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A Systems Analysis of Field Instruction in Social Work Education

by

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DOCTOR LITTERARUM ET PHILOSOPHIAE

in the

Department of Social Work

of the

Faculty of Humanities

at the

University of Johannesburg

supervised by

Prof Adrian D. van Breda

January 2019
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This thesis is dedicated to my parents Johnny and Radha Bisetty
And to my favourite young adults Uteshlen and Thiasha

This thesis is a tribute to my journey through social work practice, management and academia.

My appreciation and gratitude goes out to the many individuals who were a part of my journey. As a first-generation graduate in our family, I thank my parents for their foresight in ensuring that all of their children attained secondary and tertiary education. Mum and Dad, I thank you for your sacrifices, both financial and otherwise. You gave us a remarkable quality of life, in which you instilled in us excellent values and a high standard of education to enable us to be where we are today. For that, I am eternally indebted.

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The end of education is character – Sri Sathya Sai Baba
Abstract

This research presents a theoretically informed analysis of field instruction in social work education. Keys constructs from systems theories in the social sciences were used to inform a unique examination of system interactions and relationships in field instruction in social work education. Characteristics from general systems theory, complex and chaos theory, ecological systems, organisational and family systems’ theories were used to support a systems analysis of field instruction systems. This research identifies and describes the elements and processes in field instruction, analyses field instruction systems as social systems, identifies the factors that optimise or hinder student learning, and finally recommends a systems-informed framework for field instruction.

This qualitative research employed a multi-case-study design, purposively sampling three diverse field instruction systems at universities across South Africa. In this way, a heterogeneous and diverse sample of rural, semi-rural and urban geographical sites, each with its models of placements and unique characteristics, was obtained. Individual and group interviews were used to gather data from practice educators, students, student supervisors, placement agencies and alumni. This diverse sample group, together with a study of relevant documentation from the sites, supported the maximum variation technique and trustworthiness in case study designs. Coding of the data followed a three-step process: open and in vivo coding, grouping the codes by using axial coding and finally classifying the data into themes as part of a selective coding process.

The findings of the research indicate that field instruction systems operate as social systems, displaying properties from general systems theory, of equifinality and multifinality where single or multiple causes and actions produced different effects or outcomes. This property of cause and effect was evident in the systems’ attempts to adapt to changes or maintain a state of homeostasis between the challenges faced and the available resources. Field instruction systems are dynamic, goal-directed and contain features of cybernetic theory, where input relating to policies, behaviour and field instruction placements affected throughput in terms of placement monitoring and supervision processes, and output by means of demonstrated skills, knowledge and patterns of behaviour. Linear feedback and non-linear feedback loops were evident in the different levels of communication within the various subsystems. Constructs from ecological systems theory were evident in student learning and relationships at the micro and meso levels, particularly with systems of power and influence.

The scholarship of teaching and learning in the final year field instruction module in social work education requires a dynamic and coordinated effort by the university to ensure that graduates are practice-ready. Recommendations are offered for systems-informed frameworks for governance,
educational partnerships and operational structure that creatively rethink and reconstruct the implementation of the four-year BSW field instruction programme over two consecutive cycles, to afford students the opportunity to benefit from their field instruction experience optimally.

**Key words:** Field instruction; social work education; systems analysis; practice educator; student supervisor
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<td>ASASWEI</td>
<td>Association of South African Education Institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASSWA</td>
<td>Association of Schools of Social Work in Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSW</td>
<td>Bachelor of Social Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHE</td>
<td>Council on Higher Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CST</td>
<td>Complex Systems Theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CWSE</td>
<td>Council on Social work education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DSD</td>
<td>Department of Social Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>EPAS</td>
<td>Education Policy and Accreditation Standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIS</td>
<td>Field Instruction Site</td>
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<tr>
<td>FOC</td>
<td>First-order Cybernetics</td>
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<tr>
<td>FST</td>
<td>Family Systems Theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GST</td>
<td>General Systems Theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HDI</td>
<td>Historically Disadvantaged Institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HESQF</td>
<td>Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IASSW</td>
<td>International Association of Schools of Social Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITP</td>
<td>Integration of Theory and Practice Model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOSSW</td>
<td>National Occupational Standards for Social Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OST</td>
<td>Organisational Systems Theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PBL</td>
<td>Problem-based Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SACSSP</td>
<td>South African Council for Social Service Professions</td>
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<tr>
<td>SADC</td>
<td>Southern African Development Community</td>
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SAQA  South African Qualifications Authority
SOC  Second-order Cybernetics
WIL  Work Integrated Learning
Chapter 1. Introducing the study

The great difficulty of education is to get experience out of ideas – George Santayana

1.1. Introductory background

This study will develop a systems-informed framework for field instruction in social work education that will optimise student learning. Each field instruction system is different, but all feature similar patterns and behaviours which may be overt, obscured or obtrusive. A systems-informed framework deepens insight and understanding of patterns and behaviours across field instruction programmes. This research has, therefore, revealed the importance of the nexus of elements, processes and strategically planned partnerships to guide social work educators in field instruction.

The theoretical underpinning of research into field instruction has been noticeably absent to date. This research ventures into using constructs from a range of systems theories to develop its framework and its means of analysis. Using a systems analysis for field instruction is novel to social work education.

Research into field instruction in South Africa has thus far been limited to single field instruction sites or sites within a single province. This study has provided insights into multiple and diverse field instruction sites across South Africa, sharing contextual challenges, best practices, as well as practices that fail to facilitate optimal learning.

This thesis will emphasise that field instruction is the signature pedagogy of social work education (Boitel & Fromm, 2014). As a mode of teaching, field instruction uses pedagogical norms to train students into the role of practitioner while providing a professional platform to integrate theory into practice (Holden, Barker, Rosenberg, Kuppens, & Ferrell, 2011). This study will offer insights into students’ out-of-class learning experiences, pedagogical techniques and integration of theory into practice, all of which are essential to the social work graduate experience.

In a time of constant change, pedagogical norms take on even greater significance as social work education responds to its changing environment. This study has, therefore, raised awareness of challenges in enforcing the pedagogical norms and the development of students’ professional self-concept consistent with professional role models (Newman, Trimmer, & Padro, 2019). Based on the findings of this study, exemplars are offered to educators to restructure current field instruction programmes. Simultaneously this study calls for student supervisors and placement agencies to re-affirm their investment in field instruction by providing students with authentic learning opportunities.
within pedagogical norms. In this way, this research disrupts conventional thinking of field instruction in social work education.

This chapter provides an overview of the research by setting out the context of field instruction and highlights the problem statement that prompted this research. This chapter also provides an introduction into the theoretical framework of the study, and presents the research aim and objectives, an overview of the research methodology and indicates key concepts used in this thesis.

1.2. Field instruction context and the problem statement

This study is embedded in undergraduate social work education. It examines the elements and processes that mark field instruction as a social system. Field instruction is the means through which university-based education is integrated with field training (Royse, Dhooper, & Rompf, 2012). As the profession’s signature pedagogy, field instruction strengthens the profession’s scientific footprint, supports distinct forms of learning, socialises the student into the role of the practitioner and develops the student’s professional self (CSWE, 2008; Larrison & Korr, 2013).

Higher education policies require that students complete a designated and evaluated period work-integrated learning to attain skills and knowledge in practice (CHE, 2015; Lomax, Jones, Leigh, & Gay, 2010). Field instruction is the pedagogy used in social work education for students to complete the designated and evaluated period of work-integrated learning while demonstrating professional competence and applying theory to practice (Bogo & Vayda, 1998; Shera & Bogo, 2001).

The next section discusses the context of field instruction in social work education, as well as the problem statement.

1.2.1. The field instruction context

University-based education alone is insufficient for social work students to gain practical training. Accordingly, a typical Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) curriculum comprises academic teaching, as well as a structured practice component across the four years of study (SAQA, 2009b).

The final year field instruction practicum is notably the highlight of the student’s education. Having successfully traversed the previous three years of the BSW, students in the fourth year of study are faced with an intense workload of theory and field instruction where the emphasis is on readiness for practice. Based on the principle of progression, field instruction enables students to experience increasingly complex practice opportunities to develop increasingly complex knowledge, values and skills (Sheafor & Horejsi, 2008). The fourth-year field instruction experience is a combination of all
methods of social work, working either in block or concurrent placements or a combination thereof, and being faced with day to day employment situations.

The concept of field instruction is fundamental to social work education. This is also supported within South African higher education where concepts like workplace learning and service learning are promoted within the undergraduate experience (Petersen & Osman, 2013; RSA, 1997a). Different terminology is used worldwide to describe the field instruction process, such as work integrated learning (Humphrey, 2011), service learning (Anastas, 2010; Furco & Billig, 2002), social work placements (Lomax et al., 2010; Mathews, Simpson, & Crawford, 2014), social work field practicum (Holden et al., 2011; Parker, 2006) and internship (Anastas, 2010). This thesis confines itself to the use of the term *field instruction*, which is a standard term in social work texts.

Varied field instruction placement opportunities are required for implementing skills, knowledge and values with service users. Students are placed at educational institutions like primary and secondary schools; correctional facilities like prisons, reform schools or schools of industry; health care facilities such as hospitals, primary health care facilities and clinics; child and family welfare societies; residential care and child and youth care centres. Thus students obtain hands-on working experiences within diverse human service organisations (Royse, Dhooper, & Rompf, 1999; Wilson, 1981), and practice that which was learned in the laboratory-type classroom setting (Carillo, Manoleas, & Carillo, 1991). This simulated practice provides students with exposure to real-life situations with individuals, families, groups and communities (Nordkvelle et al., 2019). Students experience first-hand practical skills such as interviewing, conducting needs assessments, using negotiation skills, mediation, advocacy, managing professional boundaries, and utilising reflective and effective practice skills (Trevithick, 2008).

One of the fundamental entities of the fourth-year field instruction system is the university, represented by the practice educator. Other key entities include the student who is seen as the focus of the programme and the student supervisor responsible for the student’s day to day workplace learning. The placement agency provides students and student supervisors with access to agency resources. In addition, the service user as the beneficiary of the agency services is key to providing supervised learning opportunities for students (Sosland & Lowenthal, 2017).

Practice educators should take leadership in making their programmes relevant and practical so that students can respond to various societal issues. Practice educators provide students with opportunities to acquire knowledge, skills, intervention methods and ethical values via the medium of field instruction placements. The practice educator administers and develops the student’s field experience
and integrates the academic and field curriculum while ensuring a contextually relevant curriculum (Sakaguchi & Sewpaul, 2011; Xiang & Luk, 2012).

The student supervisor is responsible for the on-site student experience, providing professional mentorship and guidance to the student during the placement (Kiser, 2016; Ross & Ncube, 2018). Student supervisors are registered social workers (SACSSP, 2006), ideally with several years of practice experience, demonstrated practice wisdom and competency in understanding, supervising and monitoring students. Student supervisors work closely with practice educators and the placement agency to ensure that students receive optimal guidance and professional training (Wilson, 1981).

The placement agency offers field instruction experiences to social work students (Kiser, 2016). The agency facilitates access to service users of the organisation with whom the student can utilise and apply the professional skills and knowledge learned (Royse et al., 2012).

The student is seen as being at the forefront of the field instruction programme, by actively engaging in learning (Kourgiantakis, Sewell, & Bogo, 2018).

Central to the success of any field instruction programme is the quality of partnerships and relationships, i.e. the interplay of different role players as a cohesive system, towards the common goal of the growth and professional development of the student (Lewis, Kusmaul, Elze, & Butler, 2016). Whilst practice educators, student supervisors and agency personnel are not exclusively responsible for student training, they individually and collectively contribute to the student’s overall field instruction experience. The student is considered as the microsystem that lies within a mesosystem of relationships with practice educators, student supervisors, and the placement agency amongst others. The foundation of such relationships is a high level of knowledge, a wide repertoire of skills and a commitment to professional standards by all members of the educational team.

1.2.2. The problem statement

Previous research into field instruction in social work education in South Africa focused on the practice training of social work students in welfare organisations (Botha, 1976; Le Roux, 1998, 1999; Von Pressentin, 1993), the development of a curriculum model for field instruction (Fourie, 1982; Knoetze, 1985; Stutterheim, 1994), student-supervision in social work(Bailey, 2001; Engelbrecht, 1995, 2002; Erasmus, 1989), and partnerships between social work training institutions and placement agencies (Strydom, 1993). Many of these empirical studies were conducted during the apartheid system of education in South Africa where universities were racially segregated. The impact of some of these studies is that social work students may have been placed in social work placement
organisations that restricted work in diverse and multi-cultural environments. Students in previously disadvantaged institutions may have been exposed to disadvantaged communities where resources were lacking and the socio-economic conditions of communities may have been dire.

