

THE RATIONALE FOR THE INVOLVEMENT OF FIELD INSTRUCTORS IN PRACTICE EDUCATION

Marianne Strydom

INTRODUCTION

Practice education is regarded as an integral component of the curriculum in social work training (Bogo & Globerman, 1999; Raskin, Skolnik & Wayne, 1991:276; Unger, 2003:107), because it is through practice education that students develop the professional skills that form the basis of their future work performance (Bogo & Globerman, 1999). Practice education makes it possible for students to integrate theory and practice, develop intervention skills and manage ethically challenging situations (Litvack, Bogo & Mishna, 2010:228). Valentine (2004:3) rightly observes that practice education is the place where theory, ethics and skills meet to form the professional judgement characteristic of an effective social work practitioner. The quality of the social work profession and social workers is therefore partly determined by the availability and effectiveness of the practice education opportunities which are offered by the university (Kanno & Koeske, 2010:23), because these opportunities have an important influence on the graduates' readiness for practice (Wayne, Bogo & Raskin, 2006:161).

The important role of practice education in the training of social workers means that training institutions depend heavily on the willingness of welfare organisations to accommodate students for practice education, as well as on the willingness of social workers to act as field instructors (Bogo & Globerman, 1999). Field instructors are essential for the success of practice education placements, especially because the relationship between the student and the field instructor influences the student's perception of the learning experience, which in turn determines the student's satisfaction with practice education. This important educational role of field instructors is, however, seldom acknowledged in organisations as a formal role, which means that social workers often act as field instructors voluntarily without their workload being adjusted (Globerman & Bogo, 2003:65). Studies (Bogo & Power, 1992; Rosenfeld, 1988) have found that the workload of field instructors has not diminished (Bogo & Power, 1992:183), while the practice education of students has increased their workload (Rosenfeld, 1988:191).

Within this context the intention of this article is to determine how field instructors become involved in the practice education of students. The rationale for continuing their involvement in practice education is also explored. Armed with this knowledge, universities will be in a better position to support the field instructors in their teaching responsibilities in an attempt to continue implementing high-quality practice education programmes.

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

An empirical investigation was undertaken in the Western Cape metropolitan area and surrounding areas. The research can be classified as exploratory and descriptive (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delpont, 2002:139; Grinnell & Williams, 1990:150) as these designs are suitable for quantitative and qualitative research methods (Fouché & De Vos, 2005:153).

The population (De Vos *et al.*, 2002:139) consisted of all the social workers (27) who were involved as field instructors in the practice education of the third- and fourth-year students at a Social Work department of a South African university. These field instructors were active in a wide variety of organisations, such as child and family welfare organisations, hospitals, as well as state departments.

A self-administered semi-structured questionnaire (De Vos *et al.*, 2002:169) was used to gather mainly qualitative data, as only open-ended questions were asked. The quantitative data were gathered for compiling a profile of field instructors involved in the practice education of third- and fourth-year students. The qualitative data were collected by asking four open-ended questions based on the literature study on the rationale or the motivation of social workers to become and remain involved in the practice education of students.

All organisations were contacted by telephone or in writing to obtain permission for the research. After permission had been obtained, all field instructors were contacted by telephone and notified of the research. The questionnaires were distributed to the various field instructors for completion. Twenty-one (n=21) of the 27 (N=27) participants completed the questionnaires, which means that a response rate of 78% was obtained from the population.

The quantitative data were processed by computer, while the qualitative data were processed by transcribing all the responses. Themes, sub-themes and categories were then identified. All information gathered was treated as confidential, in accordance with the ethical code of the social work profession.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

In spite of the fact that practice education plays such a central role in the training of students, there are still insufficient research results available about the rationale or the motivation of social workers to act as field instructors (Bogo & Power, 1992; Globerman & Bogo, 2003; Lacerte, Ray & Irwin, 1989; Rosenfeld, 1988). Research (Bennett & Coe, 1998:349; Bogo & Power, 1992:186; Rosenfeld, 1988:189) done more than a decade ago indicated that social workers are essentially involved in practice education because of the intrinsic rewards received such as, for example, the satisfaction to be gained from involvement in teaching.

