned about the standard. I know what they supposed to know and what they need to take out there but how it is being translated is not always so positive.” (Participant 15 AS)*

The above statements reflect the focus on having a good standard of social work practice, especially related to the ethics of the social work profession. Additionally, social work in SA has a “poor image”, which affects the “professional identity” of professionals (Earle, 2008: 36). Chilvers (2011: 76) argues that there is a concern in fieldwork education, regarding the standard of social work, but links this to “a lack of confidence and knowledge and pedagogical skills required to facilitate student learning in the field”. This concern was also expressed by participant 1 (FL), regarding the levels of confidence in students, which reveals the universality of the findings. In addition, research suggests that a great variation exists among fieldwork placements, as well as the categories of learning that students are able to enjoy and extract benefit (Boitel & Fromm, 2014; Carelse & Poggenpoel, 2016; Wayne *et al.*, 2010). Carelse and Poggenpoel (2016: 261) assert consistency, regarding all aspects of the BSW programme is required, in order to yield and preserve “good quality social workers”. This is especially attributed to the fact that social work is practiced in various fields and agencies, as well as in different contexts (Dhemba, 2012). Earle (2007: 152) warns that “quantity should not come at the expense of quality”, and that support to uphold quality, is imperative. Therefore, the levels of competence in teaching and learning of role players in fieldwork training are highlighted here.

Despite the concerns of the standard of social work, some participants were very grateful for the type of students they were allocated. The following extracts refer:

*“It is good to have students for the capacity of having more services out there because they help us with reaching more learners, students,*



*participants or families that need help...the level of confidence and how they project themselves, so I never doubted that they can carry themselves...” (Participant 15 AS)*

*“...she really contributed to this (administrative tasks and report writing)...she added value to that and making my task easier.” (Participant 22 AS)*

*“...they were well trained in what the agency expected of them and could work well with me and the rest of the staff.” (Participant 25 AS)*

Through these experiences the participants emphasised the benefits of the fieldwork programme, as the students were able to contribute positively to the demands in the field, especially administrative functions and completion of tasks. Hay *et al.* (2016) add that fieldwork supervisors benefit from fieldwork placements, as well, because the students contribute positively to the agencies’ objectives, and also challenge supervisors to develop personally.

#### **4.3.1.3. Sub-theme 1.3: Notions of supervision competence**

Student learning in the supervision relationship is based on the supervisor’s levels of experience, knowledge and skills (Engelbrecht, 2001). The findings suggest the following, regarding the participants’ awareness of their abilities in supervision:

*“I have been a supervisor prior to the university for 10 years...so this is just...an extension of supervision in different setting.” (Participant 5 CS)*

*“Supervisors have no supervision experience or training and this is a challenge in terms of how students are being assessed.” (Participant 12 CS)*

*“...my own supervision were with regard to agency supervision um to be guided as to how to guide and supervise the student and that’s how I was orientated with regards to university supervision...” (Participant 16 AS)*

*“My knowledge from supervision I drew from the supervision module I studied last year as well as from my mentors that supervised me.”*  
*(Participant 25 AS)*

It is evident that some discrepancies exist in the supervision experience; some received sufficient, while others had to take responsibility for their own knowledge development, in terms of what they assumed they were expected to know. It was clear that supervisors’ experiences of supervision, influenced how they supervised. Social workers often feel inadequate, in terms of the theory aspect of fieldwork supervision (Domakin, 2015). Carelse and Poggenpoel (2016) assert that fieldwork lecturers and fieldwork supervisors need to have the same understanding of the concepts and theories, while there should be a relation between what is taught, juxtaposed with what is practiced. Similarly, Engelbrecht (2013) confirms that structured guidelines are crucial for fieldwork practice, as the supervisors’ confidence in supervision will be enhanced. Bogo (2010: 55) asserts that “the goal of social work is to develop competent social work practitioners”. Therefore, the onus is on universities that provide BSW programmes, to produce professionals, who are able to advocate on behalf of others (Bogo, 2010).

However, it seems unfair to expect that a social worker is competent to practice in all contexts, as it is impossible for any institution to prepare a student for all spheres of the profession. Therefore, additional training (CPD) for all professionals is vital, once they start to practice (Craig, Dentato, Messinger & McInroy, 2014; Hay *et al.*, 2017; Tham & Lynch, 2014). Fieldwork needs to become a priority, as it allows professionals to experience differing contexts, and links theory with practice, which enhances the competence of professionals (Bogo, 2010). In addition, as discussed in Chapter 2, ELT assists students, as well as professionals, to learn through experiences, which is imperative in fieldwork supervision (Skilton, 2011).

In the main theme 1, the researcher highlighted the concern that agency supervisors were not necessarily professional, registered social workers, which contradicts the ethics of the profession (DSD & SACSSP, 2012). Additionally, the standard of the profession was raised as a concern, which was fueled further by the fieldwork supervisors’ feelings of incompetence, regarding fieldwork supervision. This is an

important theme, as the standard of the profession is dependent on staying within the ethics, as prescribed by the SACSSP, as well as a sense of competence.

#### 4.3.2. Main Theme 2: Supportive supervision

Supportive supervision aims to assist with practical and psychological support, as well as provide supervisees with a safe space that is established on trust (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014; Walker *et al.*, 2008). Research has revealed that social work (in general), fieldwork placements, and education, face challenges that contribute to job stress (Blackledge, 2017; Dykes, 2014; Engelbrecht, 2013; NASW, 2013; Zuchowski, 2016).

##### 4.3.2.1. Sub-theme 2.1: Emotional support

The participants expressed their concerns that students' personal challenges could affect their studies and practice. The following quotations refer:

*"... in terms of supportive supervision as well, even personal challenges such as personal trauma in the past, current, marriage problems that the students' experience, the poverty, that type of thing, they felt free to share that vulnerabilities with their campus supervisor." (Participant 2 FL)*

*"...I do think at this crossroads where students have massive, major issues...some are volcanos waiting to erupt. I know that students sometimes feel that they are not supported by the social work department and that's their perception." (Participant 3 FL)*

*"...When we were qualified we did not have all these challenges but what I see how they struggle with stuff like; they are pregnant, young parents, they have difficulties, other emotional issues at home, and material issues. A lot of them don't have bursaries and don't have money to get to their placements..." (Participant 8 CS)*

*"During the past three years, I have experienced students who are suffering from psychological conditions which have been detrimental to their progress...Some of the students are dealing with overwhelming personal issues which can hamper their progress or act as triggers in*

*the work place. Therefore, supervisors need to be alert to this.”*  
*(Participant 23 AS)*

These narratives depict an emergent profile of students, who increasingly contend with their own socio-emotional challenges that impact on their ability to focus on their studies. Even though students are expected to consult with fieldwork supervisors when they feel overwhelmed, the findings suggest that students do not always make use of this relationship for support. Research confirms that social work students face various challenges that affect them inside and outside the classroom (Dykes, 2014; Dykes & Green, 2016; Earle, 2007); and therefore interaction with fieldwork lecturers is important. Similarly, fieldwork placements can also be challenging for students (Marlowe, Appleton, Chinnery & Van Stratum, 2015). Additionally, the relationship between the supervisor and the student affects the student's satisfaction with his/her fieldwork placement (Zuchowski, 2016). Adamson (2012) asserts that creating a conducive atmosphere and opportunities for reflection can fortify the development of the student, and ensure quality practice. Marlowe *et al.* (2015) assert that having a balance between personal and professional aspects of life, is essential in fieldwork placements.

However, one participant, in particular, felt that the selected university added to the challenges experienced by students and stated the following:

*“You know they really put a lot on the student in terms of sorting themselves out.” (Participant 20 AS)*

The above participant reveals that students are routinely coached about the role of their personal challenges in their social work fieldwork training, especially considering the demands of social work practice. Another participant, however, felt that the selected university focused too much on the challenges faced by students, and could potentially in this way neglect the standard of social work, as discussed earlier in this chapter. This participant had the following to say:

*“I almost feel that the focus is more on the student as an individual and their need, and how they struggling than on the student as a professional, as a prospective social worker and we focus so much on*

*what the student struggles is uhmm oh they not coping and and I'm not saying those are not relevant issues but we need to stick to the university standard, we need to stick to the fieldwork practice standard so that we build the identity of the student social worker and uhmm and I'm worried that we actually not building an identity that we more concerned with the pass rate, marks than the actual building of the identity.” (Participant 6 CS)*

Professional boundaries are important in social work, in order to ensure that the professional relationship is maintained, and the ethics of the profession upheld (Giles & Stanfield, 2017). Similarly, Berger and Quiros (2014: 299) state that there is a “fine line between providing professional supervision and providing therapy, and although it is beyond the role of the supervisor to explore and help the supervisee address his or her personal traumatic experience, there need to be some references to it in supervision”. This means that the supervisor should provide support, but not counsel the student, and be able and willing to listen, as well as understand the experiences of the student (Centre for Substance abuse treatment, 2009). Additionally, Cheung (2016) asserts that supervisors should not become entangled in the lives of students. Drew, Stauffer and Barkley (2017), however, contends that support is important for students, but, at times, professional counselling may be needed to help students cope with the challenges they face. In addition, Hawkins and Shohet (2000, cited in Ingram, 2013) argue that the supervision process should be a safe space, where the supervisee can reflect on challenges experienced. Even though the participants were well aware of the vast challenges faced by the students, they argued that boundaries are necessary in the supervisory relationship. This is portrayed by the participants in the following quotations:

*“I don't get into their personal things but I try to relate what the personal is and focus on the potential student ...becoming a professional.” (Participant 3 FL)*

*“...I think there has to be boundaries.” (Participant 13 CS)*

*“The supervisor cannot be a counsellor to the student but does give them the space to talk about their coping abilities etc.” (Participant 23 AS)*

From the above narratives, the participants were aware of the importance of setting clear boundaries, but still felt compelling reasons to support students by going the extra mile, as the following quotations indicate:

*“So a lot of supervisors put in extra time to grapple with the student individually and that was focused on educational supervision. I must say that also, in my experience students have over the years had a better relationship with the campus supervisor than with the agency supervisor. That I can definitely say... So that for me speaks a lot about that trust relationship with the supervisor and the confidence that this person will be able to listen to me without judgement, have empathy and understanding.” (Participant 2 FL)*

*“A simple example is a supervisor does not need to give their cell phone numbers but because they want to support, they want to give the extra, go the extra mile for students they will give, they will even form a WhatsApp group to say this is what is happening, they will have an email group, so, which is a good thing...one comes in on a Saturday.” (Participant 4 FL)*

*“...and at times she would be here until six o'clock trying to assess everyone not only with the fieldwork but with other modules.” (Participant 13 AS)*

The narratives of the participants clearly indicate that, despite being aware of boundaries with students, fieldwork supervisors were *going the extra mile* to be of support to the students. This finding is supported by other studies that fieldwork supervisors were doing more than was required of them (Barton, Bell & Bowles, 2005; Spafford, Schryer, Campbell & Lingard, 2007). Similarly, in a study conducted by Spafford *et al.* (2007), the authors observed that social work students viewed supervision as a positive experience, where they had the opportunity to make mistakes, reflect on it, and grow from the experience. This was contradictory



to the students in other professions, in the study of Spafford *et al.* (2007), as the students felt judged when they made mistakes. The above mentioned findings would concur with Kadushin and Harkness (2014), who view supervisions' supportive functions through a supervisor who is present in the process of ensuring that the student obtains the best service possible. The supervisors may also have to *go the extra mile* because they are forced to, due to the limited time spent with students.

In conclusion, Davys and Beddoe (2009) assert that supportive supervision allows the supervisee the space to reflect on themselves and their practice, as well as be mindful of their own restrictions. Therefore, it can be deduced that supportive supervision in social work (especially in the SA context of severe social issues) is essential to help social workers and students to cope better in the field, by reflecting on their own challenges and practices. Supportive supervision ties in with ELT (as discussed in Chapter 2) as the student would be able to reflect on his/her own experience and infuse it with that of others. Students' own personal circumstances could therefore also serve as scaffold in fieldwork learning when confronted with similar challenges as their clients'.

#### 4.3.2.2. Sub-theme 2.2: Students' emotional intelligence (maturity)

Emotional intelligence is seen as the ability “to rein in emotional impulse; to read another's innermost feelings; to handle relationships smoothly” (Golman, 1996: xiii). Ingram (2013) states that emotional intelligence in social work practice has the potential to be harmful, if not dealt with appropriately, and argues that being aware of own and others' emotions, is linked to empathy and communication. Empathy and communication are both essential skills in social work practice. The participants expressed their concerns about the emotional strengths of some students.

*“The students often are not emotionally prepared for the realities of the field. They often have their own personal challenges which affect them in the workplace. They are not able to understand how they fit into the organization and withhold from interacting with the staff. Students sometimes do not use their initiative and are overly dependent on their supervisor.” (Participant 12 FL)*



*“...One organisation approached us and we thought that would be a good match for them but we found that students were too sensitive and they were not matured enough to handle...” (Participant 15 AS)*

*“We have too many social workers in the field with low emotional intelligence...” (Participant 1)*

The findings suggest that the participants were concerned that the students did not have the emotional intelligence, or maturity, to cope with the demands of the practice. These findings are corroborated by other research (Carelse & Poggenpoel, 2016; Dykes, 2014; Grant, Kinman & Alexander, 2014; Ingram, 2013). According to Earle (2007), lecturers were of the opinion that students who are able to face their own challenges, make for more efficient social workers, while those who struggle to face their own challenges, often assist their clients to accept that it was appropriate to live with the challenges they faced, instead of assisting them to address their challenges. Similarly, Grant *et al.* (2014) assert that if students are able to manage their own emotional responses, they would be able to cope much better in their fieldwork placements, as well as in the workplace, after graduating. Ingram (2013) states that the emotional responses of students need to be embraced, to guide social work practice. Collins (2007) argues that emotions in social work do not have to be negative, and when perceived as positive, could be helpful to the professional, as well.

#### *4.3.2.3. Sub-theme 2.3: Support for fieldwork supervisors*

The participants acknowledged different forms of support to themselves, as fieldwork supervisors. The following extracts indicate their views on support:

*“So the support for the campus supervisors is obviously supervisors meetings that we have if you looking at support ... obviously I think I’m the main, the coordinators [fieldwork lecturers] are the main support.”*  
*(Participant 1 FL)*

*“I think the weekly meeting facilitated what should have been formalised in a training session so I would say the weekly meeting facilitated training for the campus supervisors also have a policy in this department we prefer someone with at least five years’ experience*

*in the field as a practitioner so that person would have had experience supervision so for the past few years we have, ons het staat gemaak op [we depended on], the fact that they have been exposed themselves to supervision they understand supervision.” (Participant 2 FL)*

*“Coordinators [fieldwork lecturers], you have that particular person and you have the team of fieldwork supervisors that you work which is then your basic support system.” (Participant 6 CS)*

*“...There is, however, regular meetings and opportunities to discuss challenges with the social work department fieldwork coordinator (lecturer).” (Participant 12 CS)*

*“Supervisors received support via meetings which occur before supervision, we also have access to the fieldwork co-ordinator (lecturer).” (Participant 23 AS)*

*“The support that is available will be the university supervisor, basically, we communicate regarding the needs of the students and what is required by the university.” (Participant 19 AS)*

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The participants indicated that they received support from the fieldwork lecturers, in the forms of meetings and online communication. They seemed satisfied and content with the support provided, but did acknowledge a need for collaboration between fieldwork supervisors and the fieldwork lecturers. Support to fieldwork supervisors is important, because of the role they fulfil in the growth and development of student social workers (Bogo *et al.*, 2006; Dhemba, 2012; Domakin, 2015; Hay *et al.*, 2016). In addition, support to fieldwork supervisors could be in the form of coaching, or mentoring; however, it does not have to be include them only, as coaching and mentoring could be offered to students and new graduates, as well (Loos & Kim, 2017). Likewise, Hunt, Tregurtha, Kuruvila, Lowe and Smith (2017) assert that support, in terms of supervision for students, especially those graduating, is crucial, to ensure the progression from student to professional social worker.

