



Historical and Contemporary Synopsis of the Development of Field Education Guidelines in BSW, MSW and Doctoral Programs

Journal:	Professional Development: The International Journal of Continuing Social Work Education
Article Title:	<i>Historical and Contemporary Synopsis of the Development of Field Education Guidelines in BSW, MSW and Doctoral Programs</i>
Author(s):	<i>Roberson and Adedoyin</i>
Volume and Issue Number:	<i>Vol.22 No.1</i>
Manuscript ID:	<i>221022</i>
Page Number:	<i>22</i>
Year:	<i>2019</i>

Professional Development: The International Journal of Continuing Social Work Education is a refereed journal concerned with publishing scholarly and relevant articles on continuing education, professional development, and training in the field of social welfare. The aims of the journal are to advance the science of professional development and continuing social work education, to foster understanding among educators, practitioners, and researchers, and to promote discussion that represents a broad spectrum of interests in the field. The opinions expressed in this journal are solely those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the policy positions of The University of Texas at Austin's Steve Hicks School of Social Work.

Professional Development: The International Journal of Continuing Social Work Education is published two times a year (Spring and Winter) by the Center for Social and Behavioral Research at 1923 San Jacinto, D3500 Austin, TX 78712. Our website at www.profdevjournal.org contains additional information regarding submission of publications and subscriptions.

Copyright © by The University of Texas at Austin's Steve Hicks School of Social Work. All rights reserved. Printed in the U.S.A.

ISSN: 1097-4911

URL: www.profdevjournal.org

Email: www.profdevjournal.org/contact

Historical and Contemporary Synopsis of the Development of Field Education Guidelines in BSW, MSW, and Doctoral Programs

Roberson and Adedoyin

Abstract

Field education is undoubtedly the crosswalk between the transfer of evidence-based knowledge in the class and immersion into best practices during field placements in the social work profession. It is in recognition of the synergy that field education fosters between the class and the agencies that the Council on Social Work Education appropriately termed field education the signature pedagogy of our profession. This article provides a panoramic overview of historic and contemporary guidelines for field education in the last 58 years (1960-2018). Furthermore, we expatiated on how these guidelines have shaped field education across the triumvirate of baccalaureate, masters, and doctoral social work education.

Introduction

In 2008, the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) named field education the “signature pedagogy” within social work education (CSWE, 2008, p. 8). In so doing, CSWE drew from the work of Shulman (2005), who said professions have a dual task in education. The first task is providing understanding of theory and content. The second task on the other hand encompasses developing the skills to apply the knowledge. For social work education, field education provides the opportunity to accomplish both tasks.

Incontrovertibly, field education was the original form of social work training. Agencies provided a form of apprenticeship to those interested in social work, recognizing the value of learning by doing (Wayne, Bogo & Raskin, 2010). Classes were initially offered as functions of the agencies, reinforcing the idea that practice was valued over curriculum (Trattner, 1999). As schools of social work formalized and specific

attention was given to curriculum development, the significance of field education remained. Social work educators valued field education as key to the integration of knowledge and skill. This may be one reason why, as Bogo (2015) states, so much “systematic attention” has been placed on it (p. 318). When looking at the development of field education, Hunter, Moen, and Raskin (2015) observe the role of field in social work education developed from an emphasis on direct practice experience to a more formalized, structured pedagogy. While this developing structure is apparent in both BSW and MSW programs elements, the same structure is lacking at the doctoral level.

From the foregoing, therefore, the purpose of this article is to provide a historical journey and documentary tour into the evolution of field education guidelines over the last 58 years (1960-2018). We utilized the method of document analysis in pursuit of the purpose of this article. Our intended audience are field educators, social work students, and the various stakeholders in continuing education in field education across the strata of baccalaureate, masters, and doctoral social work education and/or profession.

Field Education for Baccalaureate Social Work

The 1960s-1970s

In the 1960s, CSWE was reluctant to accredit bachelor level programs and to recognize them as preparing social work professionals (Brennen, 1984). Although CSWE was not accrediting bachelor level social work programs in 1967, they did produce general guidelines related to field education in undergraduate programs, which described field education as observation and exposure (Brennen, 1984; Pierce, 2008). Direct practice was reserved for the graduate program, resulting in limited field experiences (Brennen,

C. Jean Roberson, MSW, LICSW, is the Director of Field Education in the Department of Social Work at Samford University in Birmingham, Alabama.

