



African Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences

Publisher's Home Page: <https://www.svedbergopen.com/>



Research Paper

Open Access

Exploring the Underlying Challenges Faced by Social Work Interns in a Few Countries of the Developing World

Nyamaka L.¹  and Mangwiro Vongai P.² 

¹Department of Social Work, Bindura University of Science Education, Private Bag 741, Bindura, Zimbabwe. E-mail: lcnyamaka@buse.ac.zw

²Department of Social Work, Bindura University of Science Education, Private Bag 741, Bindura, Zimbabwe. E-mail: mpatievongai13@gmail.com

Article Info

Volume 5, Issue 1, February 2025

Received : 11 October 2024

Accepted : 21 January 2025

Published : 25 February 2025

doi: [10.51483/AFJHSS.5.1.2025.50-59](https://doi.org/10.51483/AFJHSS.5.1.2025.50-59)

Abstract

Social work training is central to professional development. Moreover, highly indispensable in training is the aspect of fieldwork placement or attachment for students to have a practical interaction with social work service users and contextualisation of social work theories, values, principles and ethics. This is premised on interactions of the placement organisations, the schools of social work and the students through the formative and summative forms of assessments and administrative processes. However, this paper highlights that there is a myriad of complications or challenges which are faced by students during their period of attachment. The challenges, specifically in the global south, are inherent in universities, ideally schools of social work, organisations of placement and those faced at personal level by students. This paper also highlighted that there stipulated guidelines for fieldwork training and also that there is need interventions for way forward through stipends for students, imparting education on diverse cultures, early supervisions and orientations only to mention a few.

Keywords: *Social work, Fieldwork, Social work interns, Fieldwork challenges*

© 2025 Nyamaka L. and Mangwiro Vongai P. This is an open access article under the CC BY license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license, and indicate if changes were made.

1. Introduction

Social work professional training comprises of two key components: the theoretical part, which involves learning and teaching offered in tertiary learning institutions like universities as well as polytechnics and the practical part, which is provided at agencies of social service during attachment or fieldwork practicum (Muchinako and Muridzo, 2015). The theoretical component comprises of a well-structured learning periods which are guided by relevant social science and social work curriculum to prepare the students for high quality social work practice. Fieldwork can be defined as a conduit through which students incorporate and

* Corresponding author: Mangwiro Vongai P., Department of Social Work, Bindura University of Science Education, Private Bag 741, Bindura, Zimbabwe. E-mail: mpatievongai13@gmail.com

integrate knowledge with values and principles of social work (Bogo, 2010). Fieldwork practicum is primarily considered to offer the student social workers the chance to situate theories grasped and learnt in lecture rooms into practice. Thus, this is predominantly intended to test, practice and verify social work or social science theories.

In this regard, this can be accomplished through involving students who also need to be pro-active members of the social work agency. In this respect, fieldwork practicum is basically the Supervision of the student in practice setup hence they need to be well equipped partially qualified to undertake social work responsibilities in the field under the helping agencies. According to Dhemba (2014) fieldwork or attachment practicum learning takes place at different levels, which are emotionally, intellectually and practically. Thus, fieldwork affords students the prospects of aligning theoretical understanding and learning with the real societal needs. In this case therefore students will have a real-life situation in the communities, amongst groups, individuals and agencies hence its can be viewed as a potential source of effective social work practice and learning curriculum which is responsive to the social problems. Also, it molds students to be acquainted with appropriated etiquettes through which they ought to respond social challenges.

In the same manner, attachment is designed to expose and give students experience on how the social work agencies function. General fieldwork' purpose is seen as to accustom social work students with concrete social work situations in preparation for effective and professional social work practice. Fieldwork is an initiation tool for students into the profession through the assimilation and inculcation of social work values, principles and ethics (Muchinako and Muridzo, 2015). It can be highlighted that; students' placements can be in country of academic study and training and others transcend international borders. Thus, can be premised on the view that social work profession is an internationally recognised profession guided and regulated same international bodies. This can therefore mean the universality of social work professional values, principles and ethics. The call for social workers to engage in international efforts is louder than in previous decades, driven by the intensifying effects of globalization and a growing recognition that social work issues stretch beyond national borders (Nuttman-Shwartz and Berger, 2012). However, despite the efforts being made to implicitly integrate the standards gotten in the classroom curriculum, and the real social work practice/social problem during the fieldwork practicum, are diverse and unique challenges which can devour students to effectively cultivate and acquire the hand-on part of social training.