#### 4.3.2.4. Sub-theme 2.4: Collaboration between all parties concerned

Collaboration between fieldwork lecturers and fieldwork supervisors was highlighted by the participants as an important factor that needed to receive attention. The participants mentioned that there was no real communication between campus and agency supervisors, and that communication between these parties would be beneficial. It was clear, however, that the fieldwork lecturer was in communication with the campus and agency supervisors, respectively. The following quotations refer:

*“Sometimes... they will just give the fieldwork guide and they will follow the fieldwork guide but there's no contact the coordinator (fieldwork lecturer) at the university and the agency and I think that must be a constant, to inform the agency that this report is due and how they can assist, how the student is performing. Also if the student is not performing that the agency knows who the contact person is at the university, and that there can actually be a round table should there be a situation, where the placement is not meeting the requirements or there is a problem at the agency and then we will look at the MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) between the agency, the student and the university.” (Participant 1 FL)*

*“Also, the link between the supervisors and the agency supervisors, I think there's a bit of a disconnect.” (Participant 6 CS)*

*“There should maybe be a link between the campus supervisor and the agency supervision. The only time there is real engagement is the evaluation or when there is an intervention. There is not a real connection or speaking to one another.... I feel there should be engagement if campus supervisor see student is not coping or the organisation is not providing enough or any question to follow so that the best can be given to student.” (Participant 8 CS).*

*“The supervision of students should be a coordinated role of the agency supervisor and fieldwork supervisors... There is however a lack of coordinated training for fieldwork and agency supervisors and*

*between agency supervisors and fieldwork supervisors...this could create some confusion for the student...” (Participant 12 CS)*

*“There is a gap in verbal/ physical/ telephonic communication between fieldwork supervisor, campus supervisor and the (mention selected university name) placement officer, especially when a problem or concern is noted.” (Participant 17 AS)*

*“The fact that there is no interaction among supervisor and universities makes supervisors unsure of whether they are on the right track.” (Participant 21 AS)*

The findings suggested that collaboration between the necessary stakeholders in fieldwork education was important, and would benefit the development of this integral process. This is confirmed by many studies, regarding the same topic (Adamson, 2012; Bogo, 2006; Carelse & Poggenpoel, 2016; Chilvers, 2011; Cleak & Wilson, 2017; Johnstone, Brough, Crane, Marston & Correa-Velez, 2016; Schmidt & Rautenbach, 2016; Strydom, 2014; Zuchowski, 2016). Adamson (2012: 186) aptly states that “supervision never happens in a vacuum”. Therefore, effective supervision cannot occur in isolation of the necessary stakeholders; they have to work together. Collaboration would essentially view supervision as a holistic service and is in line with ELT (as discussed in Chapter 2). However, collaboration may be a challenge, because of the contentious nature of fieldwork supervision, primarily because universities and agencies often contradict each other, in terms of what is taught and practiced (Apaitia-Vague, Pitt & Younger, 2011; Domakin, 2015). Therefore, it becomes important for all parties concerned to be trained and coordinated, regarding the requirements to make fieldwork supervision efficient.

In theme 2, the researcher focused on fieldwork supervisors serving as emotional support for students, as well as their concerns regarding the students’ emotional intelligence. The importance of support to fieldwork supervisors, as well as the collaboration between all the stakeholders in the BSW programme was also emphasised. The researcher is of the opinion that this is a pivotal theme, as it

focuses on support to both the students and the fieldwork supervisors, as well as how collaboration between the parties could enhance support.

#### 4.3.3. Main theme 3: Administrative Supervision

The fundamental purpose of administrative supervision is to ensure that professionals provide quality services to clients, which helps to ensure agency and policy accountability (Barker, 1999, cited in Suraj-Narayan, 2010; Bogo & McKnight, 2006; Caspi & Reid, 2012; Walker *et al.*, 2008).

##### 4.3.3.1. Sub theme 3.1: Appropriate fieldwork placements

Fieldwork placements are dependent on fieldwork (agency) supervisors providing opportunities for students to link theory with practice (Zuchowski, 2016), and regular mandatory supervision should occur in all settings (Hughes, 2011). In Africa, most BSW programmes offer fieldwork education in varying agency placements (Hochfeld *et al.*, 2009). Research studies have highlighted that finding social work fieldwork placements is a challenge, considering the number of students enrolled for the BSW programme (Hochfeld *et al.*, 2009), and that understanding the context of a fieldwork placement is imperative (Adamson, 2012; Earle, 2007; Zuchowski, 2016). This was not necessarily a concern for the selected university, but finding the perfect match was important. The participants mentioned that the selected university needed to ensure that the student was the right fit for the agency, to ensure that the students worked according to their strengths. The following quotations refer:

*“I think that is when we start looking for agencies like at the beginning of the year we need to set out the criteria and we need to scrutinize the agencies before we send our students out.” (Participant 1 FL)*

*“I think students should be orientated and be given a background of all the available agencies to choose from, and then they must make an informed decision where they want to be placed. Not all students will be suitable for certain kinds of environments.” (Participant 17 AS)*

*“I would never take students like this, I would like to interview students before they come to our organisation in future...I want some maturity, emotional maturity and I couldn't really choose.” (Participant 15 AS)*

These findings proposed that the selected university implement a system, where interaction and communication occur between the agency supervisors and the students, prior to the commencement of the fieldwork placement. As a campus supervisor, the researcher was aware that this was encouraged by the fieldwork lecturers. Apatia-Vague *et al.* (2011: 55) concur that the onus of ensuring that a student is “fit and proper” is on both the fieldwork lecturer and agency supervisor. However, the authors stress that the challenges of determining whether a student is *fit and proper*, would also be dependent on the context. Hay *et al.*, (2016) proposes that students be interviewed before gaining access to an agency. In addition, Carelse and Poggenpoel (2016) contend that the perfect fit for placements is ensuring that the pedagogical system was related to the practice setting.

#### *4.3.3.2. Sub-theme 3.2: Time for fieldwork learning*

Brown and Bourne (1996: 166) assert that for “supervision to be effective it needs to provide an opportunity for the supervisee to have more time to explore, reflect, learn, develop, and problem solve in order to move away from the monitoring or administrative concerns from increasingly generic managers”. In addition, fieldwork placements should provide opportunities where the students can be observed (Zuchowski, 2016). The participants considered the time allocated to fieldwork at agencies insufficient, as it limited adequate time to focus on interventions with clients. Another constraining factor was that, because the work responsibilities of agency supervisors were deemed their priority, time was limited to interact, observe and supervise the students. The following narratives refer:

*“The challenges would be the time allocated for practicals [fieldwork] is too little. A case especially in a hospital, need immediate intervention, normally 2 to 3 consecutive days”. (Participant 18 AS)*

*“The challenges around supervision will be the time allocated for supervising students...it is not always possible to observe the students as the workplace is highly demanding.” (Participant 19 AS)*



*“I think they should have a relook at when students spend three months [at the agency] and you can work out a plan for the student...two days is very limited for us to give that students real exposure to fieldwork.”*

*(Participant 22 AS)*

Agency supervisors clearly expressed that the time allocated for fieldwork was insufficient, and the demands of their own work limited them in devoting attention to the students. The findings of other studies confirm the findings of this current study, and highlight that the time spent at agencies was not only a concern for the selected university, but for BSW programmes across Africa, as well as globally (Hay *et al.*, 2016; Hochfeld *et al.*, 2009). Similarly, this concern is not only about time allocated to agencies, but also time allocated to fieldwork supervision. In addition, research confirms that agency supervisors are challenged with reserving time for students, especially due to their own workplace responsibilities (Cleak & Smith, 2012; Hay *et al.*, 2016; Marlowe *et al.*, 2015).

#### *4.3.3.3. Sub theme 3.3: Time for fieldwork supervision*

Both fieldwork lecturers and campus supervisors expressed concern that the time allocated to fieldwork supervision was not sufficient. The participants mentioned that they were not always able to monitor and evaluate the practice of students, due to the limited time that they had to spend with the students, as the following quotations indicate:

*“... the actual sessions on campus which are only an hour with a group, and the group is a group of 16 per session of one hour only the focus has mostly been about this (educational) what the theory says, this is what I am struggling with, this is how I must implement it and so on. So it was mostly, and you can imagine with 16 students, as I said with diverse academic challenges, your hour is going to be taken up.”*

*(Participant 2 FL)*

*“... I think now this every second week is I feel is becoming a challenging, the programme is stretched and I'm not sure ...we only have an hour with them for practice and practice is what they going to do. so that makes me, every other hour I see them, it feels less time to*



*be able to coach and mentor. And uh I feel we, not sure how we are shaping that student for practice then when this is the foundational year particularly the foundational year.” (Participant 3 FL)*

*“... by the time their (supervisors) contracts are signed, we are already into term two, so term one basically the supervisors are not here. So I think for me that is a gap... some of the challenges is off-campus supervisors (campus supervisors are not based on campus), the fact that we meet once a week...I think sometimes the students tend to demand a lot and off-campus supervisors are contracted for three hours...to be on campus. Students are not always able to access those supervisors and if they send maybe emails or whatever they complain that there is no response...” (Participant 4 FL)*

*“Campus supervisors need to go visit agencies but when are we supposed to do that if we full time employed... you know we come to university and spend an hour every week every second week with them are we really doing justice to our role as fieldwork supervisors what is the check and balances that are in place between universities and agencies to make sure that they are doing justice to students. That students are actually getting the full experience of social work training...you know the only the only measuring tool we have is fieldwork supervision is their report that they submit and we can see the disconnect in terms of agency/university expectations. We see the disconnect.. students start fabricating stuff because we not interested in what's happening at the agency. I question my input, I question what do I impart, I find that when I make extra time and see people one to one I get more I can see the growth and development but generally we don't have the time for that if we see them once a week as a group so I think time frames need to change if you want to see quality output or students and that's the way we will ensure that we building professional identity as the standard the same but are we building or are we just building people who can write good reports...fieldwork supervision I*

*think we need to take it much more seriously and not see this ad hoc once a week thing...” (Participant 6 CS)*

It is evident that the participants were convinced that the time allocated to fieldwork placements was not sufficient, and should be subjected to additional research. In Chapter 2, research indicated that *academia* was privileged above other aspects of the BSW programme, especially *fieldwork supervision*, due to the amount of time that academia is allocated in the programme, as opposed to fieldwork (Dhemba, 2012). The general consensus appears to be that more time should be allocated to fieldwork supervision and placement (Domakin, 2015). Controversially, a study conducted by Gair and Baglow (2016), in Australia, recommended that fieldwork placements be truncated, and that students be remunerated in some way, to assist with financial stressors. Students were often exhausted because they had to fulfil various roles at the placement institution, family and work. Additionally, the authors recommend that more mature students be treated differently to less mature students, when considering fieldwork placements, as their needs vary. Therefore, BSW programmes locally and internationally should be encouraged to relook their fieldwork programmes (Gair & Baglow, 2016).



#### **4.3.3.4. Sub-theme 3.4: Students interest in social work**

An interesting finding was that the participants were of the opinion that the students were not necessarily interested in social work, as a career. These views are reflected in the following:

*“Screening of prospective students should be improved as there are many students who do not really want to practice social work but end up doing it anyway.” (Participant 23 AS)*

*“...one of the students remarked that ‘she is only doing social work because the education department was full and they could not take her. She just want to get done...’ (Participant 8 CS)*

The evident disinterest of the students disturbed the participants and could explain their concern about the standard of social work. One participant’s comment was based on the fact that the time allocated for fieldwork and supervision was limited.

However, this is not isolated to the selected university, as determined by Earle (2008: 120) that lecturers were concerned about the “character” of students at other institutions, as students often entered the profession because of the misguided perception that it would be easier than other courses.

Various research highlight the importance of a selection criteria in social work, to ensure adequate throughput, which would essentially increase the standard of the profession (Croaker, Dickinson, Watson & Zuchowski, 2017; De Beer & Van Der Merwe, 2006). Earle (2008) concurs, but also cautions that it may be a costly expense to universities already challenged with financial resources. According to Nesje (2016), finding the appropriate student for the profession implies that the student would need to believe in the ethics of the profession, which will ensure that the standard in the profession is upheld. However, it could be that students merely need to obtain tertiary education, as they are first-generation students. Gair and Baglow (2017) agree that first-generation students often face various financial challenges, which force them to focus on both their studies and part-time employment, in order to cope with the demands of life, which, in essence, affects their studies and fieldwork placements. The authors argue that students, therefore, need to implement various changes to accommodate fieldwork placements. Consequently, it could be that, even though the participants in the study considered that the students lacked interest in social work, the stressors, as identified by Gair and Baglow (2017), could also affect the students’ interest in fieldwork placements, which may be due to fatigue, because they need to juggle so many responsibilities. This could be assumed for students at the selected university, who face similar challenges as the students identified in the previously mentioned study.

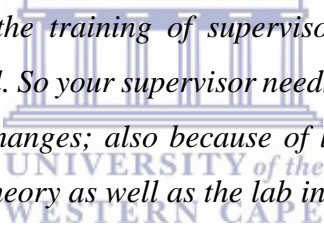
In theme 3, the researcher emphasised the importance of ensuring that agency placements meet the needs of the students’ and agencies, respectively, as well as the insufficient time allocated to agencies and fieldwork. In addition, the students’ perceived interest in the social work profession was raised as a concern. This theme is important, as it highlights finding the right fit, as well as allocating sufficient time for fieldwork supervision.

#### 4.3.4. Main theme 4: Social Work Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

According to the SACSSP (2017), CPD is the statutory process that requires practitioners (social workers and social auxiliary workers), registered with the SACSSP, to accumulate 2.5 points, annually, by attending workshops, or training that assist to maintain ethical and high-quality service. Main theme 4 highlights that the participants were concerned about the lack of training, as well as the ways in which they were trained in supervision.

##### 4.3.4.1. Sub-theme 4.1: Little to no training in Social Work Fieldwork Supervision

Research suggests that there is a need to train supervisors, so that fieldwork supervisors would be skilled in social work fieldwork supervision, as well as knowledgeable of theory and research in social work (Carelse & Poggenpoel, 2016; Dhemba, 2012; Hawkins *et al.*, 2012; Hughes, 2011). The following examples of the participants' narratives, revealed their training needs:



*“I must admit the training of supervisors at this university is not coordinated well. So your supervisor needs consistent training because of curriculum changes; also because of lecturer changes facilitating those modules theory as well as the lab in the fieldwork module... and there are different things that they bring although maybe not content specific things that they can change and may change that stays the same ... it's just the way the lab and the execution in the theory modules.” (Participant 2 FL)*

*“I didn't receive any training... there was an interview, I came the next session was sort of an orientation where we met the students in a hall and they were like indicating what is expected of us but being new, ah a lot of the information didn't resonate with me and then we started.” (Participant 6 CS)*

*“At [naming the university] no specific training is provided, we do however peruse the Fieldwork Education Module Outline provided to guide our roles for the year. There is, however, regular meetings and opportunities to discuss challenges with the Social Work department Field Work Coordinators [fieldwork lecturers].” (Participant 12 CS)*

*“I wasn’t trained, I missed that session where they trained people, because I wasn’t around. So if there was some crucial things that I missed, I wasn’t informed that there was some specific things that I need to consider.” (Participant 8 CS)*

*“Well I was not trained officially by (name selected university), but I’m aware that a lecturer came to the offices to discuss the potential placement of students but I was not party to that discussion.” (Participant 14 AS)*

*“I haven’t received any training to supervise a fourth-year student.” (Participant 22 AS)*

*“No specific training was received.” (Participant 23 AS)*

The indictment of the participants, regarding the lack of regular training of supervisors by the fieldwork lecturers, was concerning to the researcher. Various research confirm these findings, and state that fieldwork supervisors are often not properly trained, which affects the quality of the supervision provided (Carelse & Poggenpoel, 2016; Dimo, 2013; Engelbrecht, 2004; Hochfeld *et al.*, 2009). The campus supervisors, however, maintain regular meetings with the fieldwork lecturer of the relevant year level, regarding challenges in the field, as well as other teaching and learning inputs; whereas agency supervisors are only invited to a meeting once a year. In concluding this section, it is important to note that the experience of the agency supervisors and the campus supervisors will vary. The campus supervisor meets with the fieldwork lecturer on a regular basis, while the student, mostly, communicates with the agency supervisor. We can deduce, however, that there is a clear lack of training of fieldwork supervisors, which needs to be addressed. Finally, the training of fieldwork supervisors is imperative, considering their important role in fieldwork (Bogo, 2006; Chilvers, 2017; Dimo, 2013).