More recent research on the scholarship of field instruction in South African social work education has isolated the roles of the practice educator, supervisor and student (Dimo, 2013; Schmidt & Rautenbach, 2016). These studies did not investigate how these roles functioned in order to augment student learning. However, as indicated in the literature, the isolation of these roles as merely part of the field instruction programme is insufficient within the broader context of the BSW in view of the changes in the academic landscape of social work education. In this regard, studies by Engelbrecht (2001) and Von Schlicht (2003) attempted to contextualise the place of field instruction and supervision within indigenous practices.

International and South African research on field instruction draws attention mainly to the experiences of practice educators and supervisors (Schmidt & Rautenbach, 2016; Wayne, Bogo, & Raskin, 2010), as well as student experiences of the models of placements (Rock & King, 2010). Research by Dhemba (2012) highlighted the challenges of field instruction training in Eastern Africa and the Southern African Development Community. South African research on field instruction focused on practice educator challenges in view of the limited placement opportunities in the Eastern Cape (Schmidt & Rautenbach, 2016), descriptions of a field instruction programme in KwaZulu-Natal (Raniga, Simpson, & Mthembu, 2014), and the challenges of social work students at a University in northern Limpopo (Dimo, 2013; Shokane, Nemutandani, & Budeli, 2016). A recent study by Poggenpoel (2018) focused on the roles and experiences of university-based and agency-based supervisors in student supervision. However, this study was limited as it focused on student supervisors and was restricted to a single field instruction site. Until recently, understanding the roles of and relationships between key persons in the field instruction programme had not been brought under scholarly scrutiny, more particularly in South Africa.

South African research thus far has examined only single field instruction sites, in provinces such as Eastern Cape (Schmidt & Rautenbach, 2016), Limpopo (Dimo, 2013; Shokane et al., 2016) and KwaZulu-Natal (Raniga et al., 2014), Western Cape (Poggenpoel, 2018) and at a distance-learning University (Botha, 2010; Van Dyk & Du Plessis, 2013; Wade, 2009). Thus far there has been no known studies of social work field instruction across South African universities.

Case study analysis, particularly multi-case study analysis, has been rare in research on field instruction. Most research on field instruction thus far has been mostly descriptive, with little attention
to understanding a field instruction site beyond participants’ experiences. This research is perhaps one of few that uses case study as its research design to understand field instruction in social work education.

Another challenge in African social work education is the call for localised research and understanding of indigenous practices that move away from the hegemony of western knowledge (Kendall, 2000; Kreitzer, 2012; Midgley, 2004). Education in Africa was no exception to being colonised, and in particular, we have experienced first-hand the colonisation of social work education in South Africa itself. When I was an undergraduate student in social work, the theories and ideologies presented emanated from countries like Britain and the United States. During my subsequent practice years during the apartheid regime, I was employed at a government welfare organisation that perpetuated the separation and segregation of vulnerable people along racial lines. The White Paper for Social Welfare (RSA, 1997d) strengthened the doctrine of equity and non-discrimination in the allocation of South African resources and welfare services.

Today, South African universities are transforming the social work curricula in favour of localised knowledge and practices, making training of students more relevant to this country’s indigenous and varied populations (Patel, 2015). This research contributes to South African and indeed African literature on-field instruction.

The application of systems theory in understanding the elements and processes in field instruction has not been studied thus far. The findings of this research contribute to optimising students’ learning within the field instruction programme in social work education.

Finally, there are increasing demands on practice educators to provide students with a high quality educational experience (Gorse, Cozzens, Scott, & Dickinson, 2019). Delivering on such demands is an almost impossible feat given the limited or reduced resources available for student placements. In-classroom simulations in the form of roleplays have been preferred by many universities to train social work students to bridge the gap between theory and practice (Nordkvelle et al., 2019). In meeting the demands for high quality educational experiences, there appears to be little consideration with the end in mind or the attributes of graduates entering the field (Taylor, Ashford, Shelley, & Readman, 2019). This study will offer insights into some of these challenges and provide educators with suggestions to provide students with high quality educational experiences.
1.3. The theoretical framework

Field instruction is a process of learning, of implementation of theoretical knowledge in practice during which various members of the educational team function with different intentions, yet ultimately striving to contribute to the student’s professional development (Auslander & Rosenne, 2016). This research examined the contributions of key persons within the field instruction programme to student learning. This study argued that using a systems-informed framework to understand roles and relationships is crucial to understanding field instruction in social work education. This argument was supported by using key constructs from relevant systems theories that were studied to identify and describe how field instruction functions as a social system.

Theories on systems, used in the social sciences, develop a holistic view of individuals within an environment or a particular situation, implying that contextual understanding of behaviour will guide appropriate interventions. Systems theorists view the world as an interactive, self-organising and non-linear or cyclical set of interactions. Systems theories offer an explanation of how relationships are intricately interwoven within subsystems, each influencing other parts of the system (Forte, 2014a; Stokols, Perez Lejano, & Hipp, 2013).

Analysing field instruction systems requires an understanding of a general analysis of interactions, interconnectedness of elements and the functionality of field instruction actions. Thus, a sound understanding of systems’ concepts, perspectives and realities are essential. This research studied general systems theory (GST), complex and chaos theories, cybernetic theory, ecological systems perspective, organisational systems and family systems theories in order to understand the functioning of the systems and subsystems.

Relevant constructs from these constructs were used as a means of analysis of the data collected, particularly in assessing patterns of interaction, repetitive communication patterns, behaviour patterns, and in analysing systems and subsystems. Thus, the practice of systematic, continuous and relevant assessments of the system and its interactions is supported, making sense of seemingly random, irrational or chaotic interactions. Cognisance was taken of patterns of behaviour that are seemingly functional or otherwise dysfunctional. Functional behaviour may seek to bring about a balance to the homeostasis of the system, whilst dysfunctional behaviour may be destructive to the system and undermine individual members who are also part of that system (Hepworth, Rooney, Rooney, & Strom-Gottfried, 2013).
It is the general ontology of systems thinking that guided my epistemology in this research and helped to draw upon key systems constructs to understanding field instruction systems. These constructs were, therefore used to analyse the data and surmise findings of field instruction systems, as sets of interrelated elements, roles and relationships, reliant on context, being goal seeking, dynamic and laden with communicative patterns, and viewed holistically, field instruction systems were greater than the sum of its parts (Wright, 2009). These six constructs formed the basis of the analysis across the three cases in Chapter 6 of this research.

An added support for selecting systems theory as the theoretical framework was the research design. In order to understand the interaction of the elements and processes within field instruction programmes, this research elected to use case study design to penetrate the different levels of interactions and relationships. This is congruent with systems theory which allows researchers to understand different levels at which individuals and systems function and interact. Thus, understanding field instruction from a systems’ perspective was essential to this research.

1.4. Aim and objectives of the research

The aim of this research was to analyse the field instruction system in social work education, using systems theory. This prompted the development of a uniform framework for field instruction that could optimise the process of students’ learning.

In order to achieve this aim, the objectives of the research were to:

1. Identify and describe the elements and processes that comprise the field instruction system.
2. Analyse, using systems theory, the field instruction programme as a social system.
3. Determine what critical factors in the field instruction system optimise or hinder the process of learning.
4. Formulate and recommend a framework supporting the factors that can be built into field instruction systems.

1.5. The research question

The following research question and sub-questions served as a constant guide during the research process:

Main research question:

How can the final year of field instruction systemically optimise students’ learning?
Research sub-questions:

a) What are the elements and processes that comprise the fourth-year field instruction system?

b) How does the field instruction programme operate as a system?

c) What are the critical factors in the field instruction system that optimise or hinder learning?

d) What factors should be built into field instruction systems to optimise learning?

1.6. Overview of the research methodology

This section introduces the research methodology, by providing a synopsis of the research approach, design, population and sampling, data collection process, data analysis and trustworthiness. The full methodology is presented in Chapter 4.

The approach. This research adopted a qualitative approach as this was best suited to understand, identify and describe the various elements and processes within the field instruction process. This approach allowed for an understanding of the experiences of participants from their personal perspectives, narratives, as well as a descriptive analysis of the data (Bless, Higson-Smith, & Sithole, 2013; Levitt et al., 2018).

The research design. The case study design, particularly multi-case designs, was selected to provide a systematic and in-depth exploration of field instruction systems across South Africa (Rule & John, 2011). Using multi-case study design also supported the characteristics and homogeneity of the sample (Struwig & Stead, 2001), as well as the quintain or singleness of focus of the study (Stake, 2006, p. 1).

Population and sampling. The population in this research was 14 of the 16 universities that offered the social work training in South Africa. The population excluded the only distance education university, as well as the university at which this researcher is employed in order to avoid the risk of sampling bias. A two-stage process of sampling was followed; firstly by obtaining a volunteer sample which formed the sampling frame and then using purposive sampling (a non-probability sampling technique) to select the final sample of three cases (Bless et al., 2013). The sampling frame of 12 included responses from different campuses within the same universities as this provided heterogeneity in terms of location, the model of placement, access to participants and other characteristics (Creswell, 2012; TerreBlanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 2006).

Three field instruction sites were selected and formed the multi-case studies. These are referred to in this thesis as Case 1, Case 2 and Case 3 respecting the anonymity of the universities studied.
**Data collection.** Data collection methods included single-person interviews, group interviews and the collection of relevant learning guides and policy documents. There were 21 one-on-one interviews and 16 group interviews held across the three cases in this research. Multiple semi-structured interview schedules were used for the different groups of participants. An iterative process of periodically reviewing the types of questions was followed (Greef, 2015; Mouton, 2006).

**Data analysis.** All interviews were captured digitally and professionally transcribed. The written transcripts and documents were checked and readied for analysis (Rule & John, 2011). Data was managed systematically, by using labelling and storing conventions for ease of retrieval. Several readings of the written transcripts occurred in order to understand the data in terms of the study’s theoretical lens and responses to the key research questions (Frost, 2011).

A systematic process of coding was followed. Open codes were used to label segments of text used to identify an idea, theory, argument, statement or similar content, and in vivo codes were used to capture and represent the actual words of the participant or document (Saldaña, 2009). Three hundred and eighty-six (386) open and in vivo codes emerged from the data. The next step was to reduce the large number of codes derived from the open and in vivo code list, creating a new code list of 16 axial codes. The third step in coding involved grouping the axial codes by generating themes and allocating selective codes (Saldaña, 2009). These themes were aligned with the theoretical framework of this research and are presented in Chapters 5 and 6 of this thesis.

**Trustworthiness.** Trustworthiness in this study was ensured using the four main dimensions of rigour as purported by Lincoln and Guba (1985), namely credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Credibility was ensured through the process of triangulation using varied members in the unit of analysis as well as documentation from each Case. The purposive sampling technique and detailed and thick descriptions of the research methodology described in Chapter 4 of this thesis supported the transferability of the findings. Dependability was achieved by using research tools that went through a pilot process and iterative review to ensure relevance. Finally, confirmability was monitored with the use of an audit trail where all documents and communications were meticulously labelled and filed for easy retrieval, and line by line referencing facilitated tracing back to the audio recordings where required.

**Ethical considerations.** Approval for this research was received from the Faculty of Humanities Higher Degrees Committee and the Research Ethics Committee of the University of Johannesburg (Appendix 1). In addition, institutional permission was obtained from each of the participating universities in the pilot and actual research.
The identifying details of the field instruction sites were anonymised in order to respect the privacy and rights of the participants and the participating field instruction sites. However, given the limited number of universities in South Africa offering the BSW and the location of some sites, it may be inevitable that participants may recognise themselves or their university in the study. This challenge was raised with participants prior to the interviews. Thus, each participant was provided with a detailed letter explaining the research, and voluntary informed consent was obtained prior to the interview (Babbie, 2011; Horn, 2012; Monette et al., 2011). All documentation has been securely stored as per the requirements of research (Creswell, 2012).

The foremost ethical challenge was “researcher positionality” due to the researcher’s known identity as a practice educator in a field instruction programme, and the necessity to be identified as a researcher rather than as an educator (Rule & John, 2011, p. 113). Another challenge was how to handle information pertaining to unprofessional and unethical practices that came to the researcher’s attention during the research process. I realised that whilst I was a researcher first and a social worker second, I could not ignore instances where the dignity and status of the social work profession were threatened (DSD, 1993; SACSSP, 2006). In order to overcome these dilemmas, I kept a reflexive journal. Lincoln and Guba (1985), Fook (1996) and Knott and Scragg (2013) support journaling as necessary in studies where the researcher fulfils more than one role and becomes critically reflective. Relevant pieces from my journaling were used intermittently in the thesis as part of my reflections.