As noted by authors (Globerman & Bogo, 2003:65; Rohrer, Smith & Peterson, 1992:369) few studies have been done on what motivates social workers to act as field instructors; knowledge of the profession is therefore limited in this regard. In South Africa few articles have been published during the past ten years about practice education in general. Apparently no specific research on why social workers become involved and remain involved in practice education has appeared in South African publications or been registered recently on the NEXUS database. The focus in this article will therefore be on certain incentives that field instructors find supportive or motivating, and on what encourages them to remain involved in practice education.

The decision of field instructors to become and remain involved in field instruction is also influenced by circumstances in the organisation and the university. Wayne *et al.* (2006:161-163) observed that in America it is becoming increasingly difficult for universities to maintain quality in practice education as a result of the critical changes that have taken place in organisations and universities. One of the changes mentioned in organisations relates to the limited funds, which means that the workloads of social workers are increased, making it difficult for them to be involved in practice education. Regarding changes at universities, the emphasis that is placed on research and publications means that the liaison between the university and the welfare organisation for the monitoring of practice education is often left to part-time staff. Faculty staff are less involved in field teaching, because the commitment to, and interest in, liaison work have diminished. Such changes are probably also similar to the conditions in South Africa. Changes in policy, legislation and funding since 1994 have also placed more pressure on social workers and welfare organisations regarding productivity and the implementation of developmental services (Strydom, 2008:299). At the same time the switch to

a curriculum aimed at the achievement of specific exit-level outcomes and the associated assessment criteria has also brought about changes in the requirements for practice education.

These changes can result in social workers not having enough time to spend on practice education, which could in turn diminish their motivation to be involved in practice education. It could become increasingly difficult for universities to maintain quality in practice education considering the difficulty of recruiting and retaining high-quality practice education placements and especially field instructors. Strydom's (1993:117) research indicated that already by 1993 most universities in South Africa felt that the limited supervision by field instructors as a result of high workloads proved to be an obstacle in practice education programmes.

As the field instructors are chiefly responsible for the implementation of the practice education programme, it is important for the universities to determine what the rationale is for their involvement in practice education. Armed with this knowledge, universities will be in a better position to support the field instructors in their teaching responsibilities in an attempt to continue implementing high-quality practice education programmes.

RATIONALE FOR INVOLVEMENT OF FIELD INSTRUCTORS IN PRACTICE EDUCATION

There are various incentives that could influence field instructors to become and remain involved in practice education.

Incentives at welfare organisation

In the qualitative research that Globerman and Bogo (2003:67) conducted in 2003, it was found that the incentive of field instructors to remain involved in practice education was largely dependent on the dedication and support of their organisations. Especially field instructors emphasised the fact that their organisations embraced a learning culture and encouraged continual professional development as a motivating factor. Another theme that emerged was that field instructors and their organisations felt that they had something special to offer the students and the university. When the organisation was directed at a specific target group, the field instructors felt that they could offer the students unique opportunities in terms of a practice education placement. Field instructors also indicated that they were involved in practice education because of the advantages it held for the organisation. Advantages listed were, inter alia, that students took responsibility for part of the workload, as was also found in the study of Lacerte *et al.* (1989:107), and that students brought a new perspective on the service rendering of the organisation. Students were also seen as potential future employees of the organisation. Globerman and Bogo (2003:71) found that the motivation of social workers to act as field instructors has shifted from the mainly intrinsic rewards and personal value that practice education offered through their involvement to the value that students hold for the organisation.

In earlier research (Bogo & Power, 1992:183; Rosenfeld, 1988:191) field instructors identified some aspects of the welfare organisation as supportive, namely that their workload was decreased and that they were allowed to attend training sessions at the university. Incentives that positively influenced their decisions to continue with practice education were the availability of office space for students, administrative support and the availability of telephones for use by students. The welfare organisation's acknowledgement of their contribution to practice education was also experienced by social workers as an encouraging aspect in the study done by Bennett and Coe (1998:348).