#### **4.3.4.2. Sub-theme 4.2: Training from other sources**

The majority of the participants (95%) referred to training received from sources, other than from the selected university. The participants mentioned that they

received training from other universities, where they had worked, or from other service providers, in the form of accumulating CPD points. However, the type of training received was unclear. In addition, the participants referred to an orientation workshop, which they had attended at the beginning of the academic year. The researcher observed that the participants, who mentioned other forms of training, wanted to reiterate why they were equipped to be fieldwork supervisors. These are articulated in the following ways:

*“But the other thing that we look at when we take supervisors, we take people that are also studying, so which means people who are busy with continued professional development. Preference is not for people that have been in the field for twenty years and do not know what is going on in theories ... so it is people who are mostly, in fact all of them are busy with their M’s (masters) and one doing her PhD.”*  
**(Participant 4 FL)**

*“I have received some training from [naming another university]. The training entailed understanding the supervisor/ supervisee role. The course outline was discussed and student tasks as well.”*  
**(Participant 10 CS)**

*“At [naming another university] fieldwork supervisors received a 3-day CPD training presented by the social work department lecturers. This is usually provided at the beginning of the academic year. This is rather too short a time to cover all aspects in the field since on-going weekly/monthly support during the course of the year is lacking. This does cause lots of stress.”*  
**(Participant 12 CS)**

*“I have been trained by my ex-colleague for about a month when I started at this job. Supervisors are trained basically in their 4<sup>th</sup> year at varsity, they get equipped with skills and knowledge.”*  
**(Participant 19 AS)**

*“The students briefed me on what the university requires as well as the students’ field work module guide.”*  
**(Participant 15 AS)**



It is clear that, for training, the participants had been dependent on other institutions, colleagues and students, respectively, while some had to upskill themselves. However, it can be deduced that, even though the participants received training from other institutions, it still seemed insufficient. The predicament is that the training received from other institutions, might not be relevant to the training needs at the selected university. Similarly, the training received from a colleague or student may have been based on the perception, and not really the need of the selected university, and especially the students. According to Hochfeld *et al.* (2009), fieldwork supervisors considered that on-site training at agencies would be valuable; however, this may also be a challenge, if the agencies are not up-to-date with the latest theories utilised by universities.

#### *4.3.4.3. Sub-theme 4.3: Experiential learning (Self-Taught)*

Research suggests that social workers are often in supervisory positions, due to their experience of social work practice, and not necessarily continuous development (Engelbrecht, 2012; Petersen, 2010). Similarly, there is evidence to suggest that supervisors often rely on their own experiences, as a foundation for their own supervision approach (Engelbrecht, 2012). In addition, Ravulo (2017) observed that professionals often progressed in their roles, based on their own personal network, and not necessarily training, or experience. Being self-taught implies that supervisors use their own experiences and teach themselves the basics of being a fieldwork supervisor. The participants in this current study had the following to say, regarding being self-taught supervisors:

*“... there was no foundation laid I think the university expected of us as being social workers, being supervisors that we will know what to do, I think luckily in my first year the fieldwork supervisor was (name fieldwork lecturer) at least she was accessible so I could ask her, also I could ask my colleagues who have already done what does it mean you know what do I do here what do I do in certain circumstances, marking and then I just had to read very quickly.” (Participant 6 CS)*

*“The universities requirements are spelt out to a large extent in the Field work Education Module. The roles of the role players-fieldwork*



*supervisors and agency supervisors are not indicated. I believe it's a given-expectation on who does what.” (Participant 14 CS)*

*“...I read and I educate myself, my practical experience over the years that sort of helped to hone my skill.” (Participant 20 AS)*

*“...student just communicated of what is expected of me and then on the job training now.” (Participant 22 AS).*

*“I've learnt as I went along...so I familiarise myself with the curriculum...” (Participant 16 CS)*

These findings revealed that supervisors equipped themselves with the needed knowledge and skills, in order to be able to provide supervision to students. This is not an isolated occurrence, as according to Hay *et al.* (2016), supervisors often have to read, in order to upskill themselves. A study conducted by Dimo (2013) established that social workers, who provide fieldwork supervision, do not necessarily have training, other than their BSW degree, and argue that, even though further training is important, fieldwork supervisors could be just as effective, if they increased their skills, knowledge and model appropriate conduct. This could be achieved in the form of reading, unaccompanied, and thereafter applying, without attending conventional training. Similarly, Engelbrecht (2013) confirms these findings, and states that supervisors are often not trained, and therefore, need to train themselves, and are, generally, dependent on their personal encounters regarding supervision.

#### *4.3.4.4. Sub-theme 4.4: Existing training and preparation*

Even though there was no formal training available for fieldwork supervisors, they expressed other forms of communication that aided them in becoming acquainted with the BSW programme. These views are expressed as follows:

*“...I would have weekly meeting with them to keep them up-to-date with the curriculum...” (Participant 2 FL)*

*“There was an information session but I could not attend as I had other work stuff.” (Participant 15 AS)*

*“We are invited to a workshop at the beginning of the year and then the requirements are explained to us...Ms (mentioned fieldwork lecturer name) sends regular emails to update and coordinate us.”*  
**(Participant 17 AS)**

*“There was communication via email on the outline of modules and reports that are needs to be completed by the student.”* **(Participant 18 AS)**

The findings highlighted the fact that, in the absence of regular training, fieldwork lecturers and campus supervisors made use of weekly meetings, information sessions/workshops and online communication to communicate with each other. Scant research exists on the forms of training, because there is limited training of fieldwork supervisors. Hair (2012, cited in Engelbrecht, 2013) assert that training of supervisors is mainly based on agency needs, and universities may be best suited to provide this pedagogical training of supervisors. The Supervision Framework, developed by the DSD and SACSSP (2012) states that supervisors must receive training, but there are no clear guidelines as to what this training would entail, which, essentially, leaves the supervisor with a blank sheet, to use his/her own discretion (Engelbrecht, 2013). Additionally, Bartling and Friesike (2014) state that online communication is a new form of communication, and it is most likely that networking and collaborations will escalate via online communication, and expand even more in decades to come. Reamer (2013) confirms the notion of online communication in social work; however, it is more focused on providing services, as well as the ethical nature of online communication, although the author does add the benefits of using online communication to enhance the service of social work. This could mean that, in the absence of training, as well as the demands of social work and supervision, in general, online communication could be used to assist, where training lacks. It is evident that, based on the findings, the selected university makes use of online communication to fill the void, regarding training, but there is certainly room for improvement.

#### **4.3.4.5. Sub-theme 4.5: Structure/training needs**

Sufficient evidence is provided by previous studies, for the need of training social work supervisors (Dhemba, 2012; Engelbrecht, 2014; Petersen, 2010). However,

what these training needs would involve, vary because of the different contexts. The participants requested the following, in terms of training:

*“...supervisors need consistent training because of the curriculum changes.” (Participant 2 FL)*

*“I think we can do a little more academically but I think we have given so much already...I think we must do community engagement and invite them for full day workshops, invite them for dialogue sessions and also understanding what they (agency supervisors) are faced with.” (Participant 3 FL)*

*“...so I think having people in for maybe three days it may be better than for the one day for three hours.” (Participant 4 FL)*

*“I think universities specifically the social work department needs to think of full time, maybe not full time like five days a week maybe three days a week, supervisors and they can than give those supervisors obviously more students where you actually go visit, where you actually go sit in on their interviews where your link with the agency supervisors much more stronger in terms of building capacity.” (Participant 6 CS)*

*“I think they need the campus supervisors who are experienced and most of them, they all are at work. If they can get social workers who are not at work, get them full time or part-time employed, who can spend more time with the students. They must pay their supervisors a better salary or get better funding.” (Participant 8 CS)*

*“Students, fieldwork supervisors [fieldwork lecturers] and campus supervisors should have an introductory session before placement starts and then expectations and requirements are clarified and understood by all.” (Participant 10 AS)*

*“I think proper training in this regard and feedback sessions to see if I’m on the right track.” (Participant 21 AS)*

*“They should not have an orientation day and just give information they should actually have workshops where they work some of the of the academic year...the university or campus supervisor can come in two observe what the student is doing here...and make it (training) accredited [CPD points].” (Participant 22 AS)*

*“Supervisors must be prepared in advance regarding their role and responsibilities.” (Participant 23 AS)*

*“Fieldwork supervisors should also be financially reimbursed by the university for their contribution towards the academic/practical development.” (Participant 17 AS)*

Based on the findings, it was obvious that the participants were adamant that they needed training before embarking on supervising students. The participants highlighted the need for more communication, and on-going training, as well as more time with the students, and appropriate remuneration of supervisors. This finding is supported by Earle (2007), who recommended that fieldwork supervisors be employed on a full time basis, and that a general salary be allocated for supervisors in all sectors of the profession. There is a need to allocate and increase the budget for fieldwork education and supervision. This should include the training of agency and campus supervisors (Dhemba, 2012), as well as additional full time campus supervisors. Therefore, it can be deduced that continuous training and the development of supervisors are imperative, and would be consistent with the CPD requirements of the SACSSP (SACSSP, 2017).

Hawkins *et al.* (2006), however, assert that, if training occurs before the actual supervision of students, supervisors would have no experience to reflect on, which makes the training less meaningful. The authors propose that training occur during the supervision process, and argue that reflective support is imperative. Reflective support is an integral part of the fieldwork programme at the selected university (Carelse & Poggenpoel, 2016). Of equal importance is the training of supervisors in theory knowledge and requirements, as well as the practice requirements of the BSW programme, which would meet the need, as identified by Carelse and Dykes (2013), regarding the fact that students often struggle to integrate theory and

practice. The premise is, therefore, if the supervisors are up-to-date with the latest theory, it would be easier for them to advise and mentor the students. In addition, such training could be facilitated through CPD (Carelse & Poggenpoel, 2016; Dhemba, 2012; Petersen, 2010). Ultimately, Hey *et al.* (2016) highlight that the challenges relating to remuneration need to be dealt with at government level, as this cannot be the burden of the university.

In light of the sub-themes discussed above, it could be deduced that training of social work fieldwork supervisors is imperative, and would add greatly to the value of the profession. In addition, all social work practitioners are required to develop themselves continuously, by attending workshops, or training sessions that offer CPD points.

In main theme 4, the researcher demonstrated that there is a lack of training for fieldwork supervisors, as well as that these supervisors are dependent on training from external sources, and often resort to training themselves, in order to experience a sense of satisfaction in their competence. Therefore, a clear need for training was also established. This theme is pivotal as it contributes significantly to the outcome of the BSW programme.

#### **4.4. Conclusion**

Social work is a challenging and yet rewarding profession, which is clear from the findings in this chapter. There were four main themes that focused on educational, supportive and administrative supervision (the three types of supervision) and continuous professional development. These themes, therefore, reflected predefined and emergent coding. The findings indicated a myriad of difficulties and challenges in fieldwork supervision. The underlying notion was that fieldwork supervision is crucial to the development of social work practice, and, therefore, this needs to be identified by all parties, who are responsible for the growth of the profession. However, due to the contested nature of the profession, people will have varying views of how best to tackle the challenges faced in fieldwork supervision. What is important is the need for training and consistent communication between all the role players in the BSW programme, at the selected university. The need to identify supervision as important, could aid

in the development and growth of the client, as well as the social worker. In essence, this leads to the conclusion that supervision is viewed as imperative, and requires *immediate attention*.

In this chapter, the researcher clearly revealed that fieldwork supervision in the BSW programme was beleaguered with various challenges; however, it also enjoyed various strengths, such as graduating strong and competent students, who were valued in their fieldwork placements, and a good support system between fieldwork lecturers and campus supervisors.

In the following chapter, the conclusions and recommendations of this current study are provided.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1. Introduction

The motivation for this study stemmed from the researcher's own experience as a fieldwork supervisor, and was further encouraged by the lack of research on the experiences and perceptions of fieldwork supervisors, in the context of the selected university. The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions and experiences of social workers, providing fieldwork supervision to students in the BSW programme, at the selected university. The research objectives were as follows:

- 1. To explore and describe the perceptions and experiences of social workers, who are campus and agency supervisors, as well as lecturers, regarding the educational function of supervision of BSW students at a selected university in the Western Cape, South Africa.*
- 2. To explore and describe the perceptions and experiences of social workers, who are campus and agency supervisors, as well as lecturers, regarding the supportive function of supervision of BSW students at a selected university in the Western Cape, South Africa.*
- 3. To explore and describe the perceptions and experiences of social workers, who are campus and agency supervisors, as well as lecturers, regarding the administrative function of supervision of BSW students at a selected university in the Western Cape, South Africa.*

In this qualitative study, the researcher employed explorative and descriptive case study designs, and the researcher's main method of data collection was semi-structured interviews and written responses. In addition, the researcher was employed at the selected university in the BSW fieldwork programme; therefore, her observations and reflections of the study were accounted for in the form of journaling. The researcher transcribed and analysed the data, after data collection was completed, and the emerging main themes and sub-themes were identified, supported or argued, with relevant literature, to substantiate, or negate, the findings.



The following section represents a summary of the main themes and sub-themes that emerged from the research, which constituted the main findings of the study. From this summary, the conclusions and implications of the findings could be derived, as a basis for the study recommendations. These tasks represent the main aim of this final chapter.

## **5.2. Conclusions and implications of the empirical findings**

The study produced four themes and 16 sub-themes, which were based on both predefined and emergent codes. The findings were, generally, in concert with existing literature. However, finding literature on the theme relating to fieldwork supervisors going the extra mile, was challenging. Additionally, most of the literature was based on international sources, with differing contexts, which further supports the impetus for this study.

### **5.2.1. Conclusions and implications of demographic profile**

The study sample consisted of 24 participants; 3 fieldwork lecturers, 1 key informant (a previous fieldwork lecturer), 9 campus supervisors, and 11 agency supervisors. The majority of the participants were female, which is conventional in the social work profession. Additionally, the majority of the participants were classified as Coloured, which is in line with the context of the selected university, as well as the province in which the university is located. An important aspect of the demographic profile is the participants' extensive experience in the field of social work, which constitutes rich findings.

### **5.2.2. Conclusions and implications of main themes and sub-themes**

Four themes and 16 sub-themes emerged from the findings. The study produced rich, thick findings, as could be observed in the narratives of the participants, who are experienced in social work practice and fieldwork supervision. The findings were mainly focused on the challenges experienced within fieldwork supervision, across the three functions of supervision. In addition, there appeared to be a significant need for training of fieldwork supervisors, with the participants offering many suggestions, regarding how these perceived voids could be filled and improved.

#### ***5.2.2.1. Main theme 1: Educational Supervision***

Regarding the educational function of supervision, the narratives of the participants in this main theme delivered three sub-themes:

- Sub-theme 1.1: Agency supervisors who were not always social workers;
- Sub-theme 1.2: Maintaining standards in training and social work; and
- Sub-theme 1.3: Notions of supervision competence.

The findings highlighted that agency supervisors were not always registered, qualified social workers, which affects the students' placements, as well as the standard of social work. The need for training, therefore, was reiterated, as the participants felt that it would enhance the standard of the profession. The student profile at the selected university dictated how supervision was conducted. Therefore, the participants, being aware that the students' profile affected their learning, adjusted their programmes around it, even though, at times, they felt that it should not be an excuse. Additionally, the participants were aware of their own competence and limitations, as supervisors.

A **conclusion** for Theme 1 was the need for the training of social workers at agencies, as well as fieldwork supervisors, in order to uphold the standard of the social work profession. An **implication** of this theme would be the deprivation of the students because of the lack of competence, and therefore, the standard of the profession would decline. This would also affect the students learning and development in terms of ELT.