A. Christson Adedoyin, MSW, PhD, is an Associate Professor of Social Work at Samford University in Birmingham, Alabama.

1984). However, the early emphasis on a quality-learning environment must be noted, which is a critical element of experiential learning (Brennen, 1984; Bogo, 2015).

Structure was created for the BSW field experience in the 1970s when CSWE published the Standards for the Accreditation of Baccalaureate Degree Programs in Social Work in 1974, calling for 300 hours in “educationally directed field experiences” (CSWE, 1974, p. 14). Faculty members with CSWE-accredited degrees in social work were identified to guide the learning experiences, and such experiences were defined as opportunities to apply beginning level social work knowledge. The emphasis remained on general exposure to field experiences (CSWE, 1974). Thus, the requirements for hours and leadership were introduced.

The 1980s-1990s

A great deal of discussion occurred during the 1980s regarding the required number of field hours for both the BSW and MSW degrees. In 1982, CSWE published the 1982 Curriculum Policy Statement requiring 400 field hours for the BSW degree and 900 field hours for the MSW degree (CSWE, 1982). The designation seems to have been a compromise, given the varied number of hours evident in the many degree programs (Raskin, Bogo, & Wayne, 2008).

The development of increased structure in field education continued through 1994. First, CSWE identified the administrative responsibilities of the field director. The Baccalaureate Evaluative Standards, Interpretive Guidelines and Curriculum Policy Statement and Self-Study Guide (CSWE, 1994a) mandated the coordinator of the field program to have 25% of his or her time reserved for administration of the field education program. The Standards also called for criteria outlining the selection of field sites, the qualifications of field instructors, and evaluative measures of students. The Interpretive Guideline 6.4 stated programs were to develop a field manual, which outlined the policies and procedures of field education (CSWE, 1994a). Field instructors were to have either a bachelor or master’s level social work degree from an

accredited program (CSWE, 1994a). In the Interpretive Guideline 6.5, programs were encouraged to engage field instructors in the evaluation of the curriculum and program development (CSWE, 1994a). By the mid-1990s, field education had matured beyond experiences to a program with administrative structure, evaluative criteria, leadership, and procedures.

The 2000s -2018

The 2001 Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS; CSWE, 2001) continued the required 400 hours and the structural elements for field education program within the curriculum. Additional elements in 2001 included the development of criteria for admittance into field education, which were in addition to admission criteria for the BSW program. CSWE recognized and codified that while students may succeed in the classroom, they may not succeed in practice. This granted field education a degree of uniqueness and specialty in the overall curriculum.

As stated earlier, CSWE declared field education as the signature pedagogy of social work education in 2008. Also in 2008, CSWE made the move to a competency-based curriculum. Competencies were broken into practice behaviors (CSWE, 2008). The transition created more consistency across programs. This influenced field education by providing a more detailed structure for the field education program, allowing educators to specifically identify field-learning experiences and to shape the field practicum (Hunter et al., 2015; Pierce, 2008). One other addition in the 2008 EPAS (CSWE, 2008) was the designation of bachelor level social work as “generalist practice” (p. 9).

CSWE published the most recent Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards in 2015. For the field education program, there are notable additions. First, field instructors must not only hold a CSWE-accredited BSW or MSW, but also have at least two years of professional practice experience, bringing greater emphasis to the need for practice experience. Second, schools can now use technology as part of the field experience, which may include the use of technology in

simulation and avatars (CSWE, 2015). In this way, field education can respond to societal trends and preparing students using current teaching methods. This may also be a way to address the need to quality learning experiences as the availability of placements in social agencies becomes increasingly difficult (Bogo, 2015; Pierce, 2008).

Field Education for Master of Social Work

The 1960s-1970s

Although master's level social work programs developed prior to bachelor level programs, the development process was similar. Initially, field education at the master's level was conceived of as "learning experiences" with little programmatic structure (CSWE, 1971, p. 60). One difference from the beginning of BSW level field experiences, however, was master's level field education was to include direct service. The description of these experiences and the criteria set forth in both Appendix I and Appendix II of the Manual of Accrediting Standards for Graduate Professional Schools of Social Work (CSWE, 1971). The manual emphasized the need for the student to engage in direct practice through diverse and quality learning opportunities. Additionally, the "field teacher" was agency-based and selected based on level of education, commitment to social work values, and ability to teach (CSWE, 1971, p. 60).