Personal incentives for field instructor

In addition to the support of their organisation as an incentive, *professional growth* was identified in Bogo and Globerman's (2003:69) research as the second most important motivation for the involvement of field instructors in practice education. A theme that emerges strongly is that students bring new ideas to the practice situation, thereby forcing field instructors to think more critically about their work performance. This in turn enables social workers to stay in touch with new developments in social work theory and practice. In the research by Bogo, Regehr, Woodford, Hughes, Power and Regehr (2006:587) field instructors indicated that especially academically strong students add value to an organisation, as well as to the field instructor, in that mutual learning takes place. Field instructors are compelled to reflect critically on their performance and the services that the organisation renders, as well as about ways to improve service delivery. These recent findings confirm those of the study by Lacerte *et al.* (1989:107) undertaken in the late 1980s to determine why field instructors become and remained involved in practice education. They found that field instructors had the opportunity to be brought up to date with the newest theoretical knowledge.

A small number of field instructors regard practice education as their professional responsibility towards the social work profession, a finding which emerged from Bogo and Globerman's (2003) study, and from the research of Lacerte *et al.* (1989:107).

Personal motivation was identified as the third and last motivating factor in the research of Globerman and Bogo (2003). Field instructors indicated that they regarded the teaching of students to have a personal value, because their input made it possible for the student to integrate theory and practice. Further personal motivations related to the fact that they could, as a result of their experience, make a unique contribution to the development of the student and thus to the next generation of social workers.

The themes that emerged around personal growth and personal motivation partly confirm research done in the 1980s and 1990s (Bennett & Coe, 1998; Bogo & Power, 1992; Lacerte *et al.* 1989; Rosenfeld, 1988), which found that the intrinsic rewards gained from involvement in practice education play a role in the decision of field instructors to be involved in practice education. Intrinsic rewards included the satisfaction to be gained from training (Bogo & Power, 1992:186; Lacerte *et al.*, 1989:107), the contribution made towards the profession, the acquisition of new ideas, the decrease of boredom, the skill of the student who is involved with the welfare organisation (Bennett & Coe, 1998:349; Rosenfeld, 1988:189), as well as the opportunity to make a contribution to the professional development of the student (Lacerte *et al.*, 1989:107).

Incentives from university

Regular contact with the university is seen as an incentive by field instructors for their continued involvement in practice education. As indicated in Rosenfeld's (1988:189) earlier study, the field instructors' satisfaction with the university is partly determined by the regularity of contact with the university, as well as the quality of the university's training programme for field instructors. From other studies (Hartung Hagen, 1988:229; Rosenfeld, 1988:193; Skolnik, 1988:62) done in the 1980s, it seems that field instructors have repeatedly called for more contact with the university. This linkage or communication with the university seems to remain important to field instructors, considering that research (Bennett & Coe, 1998:348; McInnes-Dittrich & Coe, 1997:9) done ten years later found that the communication between field instructors and the university was considered a more important incentive in a field instructor's decision to continue involvement with practice education than interaction with the student.

Unger's (2003:116) more recent research into the support that field instructors in rural areas require from the university again confirms the importance of regular contact, as field instructors still indicated regular phone calls to be one of the most preferred methods of support. Other aspects considered important in terms of support were, inter alia, orientation as to the expectations of the university, as well as visits from the liaising staff to the organisation. Universities must thus still foster this liaison with welfare organisations to ensure the success of the practice education programme.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

The results of the study are explained with reference to the research questions which were mainly aimed at determining:

- how social workers became involved in practice education;
- the rationale or motivation for remaining involved in practice education;
- the perspectives of the field instructors on the value of student practice education for the organisation; and
- the views of the field instructors on the ideal situation in which to teach students.

PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS

An equal number of the participants were between the ages of 30 and 39 (7) and 40 and 49 (7). Almost half (10) of the participants had between 10 and 19 years of work experience. The rest (7) had between one and nine years of work experience. Most of the participants (13) had four or fewer years of experience in practice education. The majority (16) of the participants had been with their present organisation for between one and nine years. Regarding their qualifications, the majority of the participants (8) have a postgraduate degree or a four-year degree in Social Work (6). The minority (7) have a three-year Diploma in Social Work.