2. Global Standards for the Education and Training of the Social Work Profession

The social work profession is guided right from its training to assure high quality learning and teaching as obligatory fortitudes toward professional competency. Thus, all schools of social work or universities offering social work in collaboration with social welfare agencies should aspire to and collaboratively work towards meeting the set standards by the IASSW and IFSW. The two herein international social work regulatory bodies developed standards with regard to programme curricula including field education (IASSW & IFSW, 2004). These standards show that there is a direct link between the in-class/lecture room or social work theoretical learning and the practicum of applying the values and ethics in service provision. With regard to standards regarding programme curricula, schools should consistently aspire towards the development of clear plans for organisation or planning, implementation and evaluation of the theory and field education components of the programme. Thus, there is need for the development of clear methods in the designing, the teaching and practicum as well as the formative and summative assessments of both. Also, there is need for the recognition and development of indigenous or locally specific social work education and practice from the traditions and cultures of different ethnic groups and societies, insofar that such traditions and cultures do not violate human rights. In this case therefore, one can note that fieldwork can be a reputable source of reality and the bedrock of indigenising and developing authentic social work knowledge and practice. Also, ensuring that the curricula help social work students to develop skills of critical thinking and scholarly attitudes of reasoning, openness to new experiences and paradigms, and commitment to life-long learning is viewed as vital component of social work training (IASSW & IFSW, 2004). Thus, one can note that that fieldwork can offer a platform for students to furbish their skills learnt in the social work lecture rooms through direct interface with the clientele. Fieldwork education also, under the guidelines, is supposed to be sufficient in duration and complexity of tasks and learning opportunities to ensure that students are prepared for professional practice. It can be

viewed that, during fieldwork, students are supposed to be exposed to diverse and intricate cases and situations which can augment their capacity to deal with compound issues affecting the communities and individuals.

Also, the bodies call for planned co-ordination between the schools of studies and the agency/field placement setting and there is need for provision of effective orientation for fieldwork instructors or supervisors who are also to be appointment and qualified and experienced, as determined by the development status of the social work profession in any given country. This is also supported by Ferns and Moore (2012) who posits that best practice is achieved through establishing and maintaining partnerships between community and industry hence the agencies can be viewed as the means of conveying what is in the fields/communities to the institutions of higher learning as students interact with the communities during fieldwork. In this case, provision for the inclusion and participation of field instructors in curriculum development is seen as vital as it can inform in developing responsive and consistent knowledge to the real-life challenges. Also, making available, to fieldwork instructors or supervisors, a field instruction manual that details its fieldwork standards, procedures, assessment standards/criteria and expectations is viewed as key as it avoids a 'haphazard' assessment. Above all, adequate and appropriate resources, are supposed to be available to meet the needs of the fieldwork component for all parties that is the agency, college and the students for effective experiential learning during attachment.

3. Assessments of Students of Fieldwork

The need by tertiary institutions to test or apply the theoretical aspects of the curriculum has called for the planning of syllabuses from mere traditional and of absolute classroom-based work to a more inventive approach. In this case therefore, there is need for timely alignment of the theory and the employability capabilities of students. Assessments are viewed as integral to sound teaching practice. This idea is supported by Ferns and Moore (2012) who highlight the importance of a specific assessment strategies to scaffold learning experiences and ensure 'progress and coherence' thus maximising the prospect of the ongoing development of employability aptitudes. One should therefore note the assessments are multidimensional in nature and also, they present educational, ethical and organisational dilemmas. According to Yorke (2011), assessments comprise of (1) a record of the experience; (2) actual workplace performance; and (3) a reflection on the work-based experience. Thus, it is critically important for student's performance to be assessed through observations of actual work as it takes place. However, one can note that the apt recording of attendance can be viewed as an administrative role usually by the human resource task.