#### *5.2.2.2. Main theme 2: Supportive Supervision*

In main theme 2 there were four sub-themes:

- Sub-theme 2.1: Emotional support;
- Sub-theme 2.2: Students' emotional intelligence (maturity);
- Sub-theme 2.3: Support for fieldwork supervisors; and
- Sub-theme 2.4: Collaboration between all parties.

Sub-themes 2.1 and 2.2 focused on the participants' concern that the students lacked emotional intelligence, which negatively affected their practice during fieldwork; however, even social workers in practice displayed this deficiency. In sub-theme 2.3 it was evident that the participants were dependent on their own experiences of supervision, which influenced their practice. Even though the

participants felt that the support for fieldwork supervisors could improve, they valued the online communication with fieldwork lecturers, as well as their availability to respond to experiences. Similarly, the participants valued the support of their peers in the fieldwork programme. However, the participants were aware that there was a failure of collaboration between the fieldwork lecturer, campus supervisor and agency supervisor (sub-theme 2.4). The participants, therefore, considered that this aspect of the fieldwork programme needed urgent attention, and expressed the value that could be derived from working in partnership. Based on the findings, improved and unvarying communication between the different role players was imperative.

In **concluding** theme 2, it was clear that emotional support for the students was imperative, and should be provided. However, support for fieldwork supervisors was provided mostly via online communication. An **implication** of theme 2 would be that, without support, the students could not only struggle to manage themselves, but also their lack of emotional intelligence may negatively affect their work with clients and colleagues alike, and, ultimately, lead to burnout. A further implication could be that the lack of collaboration between all the stakeholders would further disengage theory from practice.

#### *5.2.2.3. Main theme 3: Administrative Supervision*

Administrative supervision encompassed the majority of the functions of the participants, as well as social work as a profession. This main theme delivered four sub-themes;

- Sub-theme 3.1: Appropriate fieldwork placements;
- Sub-theme 3.2: Time for fieldwork learning;
- Sub-theme 3.3: Time for fieldwork supervision; and
- Sub-theme 3.4: Student interest in social work.

Accessing agencies was highlighted as a concern and the participants offered various recommendations, regarding how this could be improved. The participants stressed the importance of interviewing students, in order to ensure that the student was the right fit for the agency, and vice versa. It was evident that the time allocated

to fieldwork practice was insufficient, as the participants claimed that they could not always allocate time for the students, and therefore, were unable to actively participate in the students' development. The students' development and growth was important to the participants, but their work place demands limited them from fully supervising the students' practices. Similarly, the participants considered the time allocated to fieldwork in the BSW programme, limited and insufficient. Campus supervisors insisted that more time needed to be allocated for supervising students, and that supervisors needed to be employed on a full time basis. Finally, the students' interest in social work was questioned, which further motivated the need to interview students, prior to allowing them into the BSW programme.

The **conclusion** for this main theme was that the students' real intent to study social work needed to be investigated, and that placing students at agencies needed to be a more rigorous process. In addition, the time allocated to fieldwork placements and supervision had to be extended. The **implication/s** could be that linking the right student with the right agency would increase job performance, service to clients, as well as overall well-being. Additionally, if more time was allocated for fieldwork, the feelings of competence in both the student and the supervisor, would increase significantly and, essentially, improve the standard of the profession.

#### *5.2.2.4. Main theme 4: Continuous professional development*

Theme 4 produced five sub-themes:

- Sub-theme 4.1: Little to no training;
- Sub-theme 4.2: Training from other sources;
- Sub-theme 4.3: Experiential learning (self-taught);
- Sub-theme 4.4: Existing training and preparation; and
- Sub-theme 4.5: Structure/training needs, and the lack of coordinated training was evident amongst the participants.

The sub-theme 4.1, which was most significant, was the clear lack of training for fieldwork supervisors. This implied that supervisors were not always aware of what the university required from them. In addition, the participants' lack of awareness regarding the needs of the university, were often attributed to not taking the time

to read the manual provided by the university, as well as not having sufficient contact with the fieldwork lecturers and other fieldwork supervisors. In sub-themes 4.2 and 4.3, the supervisors were dependent on one day workshops, or information sessions regarding the BSW programme; however, the participants maintained that this was not coordinated well, as they had no input in the programme. In the majority of cases, training from other sources was the foundation of the participants' supervising skills, in addition to their own experiences of being supervised. These training sources came in the form of workshops, and a module in the participants' undergraduate training, while others learnt from social work practice experience. Alternatively, regarding sub-theme 4.4, some participants trained and coordinated themselves for the role of fieldwork supervisors, often reading to upskill themselves. This was especially common among campus supervisors, as they needed to be up-to-date with the latest theories taught at the selected university. With sub-theme 4.5, the need for uniformity, regarding the importance and relevance of fieldwork education and supervision, emerged. The participants offered various recommendations in fieldwork supervision, which are presented later in this chapter.

In **concluding** theme 4, it was evident that a void, in terms of training for fieldwork supervisors, needed to be filled, as, currently, supervisors depended on external training, upskilled themselves, in order to ensure that they were competent for practice. The **implication** of this is that the competencies of staff contracted to undertake social work fieldwork supervision has been compromised, which affects the practice, and limits the link between theory and practice that is essential in social work.

### 5.3. Overall conclusions of the main findings

To conclude this current study, the following overall conclusions were formulated regarding the main findings:

#### 5.3.1. Main theme 1

In this theme, the need arose to ensure that fieldwork supervisors were qualified, registered social workers, or that alternative arrangements would be made to ensure that students received fieldwork supervision from a social worker, in order to maintain the

standard of the social work profession. Additionally, the need for training of supervisors also surfaced, to ensure that supervisors were competent to supervise in the BSW programme.

### 5.3.2. Main theme 2

In this theme, the need of support for students and supervisors alike was deemed imperative, as well as the collaboration between all the stakeholders in the BSW programme.

### 5.3.3. Main theme 3

In this theme, the need to assess the students' interest in social work, prior to the commencement of their studies, was vital, while agencies and students needed to meet, prior to student placements, in order to ensure that the placement served the student, as well as the agency. In addition, the need to extend the allocated time for the fieldwork programme was highlighted, as the fieldwork practise was essentially what students would be undertaking, once they graduate.

### 5.3.4. Main theme 4

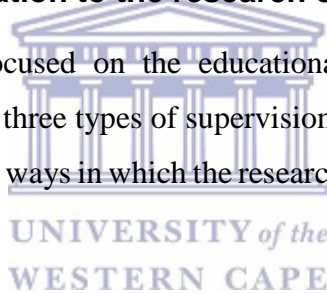
In this theme, the need for the training of fieldwork supervisors in a structured programme was highlighted as important, to ensure that the best possible service was provided to the student, as well as to maintain the standard of the social work profession.

As identified by Chilvers (2011: 85), "...field education appears to be an activity that is characterised by tensions and contradictions and a complex interrelationship between actors in different organisational settings. These tensions and contradictions impact on the approach that field educators take to working with students and their own professional development, which in turn impacts on the quality of outcomes for students". Therefore, it is important that, despite the challenges faced in fieldwork education, the growth and development of the students had to be considered at all times, which would have implications for the teaching and learning of the students. Including ELT in the fieldwork programme would be advantageous, as it would allow the student to learn holistically, based on his/her needs, and more specifically, to uphold the quality of the profession. Consequently, as the standard of students and social workers in practice was being questioned, the aforesaid was of particular importance in this current study.

According to the findings, it was clear that the fulltime work obligations of agency (and some campus) supervisors often entailed that they were unable to pay as much attention to the students, as they would have desired, which, in essence, left the students to function without the needed guidance, most of the time. The majority of campus supervisors would probably disagree with this statement, as they seemed highly invested in the students. A contributory factor could be that campus supervisors have more access to the fieldwork lecturers, which is unusual for the agency supervisors. However, notably, most campus and agency supervisors extended themselves beyond the scope of their supervisory responsibilities, to aid in the students' development and growth, despite the challenges they faced. In some instances, the supervisors' perspectives highlighted the need for the provision of more fixed contracts, or employment, to ensure that the best interest of students were met. Regrettably, the extent to which this will be addressed is outside of the scope of this current study.

#### **5.4. Research findings in relation to the research objectives of the study**

This study's three objectives focused on the educational, supportive and administrative supervision that encompassed the three types of supervision, in accordance with the literature. The following section discerns the ways in which the research findings achieved the established study objectives.



##### **5.4.1. The perceptions and experiences of fieldwork supervisors and fieldwork lecturers, regarding educational supervision**

This objective was achieved by exploring the perceptions and experiences of the fieldwork supervisors, as well as a literature review, which covered the functions of supervision and the current context of the educational aspects of supervision. The findings suggest that agency supervisors were not always social workers, which, alongside other factors, impacted on the standard of social work practice.

##### **5.4.2. The perceptions and experiences of fieldwork supervisors and fieldwork lecturers, regarding supportive supervision.**

This objective was achieved, as the participants were able to explain and discuss their perceptions, but mostly their experiences, of supportive supervision. The findings clearly reveal that fieldwork supervisors played a big role in supporting students through their personal and professional challenges, while the supervisors, on the other hand, received



their support from fieldwork lecturers and their peers. Despite the fieldwork supervisors receiving support from fieldwork lecturers, a uniform need arose for all the stakeholders to have more collaboration among themselves, which would also serve as a form of support.

#### 5.4.3. The perceptions and experiences of fieldwork supervisors and fieldwork lecturers, regarding administrative supervision.

This objective was achieved, as the aspects of administrative supervision was discussed with the participants. The findings revealed that a void existed between all the stakeholders in the BSW programme, and that regular meetings would enhance the functioning of fieldwork supervision. The participants expressed the need for change in the fieldwork programme, especially, regarding the time allocated to the programme. Additionally, a need was identified for continuous professional development (CPD) of fieldwork supervisors, in line with the BSW programme at the selected university, as well as the literature review.

In view of the above, it could be concluded that the aim and objectives of the study were successfully achieved, as the findings embodied the perceptions and experiences of social workers, providing fieldwork supervision in the BSW programme, at the selected university.

### **5.5. Recommendations for social work fieldwork supervision**

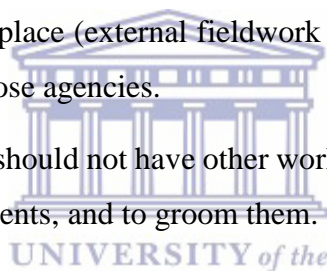
The findings of this current study and the literature review informed the recommendations of this study, as presented in the following section.

#### 5.5.1. Recommendations regarding educational supervision

In the main theme 1, the focus was on fieldwork supervisors, who were not always qualified, registered social workers, with concern regarding the standard of training, as well as social workers' and supervisors' competence. The following recommendations are suggested, regarding educational supervision at the selected university:

1. A structured training programme to be implemented for all supervisors on each year level consisting of:

- Preparatory workshops on each year level to discuss the expectations from the university, as well as the campus and agency supervisors.
  - Regular training and information-sharing workshops, focusing on, for example, teaching and learning (especially the way students learn using students' profile and learning theories/ ELT), theories, application, student needs, challenges, highlights, and fieldwork supervision skills and requirements.
  - Compulsory training sessions for all fieldwork supervisors before the commencement of the BSW programme.
  - All training or workshops must be accompanied with CPD points.
2. Students must be supervised by social workers, as per the requirements from the SACSSP. However, when this is impossible, then the selected university needs to have alternatives in place (external fieldwork supervisors), who could supervise students and visit those agencies.
  3. Fieldwork lecturers should not have other work responsibilities, except to tend to the needs of the students, and to groom them.



### 5.5.2. Recommendations regarding supportive supervision

In main theme 2, the focus was on the emotional support of students, as well as their emotional intelligence. A need was identified for support and collaboration of all parties in the BSW programme. The following recommendations are suggested regarding supportive supervision at the selected university:

1. All the role players in fieldwork supervision should develop supportive mechanisms and methods that supervisors can draw from in their engagements with students.
2. Self-care awareness and exercises should be incorporated into the fieldwork programme, especially lab-work, in order for students to become conscientized about the effects of their personal challenges on themselves, their academic work and professionalism.

3. Use an awareness campaign to lobby social work (and related) organisations and agencies to reassess their role as critical to the growth of the profession, and incorporate fieldwork supervision, as part of the social workers' job description.
4. Regular meetings and workshops with all role players would help to strengthen relationships and maximise cooperation. These could be in the form of CPD points to encourage all role players to attend such meetings and workshops.
5. Regular information sessions/workshops should be hosted, where the processes of fieldwork could be clarified and explored.
6. Regular communication, regarding the administrative processes, such as the academic requirements from the university, types of reporting, rubrics used, supervision matters, any changes, and progress of the students. This could be facilitated through online communication (for example, email).

#### 5.5.3. Recommendations regarding administrative supervision

In main theme 3, the focus was on appropriately linking students and agencies, allocating more time to the fieldwork programme, and the students' interest in social work as a profession. The following recommendations are suggested regarding administrative supervision at the selected university:

1. Interviews should be conducted prior to placing students at agencies. This could be conducted by campus supervisors, as the load would be too much for fieldwork lecturers, whose role it is to coordinate the BSW programme. However, this would necessitate employing campus supervisors on a full time basis.
2. Agencies should be requested to provide information regarding the supervisor, as well as the proposed schedule for supervision.
3. Additional time should be investigated for fieldwork supervision, commensurate with the students' learning needs on each year level. (This would increase the contract time of campus supervisors, which would impact on budget allocation for supervision).
4. Campus supervisors should be employed on a full time basis, to provide more meaningful supervision time for student learning.

5. The roles of fieldwork supervisors and fieldwork lecturers should be clarified further, and noted for future reference, to prevent duplication and confusion. This would promote a general understanding of their respective roles, among all parties.
6. Regular site visits from fieldwork lecturers/campus supervisors to the agencies should be mandatory, in order to assess quality of fieldwork placements, and increase the accountability of all parties concerned.
7. Generalised salaries need to be provided to social workers in different sectors of the profession, to ensure less turnover in agencies.

#### 5.5.4. Recommendations regarding Continuous Professional Development

In main theme 4, the focus was on the lack of training for fieldwork supervisors, alternative training methods and fieldwork supervisors identifying their training needs. The following recommendations are suggested regarding CPD at the selected university:

1. CPD training sessions should be held with fieldwork supervisors and lecturers on topics related to, for example, teaching and learning, student supervision skills, contemporary social work theories and learning needs of the students.
2. Fieldwork supervision needs to be seen as priority, which could be conducted through the DSD and the SACSSP.
3. Fieldwork supervisors need to be re-trained, regarding the importance of linking theory with practice, and not seeing this as a separate function.
4. Policies and legislation, for example, supervision framework, needs to be more specific, regarding fieldwork supervision.
5. It should be a requirement for fieldwork supervisors to keep abreast of the latest trends and theories in social work and related fields.
6. Online communication could be used to assist with the training needs and requirements of fieldwork supervisors.
7. Supervision needs to become a specialised field and remuneration, therefore, should accompany the area of specialisation, which would require, either an increased budget for fieldwork supervision, or a separate budget, to tend to the needs of the programme.

8. The DSD or Department of Education (DOE) could provide the needed funding for fieldwork supervision.
9. A training manual needs to be developed for the BSW programme at the selected university.

#### 5.5.5. General recommendations

The following recommendations are suggested, generally, regarding the BSW programme:

1. Students need to be screened before starting the BSW programme, as this would ensure that they are the right fit for the profession.
2. Fieldwork supervisors need to be trained, regarding all aspects of the BSW programme, to ensure that they are competent in supervision.
3. Agencies need to be screened prior to placing students.
4. Interviews should be conducted between students and agencies to ensure that the perfect fit is found for both the agency and the student.
5. Training needs to be provided to fieldwork supervisors before, during and after the BSW programme.
6. Continuous communication between all stakeholders needs to be prioritised.
7. Fieldwork lecturers should not have other responsibilities, except to coordinate the fieldwork of their year levels.
8. Campus supervisors need to be employed on a full time basis by the selected university.

#### 5.6. Recommendations regarding future research

Emanating from the findings, as well as the above recommendations, the possible areas for further research would include the following:

1. Possible content for a formalised structure of fieldwork supervision training for social workers, who supervise students in the BSW programme at the selected university.
2. The elements and mechanisms for supportive supervision.
3. Possible policies for fieldwork supervision in social work.