1.7. Key concepts

This section presents an overview of key concepts used in this thesis, followed by a table of related concepts that are widely used within South African higher education.

1.7.1. Educational team

This research makes constant reference to an educational team who are responsible for the holistic and professional development of the student. The members of the educational team in this research are restricted to practice educators, student supervisors and representatives of the placement agency. The service user is integral to the development of the student’s professional knowledge, however, for ethical reasons, this member of the team was excluded as a participant of the research. In a broader study beyond just the fourth-year field instruction programme, members of the educational team would also include all academics teaching within the BSW.
1.7.2. **Field instruction**

Field instruction in social work education is a specialised curriculated means of developing students in translating theoretical knowledge into practice (Ghitiu & Mago-Maghiar, 2011). The fundamental purpose of field instruction is to ensure that social work students are safe to practice as social workers (Parker, 2006). Field instruction forms part of the higher education strategy on work-integrated learning (CHE, 2015) and is a mandatory component to the undergraduate degree in social work in South Africa. The Qualification Standard for the BSW (CHE, 2015, p. 14) uses the term field practice education, and sees this as the training of social work students as a means to “make discernible impacts on the persons/communities that they [students] engage with”. It is also argued that field instruction allows students to demonstrate the ability to link praxis with understanding and challenging hegemonic histories and discourses (CHE, 2015). Within the BSW, students undertake a structured field instruction module primarily over each of the second, third and fourth years of study. This is due to students being permitted to work with service users only once they are registered as student social workers with the SACSSP in their second year of study (SACSSP, 2011). Field instruction is also known widely by various other terminologies like internship, service learning, practice education and field practice (Bay, 2006; Kanengoni, 2014; Royse et al., 2012). Some of these terms will be briefly described in Section 1.7.5 of this chapter.

1.7.3. **Field instruction placement**

A field instruction placement, known sometimes as practice learning opportunity or agency placement, allows the student to demonstrate academic learning in practice (Lomax et al., 2010). Field instruction placements may include student assignments to human service organisations such as child and family welfare agencies, child and youth care facilities; health care facilities like primary health care clinics, oncology and geriatric care; educational facilities like primary or secondary schools, and correctional facilities like reform schools and prisons. Field instruction placements occur within a specified model and duration, depending on the year or level of study, the programme of the university and statutory or professional requirements. During the field instruction placement, students are given opportunities to implement social work practice with the agency’s service users, use agency resources, and implement case, group and community work practice.

1.7.4. **Supervision**

In this thesis, I use the term supervision to refer to field instruction supervision. Supervision refers to the necessary support, guidance and mentorship provided to students by designated student
supervisors (Hagen, 1989; Kiser, 2016). Each social work student is allocated a social worker who serves as the field instruction supervisor for the duration of the student’s field placement at a particular organisation. Students are provided with developmental, administrative, educational and supportive guidance and mentorship during supervision (Jones, 2004; Kadushin, 1977; Ross & Ncube, 2018). South African social work students may not practice social work functions or engage in field instruction without the supervision of a registered social worker (SACSSP, 2006).

1.7.5. **Supervisor**

In this thesis, the term supervisor refers to a field instruction supervisor who renders supervision to a student. The supervisor is a registered social worker (SACSSP, 2006). This thesis makes reference to two types of supervisors, namely one that is based at and is usually employed by the placement agency and is referred to as the agency-based supervisor. The second is a university-based supervisor who may serve as a link between the university and the student’s placement agency.

1.7.6. **Systems**

A system refers to a set of coherently organised and interconnected elements or parts, that produces a characteristic set of behaviours (Wright, 2009). The behaviours of a system are classified as the system’s purpose or function. Systems have common behaviours and properties that provide insights into its functioning (Wright, 2009). A social system refers to a set of elements or units or groups of people who are interrelated in some way, perhaps orderly or otherwise, and when placed together, function as part of a whole (Wright, 2009). Systems may also be made up of smaller systems, laden with interactions. Larger systems, on the other hand, may be characterised by features of self-governance, self-reliance, autopoiesis, and independence.

Each system is autonomous, and mostly abstract or intangible but is ever-present in society. For example, one cannot see the economic system, the legal system or the educational system, but they exist and knowingly or unknowingly impact on everyday activities. The economic system is evident in our daily interactions as consumers. The legal system sets and implements the rules of society and handles transgressions against the law. The educational system develops the intellect of citizens and provides qualifications that may provide entry into the employment sector, thereby supporting (and reverting to) the economic system. These systems function independently, focusing on their own functions and finding solutions to issues within the respective system (Luhmann, 1995; Parsons, 1977). Brown (2006) views systems as omnipresent yet only observable at moments when specific communication is required.
The focus of this research was on field instruction systems, comprising sets of functionally differentiated systems and sub-systems. Field instruction systems, when viewed from an ecological perspective, are influenced by the configuration of six systems, namely the learner system which is seen at the micro level, the supervisor system, the field instructor system which operates on a meso level, the training institution system, the welfare agency system that is seen on an eco-system level, and finally the welfare policy system that operates as the macro system. (Engelbrecht, 2001, p. 349). This research examined these system configurations across three field instruction programmes in South Africa.

### 1.7.7. Systems theory

Systems theory is an approach or a body of knowledge about systems, describing how and why systems function in the way they do and understands the relationships between elements of a system (Germain & Gitterman, 1996). Systems theory is also viewed as an all-encompassing approach comprising of other approaches and perspectives. This research has studied systems theories relevant to the social sciences, with a focus on general systems theory (GST), complex systems and chaos theory, cybernetic theory, ecological systems perspectives, organisational systems theory, and various family systems theories. This thesis used constructs from these systems’ theories as its theoretical lens.

### 1.7.8. Typology of related workplace learning concepts

In addition to the above key concepts, Table 1.1 includes related concepts that are widely and frequently used within South African higher education. Concepts like service learning and internship are often used interchangeably, though not necessarily appropriately, within social work field instruction. As part of its transformation agenda, the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) has linked service learning with community engagement, reflecting that graduates must contribute to nation building (HEQC, 2006; Petersen & Osman, 2013). These concepts support the need to develop awareness and social responsibility in students as driven by the Education White Paper 3 (RSA, 1997a).

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Typology</th>
<th>Brief description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apprenticeship</td>
<td>Refers to vocational skills training with an employer in the same field of work as the vocation. The student acquires vocational training whilst also receiving payment or a stipend from the employer (CHE, 2011). The apprenticeship model was previously used in social work education where students observed an experienced social worker before being taught theory (Sheafor &amp; Jenkins, 1984).</td>
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A Systems Analysis of Field Instruction in Social Work Education

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<tr>
<th>Typology</th>
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<tr>
<td>Experiential learning</td>
<td>Experiential learning is an educational or teaching approach where students directly engage in action and doing in order to gain knowledge and gain skills that otherwise would not be learned in the academic sphere, in the course of obtaining experience (Bezuidenhout &amp; Erasmus, 2013; Petersen &amp; Osman, 2013). It is a more generalised form of learning.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fieldwork</td>
<td>Fieldwork has been commonly associated with research or working within communities (Tolich &amp; Davidson, 1999), and is used interchangeably, albeit incorrectly, with field instruction (Dimo, 2013; Kaseke, 1986; Shokane et al., 2016).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internship</td>
<td>Internship refers to a period of supervised practical training related to the degree and is targeted at postgraduates (CHE, 2011). Bay (2006) views internships as experiential learning opportunities and helps students prepare for career choices. The use of the term internship is sometimes used interchangeably with field instruction in social work education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service learning</td>
<td>Service learning is a form of experiential learning as well as a form of curricularised community engagement in higher education (Petersen &amp; Osman, 2013). Furco (2002) argues that service learning focuses on academic and civic engagement whereby the activities of community service and academic learning are combined. Service learning allows students to apply their knowledge to address a curriculum-related need in the broader community. Service learning also facilitates the integration of the three pillars of higher education located in the Education White Paper 3, namely community engagement, teaching and learning, and research (RSA, 1997a). The community becomes the source of the student’s learning and development, as illustrated by the Bright Site Project at the University of South Africa (UNISA) (Du Plessis, 2011b; Osman &amp; Petersen, 2013). Unlike field instruction within the social work curriculum, service learning is aligned with the needs of the community and is not necessarily related to the students’ development of knowledge, skills and values.</td>
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1.8. Structure of the thesis

This thesis comprises eight chapters:

Chapter 1. Chapter 1 contains a general introduction to the research, comprising an overview of the context of field instruction, the problem statement, the theoretical framework, aim and objectives, the research question, the research methodology and key concepts used in this thesis.

Chapter 2. Chapter 2 provides an extensive literature review of the scholarship of field instruction in social work education, with reference to the place of field instruction in higher education training, the South African higher education framework and the Bachelor of Social Work degree. Arguments are presented on praxis and signature pedagogy of social work education, with descriptions of student education, the field instruction education team and field instruction processes, partnerships and relationships.

Chapter 3. Chapter 3 presents a literature review of systems theories, drawing inference from general systems theory, complex systems, chaos theory, cybernetics and second-order cybernetics, ecological systems theory, organisational theory and family systems theory. This chapter informs the theoretical analysis of the data and findings in Chapter 6.
**Chapter 4.** In Chapter 4, the research approach and design are described, emphasising case study as the design of choice for this research. This Chapter provides details on the processes followed in identifying the population and sample, the data collection process, data analysis, trustworthiness, researcher reflexivity and ethical considerations.

**Chapter 5.** Chapter 5 presents the findings from each of the three cases in this research. Key themes relating to policy documents, and participants’ views on field instruction, the educational team and the placement relationship are reported. This chapter responds to Objective 1 of the research which is to identify and describe the elements and processes that comprise field instruction and responds to Research sub-question 1, which is, What are the elements and processes of field instruction systems in social work education? Each case is presented individually, and a summary of the findings of all three cases is provided at the end of the Chapter.

**Chapter 6.** The findings presented in Chapter 6 are founded across all three cases and are aligned with the theoretical framework of the research. This Chapter responds to Objective 2 and Research sub-question 2 of the research which is to analyse, using systems theory, and field instruction systems as social systems. Six key themes based on systems theory concepts from Chapter 3 are used to form the basis of analysis in this Chapter. The findings of this Chapter also address Objective 3 of the research which is to determine the critical factors in the field instruction system that optimise or hinder the process of learning. A summary of the findings is tabulated at the end of the Chapter.

**Chapter 7.** Following the findings of the critical factors in field instruction systems, Chapter 7 responds to Objective 4 of the research, which is to formulate and recommend a framework supporting the factors that can be built into field instruction systems. Thus, this Chapter provides recommendations based on a systems-informed framework for field instruction in social work education.

**Chapter 8.** Finally, Chapter 8 provides critical reflections of the theoretical framework, the research methodology, issues of trustworthiness, study limitations, aim and objectives of the study, original contribution of the study, and recommendations for further research.
Chapter 2. The scholarship of field instruction

Just as living involves the whole person, so does learning, especially learning to practice an art which is intimately the person, using sensitivity and judgment in relation to adapting knowledge and skills to a real situation (Reynolds, 1985, p. 1)

2.1. Introduction

Literature in this Chapter focuses on the scholarship of field instruction. Commencing with a background to social work education, arguments are presented on field instruction as a planned and systematic means of developing knowledge, skills and values, and is critical learning for social work students’ education. Field instruction is argued as the signature pedagogy of social work education, a concept attributed to a profession’s ability to integrate theory and practice (Shulman, 2005b). This is followed by a reflection of local and international standards and trends in field instruction, the scholarship of student education, and finally the value of partnerships in the process of field instruction.

Broad-based concepts which incorporate the variety of terminology contained in the literature are presented in this Chapter. This is likened to the language of social work practice and education changing periodically and sometimes differing among geographical areas and from university to university. This Chapter also contains pieces of relevant reflective journaling in order to throw light on this epistemology of field instruction.

2.2. The significance of field education in social work training

Globally, formal social work education is reported to have commenced late in the 19th century almost simultaneously across Europe and the United States of America, and thereafter, in East Asia and South Africa. Social work was recognised in Japan as a separate professional qualification only in 1947 despite having registered students in social work modules since 1921 (Karls & Wanderei, 2008; Kikuchi & Sakano, 1980).

Social work education in South Africa has been well documented, has been dominated by British and American models, and rooted in an apartheid system of education since the 1920s. Smith (2008) and Mupedziswa (1997) argue that the influence of colonial and western practices have permeated the social work education and welfare system in South Africa. However, it is also well documented that social work education has over the years attempted to shake off the shackles of the apartheid era as new debates and arguments constantly battle to make headway. According to a draft audit report by
of the South African BSW programmes by the Council on Higher Education (CHE), “despite the huge challenges, social work programmes at many institutions have not only responded to transformation in higher education and the welfare sectors, but also to the demands of reconstituted universities with the mergers, and with internal restructurings” (CHE, 2018, p. 38). This is indicative of concerted efforts by social work departments to construct curricula that is student-focused, rooted in the developmental social welfare paradigm and relevant to meeting the needs of society at large (Hochfeld, 2010; Patel, 2015).