Reflection component is pertinent also in tertiary education as it is a tool or means for thought development, thus, student's ability to reflect is coined around all elements of the challenges presented hence it enhance her or his knowledge development basing on theoretical understating (Ferns and Moore, 2012). This is also supported by Dewey (1910), who postulates that learning occurs from actively addressing meaningful problems illuminates the accumulation of experience and consequently greater wisdom amongst experienced professionals. In this case it calls for promotion of feedback and testing of insights which are also supposed to be done effectively and commendably. For Ferns and Moore (2012), the frequency, the timing of the observations of students' work, along with the feedback given, has a significant bearing on learning. Thus, feedback ought to update the student about his or her actual performance relative to what is expected and the overall goal of the educational experience. Assessments are vital in the tertiary education as it is a tool for professional development and employability moulding. Thus, it requires that the learner receives useful and meaningful feedback in a well-structured way. One should note that there are several forms of assessments and they will be explained below:

3.1. Forms of Assessments

Two types of forms of assessments which are formative assessment and summative assessment are discussed below.

3.2. Formative Assessment

In pursuit of excellent professional skills development and integration of the theory and practice, there is need for appropriate quality of feedback. This also marks the corrective and molding of reflective thinking of what

was learnt and real practice. This is supported by Hodges (2011), who alluded that formative assessments expedite constructive feedback which assist the students' learning and consolidations of knowledge and skills. According to Dimo (2013) the main purpose of formative assessment is to give regular feedback to learners in order to encourage learning and to afford students with information which will enhance them judge the efficacy of their learning. In this case however there might be differing ways, or possibly conflicting views, as to how this is done especially in the varying organizations with unique organisational values and traditions. Thus, what constitutes better feedback or not remain a key point and whether students are able to reflect on the feedback to enhance their efficiency and future employability prospects.

In relation to the above, Dimo (2013), further highlight that there must be acknowledgment, then, from supervisor given, that some learners will not easily decode and be able to translate the feedback received, since feedback must go beyond transmission of information. Thus, the way how a supervisor articulates the feedback and the context can motivate or demoralizes the student's motivation to learn while also the insightfulness or tone used is an indispensable component for effective learning. It can be noted that, due to differences and wide range of issues can affect the quality of feedback hence leading to poor experiences relative to the expected experience. Work-based learning compromises quality assurance and validity of the assessment process (Yorke, 2011; Hodges, 2011). Scaffolding the assessment points maximises the value of assessment experience and guarantees feedback from preceding assessments informing future assessments, ultimately resulting in higher quality skill attainment (Yorke, 2011). Agency based and university-based supervisors need good data about how learners are progressing in order to aid reflection before making an action to help further support the development of inordinate critical skill and independence. In this case therefore, formative assessments can be regarded as part corrective measures to align the demands of social work assessments for professional development and the agencies' value-based practice. In the Zimbabwean context, some universities like Bindura University of Science Education and University of Zimbabwe uphold preliminary formative assessments during the eve of the fieldwork practicum to see to it if it is in line with demands of the regulating bodies like the Council of social work.

3.3. Summative Assessments

Summative assessment can be defined as the measure of a student's performance or level of a student performance or level of accomplishments and achievements at the end of sequence of study. According to Hodges (2011) the main purpose of summative assessment is to make a judgment concerning each learner's performance. It should be highlighted that the results of summative assessment are stated as marks. According to York (2011), the purpose of summative assessment entail among others entails the fitness to continue to higher level of tertiary or the next stage of learning. Success in the final examination signifies that the graduate is qualified to enter the profession after success in the field examination.