4. A structured training manual for the BSW programme. This could be facilitated in collaboration with all stakeholders in the BSW programme, in the form of a conference.

### **5.7. Limitations of the study**

In the preceding chapters, the researcher highlighted the limitations of the study. In conclusion to this current study, while viewing the research process and findings holistically, the following limitations were highlighted:

- Although this study was limited to the social work department in the selected university's BSW programme, the study could be used by other universities within a similar context, as a guide to improve their fieldwork supervision.
- Access to the identified sample of social workers, mainly because of the time constraints of participants, proved challenging. However, the latter could be viewed as a lack of interest in research, which may indicate a need for awareness, regarding the importance of research, and how it could improve the functions within the profession.
- Due to the busy-ness of participants, the researcher used the interview questions in the form of email written responses as part of data collection. Even though these responses were valuable, face to face interviews would have elicited more information, as the researcher could have responded to non-verbal cues.

### **5.8. Significance of the study**

This study has added significant value to the BSW programme at the selected university, especially regarding awareness and insight into the voids that should be filled/addressed, in order to increase the learning experiences of students. This study has shed light on the many areas in fieldwork programme that could be improved; however, it also confirmed the many aspects that were positive. This study contributes to an already existing body of knowledge, which stresses the importance of fieldwork supervision, as well as the need for training of fieldwork supervision. This study benefits not only the selected university, but all social workers, who aspire to participate in social work fieldwork supervision, as it informs further research.

## 5.9. Conclusion

In this study, the researcher has argued that fieldwork supervision in social work has been observed to be imperative, and aids in the development, as well as growth of social workers, especially social work students in training. Additionally, this study *explored and described the perceptions and experiences of social workers regarding fieldwork supervision in the BSW programme at the selected university*. The findings of this study are supported by various previous research, which suggest that a need exists for a structured training programme, and more communication between fieldwork lecturers and fieldwork supervisors.

Importantly, the aim of the study was achieved, as the researcher was able to explore and describe the experiences of the social workers in the BSW programme at the selected university. The study followed a qualitative approach, and used thematic analysis, which aided in obtaining rich findings that will add value to, not only the selected university, but also the social work profession.

The findings have revealed the challenges and highlights in fieldwork supervision. Even though the social work department at the selected university could make changes to address these challenges, it is important that the challenges be addressed, not only by the staff members directly involved, but also by staff members in leadership positions, who could affect the changes required, in terms of a policy for consistency, as well as for confirming the needed changes across year levels. Some of the recommendations, also, might extend far beyond the selected university, for example, the DSD, SACSSP and ASASWEI (Association of South African schools of social work educational institutions). However, this can only be accomplished if social work fieldwork supervision is viewed as important, and stands equally with its academic counterpart.



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# APPENDICES

## Appendix A: UWC Ethics Clearance



### OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR: RESEARCH RESEARCH AND INNOVATION DIVISION

Private Bag X17, Bellville 7535  
South Africa  
T: +27 21 959 2988/2948  
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22 August 2016

Mrs L Poggenpoel  
Social Work  
Faculty of Community and Health Sciences

**Ethics Reference Number** HS/16/2/12

**Project Title:** Social Workers' perceptions and experiences of fieldwork supervision in the Bachelor of Social Work degree.

**Approval Period:** 18 August 2016 – 18 August 2017

I hereby certify that the Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Western Cape approved the methodology and ethics of the above mentioned research project.

Any amendments, extension or other modifications to the protocol must be submitted to the Ethics Committee for approval. Please remember to submit a progress report in good time for annual renewal.

The Committee must be informed of any serious adverse event and/or termination of the study.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Josias'.

*Ms Patricia Josias  
Research Ethics Committee Officer  
University of the Western Cape*

**PROVISIONAL REC NUMBER - 130416-049**

## Appendix B: UWC SW Department Letter



UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa

Tel: +27 82 335 3531

E-mail:lpoggenp@gmail.com

LETICIA POGGENPOEL - MSW STUDENT (2420470)

08 September 2016

Professor Schenck  
Head of Department: Social Work Department, UWC

**REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN SOCIAL WORK DEPARTMENT (UWC)**

Dear Prof. Schenck

My name is Leticia Poggenpoel and I am a full thesis Master's student within the social work department at UWC. The research I wish to conduct for my Master's dissertation involves exploring Social Workers' perceptions and experiences of fieldwork supervision in the Bachelor of Social Work degree. This dissertation will be conducted under the supervision of Dr. Glynnis Dykes (UWC).

I am hereby seeking your consent to approach relevant lecturers and associate lecturers of fieldwork modules and campus supervisors who are in the employ of the social work department. This study will greatly contribute to the supervision processes in fieldwork. I will be conducting focus groups and would like further permission to conduct the groups in the department to facilitate easy access for staff participants at a time of their choosing. The focus group should take no longer than 60 minutes.

To assist you in reaching a decision, I have provided you with a copy of my dissertation proposal which includes the information letter and consent forms to be used in the research process, as well as a copy of the Ethics Approval letter which I received from HSSREC.

Upon completion of the study, I undertake to provide the Department of social work with a bound copy of the full research report. If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me on 082 323 2437 or [lpoggenp@gmail.com](mailto:lpoggenp@gmail.com). If you agree, kindly sign below and I will either collect at the department or if possible to be emailed to me with the department's stamp acknowledging your consent and permission for me to conduct this study at your institution.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Yours sincerely

Leticia Poggenpoel, MSW student, UWC

Approved by:

Prof C J Schenck  
Print your name and title here

Signature

2016-09-30  
Date

## Appendix C: DSD Ethics Clearance



Research, Population and Knowledge Management

tel: +27 21 483 4512 fax: +27 21 483 5602

48 Queen Victoria Street, Cape Town, 8000

Reference: 12/1/2/4

Enquiries: Clinton Daniels

Tel: 021 483 8658/483 4512

Ms L. Poggenpoel

3 Bath Close

Victoria Park

Somerset West

7130

Dear Ms Poggenpoel

**RE: APPROVAL TO UNDERTAKE RESEARCH IN THE WESTERN CAPE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

1. Your request for ethical approval to undertake research in respect of *'Social workers' perceptions and experiences of fieldwork supervision in the Bachelor of Social Work degree'* refers.
2. It is a pleasure to inform you that your request has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee (REC) of the Department, subject to the following conditions:
  - That the Secretariat of the Research Ethics Committee be informed in writing of any changes made to your proposal after approval has been granted and be given the opportunity to respond to these changes.
  - That ethical standards and practices as contained in the Department's Research Ethics Policy be maintained throughout the research study, in particular that written informed consent be obtained from participants.
  - The confidentiality and anonymity of participants, who agree to participate in the research, should be maintained throughout the research process and should not be named in your research report or any other publications that may emanate from your research.

- The Department should have the opportunity to respond to the findings of the research. In view of this, the final draft of your research report should be send to the Secretariat of the REC for comment before further dissemination.
- That the Department be informed of any publications and presentations (at conferences and otherwise) of the research findings. This should be done in writing to the Secretariat of the REC.
- Please note that the Department supports the undertaking of research in order to contribute to the development of the body of knowledge as well as the publication and dissemination of the results of research. However, the manner in which research is undertaken and the findings of research reported should not result in the stigmatisation, labelling and/or victimisation of beneficiaries of its services.
- The Department should receive a copy of the final research dissertation and any subsequent publications resulting from the research.
- The Department should be acknowledged in all research reports and products that result from the data collected in the Department.
- Please note that the Department cannot guarantee that the intended sample size as described in your proposal will be realised.
- Logistical arrangements for the research must be made through the office of the relevant Regional Managers, subject to the operational requirements and service delivery priorities of the Department.
- Failure to comply with these conditions can result in this approval being revoked.

Yours sincerely



Ms M. Johnson

Chairperson: Research Ethics Committee

Date: 24/7/17

**Appendix D: Interview Schedule– Fieldwork Supervisors**

This interview schedule is to address the following research question: **Social Workers’ perceptions and experiences of fieldwork supervision in the Bachelor of Social Work degree?** The objectives of the study will be to:

1. To explore and describe the perceptions and experiences of social workers with regard to educational supervision of BSW students at a selected university in South Africa.
2. To explore and describe the perceptions and experiences of social workers with regard to supportive function of supervision of BSW students at a selected university in South Africa.
3. To explore and describe the perceptions and experiences of social workers with regard to administrative function of supervision of BSW students at a selected university in South.

**Please make sure that you have given your written consent before taking part in this research study, also note that everything that will be shared during this interview will only be used for the research project and pseudonyms will be used to insure anonymity.**

Date of interview/ Completion of Questionnaire: .....

Pseudonym: .....

Age: .....

Gender:.....

Agency (Government/ NGO):.....



|   |
|---|
| <b>QUESTIONS:</b>   |
| <b>Please be as transparent as possible and give examples where needed. Please also provide as much detail as possible.</b>   |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Introductory questions:</b></li> <li>2. Describe your role in fieldwork supervision.</li> <li>3. How long have you held this position?</li> <li>4. How long have you been practicing as a social worker?</li> <li>5. Explain how fieldwork supervisors have been trained and/or coordinated regarding your roles.</li> <li>6. Explain how fieldwork supervisors have been trained and/or coordinated regarding agency and university requirements.</li> <li>7. Explain the support structures available to fieldwork supervisors from the university.</li> <li>8. Describe the challenges with regard to fieldwork supervision.</li> <li>9. Describe the highlights with regard to fieldwork supervision.</li> </ol> |
| <b>Questions on education supervision: Please make examples.</b>  |



10. What is your understanding of educational supervision?
11. Describe your perceptions and experiences with regard to educational supervision.

**Questions on supportive functions: Please make examples.**

12. What is your understanding of supportive supervision?
13. Describe your perceptions and experiences with regard to supportive supervision.

**Questions on administrative functions: Please make examples.**

14. What is your understanding of administrative supervision?
15. Describe your perceptions and experiences with regard to administrative supervision

**Concluding questions:**

16. Would you like to add anything else that you think might be beneficial for the research project?
17. Do you have any recommendations regarding fieldwork supervision?
18. Do you have any other questions or concerns?

**THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT. YOUR INPUT IS INVALUABLE.**



## Appendix E: Written request 1



# UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

*Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa*

*Tel: +27 82 335 3531*

*E-mail:lpoggenp@gmail.com*

## LETICIA POGGENPOEL - MSW STUDENT (2420470)

24 April 2017

### To whom it may concern

Field Work Agency Supervisor

### **REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH WITH SOCIAL WORKERS SUPERVISING SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS AT UWC.**

Dear Agency Supervisor

My name is Leticia Poggenpoel and I am a Master's student within the social work department. The research I wish to conduct for my Master's dissertation involves exploring Social Workers' perceptions and experiences of fieldwork supervision in the Bachelor of Social Work degree. This project will be conducted under the supervision of Dr. Glynnis Dykes (UWC).

I am hereby seeking your consent to approach social work agency supervisors who are in the employ of the social work department regarding the topic under investigation. I require social workers who are currently supervising third year social work students from the University of the Western Cape either as agency supervisor. The focus group should take no longer than 120 minutes

To assist you in reaching a decision, I have provided you with a copy of my dissertation proposal which includes the information letter and focus group consent forms to be used in the research process, as well as a copy of the approval letter which I received from the UWC Research Ethics Committee.

Upon completion of the study, I undertake to provide the department with a bound copy of the full research report. If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me on 082 335 3531 or [lpoggenp@gmail.com](mailto:lpoggenp@gmail.com). If you agree, kindly provide me with names and contact details of agency and campus supervisors and I will either collect at the department or if possible to be emailed to me acknowledging your consent and permission for me to conduct this study with supervisors.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

**Leticia Poggenpoel, MSW student, UWC**

---

**Approved by:**

---

**Print your name and title here**

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**Signature**

---

**Date**

## Appendix F: Written request 2



# UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

*Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa*

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## LETICIA POGGENPOEL - MSW STUDENT (2420470)

24 April 2017

### Campus Supervisors

Field Work Supervisors

### REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH WITH SOCIAL WORKERS SUPERVISING SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS.

Dear Supervisors

My name is Leticia Poggenpoel and I am a Master's student within the social work department. The research I wish to conduct for my Master's dissertation involves exploring Social Workers' perceptions and experiences of fieldwork supervision in the Bachelor of Social Work degree. This project will be conducted under the supervision of Dr. Glynnis Dykes (UWC).

I am hereby seeking your consent to interview you in a focus group setting as part of my studies. The focus group should take no longer than 120 minutes/2 hours. The time can be reduced, depending on the process.

To assist you in reaching a decision, I have provided you with a copy of my dissertation proposal which includes the information letter and focus group consent forms to be used in the research process, as well as a copy of the approval letter which I received from the UWC Research Ethics Committee.

Upon completion of the study, I undertake to provide the department with a bound copy of the full research report. If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me on 082 335 3531 or [lpoggenp@gmail.com](mailto:lpoggenp@gmail.com).

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

**Leticia Poggenpoel, MSW student, UWC**

---

**Approved by:**

---

**Print your name and title here**

---

**Signature**

---

**Date**

**Appendix G: Consent Form**



# UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

*Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa*

*Tel: +27 82 335 3531*

*E-mail:lpoggenp@gmail.com*

## CONSENT FORM

**Title of Research Project:** Exploring social work fieldwork supervision: Social Workers' perceptions and experiences of fieldwork supervision in the Bachelor of Social Work degree

The study has been described to me in language that I understand. My questions about the study have been answered. I understand what my participation will involve and I agree to participate of my own choice and free will. I understand that my identity will not be disclosed to anyone. I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and without fear of negative consequences or loss of benefits.

*Participant's name*.....

*Participant's signature*.....

*Date*.....

Consent Form

## **Appendix H: Self reflexivity report**

### **My role in the context of the selected university:**

I am a classified coloured in the SA context and I was the first in my family to graduate from a university. I am therefore able to relate to the students at the selected university as well as the participants of this study.

I have been a campus supervisor since March 2013 and I have invested myself in fieldwork supervision, mainly because I always felt my fieldwork supervisors invested more than what was required from them. I however always felt a sense of inadequacy and often wondered whether I was doing justice to the social work profession and the students I supervise. Despite these feelings of inadequacy, being a campus supervisor, provided me with a sense of accomplishment and reignited my love for social work. I learnt the importance of linking theory with practice and after my few years in social work practice, being a supervisor was the essential key that helped me to link theory with practice. I loved working with students and often felt energised and motivated to work with them. I had various bright ideas regarding how to improve the quality of service I provided to the students and how fieldwork could be improved. Additionally, I also functioned as an agency supervisor for a year which furthermore increased my desire to complete this study. The nagging voice in my head that continually alerted me to the fact that despite my love to work with students, I needed more, was however ever present.

A few conversations with the then fieldwork lecturer inspired me to further my studies (this study) to explore the perceptions and experiences of fieldwork supervisors in order to add to literature regarding fieldwork with the desire that this study might help in the plight of fieldwork supervision.

### **Experiences that emerged whilst conducting this study:**

The genesis of this study lies in high ambition and motivation and the desire to be the change I wanted to see in fieldwork supervision. I however soon became aware that ambition and motivation alone is not enough and found starting my study challenging. I was challenged with writing this study and somehow regretted ever committing to this process. Juxtaposed with my writing ability, various personal situations limited me to do what I expected of myself. This eventually fueled my feelings of inadequacy regarding my role as fieldwork supervisor and

often brought me to a complete halt, often for months on end. Additionally challenges to obtain participants was often demotivating and frustrating. I made use of my colleagues and peers to remind me that the process is not about me and this assisted me to not be biased. This was especially challenged through my supervisor constantly challenging me regarding what I wrote and how it was written.

Fortunately I was always surrounded by people who believed in my abilities and who have undertaken the process of post graduate research which help me get out of my slump. Likewise, the participants who participated in this study fueled the last few months of this process with their excitement regarding the possible findings of the study. They too, were excited to see change in the fieldwork programme, mainly because of their heart for the social work profession. Working with professionals who have a heart for what they do is inspirational and this carried the process through.