2.2.1. South African higher education qualifications standards

The responsibility for the accreditation of South African higher education qualifications and the setting of qualification standards are located firmly with the domain of the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) and the Council on Higher Education (CHE). CHE has developed the Framework for Qualification Standards in Higher Education in South Africa (CHE, 2013a) which sets clear qualification standards for higher education, determined by the purpose and characteristics of the desired degree.

The South African Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF) (CHE, 2013b) is located within a “single integrated system for the classification, registration, publication and articulation of quality-assured national qualifications” known as the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), (SAQA, 2008, Section 4).

The BSW is recognised as a professional degree on the Framework for Qualifications Standards in Higher Education (CHE, 2013a). The qualifications standards for the BSW are contained in the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF) and the BSW is registered as a professional degree with SAQA with Qualification Identity Number 23994 (CHE, 2018). This background is presented to locate the BSW within the higher education qualifications framework.

One of the implications of the two qualification frameworks of the CHE, namely the Framework for Qualification Standards in Higher Education and the HEQSF (CHE, 2013b), is the recognition of the role of professional statutory bodies like the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP) in informing the qualifications process and in conferring on an individual a professional designation. Therefore, as a professional degree, the BSW leads to the graduate’s registration as a social worker with the SACSSP (DSD, 1978, as amended).
2.2.2. The Bachelor of Social Work (BSW)

The BSW is a professionally recognised degree, comprising 480 credits, completed over a four year period full-time and registered on the NQF at level 8 (CHE, 2015). The degree consists of fundamental, core and elective components, with the core components based solely in recognised social work modules, and the electives in recognised humanities or related fields (CHE, 2015). Field instruction is an integral and compulsory component of the BSW.

As a four-year degree, the BSW is given full recognition at level eight on the NQF, a level reserved for a professional bachelor’s degree or a recognised honours degree with a research focus. The recognition of the levels is further described in the Level Descriptors of the NQF (SAQA, 2012, pp. 10-11), which include, *inter-alia*, that graduates demonstrate the application of knowledge, theories, research methodologies, methods and techniques relevant to the field, discipline or practice, and demonstrate problem-solving, ethics, professional practice, and accountability.

Until 2015, the process of assessing students in the BSW was guided by a set of 27 exit level outcomes (ELOs). Students were expected to demonstrate competency based on a range of requisite statements and associated assessment criteria on the ELOs (CHE, 2018; Hochfeld, 2010). However, it is noted that the CHE Framework for Qualification Standards in Higher Education had in 2013, realigned its requirements for qualifications along the continuum of the levels and domains of the NQF (CHE, 2015). The new qualifications standards for the BSW degree include a focus on core social work knowledge like welfare policies, the developmental welfare paradigm, and relevant theories, perspectives and models, to applying knowledge and skills with nine core areas. These core areas include professional identity, application of core values and principles, holistic assessment and intervention, ethical competence, working with diverse communities and cultures, application of knowledge, theories and skills, effective communication of professional knowledge, research, and a sound knowledge of relevant policies and legislation applicable to social work practice (CHE, 2015, pp. 9-12). Based on a series of emails among academics during 2018, it became clear that many BSW programmes were unaware of the 2015 Qualifications Standards for the BSW, prompting a professional association called the Association of South African Social Work Academic Institutions (ASASWEI) to set up a task team to peruse the 2015 Qualifications Standards to assist social work academics.

2.3. Understanding praxis in social work education

The word “praxis” is identified as an accepted practice, or a custom, idea or theory that is put into practice (Simpson & Weiner, 1989, p. 806). In the context of social work, praxis allows students to...
apply theories learnt in the classroom into practice with service users. As part of praxis, social work students are encouraged to engage in critical learning. Critical learning is the ability to integrate knowledge, analysis, synthesis, and the ability to reframe ideas and debate, values and beliefs in order to work with service users, as well as to challenge existing views (Gould & Baldwin, 2004; Jones, 2009). This section recognises that both praxis and critical learning require that students are provided with structured opportunities to practice in the field that which is learned in class. This section argues that whilst field instruction is the heart of social work education (Homonoff, 2008; Schmidt & Rautenbach, 2016), it is the profession’s signature pedagogy (Shulman, 2005b).

2.3.1. **Historical development of social work education**

Historically, field instruction in social work started within an apprenticeship where students gained experience and knowledge by observing and while in employment within the human services sector. Royse et al. (2012) argue that the shift internationally from the apprenticeship model to a more academic approach was sparked by the changes in social welfare programmes and the determination of social work roles. The need for defined criteria for educational standards in field instruction emanated in the early twentieth century by organisations like the American Association of Schools of Social Work (Royse et al., 2012). This required a definition or demarcation of the roles of the persons involved in the field education process, like those of the educator, practitioner, and welfare agencies in developing the field instruction component of the social work curriculum and required field instruction opportunities for students (Kendall, 2002).

**Development of social work education in SA.** South Africa was the first country in Africa to have formal education and training in social work, pioneered by two academic institutions in the early 1920s, at a time when South African education had not yet called for trained personnel to work in the field of social welfare (Sewpaul & Lombard, 2004). A diploma course in social work was introduced in 1924 by the University of Cape Town, followed by a degree course in social work in 1932 by the University of Stellenbosch. Also attributed to this pioneering venture in social work education was the Zuid-Afrikaanse Vroue Federasie, an Afrikaans women’s organisation that was affiliated with the Transvaal University College and subsequently with the University of Pretoria in 1931 to train social workers (McKendrick, 1987; Ramanathan & Link, 1999). Social work education in SA was endorsed as a social science-based generic three-year university qualification at a National Conference on Social Work in 1936 (McKendrick, 1998; Studies, 1954). It appears that two significant developments occurred in 1965 that shaped social work education. First a study by Annette Muller (RSA, 1972) who found that standards of social work education in South Africa were aligned with social work training in Britain and Netherlands. Muller also recommended that social work training in South
Africa be extended from three to four years (McKendrick, 1998). Second, the National Welfare Act of 1965 which made provision for all social workers (including social work educators) to be registered, thus formalising the title of ‘registered social worker’ (McKendrick, 1987, p. 186).

The subsequent development of social work as a profession with the inclusion of members of all races being educated and trained in South Africa is well documented. McKendrick (1998) and Rautenbach and Chiba (2010) argue that despite separate education with the promulgation of the Extension of University Education Act of 1959 social work education continued to thrive in South Africa. However, it was only in 2002 that national standards for social work education, together with a statutorily endorsed accreditation system was developed (Sewpaul & Lombard, 2004).

Post-apartheid social work education in South Africa has seen the recognition of a four-year qualification namely the Bachelor of Arts in Social Work degree, supplanted by the Bachelor of Social Work degree (BSW) registered on the National Qualifications Framework in 2003. Since 2007, all providers of social work education had to offer a four-year undergraduate degree (Simpson & Raniga, 2014). Today, there are 16 universities of higher education that offer the BSW qualification across South Africa (CHE, 2016).

Other countries in Africa also recognised formal social work education, with Uganda (College, 1967), Ghana (Kreitzer, 2012), Lesotho, Tanzania and Zimbabwe (Dhemba, 2012) providing for the professional training of social workers as from the late 1960s. Professional associations for social work academia developed and had gathered momentum. The Association of Schools of Social Work in Africa (ASSWA), the Association of South African Social Work Education Institutions (ASASWEI) and the International Schools of Social Work (IASSW) bear reference.

Field instruction in social work education was seen as integral to praxis and the professional training of social workers and was recognised as such at the 1972 Conference on Field Instruction (RSA, 1972).

2.3.2. Trends in field instruction education

Social work educators worldwide share a common theoretical and knowledge base. Despite this, one of the key issues across countries is the need to have shared standards in field instruction in social work education. In this section, relevant studies and debates on field instruction across the various continents, as well as from the IASSW are explored.

North America. Early debates into creating uniform standards for social work field instruction within the CSWE in the USA were raised in a report by Loewenberg (1972). These debates related to
lengthening the field instruction studies from a one to two-year field instruction study as a postgraduate requirement for social work, to aligning the educational content of social work programmes with outcomes standards. Loewenberg (1972) reiterates concerns by field placement agencies concerning the quality and content of the field instruction component. This resulted in the CSWE creating standards for institutions granting degrees in social work, requiring the institutions to provide clear plans for the content, methods and evaluation of both classroom and field instruction training (Kendall, 2002). Field instruction was subsequently made a requirement for undergraduate programmes by CSWE and formed an integral part of the 2015 CSWE’s Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) (Royse et al., 2012). A review of standards for field education at the CSWE conducted by Raskin, Wayne, and Bogo (2008) found that there was a lack of empirical evidence to support the contribution of standards as per the CSWE’s EPAS as to the specified hours of fieldwork and the role of the practice educator to student outcomes. Raskin et al. (2008) suggested that models of field education be aligned with the EPAS standards, particularly the need for well-designed evaluation components that demonstrate student achievement of educational outcomes. However, there was a need to mandate programmes to address issues of human exchange in the learning environment, particularly concerning students’ diversity, rights and responsibilities. This culture of human exchange, according to Bogo and Wayne (2013), is especially relevant to field instruction programmes where members of the education team observe students’ relationship patterns and personality traits in everyday practice.

Europe. Social work education across Europe is indicated in The Bologna Process, an agreement signed by over 45 European countries that sought to restructure higher education in Europe (Clark, 2005). With the last restructuring process occurring in the 1960s and surpassed by The Bologna Process in 1999, social work education across Europe offered a two-tiered system of higher education, namely a free-standing three-year bachelor’s degree, as well as postgraduate master’s and doctoral degrees (WES, 2007). Studies in social work are regarded as a specialised field of study and not part of the general three-year degree, thus specialisation (social work) forms part of the master’s degree. This is unlike in South Africa where social work is offered at a four-year undergraduate level.

Africa. Debates into standards of training in Africa are also prevalent. Research was conducted into the fieldwork programmes at the Institute for Social Work in Tanzania, the National University of Lesotho and the School of Social Work at the University of Zimbabwe by Dhemba (2012). His research acknowledges that field instruction standards in social work were marginalised and that standards needed to focus on practical issues like fieldwork manuals, hours and models of practice, amongst other findings. In a separate, but earlier study, Sewpaul and Lombard (2004) argued that the context, standards and training in social work education, particularly field instruction training,
differed across the 53 countries in Africa. They identified either a lack of formal education and training in some countries whilst a variation in the type of social work qualification either at certificate, diploma or degree levels. To counteract this, Sewpaul and Lombard (2004) suggest the development of a regional qualifications framework to assist universities offering social work in Africa to develop or align existing structures and mechanisms with the broader regional initiatives. Research indicates that as far back as 1996, representatives of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), identified a need for a regional qualifications framework, which was followed in 1997 by member states signing a SADC Education and Training protocol (DoL, 2002; Sewpaul & Lombard, 2004).

Over and above uniform standards for the BSW, debates within the South African social work educational landscape ventured into whole qualifications and unit standards for the BSW. Whole qualifications indicate the competency level of the student at exit level of the degree, whilst unit standards refer to specific statements of education and training outcomes and their associated assessment criteria (SAQA, 2000). Sewpaul and Lombard (2004, p. 549) argue that qualifications based on unit standards were “prescriptive, reductionist, logical-positivist paradigm(s) that fragments and de-professionalises social work education and practice”. Thus, education and training of social workers in South Africa developed as a whole qualification, with emphasis subsequently on setting minimum standards within the qualification. Of note is that a review of standards for field instruction is underway at the SACSSP in the form of draft norms and standards document for the BSW (SACSSP, 2016), as well as a revised qualification standard for the BSW has been developed by the CHE (CHE, 2015). These two documents include standards for field instruction that require implementation.