4. Challenges Faced by Social Work Interns During Fieldwork Placement in a Few Countries of the Developing World

Fieldwork practice has been recognised as a core component of social work education ever since its commencement. Fieldwork education provides opportunities to try out first hand social work practice roles, to develop curiosity and a critical approach to theory and practice and to examine one's professional identity. Thus, fieldwork practice is a key part of education for social work practice. However, there is diverse school/university, agency based and personal challenges faced during the course of placement by the students which will be discussed below. Some of the challenges faced by a few countries of the developing world like Zimbabwe, Lesotho, South Africa and include poor orientation, disconnect in social work conceptualisation, insufficient supervision, strained professional relationships only to mention a few, and they are discussed below:

4.1. Disconnect in Social Work Conceptualization

Some students fail to integrate or link social work theory and practice (Dimo, 2013). This entails that they cannot see that what they practiced requires any form of theoretical underpinning. Thus, some social workers when questioned about integrating theoretical social work, acquired in universities, into practice and they specified that they did not have a clue, they frequently felt that they were performing their duties based on their

instinct than from social work knowledge base learnt during their lecture classroom practice. This can be due to the fact that, since its inception, the social work profession as a western culture orientation and bias hence, despite the globalized form of challenges, some projects (community development, advocacy) are only relevant in the African culture and perhaps deviate from vast theoretical knowledgebase which is individualistic and clinical. For Matthew and Lough (2017), this left some students questioning whether acquired skills would be useful in, and transferrable to, future jobs in their home country in this case of international placements. However, it is difficult to wholly assume that there is an absolute gap between theory and practice. What can be agreed is that social worker students' understanding of the work they undertake is perhaps far from 'theory-free. One must also note the differences of understanding theory from person to person. Also, theory may perhaps not be implicitly articulated, and it may not be used accordingly.

4.2. Delayed University Supervision

Also, delays in university supervision visits worsen the issue of poor alignment of roles with the social work ethical base expectations. Thus, it can be of value if students are firstly assessed some weeks after placement to align what they are/expected to do with social work demands. Also, this is worsened as the school industrial liaisons' partnerships with agencies may perhaps be weak, leads to a nonexistence of structure in placements, compromising student monitoring (Schwartz *et al.*, 2011). In Zimbabwe students indicated that university supervisors supervise student come late for supervision this is supported by Muchinako and Muridzo's (2015) research's that the school supervisor assessed them during the last week of fieldwork. Therefore late assessment of students can also affect the outcome of the quality of students being produced as they might be attached at wrong institutions or organizations. Consequently, earlier assessments could help improve in practice as needed for effective training.

4.3. Insufficient Supervision and Support During Attachment

The quality of feedback given to the students by agency-based supervisors is critical in serving the purpose of the fieldwork for students. In this case the students should be under the supervision of social work knowledge-furnished professional for effective and sustained individualised educational experience. In South Africa and Zimbabwe students explained that feedback from non-social work supervisors or even from social work supervisors was not enough or not provided. However, it should be noted that some students go through supervision by non-social work staff that perhaps have little or no social work values, ethics and principles (Dimo, 2013). This can probably affect the remedial part and effective reflection to align social work and practice or correct social work-related inconsistencies. According to Muchinako and Muridzo (2015) most students are supervised by non or unqualified social workers. This therefore posed challenges and difficulties during the course of fieldwork as students are guided by unqualified social agency supervisors with difficulties in linking to social work ethics and methods, some supervisors who did not appreciate effective report compilation, their formatting and student(s) supervision and assessment is done as well as maintenance of records of the student's progress or lack of and lack of guidance by the supervisor. In this case also this can even be a recipe for role confusion and non-social work-related assignments and tasks. This is supported by Muchinako and Muridzo (2015) who pointed out that there were the odd circumstances where a few agencies tend to view the student(s) as extra hands for their manual work they had accumulated in the agency. Examples included governmental and non-governmental childcare agencies that thought the students were useful addition resource to labour in laundry section.