In hindsight, there is a lot that I would change if I were to embark on another journey like this, but I believe this process has taught me the importance of time management and structure. Most importantly, I have explored the perceptions and experiences of fieldwork supervisors in the BSW programme at the selected university which was the ultimate aim of this study. I have also found a new respect for post graduate studies and qualitative research, not to mention the people who supported me through this process.

Finally, my love and desire to work with students has been reignited and I trust that this study will have a positive contribution to the selected university and the fieldwork programme.

## Appendix I: Transcript

### Participant 3

(Highlighted sections Researcher)

Okay, ooh jinne, then we are starting.

**Okay, Good morning (mention name of participant),**

**Thank you for taking the time to do this interview with me. I'm really grateful for it. Um, I have explained the confidentiality aspect of the process.**

**Um yah, so the focus of this study is on perceptions and experiences of social workers providing fieldwork supervision in the BSW at this university.**

**Um, is there a pseudonym that you would want me to use for the study or can I use my own?**

You can use your own

**Ok, How old are?**

I am 44.

**And you are only working at UWC?**

Mmmm, I freelance, so I do other work as well.

**Ok, so in private practice as well.**

Not so much private practice, but practising, yes (giggling)

**Ok, so you practicing, so how long have you been practising as a social worker?**

**Knock on door. (Not opened)**

Mmmm, from 2007, I started very late in life. I came to do my studies when I was 30 years of age and um I did my undergraduate degree, and then I went abroad and did my Masters degree abroad.

**Um, so now we are only gonna focus fieldwork supervision. Can you describe what your role is in supervision and on which year level, year levels?**

I'm a first year supervisor and I've been doing that since 2007, because after I graduated I was immediately asked to BECAUSE, I went straight into my Masters because of my marks and everything mmm so they asked me to do some the theoretical supervision for the students.

Mmm, at that time the program was different as it is today, 2007 & 2017 is a long time ago

Um, yah, my role, um with first years I think it is a different process as to the other year levels because there is a lot of um, foundational work that we have to do. Working with students perceptions themselves as to what social work is about.

You know, the classic response would be I've come to help people and then they need the help themselves. So with that in the back of my mind and um, and my own experiences of being supervised, I have devised my own style of supervision.

So in my role as a supervisor, I have different categories the way that I can see it when I do interact with students, that is to Coach, to Mentor, to Support & do a lot of personal development

**Okay, would you like explain to me what you mean with the different types that you mentioned?**

The coaching, um, getting them to understand what our profession is about, the professional development. So it's around values and ethics of social work and how does that affect their own core values as to the person who they are. So you know coaching them through a process in terms of your values does not impact on that of the process when you sitting with clients, is very important.

Because Students come in with the perception, you know "I'm gonna do what, how I do life" and then they come in very damaged in that approach.

So coaching them through the process, of understanding this is Social work and this is who you are; Social work isn't who you are, it is what you will do in life, you will get paid to do the job



Mmm, so it is a lot of coaching around understanding their capacity and then taking them from one level to another level in their understanding. That is not always an easy process because students/and over the years especially where we are in 2017, um student's perceptions of coming into the field is almost now, very much "I know what I'm doing" where as previously there was a lot of moulding that you could do through coaching, to say to them listen now let's have discussions. And it is not when I'm saying....there is individual sessions and then there is group. Um When I do that, I start from a point of understanding where the person is at, so for me, first thing before I start my supervision session is to find out mentally, physically, emotionally where everybody is. Even when I have a group of twenty, I make time in that hour, because we have an hour, an allotted hour, um, to make that connection.

So I will go around for twenty persons to tell me "how they doing, where they at" and I ask them personally where you at and also then just hearing where they at academically and then using that as a platform for learning when working with them.

Mentoring, Mmm, there's, There is always one or two students that come under your wing, because this is not like you would have it in the field where it is more professionals, they are first years. You, so some of them, they come under your wing, and I mean I have a picture when I say this; they really come under your wing um, and stay there for the entire year.

Whereas others when mentoring them, they are more than 50% very resistant to being mentored. Um for The reason why I'm saying that because this is I think it is my style and my approach. My style and my approach is very much foot on the pedal when I start, I lay down the law, I say this is what we doing, these are the expectations, these are my expectations and you tell me what is your, your expectations.

And somewhere in the middle of the year then we start meeting each other and I can tell you 100% of the time that is the process for all the students who find me very strict, because look, I also have an academic frame of mind and I know what the expectation is on every other year level in terms of integration of theory, expectation of understanding that theory guides practice, and if a student doesn't is demonstrating the capacity for laziness, and not wanting to, they are going to know that from the word get go they don't get marks from me, so now they need to bring their game to the plate. So, they are very resistant because I think that has a lot to do with the Educational system where it is, they spoon-fed and now they need to do a lot of independent learning on, on their own.

Um, come to the middle of the year, yah I'm everybody's best friend. (Giggling)

Support, support, here is also a two folded aspect, very much the academic support and understanding and I always say to students listen you on first year, but 2<sup>nd</sup> year people will ex, will not be teaching you the foundational things we are putting into practice with you. So you need to know,, you need to have your references list, need to do all these things academically, and you need to be committed to your process and u need to be present.

Um, But I think for me when I say support this, this becomes more the personal support because comes, come to middle of the year now students are more open, to more reveal a little bit about themselves, now they'll come" Mam, I need to speak to you about this "because you start to getting to know your students through their work, for a, for much of the first semester you don't know them on a personal level but you get to know them, So You start learning the patterns. And I will quickly be able to say to a student," I know that you were busy here and were doing really well at the beginning of the assignment but in the middle what was happening here, were you getting distracted, was there something else going on, whatever, whatever"...

And then through those conversations students will say "I had these challenges & I had these things". So the support here is also very emotional support for the students, especially first year students when they reveal themselves. Um And that for me, takes me into another space where it is a part of me as the person also comes into into contact, because then I get to know the person away from the student because I'm I'm I'm employed to work with the student but I get to know the person as well. So there is a lot of character building individual that I start paying attention to that I know could be something that I need to work towards that could improve the academics of a particular student.

So the support, yes like I say I think is more the emotional support for students. Um one time I had a student who fell pregnant and whilst she was preparing to go into labour, I still had my process with my entire group but I had to provide her the support and she submitted three weeks before the due date, she submitted her portfolio. I've been working with her away from the time that we are assigned to be here on campus; I worked with her over the weekends gave her feedback and supported she



needed queries around not understanding the criteria. So that was the kind of support, when I say give support on another level as well.

And in hindsight, I think she came to me one day and she said to me “Mam, after I submitted I went into labour, so I laughingly said so baby supported you through your process.

So yeah, it is examples like that in terms of support.

So what else did me say, Coaching, mentoring, support and....

Personal

Personal development...Uhh Over the last few years, that’s been a difficult one, in terms of supervision; where students come with personality issues and um very little emotional intelligence around their spaces and then it impacts the group process as well and the group learning because;...um I want to just frame it in a way that you will understand because; I had an incident with a student who disrupted supervision, and the student was caucusing against me and caucusing division amongst the group in itself, so there were a lot of issues around that person’s space. And what made it challenging was that it was an older student, if it was a younger student it would’ve made a lot of sense, you’ve got a little bit of life, you understand that everyone in the group is younger than you, why be such a toxic cause of, so I had to deal with that and more and more of that is coming to life, more & more of personalities and this makes me think of group work theories (giggling) about personalities of people and um not understanding that you have to follow a line, There is a line of communication, there is a process for everything in the system. So students are becoming very aggressive in that regard and I have to say that I’m not sure how much longer I can do this, um because it just feels different , it feels it’s just becoming so much hard work, so um yah.

Personal development I think is very key but I think it depends on the style of the supervisor and the interest of the supervisor. Because I take a keen interest in the students because not because they will be my students but for the mere fact that they will be my colleagues in the future. I would not feel good if they are in the field and catching on nonsense, um and I think that is why I have my foot on the pedal because I have my own standard by which I maintain my levels of integrity as well.

**Would you like to tell me a bit about your standard? What is your standard?**

How do I say this? (Brief silence) I pass my degree with cum laude so that is a standard for me, I expect, I put in the best. I don’t necessary say I expect the best from students but I expect them to at least try for the best and (silence) The standard is a very a no nonsense approach when it comes to integration of theory and understanding, upholding the integrity of our profession is very, is a very important thing for me, so when I’m imparting knowledge, when I’m imparting information to the inexperienced worker here, which is them um I always ask them “*what is your standard, how do you see yourself, what is the level that you want your practice to be at*”? I cannot define it for you; you need to define it for yourself.

I always say to students when they work with me, I don’t need for them to be honest with me, that’s not why I am here, and I’m not here to be liked also, so I say to them as long as you honest with **yourself** and your work will reflect that to me and that makes it good soil for me to work with.

A standard of excellence is very key for me. I mean I have had students that come to me and submit a document with no cover sheet and then I say to them; *do you come to me without your face to me, because I don’t know, I don’t recognise you like this, so, its* setting the tone even just from the cover page.

Um I when students are coming for consultation its little things like justify your tasks, it presents well, little things like that. And um Students say I provide a lot of feedback and even if you get 80% there is still room for a lot of improvement with me. That is a classic (Participant mention her own name) comment “*there is room for improvement,*” everyone when they write up their general evaluation “there is still room for improvement”. (Laughing) in their general evaluation

Um I think that is what I would say how I justify my standard. (Giggling)

**Um can you explain to me how you have been trained or coordinated um regarding your role as a fieldwork supervisor?**

Silence, Um In the 2007 and years to 2010, I would say 2010/11 um, I didn’t supervise in 2007, went away and did my degree abroad and then I came back but, the training that we had in those years I think was the foundation that laid itself for/with me.

Um Out of that um (mention a lecturer) was a very influential person with regards to setting a standard you know, um how to do supervision because she was also our supervisor and did a lot of coaching and mentoring with us. So I took a lot, of aside

from the training we did those years, the reason why supervision is something that I enjoyed doing is because I've learned a lot from the supervisors that I had. I have taken that apart, a part and apart of what I do in practice. Um when I say I took it apart I looked at what was working for them with with me being a student and when that was working for me, I mean we had hardcore social workers in the field as supervisors but they brought the best out of me. I didn't have an option to settle for less than what their expectation was to meet, for a lack of a better word, their approval um but I knew I was on the right track and you know they were giving the guidance.

Um the training we had that time was you know small workshops when we started um around program expectations, um bringing your level of theoretical input because first years is more theory than it is for practice. What do they do they do; they go out for visits of observation, we clarify the roles of social work to them, we clarify the fields of practices to them, we shape them in becoming the professional.

So, yes the training from there and then I can say to you that when (mention fieldwork lecturer), (mentioned fieldwork lecturer) took over and became coordinator she brought a different feel to the supervision um sessions again, she would either invite us to come and sit in labs so and then we would be asked, asked to provide input in labs..

You know and on several occasions I was also doing the coordination of the 101 program, when (mention lecturer) was away on sabbatical, twice I did it for her and then when (mention fieldwork lecturer) was away with um her pregnancy leave I also did it, So I'm very familiar with the program so that I think puts me in good stead to absolutely understand what the expectation, the academic expectation is around the student. So that frames my thinking and frames and influences the conversation that you having in supervision with students.

Um (mentioned lecturer) is also very open for ideas, she encourages um ideas, not because she is the coordinator you know we just need to work where she is at, she is very open for discussion forums, um she'll, you know, do a lot of um, input also with regards to , you know, what is your experiences for the students, this is what I'm experiencing in the labs, how can we best work to address because these needs or these challenges were identified, so that helps in terms of probably for her coordination but for us as the supervisors to stay ahead of what is happening in the labs and its very helpful because then there is not a disjuncture between what is happening in lab and we don't have a understanding of what is happening in lab, but um it complements then the work that we are doing, you know.

Um this year it's been a bit of a strange process because we only see the students every second week and it's...Part of why supervision works the way it does, because the attachment theory is very important also, because you can see how students start attaching themselves to the value of supervision, not necessarily the supervisor. If the supervisor meets them at a particular level it then increases their level of participation and involvement.

So, the attachment theory this year has been blown out of the water, I feel very disconnected to the students, Uhh I feel very... I cry because we using other mediums to engage with students. So Yah, this year has been a strange process and I had one or two really not so good battles with students but we ironed it out, you know *iron sharpens iron at end of the day* (Chuckling), so I ironed that, ironed a little bit. Um, but this year has been very very hard, it's been very strange, yah very strange.....

**And you meet every second week**

Yes, every second week.

**You met with the students?**

**Um, Can explain you to me how you have been trained or coordinated regarding the agency, regarding the university requirements? You mentioned small workshops uh and you briefly mentioned, you know, that you were coordinated regarding that, was that the only thing or was there more?**

There was with (mention lecturer) there was a lot of one on one's sessions, and with (mention fieldwork lecturer) as well one on one sessions um, materials were given to me uh to understand what the expectation is , the course outlines are also given to you with the expectations obviously with due dates and things like that. Um so there is a lot of dialogue, when there maybe maybe let's talk from the point, when it is, when there was handover from (mention lecturer) and from (mention fieldwork lecturer)..., you know, we, they would make time for me to sit with them especially for coordination, they would make time with me to sit with them and would say, you know, this is what we doing and these are the expectations um if we particular

around first year level, we also work with agencies because students has to do their volunteering and shadowing but that they need to do on their own because it is also about independent learning and negotiating of entry into agencies. Um Whereas with working with the agencies for for visits there was a lot of dialogue and you know around what needs to be done and so on, so a lot of work went hand in hand with the curriculum, the dialogue and um the time they made available for me to fully understand what the expectation is.

**So this you mean in terms of coordination and not necessarily supervision?**

Umm

**Were there anything done in terms of supervision or is it the same process?**

I know within the last two years there have been the workshops that took place at the beginning of the year, it was always at these awkward times and late notice, so I was I never attended those, but those were available to us. Um (mention fieldwork lecturer) has one or two sessions before we start the year, she'll invite us just to get a clock in, check in if it is that we still on board for supervision um in the year because supervisors. I've been kinda the most permanent fixture for this period of time, now one of my other colleagues is now 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> year into this process, everyone else is now very new. And so she had a session now this year to introduce the new people. Um so yah she does, you know, that kind of preparation, so that there is preparation work we do before we engage as well.

**Um can you explain to me what support structures are available to you from the university?**

For supervision, (mention fieldwork lecturer), (mention fieldwork lecturer) she is she's amazing as a coordinator. I have to say this; uh at any point that she has, um that we have queries we can call her and she will be ready there to give us support. And we have become quite a united front with students because students do conquer and divide. So we recognise the strategies immediately and it feels good that somebody has your back in that regard because students do come with a lot of stories that they created out of their little scenarios.

Um so one never has to feel that at any point you are on wobbly ground should there be any query with her. She makes you feel very appreciated and validated in your role. Because there are many time because I have also assisted her with the coordination, there are many times, a lot of times, when she will call me out of the blue and she'll say to me listen I've got this little challenge, what do you think. These are my thoughts. Just sound boarding with me, and you know, and it makes you feel very good that someone sees your value to what you bring to the program as well. Not just in your role as the supervisor so yah um Her worth and dignity aspect of embracing us, um I can speak very highly of and I think that why I stayed on so long Rumour has it that she is not continuing so I'm not sure if I'm coming back (laughter)

**Um can you describe to me what are your challenges with regards to field work supervision?**

Uh I think from an academic point of view, not I think but I know from an academic point of view, the educational system makes it a great challenge for us to...to facilitate the process of integration of theory, understanding what theory is and how does it guide practice. So students educational levels and I'm not talking about levels, I'm talking model C school um um, what the word I'm looking for, (silence) moulding compared maybe just one of our public schools, our general public schools, there is a difference in the quality of student that we have, so having to, when it is we doing supervision we speaking from one point hoping that all students will get to the that one level but it takes some time for some students to get to that level. So, you need to be very clear as to when you sitting with the work and you marking the work, what level the student is at and that becomes a challenge especially when we say one of the motto's in saying to students is "*You need to read for your degree*" and the lack of engagement with reading is very hard because students think they can just earn an A and it doesn't work that way. Academia is a different and higher degrees learning is a different environment you gonna have to" jy moet haal uit & wys" (take out and show what you have). So I think that is a very big challenge and even until maybe the last submission of reports then I can say I still see some of you not reading comments and it's not helping you, you are going into second year, should you be promoted you going into second year. These are the little things you need to sort out now, so it's really a challenge academically students and that become s an attitude because some students think because they got a seven's it's gonna be 7 year when the level is a different level so that is one of the biggest challenges um academically.