RATIONALE FOR BEING INVOLVED IN PRACTICE EDUCATION

The participants were required to explain how they became involved in practice education. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 clearly shows that most of the participants became involved in practice education as a result of a direct request by their immediate employers or by the university (7). Another reason was that there were no other permanent or qualified social workers available (4). Some of the field instructors became involved because the organisation was already involved in practice education (3). The minority (2) of the field instructors became involved because the organisation needed staff for group and community work projects and to manage the workload, because practice education was part of the responsibilities of the job description (2) and because of their desire to be involved in the teaching of students (2). Only one (1) participant became involved voluntarily. Field instructors in this research group thus became involved in practice education almost by accident and not because practice education was coupled to a specific position. The reasons given by the participants for becoming involved in practice education confirm the findings of the study of Lacerte *et al.* (1989:107).

TABLE 1
 WAYS IN WHICH PARTICIPANTS BECAME INVOLVED IN PRACTICE EDUCATION

Ways in which participants became involved in practice education	Number of participants
Approached by university or by head/supervisor of institution	7
Only permanent or qualified social worker in office	4
Organisation was already involved with practice education	3
Desire to be involved with student practice education	2
Practice education was part of job description	2
Office needed staff for group and community work projects and to manage workload	2
Field instructor approached university	1
Total	21

N=21

RATIONALE FOR REMAINING INVOLVED IN PRACTICE EDUCATION

The participants were asked to state their rationale for remaining involved in practice education. The sub-themes and categories that emerged are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 demonstrates that the first and most important sub-theme to emerge as a reason why field instructors remain involved in practice education is the personal motivation or intrinsic rewards gained through teaching. Seventeen of the responses referred to this sub-theme.

TABLE 2
 RATIONALE TO STAY INVOLVED IN PRACTICE EDUCATION

THEME: RATIONALE OF PARTICIPANTS TO STAY INVOLVED IN PRACTICE EDUCATION		
Sub-theme	Category	Narratives
1. Intrinsic rewards/ Personal motivation	1. Preparation for practice	<p>“...to prepare themselves for practice”. (“... ten einde hulle voor te berei vir die praktyk”.)</p> <p>“To prepare students to work for a welfare organisation”. (“Om studente voor te berei om by ’n welsynsorganisasie werksaam te wees”.)</p>
	2. Input into next generation of social workers	<p>“Input in young upcoming social workers ...” (“Insette in jong opkomende maatskaplike werkers...”)</p> <p>“To give students the opportunity to learn, grow and experiment in a safe environment so that they will become good colleagues in the future.” (“Om studente kans te gee om te leer, groei en eksperimenteer in veilige omgewing sodat hulle goeie kollegas in die toekoms kan wees.”)</p> <p>“To experience how students’ self-image/self-worth increases and to be able to handle the demands of the practice better.” (“Om te ervaar hoe studente se selfbeeld/waarde verhoog en hul die eise van die praktyk beter kan hanteer.”)</p>