Asia. According to Mishra (2014), there appears to be a lack of standards particularly in field instruction in India and recommends a manual for field instruction practice that would capture practices and processes to aid the student. Agencies allegedly do not see the need to be a part of the partnership for the training of social work students, thus affecting the standards. Standards for field instruction in social work education are contained in the Indian National Assessment and Accreditation Council (Mishra, 2014). Similarly, Atul Singh, Assistant Professor of Social Work at the University of Delhi, India, proposed the use of “SMART” objectives in understanding and evaluating students in field instruction (Singh, 2013). He highlights the need to adhere to what he viewed as the core objectives of field instruction; namely to develop an understanding of the agency and community, to acquire theoretical knowledge and translate this into practice, to develop skills required for professional practice, to develop professional attitudes, values and commitment, and to document evidence of work undertaken in field instruction training.
A study of standards of the four year degree in social work offered in Japan by Karls and Wanderei (2008) argue that different aspects of social work training, including field instruction standards, are regulated by three ministries, namely the Japanese Ministry of Education, The Ministry of Health and Welfare and by the Japanese Council on Social Work Education alike. The implication thereof is that students are expected to meet different standards depending on field placements. This argument was confirmed in a study by Sakaguchi and Sewpaul (2011) who also concluded that Japan responded positively to the call by the IASSW for working towards having a set of uniform standards for education and training of its students.

**Global standards for education and training.** Research into field instruction structures and curricula was undertaken by Skolnik, Wayne, and Raskin (1999) across 400 member universities of the IASSW across Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, Latin America, Middle East and North America. Their findings revealed a need for a shared understanding of social work, as well as standards in the field instruction. While it is not known whether this study had an impact on the call for global standards for education and training for the social work profession, the IASSW appointed a task team to set out standards for education and training as ideals that universities should aspire to. These standards included a focus on the university’s core purpose or mission, programme objectives and outcomes, programme curricula including fieldwork, core curricula, professional staff, social work students, structure, administration, governance and resources, cultural diversity, and social work values and ethics (Sewpaul & Jones, 2004). With regard to fieldwork, Standard 3 of the report recommends that academics involved in curricula design should ensure that curricula develop skills of critical thinking and scholarly attitudes of “reasoning, openness to new experiences and paradigms and commitment to life-long learning” (Sewpaul & Jones, 2004, p. 5). The standard promotes the need for planned liaison between the university and the agency, alludes to the quality and competency of field instructors, and supports a partnership between the university, agency and service users to evaluate students’ fieldwork performance.

2.3.3. **Emphasis on praxis**

Integral to teaching theory in social work is the application of concepts, as well as the use of empirical research and knowledge in practice. Social work theory and empirical knowledge provide a framework for students and practitioners alike to make sense of situations so that their responses and interventions are planned, useful and appropriate. Therefore, as social work is viewed as a practice profession and as an applied science, there is considerable emphasis on integrating theory learnt in class with practice within the field instruction programme. Early research by Raskin investigated efforts by British universities to integrate learning from instructional programmes in class with the
instructional programme in the field (Raskin, 1988, 1994). Using the Delphi research method, Raskin (1994) found that universities recognised the need for the integration of field instruction even prior to being formalised as a compulsory part of the academic programme.

One of the concerns raised about integrating theory and practice was that some concepts learned in the classroom may be challenging to apply in practice and thus appear irrelevant to learning practice skills (Buckley & Caple, 2004). However, these concerns were addressed over the years by the development of various strategies for integrating theory and practice. Thompson (2000) advocates the use of cycles of learning, using practice wisdom and common sense, developing a research-minded practice, and using enquiry and action learning as part of the strategies for integrating theory and practice.

Other strategies to support praxis include problem-based learning (PBL) and integrative seminars, both of which can be characterised by student-centredness, where learning occurs in small groups and teachers are referred to as facilitators or guides (Lam, 2004). The focus of these strategies is on real-life situations and learning that is self-directed. Whilst research into PBL is limited, a quantitative study by Lam (2004) indicates that PBL is strongly suited as a means of integrating theory and practice in social work education. Over time, the use of integrative seminars also gained momentum. Mok (1993) argues that integrative seminars are structured and explicitly organised to facilitate student research into selected topics relating to field instruction and fields of practice in social work. The integrative seminar approach is promoted as a cognitive approach that supports group learning and peer involvement in field instruction learning.

There have been studies that support the linking of field instruction to a research module as part of an undergraduate programme. Postlethwait (2012) studied a group of 111 students in an undergraduate social work degree where a community-based field instruction project was the primary focus. She found that this supported a type of active teaching which in turn increased student interest in the course content, thereby increasing student motivation in the project. Similarly, an earlier study by Kapp (2006) required students to design a programme evaluation plan for a community organisation as part of the students’ field instruction project, and then involved the students in research on the same project.

Another strategy was the Integration of Theory and Practice (ITP) model by Vayda and Bogo (1991), a process model where concrete experiences in field instruction were followed by observation and reflection. The ITP uses concepts like retrieval or recall of information, linkage to information using cognitive associations for reflection and self-awareness and professional responses that encourage the
student to use theoretical knowledge in planning and implementation of service delivery (Vayda & Bogo, 1991).

These and other strategies stress the importance of students being provided with opportunities to implement and practice what they learnt, in real-life situations, in environments where support and guidance are readily on hand. Therefore, the field instruction process is one of the first steps in socialising the student into professional practice.

2.3.4. Field instruction as the signature pedagogy

The discourse on signature pedagogy was led by Lee Shulman (2005b) who viewed this concept as distinctive to teaching and learning in a particular profession. However, this perspective did not necessarily include social work at the time, until it was adopted by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) as the signature pedagogy of social work (CSWE, 2008). The CSWE argued that the term was applicable to field instruction in the profession of social work as it emphasised two key aspects, namely that it was a mode of teaching that was key in socialising the student into the role of practitioner, and secondly, that it consisted of pedagogical norms that allowed students to integrate theory into practice. The CSWE perspective is understood to refer to teaching and learning processes, the demonstration of the development knowledge, and skills and values in social work. This recognition also lent itself to elevate the significance of field instruction thereby strengthening the effectiveness of social work education.

However, a later discourse by Larrison and Korr (2013) contend that before adopting such a label, a broader spectrum of the teaching and learning process should be included. They argued that whilst Shulman (2005b) emphasised aspects like preparation for professional competence to include skills in thinking, performance and acting with integrity, it was also critical to include other aspects of the profession. To this end, Larrison and Korr (2013, pp. 194-200) added three other features that included “thinking and learning like a social worker”, “the development of the professional self”, and (distinct) “forms of teaching and learning” to strengthen the profession’s scientific standing. These arguments are supported in Hendricks, Finch, and Franks (2016), Homonoff (2008), Schmidt and Rautenbach (2016) who argue that field instruction is the very heart of social work training and central to social work training programmes as it developed student competence and learning.

Research revealed two reviews of the term signature pedagogy in social work education. In their review, Holden et al. (2011) used a sample of databases, literature sources, monographs, and a survey amongst universities to attempt to uncover quantitative studies of social work field instruction in the United States of America. Another review of the term signature pedagogy in social work education
by Boitel and Fromm (2014) examined the challenges and opportunities presented by the profession adopting this term. Both studies acknowledged the consensus in the profession that field instruction as a process held a unique and essential training component for students. However, the study by Holden et al. (2011) was unable to confirm with evidence that field instruction held any priority over other forms of teaching. On the other hand, the study by Boitel and Fromm (2014) revealed that the diverse placements of students impacted on evaluation processes, and thus proposed a learning contract that would evaluate the integration of knowledge and progress towards competency in field practice.

The fit between signature pedagogy and field instruction was also reviewed by Wayne et al. (2010) and Bogo and Wayne (2013), finding that Shulman’s (2005a, 2005b) criteria which set out to indicate a profession’s designation as a signature pedagogy was useful to support the effectiveness of the field instruction process.

There are stronger arguments for the assigning of the label signature pedagogy to social work field instruction than against. This term not only fosters the development of social work students as professionals but also allows social work educators to examine and analyse the teaching and learning attribute in the qualification (Weyers, 2013). Field instruction is an integral part of the BSW and provides compulsory and formal workplace opportunities for students to practice their classroom learning. It is, therefore, concluded that recognising field instruction as the signature pedagogy of social work contributes significantly to the ongoing discourse on the importance of field instruction in social work education.

2.3.5. Decolonising the field instruction curriculum content

There have been several calls for a decolonised curriculum in social work education, particularly within field instruction training. Smith (2008) rightfully argues that social work education in SA emanated from British and American models. It is widely recognised that South Africa was the first country in Africa to offer social work education using western models, with social work practice in the 1920s borne out of and related to concern for white poverty (Kendall, 2000; McKendrick, 1987, 1998; Muller, 1965; Nicholas, 2010; Sewpaul & Lombard, 2004).

Over time, many universities in South Africa transformed their courses to become non-discriminatory and included social development and developmental practice in its curricula (McKendrick, 1998). The adoption of the White Paper on Social Welfare (RSA, 1997d) fostered alignment social work education with national goals within post-apartheid South Africa (McKendrick, 1998). The
indigenisation debate gained popularity thereafter with arguments that western training was not fit for purpose in the South African landscape.

Internationally, the Global Standards for Education and Training in Social Work and the Global Social Work Statement on Ethical Principles by the IASSW acknowledged the need for the recognition of and the development of indigenous social work education (IASSW-IETS, 2018; Sewpaul & Jones, 2004). These reports recommended that locally-specific social work education and practice be developed, particularly those developed from the study of traditions and cultures of different ethnic groups and societies, but to exclude practices that violate human rights (IASSW-IETS, 2018; Sewpaul & Jones, 2004). The aim of this turnaround strategy in social work education and training would be to replace the cloak of Eurocentric worldviews on local non-European social work environments with perhaps locally tested, relevant literature.

Social work educators should be sensitive to the manner in which European knowledge usurped the space of local literature. This argument is supported by research of indigenous cultures of New Zealand (the Maori culture), of South America (the Amerindian people), of Australia (Aborigines), of North America, and groups from Canada (namely the First Nations, Inuit, Metis) by Dumbrill and Green (2008). In what social work educators refer to as the need for ‘disruption’ of the Eurocentric perspective, Dumbrill and Green (2008) argue that special modules be developed to include practices on working with ethnic minority groups. Similarly, arguments by Tamburro (2013), and Crampton (2015) suggest that social work students are skilled with not just knowledge, but also the values to support and enhance their work with indigenous communities.

The African worldview as the basis for practice in the helping professions is useful in training student social workers. South African academics Thabede (2008), Mupedziswa (1997), Kaseke (1986) and (Ross, 2010a) argue that students should be knowledgeable about various traditions and beliefs, like the belief in ancestors, traditional healing, and the rites of passage within the Black communities. This understanding would ensure that field placements are meaningful and relevant to community expectations of social workers. Arguments on the relevance of language in South African education have also been raised (Makhubele & Qalinge, 2009). Other arguments supporting the need for recognition of indigenous practices are also forthcoming in countries like Ghana (Kreitzer, 2012), Nigeria (Olaleye, 2013), Australia (Denzin & Giardina, 2014, p. Chapter 7), Japan (Karls & Wanderei, 2008), China (Xiang & Luk, 2012), Latin America (Villanueva, 2013) and India (Mishra, 2014).
Responding to the need for debate and transformation in the social work curriculum, academics in South Africa grouped under the banner of their professional association (ASASWEI) to consolidate their understanding of the decolonising of the academic curriculum. This discourse commenced in 2016 with workshops on a shared understanding of decolonising in social work academia (ASASWEI, 2016). This discourse was expounded on a larger scale in 2017 at an international conference that included discussions among academics, students and practitioners sharing pertinent knowledge and research (ASASWEI/AASWA, October 2017). The conference attempted to “address current and emerging issues in social work in South Africa, across the continent and in much of the Global South” (p. 4) in order “to construct a social work profession that is embedded in post-colonial and indigenous contexts, that speaks to the unique and local nature of these contexts, in critical dialogue with the historically dominant voices in the discipline from the Global North” (p. 4). One of the conference resolutions on field instruction was a need to consider the applicability of current knowledge utilisation in indigenous field placements (ASASWEI/AASWA, October 2017).

The CHE recognised the call for a decolonised curriculum as “fundamental to informing understandings of quality in higher education and to guiding action in this regard” who raised questions relating to the content of the curricula and what needed to be changed (CHE, 2017, p. 1). With more profound debates continuing on many levels on the issue of decolonising the curricula, the impact will be felt on the field instruction curriculum.

However, in considering arguments on the benefits of indigenising social work knowledge, it would be facetious, if first, the transformation of field instruction programmes is not aligned with the transformation of knowledge on policies, practices, diversity, human behaviour and research within the entire academic curriculum. Second, consideration should be taken of the South African milieu. As LeGrange (2014) argues, African universities are not just organised as but have also adopted the western or European model of education, thus shaped by colonialism and colonial policies. LeGrange (2014) suggests a radical rethinking of the discipline needs to occur, with an integration of trans-disciplinary and indigenous knowledge into the curriculum. Thus, what is suggested is a shift from traditional western literature if field instruction is to meet the needs of individuals, communities and societies, as the western belief of social work intervention and fieldwork practices ignored the ethnic and cultural beliefs of minority and many larger communities.