4.4. Strained Professional Relationship

Moreover, poor student- supervisor professional relationship is another challenge faced by students during fieldwork. Carelse and Poggenpoel (2016) tacitly highlighted that social work supervision is characterized by a reciprocal, mutual, and anti-discriminatory relationship between the student and the agency supervisor. The relationship is based on the models, theories, and perspectives on supervision which are adopted by the social work regulating agencies. However, one should note that due to differences between the students and the supervisor the relationships can be strained and hence affecting the learning experiences. It should be noted also that students can have negative attitude towards the supervisor or vice versa. Also, this can be attributed to poor preparations and orientation. This is supported by Moorhouse (2013) who aptly say it is the

quality of relationship between two parties during supervision which influences whether supervision is negatively or positively experienced. Dimo (2013) further argues that the relationship enhances student's development of professional skills, knowledge and values and this can be environmental (the setting in which supervision transpires, duration of supervisory relationship, and practice of people involved in this relationship) and contextual (conflict may be due to "misfit" between supervisor and supervisee in terms learning styles, theoretical orientation, goals, personality, case conceptualization, therapeutic intervention and gender issues). This can therefore justify the challenge which majority of the students in Dimo's (2013) research which indicated that 80% of students did not get sufficient supervision during placement.

Moreover, Muchunako and Muridzo (2015) indicated that most students are attached in the Department of Social Welfare in the Zimbabwean context. However, due to the increasing numbers of social work training institutions in the country, there are challenges in securing placements. In this case also, some students are extremely affected as the DSW which traditionally recruited social work students for fieldwork, could not take many students like before due to constraints like staffing (due to brain drain) and resource limitations. It is also the hustles met by students and the university policies of forms of placement which also affect the duration of placement. In this case Muchunako and Muridzo further highlighted that students were being denied the prospect for fieldwork placement by some agencies since they were available for a limited space of time. This is also in line with Tanga (2013) who indicated that students were being rejected from some agencies that initially offered them a place due to no space.

4.5. Inadequate Orientation

A study conducted by Tanga (2013) in Lesotho indicated inadequate fieldwork preparations poses a challenge which affect both parties (supervisor student). In the study, it came out that the preparation that is being given to students prior to embarking on fieldwork practice is inadequate and brief especially for level one students. This is supported by scholars Matthew and Lough (2017) who asserted that there are poor preparation and orientation procedures in schools, such as pre-departure training on culture shock and knowledge of the host culture. This entails a lack of proper guidance before students proceeded to fieldwork practice. Tanga (2013) further indicated that fieldwork supervisors complained about absence of manuals to guide them on roles and responsibilities. Also, fieldwork supervisors lamented of poor coordination and absence of a planning meeting with responsible university supervisors to prepare for students' placement in their agencies with regards to goals and expectations. In this case one can note that this can affect the entire process or course of fieldwork as the responsible parties are not even well informed about it.

4.6. Language and Communication Barriers

Mamabolo (2013) aptly indicated that language as part of the negative challenges that students face during field work placement. Non-South African students for example from neighboring countries (Zimbabwe) work with diverse clientele during field work practice. Most of their clients are South African indigenous people and they use colorful ethnic languages. This affects most international students as they find it tough to render social work services because of the language obstructions. In Zimbabwe according to Mangwiro *et al.* (2020).

4.7. Lack of Soft Skills

Additionally, lack of computer skills is another challenge which is encountered by many students in capturing data and for compiling reports. In some cases, the agencies do not have computers hence affected students' learning during the fieldwork placement. This is also attributed to poor Pre-Fieldwork Orientation in terms of classroom or lecture learning where. In this case students indicated that though they received pre-fieldwork deployment briefing, they felt it was not sufficient and also some courses offered (computer science) lack the practical component for effective orientation and preparation for work.

4.8. Cultural Differences that Challenge Values

In the case of international placements, students come across cultural practices social and norms that challenge their personal and professional principles. Because students are usually in the minority of the host country or region, they have uncomfortable encounters of class, race, gender roles, and sexuality that diverged with or even slighted students' personal beliefs, values and identity (Lager *et al.*, 2007). Students also indicate conflicts

with professional ideals learned in their Western oriented education, reporting situations that they viewed challenging and sometimes violate the professional boundaries this is even supported by Matthew and Lough (2017) who highlighted that culture shock occurs at times during placements when learners go abroad and encounter social ways of life different from their own.