	3. Unique contribution made	<p><i>“My life opportunities gave me broad experience, many aspects of which contribute to my insights as social worker.”</i> (“My lewensgeleenthede het aan my breë ervaring gebied waarvan baie aspekte bydra tot my insigte as maatskaplike werker.”)</p> <p><i>“I feel that with my experience as social worker I can contribute to their professional growth.”</i> (“Ek glo met my ervaring as maatskaplike werker kan ek ’n bydrae maak in hul professionele groei.”)</p> <p><i>“Pleasant to make a contribution to students’ development.”</i> (“Lekker om bydrae te lewer tot studente se ontwikkeling.”)</p> <p><i>“I enjoy seeing students grow.”</i> (“Ek geniet dit om die studente te sien groei.”)</p>
2. Professional growth	1. Exposure to new ideas	<p><i>“The organisation benefits from the student placements, and field instructors are exposed to (or reminded of !!!) theoretical foundations of social work, which leads to self-development.”</i> (“Die organisasie vind baat by studenteplasings en praktykopleiers word blootgestel aan teoretiese fondasies van maatskaplike werk (ter herinnering!!!) wat ook tot self-ontwikkeling lei.”)</p> <p><i>“Keeps me also up to date with development.”</i> (“Hou my ook op hoogte van ontwikkeling.”)</p>
	2. Mutual learning and development	<p><i>“It is satisfactory and pleasant to work with young, developing colleagues and to grow and develop with them.”</i> (“Dit is bevredigend en heerlik om saam met jong ontwikkelende kollegas te werk en te groei en te ontwikkel saam met hulle.”)</p> <p><i>“... but also to learn from/about students (one is never too old to learn”).</i> (“... maar ook om by/van studente te leer (mens is nooit te oud daarvoor nie”).)</p>
	3. Professional obligations	<p><i>“The undersigned is of the opinion that students must receive practice education.”</i> (“Ondergetekende is van mening dat studentepraktykonderrig moet kry.”)</p> <p><i>“To give the necessary guidance and support to the student, seeing that I was also a student.”</i> (“Om die nodige leiding en ondersteuning aan die student te bied, aangesien ek self ’n student was.”)</p>
3. Advantages of organisation	1. Exposure to specific set-up and/or client system	<p><i>“I feel that I as field instructor can expose students to hospital social work as this was not encouraged during my student years.”</i> (“Ek voel dat ek as praktykopleier studente kan blootstel aan hospitaal maatskaplike werk aangesien dit tydens my studiejare nie so aangemoedig was nie.”)</p> <p><i>“To make students aware of the client system.”</i> (“Om studente bewus te maak van die kliëntsisteem.”)</p>
	2. Mitigate workload	<p><i>“To decrease the workload.”</i> (“Om die werkslading te help verlig.”)</p>

Intrinsic rewards or personal motivation

The first sub-theme was that the intrinsic rewards inherent in practice education motivate the social workers to remain involved with practice education. The categories identified were that the participants felt that they had to prepare students for the practice situation as well as that they wanted to make some input into the next generation of social workers. The last two

categories were that the participants felt that they could make a unique personal contribution to the development of students and that personal satisfaction was derived from this involvement.

In this research group the rationale for the participants' continued involvement in practice education was mainly personal motivation or the intrinsic rewards gained through practice education, corresponding with research done in the 1980s (Lacerte *et al.*, 1989; Rosenfeld, 1988:189) and the 1990s (Bogo & Power, 1992:186). This is in contrast with Globerman and Bogo's (2003) findings that personal motivation or intrinsic rewards are less important motivations for social workers' continued involvement in practice education.

Professional growth

Professional growth (10) was the second sub-theme to emerge. In terms of the different categories, the participants felt that students exposed them and their organisations to new ideas. The fact that mutual learning takes place between students and the field instructors was another category to be highlighted. Some participants felt professionally obliged to be involved in practice education.

This sub-theme and categories concur especially in the research of Globerman and Bogo (2003:69), in which professional growth was identified as an important theme. In earlier research by Rosenfeld (1988:189) it was also found that the need to grow professionally plays a role in field instructors' decision to be involved in practice education.

Advantages for the organisation

The final sub-theme was the fact that field instructors are involved in practice education because of the advantages it holds for the organisation (3). Two categories were identified, namely that the placement creates a unique opportunity for the student because of the specific nature of the organisation's client system, and that the workload is lessened. These aspects were also identified by field instructors in the research by Bogo and Globerman (2003:67) as the most important reasons for their continued involvement in practice education.

Different to Bogo and Globerman's (2003) research, the participants who took part in this research still focused more strongly on personal motivation or the intrinsic rewards and the professional growth achieved through practice education as the rationale for their continued involvement in practice education. An aspect that did not emerge was that the organisation encouraged them to be involved in continued professional development and training because of a learning culture in the organisation.