2.4. Student education

A key concern amongst employers is that students who graduate from their programme are ill-prepared for the workplace, and are unable to integrate and apply knowledge gained at university into
their respective places of work (Newman et al., 2019). Similarly, concerns are raised that whilst universities make the highest contribution to graduates, university learning should focus on being “less didactic and more situated, participative and ‘real world’ oriented” (CHE, 2011, p. 4). This argument forms the basis for the promotion and support for workplace learning initiatives that would foster compliment and supplement theoretically acquired knowledge at university with an actual application of that knowledge in the real world.

This section sets out the basis for work-integrated learning policies, and discusses student learning styles, debates on student selection and throughput, as well as provide studies into the background of students at South African universities.

2.4.1. Work-integrated learning in higher education

The foundation for work-integrated learning in higher education in South Africa is set out in Education White Paper 3: A programme for the transformation of higher education (Education, 1997, pp. 13-17), the Higher Education Act (RSA, 1997b), and the HEQC (2006). As part of efforts to transform higher education, the HEQC requires that work-integrated learning initiatives be embedded into academic programmes.

Work-integrated learning (WIL), prominent in higher education policies, is an umbrella term to include concepts and approaches like experiential learning, service learning, work-placed learning and community service, amongst others. WIL is defined as “career-focused education that includes classroom-based and workplace-based forms of learning that are appropriate for the professional qualification”, aligning “academic and workplace practices for the mutual benefit of students and (the) workplace” CHE (2011, p. 4). This definition suggests that WIL enhances the student’s ability to consider practice methods in implementing theory, provides students with insights into their own practice, as well as venturing out of the constraints of the university environment, fosters skills development, and enhances technical skills and knowledge. WIL may include curricular modalities like academic learning that is work-directed, learning that is problem-based, project-based learning, or workplace learning (CHE, 2011, pp. 16-21).

The HEQC requires universities to have students participate in community-based initiatives to demonstrate a sense of social responsibility to the community (CHE, 2006; HEQC, 2006). These are supported in the form of community engagement or community service (McMillan, 2013) to denote higher education interactions with groups external to the university, and aimed at “building and exchanging knowledge, skills, expertise and resources required to sustain and develop society” (Petersen & Osman, 2013, p. 4). The Policy for Social Service Practitioners (DSD, 2017, p. 84)
identifies community service as a potential requirement for all social work graduates in order to “respond to human resources shortages identified across the social services sector, (in particular) in rural communities and in poor communities”.

However, field instruction in social work education is more than community service, community engagement, internships, fieldwork and experiential learning. Field instruction also differs from fieldwork, a term referring to work done outside of the regular place of work, or in research as a method of data collection (CHE, 2011; Tolich & Davidson, 1999). Often the term “internship” is used to refer to field instruction. Internship, according to CHE (2011), refers to a placement undertaken by a student or graduate, where learning takes places directly under the supervision, usually as part of a postgraduate programme, for example where medical graduates begin a residency programme, or engineering graduates complete a period of internship of up to two years after completion of the degree.

In some sectors, the term service learning is used interchangeably with field instruction. Service learning is used in university programmes like in nursing practice for students at medical facilities (McCormack et al., 2009), clinical education of law students at facilities like law clinics (Bezuidenhout & Erasmus, 2013), and in social work field education by the social work academic department at an open distance university in South Africa (Osman & Petersen, 2013). As an example, the Bright Site project of the University of South Africa uses service learning to provide learning opportunities to a combination of disciplines, including social work, at a specified site (Osman & Petersen, 2013). Yet by definition, service learning is a form of community engagement that combines the academic curriculum of the discipline and the student’s service in the community, and on the other, is a form of experiential learning that encourages students to learn from and through their service experiences in working within a community (Petersen & Osman, 2013).

Field instruction in social work education requires direct practice in a human services placement which supports the specific academic curriculum of the discipline. Field instruction is arguably a form of experiential learning, referring to Kolb’s Learning Cycle where activities to support the student’s development are specifically designed to support learning (Kolb, 1984; Smith, 2001).

2.4.2. Student learning styles

Students have individual and diverse learning styles. Parker (2006) argues that there is a need for social work students to understand their unique learning styles before undertaking field instruction. Whilst these learning styles are present during assessment processes within the students’ theoretical courses, their individual insight is more significant during the field instruction process. According to
Parker (2006), students must show insight into issues of meaningfulness, perceived relevance and currency of practice, skills and knowledge. This is particularly significant when considering the time-lapse between learning theory and implementation thereof. It is also argued that most students experience performance anxiety before going into field practice (Kanengoni, 2014; Kiser, 2016; Mathews et al., 2014; Parker, 2006).

Beverley and Worsely (2007) and Humphrey (2011, pp. 46-47) refer to various learning styles of student learners like the activist, who likes to reflect on experience; the reflector, who reads widely on theory, research and practice, and is focused on conceptualisation of the learning process; the theorist, who focuses on both conceptualisation and experience; and the pragmatist, who understands the relationship between experience and experimentation.

Students commence supervision practice with apprehension, initially being very dependent on the supervisor (Budeli, 2018; Mamaleka, 2018). Students seem to fluctuate between dependency and autonomy, and thereafter develop a sense of self-confidence to the point of seeming overconfident (Field, Jasper, & Littler, 2014). Students finally progress to personal autonomy and awareness of professional self during supervision (Field et al., 2014; Jasper & Field, 2016). Based on these and other learning styles, students gain insight into their sense of self and are progressively confident about entering professional practice.

**2.4.3. Student throughput and selection debates**

Students enter the social work degree for many reasons. From experience, I found that South African students may enter tertiary studies straight out of high school, having met the basic entrance requirement and Admission Point Score (APS) to study social work, and over recent times had most likely obtained a state bursary to study in this field. This brings in the arguments concerning the massification of higher education in South Africa where there is an increased demand for places at university (Simpson & Raniga, 2014). Over the years, the state department responsible for social welfare has offered prospective students financial assistance as an initiative of its recruitment and retention strategy and to encourage student enrolment. Table 2.1 below reflects the breakdown of the numbers of recipients of financial assistance from the Department of Social Development (DSD) to pursue studies in social work (DSD, 2018).

The demand for the BSW increased from a net enrolment of 1 566 in the year 2000, to 7 250 in 2007, and 17 528 in 2011 (CHE, 2018, p. 55). This steady increase over the years coincided with the financial support offered to potential students to study social work by the DSD as indicated in Table 2.1 (CHE, 2018; DSD, 2013). The statistics provided in Table 2.1 refer to more recent enrolments.
and a concerted attempt by the DSD to encourage student recruitment into the discipline of social work. It has been noted that was a decline in the number of students awarded scholarships in 2017 with ostensibly no new scholarships allocated for 2018.

Table 2.1. DSD recipients of financial assistance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province (SA)</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gauteng</td>
<td>438</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West</td>
<td>407</td>
<td>349</td>
<td>306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free State</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>356</td>
<td>337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Cape</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Cape</td>
<td>516</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>441</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limpopo</td>
<td>809</td>
<td>668</td>
<td>482</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KwaZulu – Natal</td>
<td>1397</td>
<td>1228</td>
<td>1080</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mpumalanga</td>
<td>334</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>352</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Cape</td>
<td>895</td>
<td>786</td>
<td>736</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Department of Social Development</td>
<td>331</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>5674</strong></td>
<td><strong>4702</strong></td>
<td><strong>4331</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By implication then, students who were unsure of their choice of career may be attracted to pursue a degree in social work as a result of the state-aided bursary scheme, or because they now have access to a university degree. Also, this attraction for space at university is complicated by the sudden announcement on 16 December 2017 by the former president of South Africa, Honourable JG Zuma, for fee-free education to be made available to poorer students (News24, 16 Dec 2017). A response to this announcement in a financial media online revealed the economic impact of the implementation of such an announcement on universities (Fin24.com, 4 Jan 2018). The effect of such practices undoubtedly impacts the throughput rates at universities, but importantly highlights the call for criteria for the selection of students into specific disciplines.

Ultimately the social work departments at universities are gatekeepers for the profession. Efforts are in place at some universities to apply screening procedures for new and current students (CHE, 2018). The CHE raised concern about universities lowering the APS score to broaden access and not exclude potential students from previously disadvantaged backgrounds (CHE, 2018). However, a study of students at the University of Witwatersrand revealed that the lowering of the entrance requirements to meet the university’s transformation policies had the unintended result of admitting students who had little or no commitment to enter the social work profession, and many failed to keep up with academic requirements during the BSW programme (Ross, 2007).

However, throughput rates may be related to other factors, including the high dropout rates in the first year and students unable to adjust to different methods of academic literacy at university (Sibanyoni & Pillay, 2014). Furness and Gilligan (2004) argue that the practice educator ensures that only those who are competent may exit the BSW programme. However, in practice, this statement may not have
the desired effect as Ross (2010b, p. 459) explains that “in 2007, a social work department at a South African university faced possible closure partly due to low student throughput rates”.

Research on student selection revealed an early study by Wodarski (1979) that questioned the validity of selection processes versus the predictability for student success in graduate school or later practice. Wodarski (1979) also argues that reliable and valid indicators were necessary for any selection or admission process, and more so in a helping profession like social work. This is in line with arguments as to when such selection criteria takes place, noting that universities have varied entrance criteria for students, some of whom register for other qualifications before pursuing social work courses. What is mostly acknowledged is that the point of entry to the social work course or the BSW degree is likely the first stage of determining suitability. Furness and Gilligan (2004) recommend that selection procedures for prospective social work students could take on many forms, ranging from written tests and interviews to discussion groups and role plays. Interestingly, research indicates that the degree in social work in the United Kingdom called for the participation of service users in the recruitment and selection of prospective social workers (Engelbrecht, Pullen-Sansfacon, & Spolander, 2010; Furness & Gilligan, 2004; Kjellberg & French, 2011).

Currently, reliable and valid indicators to determine selection criteria for prospective social work students appear to be under consideration at South African universities. This is in response to a 2013 CHE audit of social work academic programmes that universities are to consider selection criteria of new students into the profession (CHE, 2016, 2018). Arguably the admission requirements lie within the ambit and jurisdiction of the university. Furthermore, a basic entrance requirement of usually a matriculation exemption with specified subjects is compulsory. Subsequently, there appears to be a fervent discussion amongst South African academics on selection criteria for prospective students (ASASWEI/AASWA, October 2017). These deliberations are in its early stages but are aligned to recommendations and concerns by the CHE regarding student recruitment, selection processes and student throughput.

Active involvement by social work academics at individual universities is necessary in order to develop selection and screening procedures for students entering the respective BSW programmes (Schmidt & Rautenbach, 2016). This practice is contained in an interview in this study with a practice educator [Case2_PracEduc2] at a South African university who endeavours to be present at the university’s BSW selection panel.

Efforts to reduce student dropout and simultaneously foster student recruitment and selection are under consideration. However, statistics presented by the CHE lay bare the grim face of enrolments
versus graduation. Whereas total enrolments across the BSW programmes rose from 7,570 in 2007 to 14,791 in 2012, total graduations numbered 741 in 2007 and 1,666 in 2012 (CHE, 2018, pp. 57-58). This massive drop in throughput rates creates the basis for various arguments, including the role of the university in managing overall throughput rates whilst simultaneously serving as a gatekeeper to graduates entering the social work profession.

2.4.4. Research on background of SA social work students

Notwithstanding the above, research indicates that South African students who enter university in general experience various periods of transition and life’s challenges, particularly with the country’s high levels of poverty and inequality. Van Breda’s (2017) qualitative research in this field sampled 232 undergraduate students at a university in Johannesburg, SA and found that students came from diverse backgrounds, and had a range of challenging life experiences and personal challenges. This arguably contributed to students being psychosocially vulnerable, which in turn affected their academic performance and progress. This study is relative to an earlier study on student vulnerability concerning social work students at the same university in Johannesburg wherein 77 percent of students had experienced the loss of a parent or significant other, and more than half grew up in poverty (Van Breda, 2011). This high prevalence of psychosocial vulnerability amongst social work students does not prepare students to enter the profession, with many continuing to struggle financially with their life’s challenges impacting negatively on their well-being and academic performance.

Similar findings were obtained in an earlier study on the effects of trauma on the professional self of the fourth-year social work students at a distance learning university in South Africa (Wade, 2009). Reference is also made to a qualitative study by Dykes and Green (2015) on the impact of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) of social work students, as well as a quantitative analysis of the socio-economic profile of students entering the field of social work by Ross (2010b). These studies focus mainly on the student either entering or are already in the social work programme within the South African context and present a grim view of the learning profile of some students.