4.9. Financial Hardships

In relation to the above students encounter acute financial hardships during fieldwork as they get inadequate, if not none, on financial support from government/agencies or bursaries. In a study done by Dhemba (2012), one of the students summed up the difficulties pointing out that they face so many hardships due to inadequate financial sustenance when on attachment. Thus, students struggle with financial upkeep for their personal maintenance and transport (Dhemba, 2014). Thus, some agencies are not ready to give allowances to students hence the need to limit costs prompt learners to choose agencies close to areas to their areas of residence which at times do not meet the intended outcome of professional development. A study conducted by Mamabolo (2013) supports this as it indicated that Wits social work students at Wits had to travel long distances to field placements, yet they are not paid, some lamented of being sidelined and not being recognized as part of the agency's staff, some endured problems with their supervisors

5. Way Forward

There are diverse ways to deal with the challenges inherent in social work fieldwork placement and these are espoused below.

5.1. Provide Orientations

From the above discussion, one can note that there is need for effective orientation of social work students to position them for social work practice. One should note that, this can take two forms or phases. The first one can be a university-based orientation where the institutional industrial liaison officers explain to the students on what fieldwork really entail, its significance or meaning. From this background, one is of the view that social work students perhaps leave their schools without knowledge of how they will conduct themselves, with no clear or progressive purposes for professional training or growth but eyeing securing flashy and paying experiences. According to Florida State University (2021) students should be given a comprehensive orientation to the placement and to the agency as well immediately upon their arrival. Therefore, at the organisational level supervisors should plan to greet the student on the first day of their internship and introduce them to as many of the staff as possible. At this stage there should be a written orientation schedule outlining dates and times of agency orientation, in addition to content to be covered, written expectations concerning dress requirements, leave time and holidays, attendance requirements, etc. Also, it is from this stage that the students are informed about specific agency information concerning administrative structure with names and titles of administrative staff, financial structure, pertinent policies and procedures, etc. Specific agency recording requirements are also key hence they are supposed to be given to the students to familiarise and this can be through provision of copies of all forms like outlines for intake or psychosocial assessments, transfer forms and all other required reports. The writer also recommends the following for effective organisational orientation

- A) In print statement of how student is to identify self in (1) written recording in agency records (2) written reports, correspondence, and other written material; and (3) oral contacts with clients, families, and others.
- B) Written procedures for handling client cases.
- C) Copy of agency personnel manual, including written procedures concerning student responsibilities, etc.
- D) Description (written) of agency security precautions and safety procedures.
- E) Expectations concerning supervision responsibilities, supervisory conference times, style and content of supervision provided, other pertinent supervision issues.
- F) NASW Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice.

6. Increase Organizational Supervision and Support

Disrespect and misuse of power, a conflicting relationship between the supervisor and student, focusing on weaknesses and problems of the student, as well as crossing of personal and professional boundaries, contribute to a negative supervisory relationship without trust, as well as anxiety, avoidance and a negative fieldwork experience (Bennett *et al.*, 2008; Litvack *et al.*, 2010). The various forms of power between supervisor and student should be acknowledged and well managed. It should be noted that the social work theory acquired in school can be difficult to integrate in the field in solving issues of concern in social work practice. In this case therefore, there's need for continued and relevant supervision and directions for the student in social work practice by responsible supervisors. This can take hand-on training of tasks or fieldwork practice, assignments and concurrent assessments upon completion and continued and constructive commands and teaching by the organizational supervisor. However, as discussed herein, some supervisors do not follow up on students but upon orientation, if lucky student secure one, he or she is viewed as an expert relying on trial and error without full help and direction from the experienced colleagues. It is recommended that supervisors consider the interpersonal, cultural, structural and institutionalized power dynamics during supervision. There should be regular supervision meetings, with clear professional boundaries, where strengths are stressed and constructive feedback is given to students (Beytell, 2014).