The 1980s-1990s

Similar to the BSW, the 1994 Master's Program Evaluative Standards, Interpretive Guidelines, Curriculum Policy Statement, and Self-Study Guide (CSWE, 1994b) brought structure to field education. The Standards required 900 field hours, as previously mentioned, and differentiated between a foundation level practicum and a concentration level practicum. The foundation practicum focused on self-awareness, professional communication, and the application of foundational knowledge to the practice experience; the concentration level practicum provided opportunities to apply the concentration

material.

The Director of Field Education position required an MSW with at least two years of professional practice. Like the Director of Field Education for the BSW, the accreditation standards required the Director of Field Education have 25% of his or her appointment time reserved for administration of the field education program (CSWE, 1994b). The requirement for criteria for agency selection, selection of field instructors, and evaluating student learning applied to the MSW programs as it did for the BSW programs, including the development of a field manual containing policies and procedures (CSWE, 1994b).

In the Interpretive Guideline 6.5, MSW programs were also encouraged to engage field instructors in the evaluation of the curriculum and program development (CSWE, 1994b). Again, one can track the development of a more vigorous field education program beginning with leadership and moving through to evaluation.

The 2000s to 2018

At this point it seems field education for both the BSW and the MSW were considered jointly as revisions were made. The 2001 Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS; CSWE, 2001) continued the required 900 hours of field experience. CSWE required MSW programs to develop admission criteria into field education, which were in addition to admission criteria for the MSW program. One unique change in 2001 was the increase in administrative time for the Director of Field Education, raising the reserved time to 50%.

The impact of the 2008 EPAS (CSWE) and 2015 EPAS (CSWE) on MSW field education programs was similar to the impact on BSW field education programs. One difference between the two is the 2008 EPAS (CSWE) identified MSW programs as providing "advanced practice" field opportunities (p. 9). As with the BSW field experience, the 2015 EPAS (CSWE) represented an effort to position the field to respond to current trends and practices.

Field Education for Doctoral Social Work

When one examines the issues related to field education in doctoral work, the conflict arises between doctoral education focused on research (PhDs) and doctoral education focused on practice (DSWs). Some argue that doctoral education focused on research (PhDs) leads to social work educators who become too academically rigorous researchers and whose scholarship may be tangential to the people and the issues influencing the profession (Howard, 2016; Thyer, 2015). The social work PhD programs undoubtedly contribute to building the evidence and knowledge bases of our profession (Howard, 2016).

Conversely, some scholars claim doctoral education focused on practice (DSWs) relies heavily on practitioner-focused advanced degrees (Edwards, Rittner, & Holmes, 2010; Thyer, 2015). In addition, prospective DSW degree seekers are also construed as experienced graduates and practitioners of social work who are interested in obtaining advanced clinical education and advancing the profession's best practices (Edwards et al., 2010; Holland & Fronst, 1986; Thyer, 2015). While we recognize that social work doctoral education (either PhD or DSW) does not contain a field education component, the emphasis on practice – or lack thereof – gives evidence of the value of field-based experience.

This tension led to a number of proposals for the inclusion of some practice component into the doctoral curriculum, allowing for both an emphasis on practice and research. In the 1950s, some proposed the inclusion of a practice emphasis into the curriculum. In the years that followed, others proposed a requirement of a one-year practice experience within the doctoral degree program (Anastas, 2012). Orcutt and Mills (as cited in Holland & Fronst, 1986) argued for the use of a practice laboratory for doctoral students for practice and application of clinical learning to accentuate the importance of field education.

While the emphasis on practice is apparent in clinical and practice doctoral degrees like the

DSW, field education, and the experiential learning it encompasses, is not a required element across doctoral education. The Group for the Advancement of Doctoral Education in Social Work (GADE) issued a report with recommendations for DSW degree programs. These recommendations include the following: a) at least one faculty member with a practice license for clinical programs, b) students must have at least two years of post-masters practice experience, and c) the program offers opportunities to develop practice skills (GADE, 2011).

From the foregoing, therefore, the role of field education on the doctoral level remains relatively undefined and unique to each degree program. Nevertheless, we see the social work research based doctoral education (PhDs) and the practice-based doctoral education (DSW) as two-sides of the same coin of our profession. Opportunities abound for further and future research endeavors to unwrap the benefits and utility of field education in both social work PhD and DSW programs (Howard, 2016).