Sibanyoni and Pillay (2014) and Kane, Lear, and Dube (2014) argued that students are unable to assess their capabilities and work through their vulnerabilities, yet are expected to enter disciplines that are focused on helping others. Comparable arguments are contained in a study in the UK by Furness and Gilligan (2004) who recommend that students need to share their personal background information in order to be reflective practitioners. On the other hand, in a study by Marshall, McKenna, and Mogashana (2018) of students at a South Africa University, it was revealed that students struggled to complete the degree within the specified year period. Their study called for the
restructuring of certain degrees to allow students an additional year to complete the degree (Marshall, 2018; Marshall et al., 2018).

These arguments and studies are referenced in order to provide a background to student vulnerabilities in a programme where such students themselves are expected to work with vulnerable groups and communities. These studies also have a bearing to practice educators and supervisors during the teaching and learning process, without the presumption that it applies to all students, and considering the resilience and strengths of students in this field.

2.4.5. Student supervision

In this section, I examine principles of student supervision in general applicable across most disciplines and subsequently describe supervisory roles and functions, and various methods of supervision with relevance to student supervision in social work.

According to Manathunga (2005, p. 17), supervision is seen as a “private pedagogical space” where the supervisor “is the guru with the student tapping into the superior knowledge and expertise of the supervisor”. This means that the student supervisor is the expert and can transfer that knowledge to the student.

However, it is vital that for student’s supervision to be effective, the supervisor understands the circumstances of the student, the learning context, and how the student learn. This argument is also prevalent in Gardiner (1989) whose research draws on adult learning techniques where supervision progresses from a focus on the content of learning to a level of meta-learning where the student imbibes various aspects that have been taught to be able to put this into practice. What is evident is that the student and supervisor have different but complementary roles and responsibilities and that the supervisor and student may not be at the same level of understanding at all times (Beverley & Worsely, 2007; Gardiner, 1989; Singh, 2013).

There are various approaches to student supervision that are prevalent in social work literature. The conventional approach to student supervision is what Doel, Shardlow, Sawdon, and Sawdon (1996) and Kiser (2016) refer to as the apprenticeship model where students learn by observing in the workplace and learning by watching what workplace practices entail. The supervisor in this approach is the expert who shows rather than teaches the student the steps to be taken. The growth and developmental model is another approach to student supervision where the students’ strengths and awareness of self are emphasised, and the supervisor is instrumental in facilitating the student’s reflective practice (Simpson & Raniga, 2014). A third approach is the articulated approach or a
structured learning approach where learning experiences are specifically structured to make the most of student learning in the field instruction programme (Beverley & Worsely, 2007; Kiser, 2016; Royse et al., 2012).

Understanding the type of model and applying this to practice requires that the student supervisor is aware of his/her methods of supervision, moving away from merely basing supervision on the apprenticeship model, and instead becoming developmental whilst carefully articulating a structured approach that would maximise the student’s learning within the field instruction programme.

2.4.5.1. Supervisory roles and functions

The student supervisor is tasked with maximising learning opportunities for the student within the agency context by taking on supportive, developmental, educational and managerial functions in the supervisory process (Jones, 2009).

**Supportive role.** The supportive role becomes evident when the student supervisor assists the student to overcome the emotional demands of working with service users in the field instruction process, and in dealing with the student’s sense of (or lack of) confidence and feelings of being overwhelmed. In this role, the student supervisor restructures the learning environment to suit the learning needs of the student. One of the critical factors of the supportive role is the ability of the student supervisor to guide the student in understanding issues relating to his age, ethnicity, gender, life experiences and its impact on his ability to manage the field placement (Botha, 2002; Lomax et al., 2010). However, this focus has been reported to test the student-supervisor relationship regarding emotional support (Bennet, Mohr, Deal, & Hwang, 2013), but this eases out when there the student acquires professional maturity and practices professional self-confidence (Jones, 2009).

One of the philosophies supporting the supportive function of the student supervisor is the attachment-based approach to field instruction. This approach, purported strongly by Bennet et al. (2013) and Bennet and Saks (2006), argues that the supervisor provides a supportive, circular and interactional working environment so that the student is allowed freedom to explore the professional world without the fear of reprimand. This approach to supervision is based on research into attachment, the working alliance and affect in clinical supervision. A quantitative survey of two mid-Atlantic university social work programmes into supervisor-student relationships undertaken by Bennet et al. (2013) suggests that while it was difficult to effectively measure the variables in the relationship, a supportive supervisory relationship within a noncritical context was significant.
Developmental and educational role. Parker (2006) argues that student supervisors utilise a developmental and educational approach to help the student move from a process of dependence on the supervisor to one that has evidence of personal autonomy. Educational supervision develops knowledge, skills and attitudes that are requisite for effective social work by emphasising the teaching, training, and facilitated learning roles of the supervisor (Bennet et al., 2013).

Educational supervision usually commences with an assessment of the student’s learning needs about the student’s past experiences, ethical awareness, theoretical knowledge and learning goals (Scragg, 2013). This helps students to progress from experiencing feelings of anxiety and apprehension before entering the preparation stage of field instruction (Mathews et al., 2014). In this approach, the student supervisor attempts to align the student’s learning needs with the context of social work theory, knowledge, skills, and values. Students are encouraged to link their theory, readings, literature, and research to what they experience at the placement agency (Lomax et al., 2010). Students are further encouraged to articulate their understanding of the circumstances and situations of service users, and their understanding of practical applications of laws, policies, and social work values. Thus the student supervisor assesses the student’s understanding of knowledge, learning and ability in order to make professional judgements and decisions in day to day work (Royse et al., 2012).

Providing feedback and encouragement is critical to shaping the student’s focus on the field instruction programme (Carroll, 2010). This forms part of both the developmental and management roles of the supervisor. The involvement of the student supervisor in the assessment process of the student may vary from one university to the next. The student needs regular feedback on the field instruction process, and whether the standards of the discipline are met (McKee, Muskat, & Perlman, 2015).

During the period of field placement, student supervisors are tasked to provide regular and structured supervisory and instructional meetings with the student or students assigned to them. This forms a critical part of the weekly scheduled supervisory meeting. A minimum of one-hour supervision per week is recommended (Royse et al., 2012; Unguru & Sandu, 2018). The student supervisor should be able to perform an educational assessment concerning the mutually agreed upon developmental goals (Scragg, 2013). Also, the student supervisor should use the supervisory relationship constructively and is also responsible for working jointly with the student to develop a developmental or learning plan, with appropriate milestones that would guide learning areas during the placement.
Student supervisors employ specific strategies to meet the developmental function of supervision. One such strategy is adopting a task-centred model in ensuring that the student’s related educational and developmental needs are met. The task centred model proposed by Capsi and Reid (1998) is an approach to field instruction that focuses on the development and implementation of specific tasks within the field instruction programme. Tasks are developed jointly by the student and the supervisor, which ideally is mutually accepted with clear expectations and time-frames to measure accountability. This approach was part of a qualitative research study by Capsi and Reid (1998) to elicit the views of students and supervisors in implementation. However, whilst this approach has fixed goals, it has been amended in its usage to suit the specific needs of field instruction programmes where there have been shifts from a focus on target problems to focus on setting target goals. This, in turn, was useful in the development of the student’s competence in the field instruction programme. Understandably this approach has its merits in field instruction training due to its emphasis on ensuring accountability of actions.

Management role. The management role of the student supervisor entails the management of various administrative processes like ensuring that documentation or agreements are in place and that agreements are clear, explicit and focused. Input from the student is valuable in these agreements to ensure that the supervision process is not solely linear, instead, it is a dynamic, interactive process that builds on the students’ strengths, experiences, skills and knowledge (Scragg, 2013). The management role is also indicative of the change of the student supervisor’s function from teaching to monitoring, assessment and evaluation. On the other hand, administrative supervision focuses on agency operations and provides structure and access to agency resources. It guides the student on matters of whom to report to during the field instruction process, provides structure as to starting and ending times and other agency rules, and demarcates roles of the supervisor, student, and other agency personnel.

The above roles may be ineffective unless the issue of supervisor competency is addressed. The student’s successful learning experience is seen as correlating with the student supervisor’s knowledge, skills and values (Scragg, 2013). Therefore, it is implied that the student supervisor is capable of conceptualising and transmitting knowledge and offers the student opportunities that will develop core and advanced competencies and knowledge. A four-year longitudinal study by Le Maistre, Boudreau, and Pare’ (2006) on the school to work transitions across four helping professions including social work, found that supervisors tended to lose the focus of mentoring and migrated instead towards evaluating students. This created inconsistent roles for the supervisor, which in turn resulted in conflicting feelings for the student.
From the above, it is evident that the supervisory relationship is critical to creating a safe, educative context that nurtures professional development and the advancement of both professional and personal values and skills. A student supervisor who provides poor or incompetent direction to the student could be held liable in any instance where a complaint of alleged unprofessional or unethical behaviour is lodged against the student social worker (SACSSP, 2006, Section 5.4.1.e).

2.4.5.2. Methods of supervision

Two main methods of supervision are usually employed, namely one to one supervision and group supervision. These methods may be used exclusively, or interchangeably depending on the setting, but do not preclude any other initiatives that the supervisor may employ during the supervisory process (Bor & Watts, 2011).

One to one supervision. This form of supervision usually refers to regular meetings of the student supervisor and the student. Bor and Watts (2011) recognise that this type of supervision may be time-consuming when compared to meeting a group of students simultaneously, yet it is structured with specific goals for each session and offers a high degree of support and supervisory input. One to one supervision also offers what Bor and Watts (2011) refer to as a level of containment, or a secure base to raise issues of concern and uncertainty that the student may encounter about the various phases of social work practice methods. However, whilst it may take place mostly as a structured set of meetings over a designated period, it does not rule out the need or even the possibility for meetings which are considered to be ad hoc or meeting to tackle situations of emergency or crises that the student finds himself in.

Group supervision. Whilst most social work supervision is based on a series of one-to-one meetings between the student supervisor and the student there is a growing trend towards group supervision (Bogo, 2015). Group supervision is conducted by one student supervisor tasked with the responsibility of supervision for three or more students in one setting (Bogo, Globerman, & Sussman, 2004). It is suggested that group supervision is a viable alternative to the traditional individual modality in the context of strained agency resources for field instruction. Moreover, group supervision effectively promotes a setting of peer learning, which in turn provides a safe environment for students to share intervention strategies used with service users.

A qualitative interview study by Bogo et al. (2004) of the views of a graduate student at a Canadian university revealed that the competence of the student supervisor was a crucial element for a positive supervision experience. In order to foster the positive experience of group supervision amongst students, student supervisors should be available, supportive and developmental, have a structured
leadership style, be able to facilitate learning from peers, and are skilled in balancing personal and shared experiences in a public space. This study also recommends that the student supervisor should be competent in managing and processing group dynamics (Bogo et al., 2004).

A later independent study by Zeira and Schiff (2010) on the utilisation of group supervision during field instruction education at a university in Israel, examined student satisfaction with their relationship with their supervisors and field education, internalisation of professional values, and perceptions of interventions with clients. This quantitative study found that supervisors were ill-equipped to conduct group supervision unless they had received training and had sound management of individual students within the group itself.

From these two studies, it is noted that the migration from individual to group supervision is not a tool to be used frivolously or to merely work within the constraints of the agency resources. Instead, student supervisors who resort to group supervision should be competent in managing group dynamics and individual requirements within the peer learning environment.

2.4.5.3. The supervision agreement

The supervision agreement refers to an understanding between the student supervisor and the student that pertains specifically to these members of the educational team. This should not be confused with the pre-placement agreement which is primarily among the university, supervisor, student, and agency.

The supervision agreement is different as it needs to speak directly to the nature and function of supervision during the placement period and the responsibilities of both the student and supervisor that form a contractual partnership among all members in ensuring that academic requirements, as well as the student developmental needs, are met (Lomax et al., 2010; Royse et al., 2012). The supervisor and the student negotiate a clear, explicit, and focused agreement in the form of a supervision contract at the outset of their relationship. Parker (2006) recommends that this form part of a formal contract underpinned by an acknowledgement of the various roles of supervision, setting down specific and non-negotiable criteria for supervision, whilst acknowledging progression of the student’s learning along a continuum. Thus, Parker (2006) suggests that the supervision contract contain specific information on practical arrangements on time, place, and date of supervision sessions, the content of each session, expectations of the student and the supervisor, and add a section to address reviewing and renegotiating aspects of the contract.
The supervision agreement is a learning agreement between the student and supervisor that addresses issues like length, frequency, and duration of supervision and specifies the student’s learning needs (Beverley & Worsely, 2007; Rogers, Collins, Barlow, & Grinnell, 2000). Similarly, the agreement or contract includes the tasks and processes of supervision with an emphasis on a pre-set agenda and feedback.