From April 2010 all social workers who are registered with the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP, 2010) and who wish to remain registered and practice the profession must participate in continuing professional development (CPD) as a requirement for registration to practice. This legal requirement means that organisations would have to encourage social workers to become involved in approved CPD activities in order to build knowledge and skills, which could create a stronger learning culture in organisations.

PERSPECTIVE ON THE VALUE OF STUDENT PRACTICE EDUCATION FOR THE INSTITUTION

An attempt was made to determine the benefit that student practice education holds for the welfare organisation in the light of the fact that the field instruction of students probably increases the workload. The field instructors were therefore requested to describe their perspectives on the value of student practice education for their organisations. The perspectives of the participants are divided into two sub-themes as discussed below.

TABLE 3
 PERSPECTIVES OF PARTICIPANTS ON VALUE OF STUDENT PRACTICE
 EDUCATION FOR ORGANISATIONS

THEME: PERSPECTIVES ON VALUE OF STUDENT PRACTICE EDUCATION FOR ORGANISATIONS	
Sub-theme	Categories
1. Help with handling of the workload	1. Implementation of group and community work projects 2. More intensive and better service delivery to client system
2. Renewal in organisation	1. Valuable new ideas and knowledge

Help with handling of the workload

The responses of most participants (15) related to the fact that students help with the workload. Participants here referred to the fact that students offer to help with the implementation of the service plan, especially of group and community work projects. A response was: *“Exposure to projects and group work within the organisations is valuable.”* (“Blootstelling aan projekte en groepwerk binne die instansie is waardevol.”)

Another aspect that emerged is that services can be delivered with greater thoroughness to the client system as students have more time available. One participant remarked: *“They help with groups and projects and intensive work with cases.”* (“Hulle help met die aanbied van groepe en projekte en intense werk met gevalle.”)

Participants also referred to the fact that student practice education improves the organisation’s service delivery to the client system. One participant mentioned: *“Their participation broadens our impact on the community.”* (“Hulle deelname verbreed ons impak op die gemeenskap.”) Another participant remarked: *“It (student practice education) is of great value to our organisation and helps us with caseloads and to provide a better service to the client system.”* (Dit (studente praktykonderrig) is van groot waarde vir ons organisasie en help ons met gevalleladings en om die kliëntsisteem beter te bedien.”)

As most participants were of the opinion that students offer help to cope with the workload, the involvement of organisations in student practice education and the university is of definite value and benefit to the organisation. The fact that practice education is also beneficial to the organisation, as emphasised by field instructors in Globerman and Bogo’s (2003:67) study, is confirmed by the above finding. The value that student practice education holds for an organisation can also be considered an incentive for their continued involvement in practice education.

Renewal in organisations

The fact that students bring renewal to organisations in the form of the latest knowledge and new ideas was the second sub-theme that was mentioned by seven (7) participants as the value of student practice education for the organisation. Participants referred especially to the fact that students bring the organisation up to date with what is happening in the social work profession as well as with the recent theories. Two participants remarked as follows: *“The organisation (social workers) remains up to date with changes in theory.”* (“Die organisasie (MWs) bly op hoogte met veranderinge op teoretiese gebied.”) *“Students bring valuable new ideas and knowledge, which is good for the image of the social work profession.”* (“Studente bring waardevolle nuwe idees en kennis wat die maatskaplikewerk-professie se beeld bevorder op ’n goeie manier.”)

The finding that involvement of organisations in student practice education brings renewal and enables social workers to remain up to date with current theory is in line with findings in studies by Bogo *et al.* (2006:587), Globerman and Bogo (2003) and Lacerte *et al.* (1989:107) in which these aspects were also listed by field instructors as some of the benefits to the organisation and the field instructors.

IDEAL CIRCUMSTANCES FOR INVOLVEMENT IN PRACTICE EDUCATION

An attempt was made to determine whether field instructors experience obstacles in performing their role. They were asked to describe the ideal circumstances under which they would like to be involved in field instruction. It appeared that the participants' experience of the ideal circumstances for involvement in field instruction mainly related to the aspects that could be regarded as incentives from the welfare organisation or the university. The sub-themes and categories are set out in Table 4 below.