7. Provide Early Supervision

From an institutional side, it should be noted that there is need for quick following up by university supervisors on attached students as a form of first assessment to see if students are placed in social work or relevant organizations, undertaking social work practice. This therefore can serve as a platform of interaction between the organizational and university-based supervisors for the best adaptation of the student. Also, it helps to align the placement duties or orientation with what is expected from the university side. Hence it can be used as a corrective measure for effective and relevant social work practice. According to Bogo (2010), some students have a risk of being attached in non-social work organizations leading to poor professional training. Hence the first attachment serves to deal with such scenarios as described by Bogo.

8. Provide a Stipend for Social Work Interns

Social work practicum is part of an academic course and supervised in an organisational setting, placement agencies do not pay students for their work. However, some internships are paid. It should be noted that the challenges faced by students during the internship relates to personal inability to support themselves in terms of academic material, transport fares and personal upkeep and these compromises their learning. However, whether social work programs allow paid social work internships varies by school, therefore it is essential to research policies at schools that suit students. The values of stipends therefore entail cushioning attached students with allowances for academic progress, learning and basic support.

9. Education on Other Languages

It should be noted that social work is an international profession and the practitioners transcend international borders and work with diverse social groups. From this background, there is need therefore for teaching diverse languages especially those indigenous ones including sign language. This can enhance effective interaction and exchange or sharing between the social work students and the community and with colleagues within a given social work setting. As highlighted by Tanga (2013), in Lesotho, most of the social work students are between the ages of 16 and 30 years-old and all of them speak one language, Sesotho and this therefore affects them to interact with clients who are purely English or speaking different languages. In the Zimbabwean Context, social works who are purely Shona fail to effectively practice in Ndebele dominates societies hindering their effective training and fieldwork practice. Languages like Tonga, Chewa, Ndebele, Shona and other indigenous spoken tongues should be integral in social work teaching.

10. Education on Soft Skills

It should be noted that students during field work lack attributes that enable them to engage in meaningful interactions with others in fieldwork or organizational context. However social work jobs require teamwork;

hence it is important for students to possess soft skills to enhance their employability and achieve the objectives of fieldwork placement. The top five important soft skills identified by the students were: teamwork and collaboration, decision-making, problem-solving, time management and critical thinking skills. If one is acquainted with these, he or she will be able to engage well during placement and be an effective practitioner (Hazari, 2019)

11. Impart Knowledge on Diverse Cultures

According to Shokane *et al.* (2016), social work programme is of an international character and social work students should be cognizant and knowledgeable about diverse culture. It should be noted that despite the value of culture in social work practice and training, universities do not effectively give ways on how that ethical aspect should be upheld. In this case therefore, there is need for mainstreaming cultural sensitivity in all aspects of social work training to impart knowledge on diverse cultures.

12. Conclusion

The article explored the challenges faced by social work students during internship/attachment in a few countries of the developing world like South Africa, Zimbabwe and Lesotho. The organizational, university based and personal challenges faced included cultural differences that challenge values, financial hardships, lack of soft skills, language and communication barriers, strained professional relationship, inadequate orientation and insufficient supervision and support during attachment, disconnect in social work conceptualization and delay school supervision. However, one can note that some challenges are peculiar basically due to the macro-level socio-economic issues which trickle down and affect the overall performance of educational institutions. For example, the Zimbabwean down-trodden educational system is perhaps affected by the poor performance of the economic system. These researchers recommended that: provide orientations, increase organizational supervision and support, provide early supervision, provide a stipend for social work interns, education on soft skills, and education on other languages and impart knowledge on diverse cultures. African universities need to adhere to regulations governing bodies of social work and local councils of social work. Institutions and various organizations should also try to work hand in hand with universities and the various boards of social work in building, supporting and empowering students that will effect change in our societies for the better of nations.