Conclusion

It is undoubtedly informative to note the difference between the growth of field education guidelines in social work education in the last 58 years on the baccalaureate and master's level and the lack of field education guidelines in the doctoral level education. This may be a function of the maturation of the profession and the accrediting body, or it may be argued that doctoral programs are not accredited and therefore may not require strict adherence to a set of field education standards that are copiously seen in both the baccalaureate and masters social work programs.

Despite importance of guidelines that shapes the signature pedagogy of our most noble profession, it is important to note that a dichotomy of processes and guidelines exists in the baccalaureate and masters programs on one hand and doctoral education programs on the other hand. It is our anticipated hope that in the not too distant future there will be a convergence of appreciation and agreement for field education

(our profession's signature pedagogy) to be integral content across the strata of the curricula of baccalaureate, master's, and doctoral social work education.

References

- Anastas, J. (2012). *Doctoral education in social work*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Bogo, M. (2015). Field education for clinical social work practice: Best practices and contemporary challenges. *Clinical Social Work Journal*, 43(3), 317-324.
- Brennen, C. (1984). The continuum: Multiple levels of social work education. In M. Dinerman & L. Geismar (Eds.), *A quarter-century of social work education* (pp.25-46). Washington, DC: NASW.
- Council on Social Work Education. (1971). *Manual of accrediting standards for graduate professional schools of social work*. New York, NY: CSWE.
- Council on Social Work Education (1974). *Standards for the accreditation of Baccalaureate degree programs in social work*. New York, NY: CSWE.
- Council on Social Work Education. (1982). Curriculum policy for the master's degree and baccalaureate degree programs in social work education. New York, NY: CSWE.
- Council on Social Work Education. (1994a). *Baccalaureate evaluative standards, interpretive guidelines, curriculum policy statement, and self-study guide*. New York, NY: CSWE.
- Council on Social Work Education. (1994b). *Master's programs evaluative standards, interpretive guidelines, curriculum policy statement, and self-study guide*. New York, NY: CSWE.
- Council on Social Work Education. (2001). *Educational policy and accreditation standards*. Alexandria, VA: CSWE.
- Council on Social Work Education. (2008). *Educational policy and accreditation standards*. Alexandria, VA: CSWE. Retrieved from <http://www.cswe.org/File.aspx?id=13780>.
- Council on Social Work Education. (2015). *Educational policy and accreditation standards for Baccalaureate and Master's social work programs*. Alexandria, VA: CSWE.

History of Field Education Guidelines in Social Work

- Retrieved from <http://www.cswe.org/File.aspx?id=81660>.
- Edwards, R., Rittner, B., & Holmes, J. (2010). *The doctorate in social work (DSW) degree: Emergence of a new practice doctorate*. Retrieved from <http://www.cswe.org/File.aspx?id=59954>
- Group for the Advancement of Doctoral Education in Social Work (GADE), Task Force on the DSW Degree. (2011). *The doctorate in social work (DSW) degree: Emergence of a new practice doctorate*. Retrieved from <http://www.gadephd.org/portals/0/docs/dswguidelines2011t.pdf>
- Holland, T. & Fronst, A. (1986). *DSW education: Doctoral education in social work: trends and issues*. Social work monographs services. Austin, TX: University of Texas.
- Howard, T. (2016). PhD versus DSW: A critique of trends in social work doctoral education. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 52(1), 148-153.
- Hunter, C. A., Moen, J. K., and Raskin, M. S. (2015). *Social work field directors: Foundations for excellence*. Chicago, IL: Lyceum Books, Inc.
- Pierce, D. (2008). *Field education in the 2008 EPAS: Implications for the field director's role*. Richmond, VA: Council on Social Work Education.
- Raskin, M., Bogo, M., & Wayne, J. (2008). *Revisiting field education standards*. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 44(2), 173-188.
- Shulman, L. (2005). *Signature pedagogies in the professions*. *Daedalus*, 134(3), 52-59. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.stthomas.edu/stable/20027998>
- Thyer, B. A. (2015). The DSW: From skeptic to convert. *Clinical Social Work Journal*, 43(3), 313-316.
- Trattner, W. (1999). *From poor law to welfare state: A history of social welfare in America*. New York, NY: The Free Press.
- Wayne, J. Bogo, M., & Raskin, M. (2010). Field education as the signature pedagogy of social work education. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 46(3), 327-339.