TABLE 4
 IDEAL CIRCUMSTANCES FOR INVOLVEMENT IN PRACTICE EDUCATION

THEME: IDEAL CIRCUMSTANCES FOR INVOLVEMENT IN PRACTICE EDUCATION	
Sub-themes	Categories
1. Incentives at welfare organisation	1. Sufficient resources and facilities 2. Smaller workload 3. Special posts for practice education
2. Incentives from university	1. Driver's licences and access to university transport 2. Regular communication

Incentives at welfare organisation

The first sub-theme that emerged concerning the ideal circumstances to be involved in practice education related to the incentives offered by the organisation. Table 4 shows that in the opinion of field educators the ideal circumstances for practice education related to sufficient resources and facilities in the welfare organisation. Some participants (5) especially referred to the fact that transport and offices should be made available to students. One participant's comment about transport was: "...*unfortunately the organisation has just one car and seven staff members who need to use it*" ("... organisasie het ongelukkig net een motor en sewe personeel wat dit moet gebruik").

Another participant envisioned the following ideal regarding office space: "...*to have facilities that can accommodate everyone – an office for every member. A place where group work can be done*". ("... fasiliteite te kan hê waar almal geakkommodeer kan word – elke lid 'n kantoor. Plek waar groepwerk gedoen kan word".) Another remark by a participant was: "... *except that I often feel self-conscious about our infrastructure, especially office space and that students do not have much space for themselves*". ("... behalwe dat ek soms selfbewus voel oor ons infrastruktuur, veral kantoorryimte en dat die studente nie veel ruimte vir hulleself het nie".)

Another category that emerged is that workloads should be reduced so that field instructors could give more effective guidance to students (4). One participant remarked: "*Field instructor should have a small workload or one that can be handled more easily so that she can offer more support and guidance to the student.*" ("Praktykopleier moet 'n hanteerbare/min gevallelading hê, sodat sy meer ondersteuning en leiding kan bied aan student.")

Another type of ideal circumstance identified by two (2) participants is that field instructors should not be responsible for caseloads and that there should be posts for field instruction (2) only. In this regard a participant mentioned: “*Only students and no caseload and obligations.*” (“Net studente en geen gevallelading en verpligtinge.”)

The aspects that the study group considered as ideal in the welfare organisation are in agreement with findings of earlier research (Bogo & Power, 1992:183; Rosenfeld, 1988:191) that incentives such as workload and administrative support from the organisation influenced the decisions of field instructors to remain involved in practice education. Bogo and Power (1992:183) also found that workloads were not decreased when social workers were involved in practice education.

Incentives from university

Still another sub-theme that emerged concerning the ideal circumstances to be involved in practice education related to the incentives offered by the university. In the first category the focus was on the field instructors’ ideal that each student should be in possession of a driver’s licence and have access to the university’s transport for home visits (2). One participant remarked: (“*...and naturally everybody must have a licence!! to be independent – will also increase productivity*”). (“...en natuurlik almal met lisensies!! om onafhanklik te wees – sal ook groter produktiwiteit teweegbring”.)

The view of one participant regarding access to university transport was: “*The students should have access to the university car for home visits.*” (“Die studente moet toegang hê tot die universiteit se motor vir tuisbesoeke.”)

Lack of transport and the fact that not all students are in possession of driver’s licences have already been identified as a problem at universities in South Africa in the research done by Strydom (1993:116) in 1993. These problems were confirmed by this research group.

The last category concerns the fact that there should be regular communication between the lecturer at the university and the field instructor (1). A participant remarked as follows: “*Regular communication between the field instructors and the lecturers.*” (“Gereelde kommunikasie tussen praktykopleiers en dosente.”)

Regular communication between the field instructors and the university has been mentioned repeatedly in research (Bennett & Coe, 1998:348; Hartung Hagen, 1988:229; McInnes-Dittrich & Coe, 1997:96; Skolnik 1988:62; Rosenfeld, 1988:193; Unger, 2003:116) as an incentive considered by field instructors to be very important in their decision to remain involved in practice education. It is also seen as a supportive factor. This research group confirmed that regular communication with a liaison officer at the university is seen as an ideal circumstance for involvement in practice education.