Another challenge, I think now is this every second week is I feel is becoming challenging, the program um is stretched and I'm not sure, I I because I come from the old school now we seen students every, every week, that amount of... we only have an hour with them for practice and practice is what they gonna do. so that makes me every other, every other hour I see them, it feels less time to be able to coach and mentor. And uh I feel we, not sure how we are shaping that student for practice then when this is the foundational year particularly the foundational year. Um sometimes It has me concerned as a challenge, um I think can I say this; the rights based attitude of students is becoming a massive issue these days.

**The what?**

Rights based attitude.

**Okay**

Students come in with the understanding that they are youth and that they have rights not often do they remember the responsibilities with the rights. And I'm very old school "Respect *is earned*" You gotta work for me to respect you , I'm not just gonna alter the blocks just to respect you and students think they are your equal and they from a rights based perspective and having to put them down becomes a uh battle between student and supervisor.

And I said to the students particularly this year, I don't come here to fight with you, I've come here to mould you, I've come here to work with you but your attitude and the way you approach certain things, I said, I don't mind at any point in time because for me, my supervision and when I do supervision it is a learning environment and students hate what I do: we talk marks, we talk what did you do, why did you do it this way, why did you achieve this mark? So students always right when we do evaluation they write back "don't like the fact that (participant mention her own name) talks about my marks in front of everybody" It's funny when they talk to each other about their marks. (Chuckling) Anyway so then eventually they will switch around the mind-set of we understand that this is how she operates.

And then also what I do there is, I teach them to validate one another, if someone has achieved an A, eventually they all start applauding and ask Mam "when is mine coming"? And I say there is still a lot of work to be done. And that kind of thing. So there is still of work around the attitude of students and I think it's becoming quite a challenge this year. Um Yah I had my little incident this year

**And do you think, because it sounds to me that you saying that maybe seeing the students more like every week um is beneficial and that maybe the one hour isn't enough to really work on...?**

(mention researcher name), you need to understand that I have two supervision groups on first year level, and I have a group of twenty students and by no means (*sal nie afskeep nie*) (will I neglect any one) by no means. I speak to the students who are not doing well, I speak to the students who are doing well and speaking to the students that's in the middle of that two. And the less time we have, the less opportunities we have to provide them with a clearer understanding of scope of practice, their scope and how they as a person also impact all of that.

So what I have done this year because I am still in the department, I have encouraged this group to come to me, so there are only a few students coming to me, students who now I can see academically they are here, they are on board. So the others who are not making use of consultation because I'm now having to engineer other times outside of the contract to help them along as well because where am I gonna have enough time for a one on one, if I only have an hour for a group of twenty students .

So I do take some of that onto myself, but that's my personal investment also in terms of giving back towards the profession, so yah I think it is, it is a challenge for us this year.

**Um, okay, is there anything you that you would like to add?**

I wouldn't want to say that their personality disorders (laughing) are a challenge because ag man at the end of the day they are the client, they also need to, this is part of their process and whilst it is their process I also have to work where they at; I mean, I have had some hard words in between (laughing), but it's their process after all its not process after all, I'm merely here to facilitate their levels of growth and development and I 'm very aware of that, I 'm very aware of that.

**What are your highlights um in fieldwork supervision?**

Highlights; definitely the blossoming of students;

**Okay**

When they bloom, they bloom very well and it warms your heart because I know the amount of time, effort, consultation they have put in, they draft, they'll say "Mam, can we send our work to you"? I said yesterday to the first years, you know that this assignment is a 100 marks, we had consultation yesterday, they are supposed to do their job; job shadowing um volunteer assignment when they going out so they come and I just gave them guidance, you know, look at theory here under this category because this is roles, this is skills, this is values of social work, look at this, and look at that

And um when they The reason why it is, I think this year the one hour thing is a challenge also, is because it's harder for them to go that level, that level higher because I now only see them once and when I return the stuff they are already busy with the next task. And I don't have... I squeeze the one hour to give feedback, proper feedback because I can't do it individually feedback in that hour so I just say everybody opens up; let's go to introduction, let's go through historical background of the organisation, management structure, all of these things. So, so Then we do it in a collective way and I'll say what do you see? Obviously I would have been given a lot of comments in between. They will say "Mam, I see this, why did I do this Miss" and then when you get the next report then you can see that they have implemented but now with the break and getting the next one up I can't see that development and maybe last year was also a little bit of that because there were moments that we skipped seeing them.

Um so yeah!! the development, the development of the individual as well when the student comes and cries their eyes out with you and now I'm saying, you know, never giving advice, just do working where they at...um and they coming back saying they were thinking of some of the discussions we had, started implementing this that taking and that, taking ownership, taking responsibility for me is a plus for me, obviously getting an A with lots of theory integrated (chuckling)

Um joy of social work supervision, working with (mention fieldwork lecturer), very much, she um I enjoy working with her. She supports us well, and I think it is because she supports us well, and she leans on us, she supports us well, she integrates us into the program not just from a supervisory point of view but also with knowledge and skills. You know, and also because I think on a one on one basis, we have the same approach to academia as well, she doesn't give marks...so we have both have the reputation as "they don't give marks". (Laughing) Our thinking is always on that level, you know what I mean?

**And what do you mean with you "don't give marks"?**

No, you can't get a mark if there is no theory, you know, that kind of thing. Students think they can just get an A and have one source at the back. So if students put the effort in they going to be awarded, you know *I always say what you sow you will reap, give 50% and you can get 50%*. So it's also changing that mentality. I think it has a lot to do with when they come from school and the approach at the school. Students who come from the model C schools tend to be a little, the work is not as demanding with them because they know there is expectations so they need to rise, but students from our general public schools, think they can just come and just be here and that that is enough. And I always try to relate that kind of behaviour in what kind of social worker will you be? You can't just be here, you gotta come prepared for your clients, be prepared for your day, do you have a to-do list? I mean I do this with my students okay what's now, what's ahead for us, we need to this, then we do a checklist, when we start prepping for because we don't do online portfolios we do hardcopy portfolios. Guys, next week everybody needs to give feedback, who's got their arch lever file, who's got this, who's got that. And everybody and I make notes so it's about helping them to understand what is your context, what is your practise because all of this is about their practice.

Um So yah I think those are my joys, my joy is working with students whether they are difficult or not, I enjoy working with students I enjoy working with them to know that they gonna make a difference somewhere, if I can make a small difference in their lives it is just a ripple effect of paying it forward in the future somewhere, you know, hoping that they not in it just for the money (laughing)

**Okay, Anything else?**

Shakes head to represent no.

**Okay, what is your understanding of educational supervision?**



Well, educational supervision has a lot to do with um, educating the students around firstly what supervision is about; they come in at first year thinking it's, it's a tutorial. So tutorials are not supervision, this is related to their practice, and uh always having to make them understand we actually sign a MOU with you and so this is not a tutorial, it's not colloquium where you come share ideas and thoughts, this is about we working around professional practice whether it be conduct, ethics, um integrity of the profession, whatever it may be.

So Educational supervision for me has a lot to do around educating the student who have enrolled into Social work and providing opportunities, like I said to you, when I'm working with the students I do it for, it must be a learning environment, it's not consultation that we doing in supervision it must be a learning environment so I always encourage lots of discussion, lots of debates. Um and when I say lots of discussion, and lots of debates, when they go out for visits of observation, it's to keenly probe their critical factor and for them to start engaging in the critical factor. So if you saying they doing micro level services what is that about? You know And If you say that's what they doing how does it related to context, how does it relate to the the communities need, what are they doing..now I'm asking them to debate with one another and its always interesting to see from the beginning of the year to the end of the year how they actually start the debate; it's very murmuring like... at the beginning and to the end not everybody but the voices are being found. Because I always say to them when you are doing social work you've got to find, you need to locate you in your practice as well, do you have an opinion of something, what are your discussions around, what does your peers saying about these topics. So it's not about my being the experience worker but it is also about using them to peer educate one another through thought processes, dialogue and engagements on whatever I do, whether it is diversity. We cover diversity, we cover the values & ethics they do it in labs, and then we'll have it maybe small role plays in supervision that kind of thing.

So all of that, the role plays, they'll do interviews with one another; it's all part of the educational value and the educational aspect of supervision as well. So the role of the lab and supervision has something that always has to walk so closely together um so that's why I say to you,, working with (mention fieldwork lecturer), she very this is what's happening in lab, what is she feeling out in terms of the student experiences and also having that platform to, when they engaging in that kind of educational platform to challenge me because I can learn from them as well. Um yah There's, you know, I remember particularly this year level students um that were my students, we always had lots of lively debates, because there were lots of opinions that had to be curbed and tailored you know because some of the opinions were in the political sphere, you know. So you could see them grooming from understanding not so much the political political correctness of what that they were discussing but becoming more conscientising them around what are the politicised issues. So yah, I enjoy that (chuckling).

**Um can you describe to me your perceptions and experiences with regard to educational supervision?**

Um Experiences, I think something that remains, some... I wouldn't necessary say it's a challenge but it has never, it's been a constant thing in all the years that I have been doing supervision, it's a constant, the disempowered voice of some of our students um is not a good aspect for some of our students because some of them remain disempowered until fourth year, never engaging, whether it be in class, whether it be in supervision; and when I say in class because I've been sitting in on lab sessions you can see who the people are... the hand goes up, there are people who write very well but they would not translate it into our conversation, a dialogue or a input in class. Um that does not feel okay because you can be academically sound but you have to challenge yourself in some way. So hence that I say an hour for 20 people and having to hear twenty voices, I try and bite it out in terms of I want to at least hear from you, what are you thinking, it does not have to be rocket science for me, I just want to hear you, where you are at because that does impact , especially when it comes to the end of the year and students feel they have not achieved then I say you never had a conversation with me, you've never had consultation with me, so that it disempowered feel of our students um must I now say it remains a challenge. It's a challenge and when I'm speaking out of that and I relate it to the person then the lack of self esteem, the lack of confidence impacts on the person but its gonna definitely impact on the professional because whilst they not working on that it projects not a very good professional and that for me in the long-term when I look at it from a long term perspective is a concern when the student goes out into the field, it will be a product of our department and it is gonna be a product of us being the supervisors, it's gonna be a product of this process here. And too many of them are wallflowers when they have to be out being a competing voice, we can't, Social work is already

such a sleeping giant man, to be losing more voices, voices that were never even heard before, I'm concerned about our profession in that regard.

**You mentioned social workers are a sleeping giant,**

Mmmm

**Can you explain that for me?**

(Silence) With our state of grace in our country, why are why are social workers, it is a critical question that I'm asking; why are social workers not in more critical positions when it comes to the issues of our communities. Um On some level certain structures in government governing structures have become gate keepers to our profession and they have silenced some of our social workers to be a voice, to be more aware of social justice actions that we know we can participate in and but we have become apathetic on some level man and if the students are already apathetic here on first year level, how am I, not just me, but how are we through three more years, beyond the first year going to mould the student to at least say something because if the, how is the student gonna say something to a supervisor in the field, to a manger in the field. And I'm saying just even starting there, to say listen I disagree with what you are saying and for these reasons I'm disagreeing with you, and it is nothing personal. So yah man it doesn't feel mm yah, it doesn't feel; I'd like our students not to stand against (mention two universities) and not be able to say something...

**Okay**

and I know what kind of work is done here and it is work so differently from the way they are moulded as as professionals and shaped to be in the field and our theories and things that we using, I mean, our students should be a little bit more confident in what they are doing you know, and they tend to hide behind the student who is more willing to say something.

**Why did you bring up the (mention two universities)?**

Because that is, that is a reality for our students

**Do you feel that they feel incompetent in a sense or is it just the lack of confidence that makes it they cannot stand up...?**

When our students go for visits of observations they are constantly told, we have (mention another university) students, why don't you know this and why do you not know that. It is always a competing factor for them on that level and if students are already not confident, I don't want to say disempowered, but not confident, that renders them more powerless to be said: why are you not like them?

So the institutional regard for our student's capacity it does impacts on our students experience as well

**So it's the way people view our students from the outside impacts?**

But our students have been told, we would have given you placement but we don't take (mention selected university) students and it happened this year as well. Silence

What was the other part, what was the question again? I think I had something else I had to...

**Your Perceptions and experiences with regard to educational supervision?**

Yes, uhhh silence the social work jargon particularly with regard to educational supervision is very hard for our students because they don't read, and when they don't read and they don't find a place to engage, it becomes challenging for our students man. So in an educational setting for supervision, I'm talking jargon you have to be aware you working with first year students so you can't just spew out all the beautiful jargon that we have, So you've gotta first ask did you hear of this terminology, was it said in in in lab, what do we mean by this, what is the role of the social worker, you know, that kind of thing. And I can tell you last year, at the end of last year I ask students still what is the role of a social worker and I 'm talking now like educator, broker, all those things then the students are like, two students could answer me and it again indicated as part of their responsibility in their educational part they not taking that up. And nowhere whilst they say I don't give marks I don't spoon-feed, I don't provide answers because by providing answers you not gonna learn anything out of that, so my strategy is always come you tell me, I'm also here to learn. So tell me what you think this terminology is and then I'll guide them: you guys had it spot on there, and then we will go from there but I never provide answers even on a third year level.

**You mentioned that students on second year students maybe not know the roles of social work um which they are taught in first year and yet they are, they have passed from first to second year. Where do you think is the gap or is it just not reading or is there something else that? You've mentioned earlier ,about the educational system, now you've mentioned the reading you've mentioned how students are viewed from outside institutions, is it the combination of a few things or, what do you think?**

You asking me a very challenging question (chuckling) but like you said this is confidential ne.

Um In my experience, because people, some of the supervisors that have been part of our processes have not been academically inclined. This is now confidential. A student came to me recently from another super vision, asking for guidance. I was teaching a theoretical model. In teaching this model, I and my co-facilitator, (mention associate lecturer) said to students, you're in academia now you cannot write a report and an assignment, and you have one reference, you cannot get 80% for that because you suppose to demonstrate. write persuasive academic pieces, you suppose to write something where it is, you make a statement and back it up with theory you bring in something of practice, then make an argument against what the theory says because you can contextualise something an argument, so that kind of thinking may not always be around, the people who came from practice to do supervision.

So the student came to me recently from another supervision and I said listen when you writing up under the services because you first year, when you writing up the services write down which level of intervention because we now want to know what you know, you presenting your work, don't just write they do counselling tell me what you understand which level is it at, and when you do that you say micro level intervention according to so& so is this, now you showing me you starting to shape your understanding about what practice is about. And when you say counselling tell me what role, give me the theoretical role and when you give me the theoretical statement of what that role is, give me the practice example because that is now marrying what you are doing. The student got me three/four weeks later after I have given that advice ,said her supervisor had written in her report why did you do this, this is unnecessary.

**So it seems there are different views on how things should be done and the academic supervisor is/has a different view than the practical supervisor?**

Mmmm Mmmm, so I said to the student look you gonna have to work that out with your supervisor because that is what I do with my students. I'm not saying it is a competing thing but maybe that is your supervisor's preference. But if we in an academic setting then this is the field of practice here, we in academia, so we got to mould the student to know you need to integrate theory. So that I would say we could..... Potentially ... approaches understanding maybe

**So it also sounds that the supervisors need to have the same view on as to what is the requirements from the University?**

So I'm going into the meeting and own up that a student came to me for advice from the lecturer to there and maybe we need to look at how we presenting it because students will always generally their compare supervisors, generally they will compare so this is not breaking news for us, that what they do because we all have different ways, it's part of our personalities, it's who we are as individuals so yah they are gonna compare but we need to be united on the one front.