References

- Bennett, S., Mohr, J., Brintzenhofesoc, K. and Saks, L.V. (2008). *General and Supervision-Specific Attachment Styles: Relations to Student Perceptions of Field Supervisors*. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 44(2), 75-94.
- Beytell, A.-M. (2014). *Fieldwork Education in Health Contexts: Experiences of Fourth-Year BSWstudents*. *Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk*, 50(2). doi: <https://doi.org/10.15270/50-2-394>, South Africa.
- Bogo, M. (2010). *Achieving Competence in Social Work Through Field Education*, University of Toronto Press.
- Carelse, S. and Poggenpoel, L. (2016). *Practitioners' Experiences of Student Supervision in the Bachelor of Social Work Degree*. *The Social Work Practitioner-Researcher*, 28(3), 251-263. <http://hdl.handle.net/10520/EJC197094>
- Dewey, J. (1910). *How We Think*, D. C Heath & Co Publishers, Chicago.
- Dhemba, J. (2014). *Fieldwork in Social Work Education and Training: Issues and Challenges in the Case of Eastern and Southern Africa*. In *Social Work and Society, International Online Journal*, 10(1), (2012).
- Dimo, M. (2013). *Evaluation of Fieldwork Practice in Social Work Education at the University of Limpopo: (Turffloop Campus) Aligning Theory and Practice*. University of Limpopo Press.
- Ferns, S. and Moore, K. (2012). *Assessing Student Outcomes in Fieldwork Placements: An Overview of Current Practice*.
- Hazari, S. (2019). *Why are Soft Skills Important to Students?*. *Toronto School of Management*.

- Hodges, D. (2011). *The Assessment of Student Learning in Cooperative and Work-Integrated Education*. in Coll, R. and Zegwaard, K. (Eds.), *International Handbook for Cooperative & Work-Integrated Education (2nd Ed.)*, 53-62, World Association for Cooperative Education Inc., Lowell, MA.
- IASSW & IFSW. (2004). *Global Standards for the Education and Training of the Social Work Profession*.
- Lager, P.B., Leta, H.B. and Rodgers, M. (2007). *Developing and Sustaining International Field Education Opportunities*. In *NADD Task Force Report: International Social Work Conference*, 49-68, NADD, Boston, MA.
- Litvack, A., Bogo, M. and Mishna, F. (2010). *Emotional Reactions of Students in Field Education: An Exploratory Study*. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 46(2), 227-243.
- Mamabolo, W.T. (2013). *Developing a Passion to Practice: Exploring the Perceptions of Final Year Social Work Students from the University of the Witwatersrand Regarding their Field Placements*.
- Matthew, L.E. and Lough, B.J. (2017). *Challenges Social Work Students Encounter in International Field Placements and Recommendations for Responsible Management*. DOI: 10.1080/10437797.2016.1246268
- Moorhouse, L.M. (2013). *How Do Social Work Students Perceive their Fieldwork Supervision Experiences*. *Manawatu*, Massey University Press.
- Muchinako, G.A. and Muridzo, N. (2015). *Challenges Faced By University of Zimbabwe Social Work Students on Fieldwork Attachment* Research Journali's. *Journal of Sociology*, 3(7). ISSN 2347-8241.
- Nuttman-Shwartz, O. and Berger, R. (2012). *Field Education in International Social Work: Where We are and Where We should Go?*. *International Social Work*, 55(2), 225-243.
- Schwartz, K., Kreitzer, L., Lacroix, M., Barlow, C.A., McDonald, L., Lichtmanegger, S., Klassen, M., Orjasniemi, T. and Meunier, D. (2011). *Preparing Students for International Exchanges: Canadian/EU Experiences*. *European Journal of Social Work*, 14(3), 421-434.
- Shokane, A.L., Nemitandani, V. and Budeli, N.J. (2016). *Challenges Faced by Fourth Year Social Work Students During Fieldwork Practice at a Rural-Based University*. *AFFRIKA Journal of Politics, Economics and Society*, 6(1), 133-163.
- Tanga, P.T. (2013). *The Challenges of Social Work Field Training in Lesotho*. DOI: 10.1080/02615479.2012.741578
- Yorke, M. (2011). *Work-Engaged Learning: Towards a Paradigm Shift in Assessment*. *Quality in Higher Education*, 17(1), 117-130.