DISCUSSION

Field instructors in this research group were mostly experienced social workers with more than ten years of work experience, and have been involved in practice education for more than two years. They became involved in practice education mainly because they had been approached by a senior person in their organisation or by the university, presumably because they had enough work experience to teach students.

One of the purposes of this investigation was to determine the rationale for the continued involvement of field instructors in practice education. The field instructors in this group mostly mentioned personal motivation or the intrinsic rewards that practice education holds for them.

These reasons largely concerned the preparation of social workers for practice, the inputs that are made into young social workers, the unique contribution that field instructors feel they can make to the professional growth of students and the personal satisfaction the field instructors gain from teaching. These findings correlate with research that was done in the 1980s and 1990s.

It seems that within the organisations where the participants work, emphasis on continued professional development and learning is not such that the participants feel encouraged to become and remain involved in practice education. These results differ greatly from the findings in recent research (Globerman & Bogo, 2003), which indicated that the reason for social workers to be involved in practice education has shifted from intrinsic rewards and personal motivation to the fact that continued professional development is supported and encouraged by the organisation. It seems, however, that the rationale for the social workers' continued involvement with practice education in this study group has not shifted, because continued professional development is perhaps not emphasised in their organisations.

This situation could change with the implementation of the legal requirement of the SACSSP (2010) where social workers have to acquire a certain number of points every year for continued professional development (CPD) before they can renew their registration as a social worker. Universities could perhaps obtain the permission of the SACSSP to award a certain number of points every year to social workers for their involvement in practice education. Involvement in practice education could build knowledge and skills and keep social workers abreast of developments in their field, which is part of the purpose of continuing professional development.

The participants were overwhelmingly positive about the value and especially the benefits that student practice education holds for the organisation. Here it seems that students do offer help in managing the workload, in carrying out the service plan and especially in the implementation of group and community work projects. The fact that students bring renewal and make it possible for social workers to remain up to date regarding theory and new developments in the profession can be seen as one of the most important incentives for the continued involvement of field instructors and organisations in practice education. This value that students have for the welfare organisation can also help to maintain the high quality of practice education programmes for universities and holds definite advantages for the organisations, specifically regarding the management of workload and continued professional development.

By listing the ideal circumstances for practice education, the focus was on defective resources and facilities in organisations and the fact that workloads should preferably be smaller in cases where students are accommodated for practice teaching. These obstacles are difficult to address in the current South African situation, where organisations are often hampered by financial constraints. Posts created especially for student practice education would not be a high priority for many of these organisations. The fact that the participants considered these incentives as part of ideal circumstances means that this could possibly not have been a determining factor in their decision to remain involved in the practice education of students.

In the matter of the incentives from the university, the fact that field instructors wish students to have access to the transport of the university especially for home visits is problematic, again largely because of the financial implications for the university. That not all students possess driver's licences also presents a difficulty for the university, because the acquisition of a driver's licence often requires students to have sufficient financial resources.

Regular communication between field instructors and lecturers was again emphasised as important by field instructors. Communication by means of regular telephone calls and training

sessions is one of the most important ways to build good relationships between field instructors and organisations, and one way to ensure that obstacles are overcome.

CONCLUSION

The quality of practice education programmes is determined by the partnership relationship between universities and welfare organisations and especially the social workers who act as field instructors. The benefits of practice education to the organisation and the social workers could be seen as the rationale for social workers to continue their involvement with practice education, apart from the intrinsic rewards and personal motivation to be gained from the teaching of students. If universities could obtain the permission of the SACSSP to award a certain number of CPD points every year to field instructors, this could act as an incentive for social workers and organisations to become and remain involved in practice education, which could contribute to the development of a learning culture in organisations.

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Dr Marianne Strydom, Department of Social Work, University of Stellenbosch, Stellenbosch, South Africa.