So this is why I can say it in this space here working with the third year supervisors, everyone was on board (door opening) (silence) for the academic part of the program, everyone had the same understanding, the expectation is here you've got to work with your theories, you have got to marry your practice, you have got to bring in some of the examples of what you learning. So that for me was a good thing when I was sitting with all of you that maybe because we were like minded also (laughing), so for me that was a plus (laughing), you understand?

**Okay. What is your understanding of supportive supervision? Are you still okay?**

Yah. Like I said before it had to do with the individual and practitioner. I think support for the individual is very important particularly as the student now tries to locate themselves in their own practice. A very important aspect of supportive supervision for me is about what does (mention lecturer) say is " Reflexivity and self reflective practice" so for students to know, have a greater capacity for their self awareness because when they know why they are at it helps us to understand how to read the need of the student and I'm not now talking on a personal level I'm talking on an academic level because students want to pump, pump up those things and still think they must get A's for what they doing but yet , pumping it out and how



they had” geploeg in dai in” (how they ploughed into it) it is not always of good quality, so I think that’s why I say to students if you honest with yourself, I don’t need you to be honest with me , I’m gonna read you like that .

Um So supporting students, I have to tell you though that supporting students have become, I would probably not be able to say what exact percentage but the bigger chunk of the percentage now because come in with a lot of issues, students are coming in with a lot of unresolved um not even touching on whatever the issues may be that they have pressing down, pressing down, pressing down. Some of them are volcanoes waiting to erupt and I am concerned about eruptions taking place with clients because if a client is disclosing their situation and you haven’t contained or manage with what’s going on here, it’s becoming a bigger chunk to in terms of having to manage students.

I had, we were just having an open discussion in one of the first year supervision session, when one of the students said to me and the one student just started crying. I mean I ‘m in a process here, I can’t now just go there to the student, so when the student was there I had to quickly contain that and still do what we needed to do. So when the other students left I said to the student you have to come see me and then started a process for that student again. So they have issues, hectic issues.

I can tell you this year I taught on the module “The introduction to social work”, and having read the “**who am I**” reports and how it played out in supervision, it became I felt so bad for the students because when they had to work out their assignment for diversity they were working on their issues instead of looking at what the content criteria was asking of them. They lost marks because they could not meet the criteria because they were grappling their own issues throughout the assignment and obviously I had to bring that to light in supervision and discussing that with them. So support is becoming a bigger chunk now from a first year level I’m saying now, from engaging with them on that level, it is heavy, It is heavy for them!!!

**For the students are the supervisors their only form of support or are there other forms of support of them?**

Um generally when students do disclose something of a nature where it’s troubling if it is affecting their academia, we tend to do the referral to student counselling here on campus. That is kinda a problem because, it is okay to refer them , when I know what is happening there ,you can’t get an appointment , they are booked up about two weeks almost in advance and whoever who is on the list first will be bumped up. So some of the students, I think, even though they go there and, told that they don’t have, I have to followed up with the students to found out if they got back yet and if they have not, what is the alternative for us because some of these students need to see someone , So student support services is also inundated, so away from that I will try to support that student just for the student to know the door is open to them but not to get too heavy into too much of the complications around what needs to be done for the intervention because there is only so much you can do after an hour (giggling).

**Can you describe to me what are your experiences and perceptions with regard to supportive supervision?**

If we individually have a student that we know, really this is bigger than us for the capacity for that time that we have for the student, the support (mention fieldwork lecturer) gives us in terms of she will also have time for the student, and see what can be done, if there is any structures can be put in place, is there any support from a departmental option that is also something that is a good thing for in my own perception off, you know, it’s not just we just send them to student counselling, so she will have time for the student, will also do follow up if she knows its major incidences or crisis, you know. Um yah Then obviously also from a departmental level through meetings and discussions as student matters are discussed um especially if it is a crisis matter. So the support also departmentally from individual parties who also engaged with students I think is also a good thing. I do think at this crossroad where students have massive, major issues we should think of having either a counsellor available because of that um challenge of just getting on the list for student support services so I think if there was a possibility because this is social work, not Nursing, this is not, this is social work and if we do not get the individual, ‘hulle gaan op mors da buitekant’ (they will mess up outside) with their own issues because they have never actually addressed it. We have too many social workers in the field with low emotional intelligence that I would say, so maybe around that I would say.

**So to improve the emotional intelligence and confidence of social workers from university level onwards?**

I know that is not very academic but we need to be honest with ourselves, that the cohort is changing because of what is happening in our communities, our communities are becoming the student now. So yeah I think we need to with the levels of trauma, crime and violence that people are exposed to, we need to not be so clinical in the aspect for support for our students.

Because I know that students sometimes feel that they are not supported by the social work department and that's their perception.

**Anything else you want to add?**

Silence Mmmm Experience around support, I don't mind availing myself to talk to students because for me, I don't get into their personal things but I try to relate what the personal is and how its impacting on the potential student or candidate student towards the becoming professional.

So I don't mind that students to come talk to me and say" Mam, I just want to talk to you for ten minutes" because to be the ear for ten minutes is not a, it's not a thing for me in terms of looking at this is my allotted hours and things because I also have a care for other beings and maybe that's why I'll say if you need, the door is open or just send me a message before or after supervision you need extra time. And there is just sometimes people want to be heard also man, not enough. I'm a great believer that you know what the answers are to your situation, so and they still young, let them find their feet as well.

**What is your understanding of administrative supervision?**

Oh...the marking and more marking, give marks and sending marks, keeping notes, that's also part of it, whether it be from a supervision meeting and (mention fieldwork lecturer) says that we covered this so making notes while she is talking so that we on the same page with her because students like to say we don't say the same thing, although we say the same thing. They have really strange listening skills. So keeping notes/ taking notes is very important for supervision purposes whether with the coordinator or with the students.

Uhhh (mention fieldwork lecturer) have devised a nice consultation form that helps you to keep track with the process with the student also. So I see that as part of administration and I think I don't mind that because students have a lot of stories so if there is a paper trail of events that's a good thing. So marking, doing marking, more marking and then obviously the administration of marks and submitting them to (mention fieldwork lecturer)

**Can you describe to me your experiences and perceptions with regard to administrative supervision?**

Some days I like it and other days I don't, PERIOD. (Laughing) period I don't know have more to say to you. Some days it is a joy and others it is tedious. So maybe it is just on my mood (laughing)

**Okay, we are close to the end of the interview, so thank you so far. Is there anything else you wish to add that may be beneficial to the study?**

I think that I would like to add this, having been at the dept for quite a number of seasons now, and even though supervision on first year level is hard work, because we get them raw and we have to mould them into a product, a bit of a product, I really enjoy that work because working with a raw product, is, I like a challenge also...I enjoy that. I, As I started the sentence of being here for a couple of seasons, I'm aware that people away from the Social work department and the Social work Profession, don't always see the value of supervision and that I think become a challenge in how we shaping our product here. And when I say that, that goes in line also with students because students come comes here and think it is a tutorial and it is not a tutorial; it is about talking about other people's lives, understanding the dynamics, the nature of the client system, understanding what, how you are facilitating a process.

I believe that we need to do more for supervision, not just on an academic plain but also in the field. Maybe I want to say something on a third year level because, how supervisors and when I say supervisors I mean when social workers becomes supervisors to students is also a process for some people and the educational value around, yes this is what we do in academia and this is what they do in practice, and sometimes we don't speak the same conversations around what we doing in practice because it is coming from this theoretical point of view

I think we need to do more a lot more support around, I'm not saying that we have to reinvent the wheel, I'm just saying that we can do a lot of support around that, there is student experiences and I 'm talking now from what I was exposed to on a third year level and first year level, and that is not such a negative experience for our students. Students go out in the field and hear "why are you doing social work" when this person is supposed to be supervising them. That kind of experience and approach, it is not gonna be a positive experience for our students and students walk away from that negative experience and go do something negative stuff as well..

**Are you speaking about supervisors in the field are... okay...?**

Particularly around our first year students when they go for their visits and volunteering shadowing, it is a 32 hours project that they have to do and they have to be under the supervision of a social worker and if the social worker is already jaded in the field, it does not bode well now when they come back into supervision where we now have to contain that and have to impact on the student, and impress on the student, you know that is that individuals experience, it may not be your experience. Take that as a learning curve but let it not influence your practice, if you are still having to create/locate your practice. I feel there needs to be more; maybe from an academic practice side especially around student supervision, I can't speak on supervision in general, although I know there are gaps there as well, I 'm speaking from my own experience but I 'm talking around because this is about academic and student experiences.

So no man, we making students negative already around what... they already have the negative perspective that social workers do nothing and social workers themselves are saying stuff to just compounds it and make it worse

**Why do you think that's the case (social workers being negative)?**

I think because social workers experience in the field have become either greatly dangerous or it's become a factor where it is overloaded with work, because now post is frozen and there is not a budget for another social worker and social workers are servicing communities of 25000 with one social worker rendering social services in that community.

I think it becomes taxing on your morale and your optimism, the believe that you have and the passion that you still have so I thinks it impacts gravely, but if someone who is new to the fold projecting that already, I think it becomes hard work for us also when they come back to this fold. It is 100 to 1 first the question/statement: *Mam, this is what the social workers say; why are you doing social work? Why don't you to do something else* and we need to contain this. In first year a lot of students drop out, the percentage for drop outs become very big what did I have last year; I had 15 students in one group and 10 students in the other group in another supervision from my allotted twenty per group for various contributing factors such as just not for me,

There is a lot we can still a lot of support that we can do around educational supervision.

**You also mentioned that a lot of people don't see the value in supervision, why do you think that is?**

I think because there is (silence) can I say this (giggling), I have to put my opinion out there.

From an opinion from what I have been exposed to is also this thing of when people have not been supervised themselves also and they went into an agency and there have never been supervision at all, it impacts the social workers perception around the educational part of supervision as well especially if the agency is open to take students. Then there is very little grooming and understanding around how that process impacts on the students and when the student is with us we expected to say but they supposed to know the processes. We give guardianship of our students for a whole entire day or for 32 hour project they are exposed to a practitioner and if the practitioners perceptions about what they can give back to the institution is not in line with the expectations that we have it creates this disjuncture in the students experience and the student cannot necessarily resolve this for themselves and what becomes a gap for us is that they don't always translate that very well in their consultations with academic supervisors because academic supervisors are also people with years of experience and also doing the academic side of educational supervision. So I think that's the disjuncture that comes and it leaves us with a lot of gaps and we think the student is under performing; it is gaps little gaps and processes that's not speaking to one another.

**Anything else, do you have any recommendations regarding field work supervision?**

Field work supervision, I think we can do a little more academically but I think we have given so much support already, we've got tutors available. I don't know, I'm at a loss for how students can...because consultation is part of supervision, feedback and critical feedback is essential for the development of an inexperienced worker. I think somewhere we need to do a lot more brainstorming around, not necessarily to convincing students, but to get their buy in that they need to consult more, when the supervisor says I'm available for consultation then the same people come, but the people who have the most to say, and underperforming in supervision are not the ones coming for supervision so they don't see the benefits of it. And when they do come they will say: *I've waited too long for consultation, Mam, I don't know why" and I will say" yes I also don't know why.*

The understanding for our students around consultation, I think consultation is such a key aspect for a student in social work which they don't engage with.

**Anything else in terms of fieldwork?**

"I think from the third level perspective we need to do much more community engagement around that aspect I just said, there is a gap with agency supervisors not understanding the educational value and purpose, as they see that as an additional role to what they already have to do in the field. So I think we must do more community engagement and invite them for a full day workshops, invite them for dialogue sessions and also understanding what they are faced with. From our point of view, yes we all have our outputs to be achieved; its evidence based but maybe not lose sight of the process and value of the process in the contribution to the students experience and the moulding of the practitioner. So I think we need community engagement, to invite them to strategic um discussions around what they think is supervision and can we support them to even fulfil their role because I think it is a lot around language as well, because if you tell people you must do this and do that it becomes a battle as well, because it is around language and how we frame our engagement with the individual and the agencies. So I think we need to do some community engagements have some workshops and even invite them, um (mention fieldwork lecturer) & I have been talking around the CPD training cause that also then ups the experience for the social worker in practice and it becomes a more positive experience for our student, I'm not saying necessary more successful but a more positive experience in terms of and I'm saying that holistically now not talking just from a academically, now because they see the student for a whole day and they get to know the personality, around what is an academic expectation but also the holistic view of the student for an educational purpose and what they can contribute.

**Okay, anything else?**

No I think 'fluit fluit my storie is uit' (whistle, whistle, my story is out)

**Just for clarity, you have spoken about third year and first year and you mentioned that you are a first year supervisor**

I'm a first year supervisor, for the last 6 months I been coordinating the SCW301 practice module.

**Anything else? Any questions.**

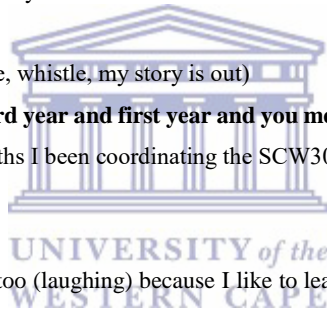
No, am done

But if you gonna have workshops invite me too (laughing) because I like to learn new things because it keeps you abreast in terms of thinking and sharing and I feed a lot of from being around other social workers because then I think that is kinda cool, I never thought of it like that, that kind of thing. Let me think of how I can integrate that into my own way of doing things. Invite me please (laughing)

**Any concerns...**

No, I'm good

**Thank you for taking the time for this interview. I think we done here...**



## Appendix J: Member Checking Letter

### MEMBER CHECKING OF RESEARCH FINDINGS OF CHAPTERS 4

#### Dear Participant

I selected member checking as a way to enhance my research findings. Member checking is important in qualitative` research as it enhances the accurateness and correctness of the findings. I selected member checking as I wanted to make sure that you agree with the themes and sub-themes of this study.

#### Your member checking role:

Your role as a participant in this research is to check if you think that the themes and sub-themes generated by the data are relevant in terms of the input that you provided. It is important to note that not all themes and sub-themes would be relevant to you as the findings contain narratives of 24 participants. **You have to check if you are able to see relevant aspects of your own narrative in the findings.**

Please respond to me whether you **CONFIRM and ENDORSE** (that is you confirm / agree that the themes and sub-themes are largely characteristic of the narratives you have provided) or **NEGATE OR CONTRADICT** (there is little or no similarity or correlation with the narratives you have provided). In the latter please provide reasons so that I can go recheck with the original transcriptions.

Please note further that the themes and sub-themes are confidential and subject to further editing and amendments and thus remain the intellectual property of the researcher and cannot be reproduced or disseminated at this time.

THANK YOU for your kind cooperation. It is very much appreciated by me.

**PLEASE COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING AND EMAIL THIS PAGE BACK TO ME.**

[Tick the relevant box.]

|   |          |
|---|----------|
| <b>FIELDWORK PARTICIPANT</b>  | <b>X</b> |
| <b>STAFF PARTICIPANT</b>  |          |
| I hereby <b>CONFIRM and ENDORSE</b> (that is I confirm / agree that the themes, sub-themes and categories are largely characteristic of the narratives I have provided to the researcher) | <b>X</b> |
| I hereby <b>NEGATE OR CONTRADICT</b> (there is little or no similarity or correlation with the narratives I have provided to the researcher)  |          |

**THANK YOU.**



## Appendix K: Editorial Certificate

22 May 2018

To whom it may concern

Dear Sir/Madam

**RE: Editorial Certificate**

This letter serves to prove that the thesis listed below was language edited for proper English, grammar, punctuation, spelling, as well as overall layout and style by myself, publisher/proprietor of Aquarian Publications, a native English speaking editor.

**Thesis title**

SOCIAL WORKERS' PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF FIELDWORK  
SUPERVISION IN THE BACHELOR OF SOCIAL WORK DEGREE

**Author**

Leticia Poggenpoel

The research content, or the author's intentions, were not altered in any way during the editing process, however, the author has the authority to accept or reject my suggestions and changes.

Should you have any questions or concerns about this edited document, I can be contacted at the listed telephone and fax numbers or e-mail addresses.

Yours truly



E. H. Londt  
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