In summary, student supervision is not an easy process. It is made complex by the various roles that the supervisor plays, aligned with the learning needs of the student, within a short and specified time frame. It is in this process that the student gets answers and guidance to pragmatic matters like how and where to access resources and what to do when facing relevant difficulties. Therefore, the process involved in learning is often lengthy and is complicated when bound by a specific period. Thus, the onus is on both the supervisor and the student to remain focused, clear and direct in meeting the student’s growth and developmental needs.

2.5. **The field instruction education team**

This section identifies members forming the education team in the field instruction process. Research indicates that the education team is known as practice partners or key role-players, of which there appears to be an endless list of personnel, depending on the structure of the field instruction programme, the structure of the university, and the numbers of students enrolled for the module. In this section, the many practice partners are clustered under five strategic headings and present key functions as per the literature. However, these functions are not in any way inclusive or exhaustive.

2.5.1. **The student**

Sometimes referred to as the student intern, the student is central to the field instruction process. The student is the learner in the process, thereby assumed to be participating fully in learning. Literature on the roles and responsibilities of students is limited and is to be mostly intertwined with practical issues concerning student placements. However, Hoffman (1990, pp. 54-55) presents a solid list of the roles and responsibilities of social work students, arguing that students adopt the role of the learner, but assumes full responsibility for learning. Below is a summary of the overall roles and responsibilities of student social workers, extracted from Hoffman (1990) and amended and linked to other literature:

a. Students should be mostly independent, transitioning across the years of study from dependence to independence (Hoffman, 1990). This indicates that students take on more professional responsibilities, gather evidence in assessment and intervention, and understand
how to integrate theory into practice in order to make constructive decisions in their work (Mathews et al., 2014).

b. Students should attend and participate in formal, specifically structured teaching-learning sessions as per the university curriculum.

c. Students are required to abide by a code of ethics, which is enforced by their registration with the SACSSP (DSD, 1978, as amended), and serious defaulters are to be reported to the regulatory body, in this case, the SACSSP (DSD, 1993) or the relevant university authorities (Makhubele, Matlakala, & Mabvurira, 2018).

d. Students should ideally have a learning contract with the university, the student supervisor, and agency.

e. Students shall work only under the direct supervision of a registered social worker (SACSSP, 2006, Section 5.4.1.f), and must consult with and attend supervisory sessions with the supervisor.

f. Students shall learn to manage the assigned and required workload as well as fulfil the requirements of the curriculum.

g. Students shall observe the working hours and work routine of the placement agency and offer professionally acceptable services in line with the policies and procedures of the field placement agency.

h. Students shall provide a portfolio of evidence and meet other assessment requirements of the university.

The above set out, in summary, some of the key responsibilities of students in the social work field instruction programme.

### 2.5.2. The practice educator (representing the university)

For this study, labels like practice lecturer, field coordinator, internship lecturer, university field placement liaison, university field liaison and field educator is limited to ‘practice educator’ for ease of reference. The term practice educator was used to cover all functions attributed to the university personnel responsible for either teaching in the field instruction programme or are involved in the placement liaison process. However, though limited in its title, the label practice educator is seen as all-encompassing, yet acknowledging that individual university resources and numbers of students may vary with some resources for designated field instruction coordinators, lecturers, and liaison persons.

As per South African legislation, no person may teach in the field of social work without registration as a social worker with the SACSSP (DSD, 1978, as amended, Section 15.1.d). Also, social workers
who function as educators provide education “only within their areas of knowledge and competence and should provide education based on the most current information and knowledge available in the profession” (SACSSP, 2006, Section 5.1.2.a)

Some universities allocate multiple roles to its academics so it may be that a person may be both the university lecturer and field instruction coordinator, or there may be multiple persons sharing roles and responsibilities in the field instruction programme of that university. Hoffman (1990, pp. 53-54) identifies and lists the functions of two persons who fall under the title of practice educator, namely the field practice teacher and the course coordinator. Hoffman (1990) argues that the liaison between the university and placement agency is maintained by the course coordinator, as well as the field practice teacher, with separate and yet overlapping responsibilities. All of these fall under the ambit of practice lecturer, a title preferred by scholars like Kiser (2016), Lomax et al. (2010) and Furness and Gilligan (2004). The roles and responsibilities of these job titles are presented and cross-referenced with more recent literature.

The title of field practice teacher is supported by social work scholars like Parker (2006), Hoffman (1990), Danbury (1994) and Beverley and Worsley (2007), whilst Rogers et al. (2000) use the title practicum seminar teacher as the key person responsible for the teaching and learning component in the field instruction programme. These scholars describe the role of this job title to include introducing the student into the life and service programmes of the placement organisation, compiling an education programme in the field, be available should the student require guidance for field practice, reporting to the course coordinator on the student’s progress or challenges, as well as reporting on agency changes which may impact on the student’s placement. Added to these job functions is practice assessor which Beverley and Worsley (2007) view as emphasising the assessment function within the teaching and learning function of the field practice teacher.

The title of course coordinator is proffered by Hoffman (1990), whilst the title of faculty field liaison (Royse et al., 2012), practicum coordinator (Rogers et al., 2000) also have similar job functions. These scholars argue that the course coordinator is ultimately responsible for the planning, designing, and development of the field instruction course, a mammoth task which is usually conducted as part of a course design and development committee at the university. The course coordinator is also responsible for the recruitment, selection and appointment of placement agencies as agents of the university, participates in the selection and appointment of field practice teachers as agents of the university, arranges, manages and monitors the implementation of the field instruction module, introduces both student and field practice lecturer to their respective roles, and serves as a mentor to the field practice lecturer. In addition to these functions, Royse et al. (2012) argue that the course
coordinator is responsible for assisting field practice teachers in developing their teacher skills, facilitates the development of the supervisor’s supervisory skills within the range required to carry out their student supervision functions, mediates in resolving problems between students, supervisors and agencies, and advocates to the academic review committee where applicable on the field instruction programme.

The practice educator is argued to be responsible for representing a university’s social work programme and is an all-encompassing title for the duties of both the field practice educator and the course coordinator. The practice educator is responsible for the monitoring of agency sites, and student supervisors for a specific cohort of students (Anastas, 2010; Cleak, Hawkins, Laughton, & Williams, 2015). Sosland and Lowenthal (2017) argue that the practice educator is also tasked with assigning analytical assignments designed to enhance the student’s field instruction experience, as well as to provide a framework within which to reflect, to conceptualise, analyse, test and apply ideas encountered outside of what was taught in the classroom.

Ultimately irrespective of the terminology, all under this title have the responsibility to provide a constructive learning experience for the student, and the responsibility of teaching and guiding the student on integrating theory and practice. In addition, the practice educator abides by the guidelines of the statutory body in that they:

- evaluate learners' performance in a manner that is fair and respectful, take reasonable steps to ensure that service users are routinely informed when services are being provided by learners, and not engage in any dual or multiple relationships with learners in which there is a risk of exploitation or potential harm to the learners. Educators and field instructors are responsible within the social service field and field instructors are responsible for setting clear, appropriate and culturally sensitive boundaries (DSD, 1978, as amended, Section 5.1.2.b-d).

It is the practice educator who represents and takes overall responsibility, on behalf of the university, for the student’s learning and assessment when the student is on practice placement. The practice educator assesses the student against various outcomes and makes a recommendation on the student’s progress (Mathews et al., 2014). Thus, the responsibilities of the practice educator (as per the above combination of terms) consist of accountability for university-based classes, as well as for placements and monitoring of placements, including the monitoring of supervisors. One of the other functions of the practice educator is to monitor student throughput, which Botha (2010) argues is linked to governmental policies regarding student retention, funding and increasing competition between universities.
2.5.3. The placement agency

Practice placements lie at the heart of social work education and training. Lomax et al. (2010) posit that social work students are required to have experience in at least two practice settings and of providing services to at least two types of service-user groups. Placements are an opportunity for the student to put into practice his/her academic learning, and to explore more knowledge, skills, and values that are needed to work safely and effectively with different service users.

Social work students are placed at human service agencies in order to maximise the benefit from implementing the theoretical knowledge, skills, and values taught at university. The South African landscape has seen an array of human service agencies with a vast and complex array of programmes that provide social work services and benefits. This occurs at governmental and non-governmental levels. The National Department of Social Development is seen as the overarching provider of social welfare services in the country (RSA, 1997d). In practice, this role is deployed to the nine provinces where provincial DSDs are responsible for the implementation of social services. In turn, some of these social work services and benefits may be distributed by what is commonly known as a purchasing of services by or service level agreements with non-governmental organisations (DSD, 2017). In this field, non-governmental organisations include community-based and faith-based organisations (RSA, 1997c). This sector comprises the local child and family welfare societies, family and marital services, organisations that may deal with alcohol and substance dependency, crime prevention and rehabilitation and private medical facilities. In addition to social work services at the DSD and non-governmental organisations, social work services are also offered at state departments like public hospitals, correctional services, justice department, at magisterial, regional and high courts, and at the Offices of the Family Advocate in terms of the custody of minor children (DSD, 2007, 2016).

More recently in the field of social services, it appears that the DSD has turned attention to statutory services with specific focus on foster care (DSD, 2017). This means that student placements at the various locally-based service points of the DSD provide limited opportunities for practice across the micro, meso, and macro levels of social work, and may be restricted to statutory work. This is a far cry from my own experience in this field. I completed my fourth-year placement at a local office of the DSD in 1986 where I had obtained comprehensive experience in social work services at a micro, meso and macro level, gaining experience in working within foster care services, abuse and neglect cases, services to the elderly and to the disability and victim empowerment services, amongst other practical experience.
One important teaching experience provided to the student by the placement agency is the availability of other staff at the agency who add to the learning environment of the student. Thompson (2006) argues that students are influenced at the agency by the agency’s approaches to its service-users and its role in the community, the influence of other staff members, agency politics (referring to communications amongst staff members), and power relations. However, recognition is also given to the positive role that the broader agency environment has on the student, particularly the learning gained from other disciplines, members of multi-disciplinary teams, and other stakeholders working in the agency and community.

Finally, given the knowledge that there are non-South African students registered full-time for the BSW degree, specific literature or policy that guides whether students registered at South African universities should complete their field instruction programme in agencies in the same country of study is not available.

2.5.4. The student supervisor

The term student supervisor applies to those persons who meet the criteria of being registered with the SACSSP as a social worker (DSD, 1978, as amended) and is involved in providing direct supervision, guidance, and monitoring of the student. The SACSSP emphasises the requirement for social work students to receive supervision. Whilst the amount, regularity or purpose of supervision during field instruction is at this stage not specified, attempts are being made by the Professional Board for Social Work at the SACSSP to address this as a standard (SACSSP, 2016). However, what is clear is that a student social worker may not function without the supervision of a social worker (SACSSP, 2006, Section 5.4.1.f).

Rogers et al. (2000) view the student supervisor as the practicum instructor who is based at the organisation. However, this is not the norm. From experience on student placements, I have found that some human service agencies lack a social worker on site or may not have social workers willing to supervise students. Presently, there does not appear to be legislation or adopted policies on the criteria to be a student supervisor. However, what is agreed in the literature is that student supervisors should possess good personal and professional characteristics.

Personality and knowledge are qualities in supervisors that have a significant impact on the student’s learning experience during the field instruction process. Kiser (2016) argues that knowledge, support, and skill in supervising and providing feedback, in particular, are the core characteristics of student supervisors. Effective supervisors should possess characteristics of professionalism and be a model for the student in terms of practice. The student supervisor should be able to work in diverse
environments, and work with diverse individuals, irrespective of issues of differences (Rogers et al., 2000). Arguably, supervision would then be the transmission of knowledge and learning from the so-called expert (or social work supervisor) to the learner (or social work student) (Strydom, 2014). These arguments were also supported in a study at a South African university by Poggenpoel (2018).

Over and above these characteristics, the guidelines offered by the SACSSP also support the expertise and behaviour of the student supervisor in that supervisors:

should have the necessary knowledge and skills to supervise or consult appropriately and should do so only within their areas of knowledge and competence, are responsible for setting clear, appropriate and culturally sensitive boundaries, should not engage in any dual or multiple relationships with supervisees where there is a risk of exploitation of or potential harm to the supervisee, and should evaluate supervisees' performance in a manner that is fair and respectful, as well as record what transpired during supervision or consultation sessions (SACSSP, 2006, Section 5.4.1.a-d).

Botha (2002) asserts that supervision is an essential component of social work practice as the latter is unpredictable, non-routine and non-standardised. It is therefore essential that all student supervisors and student social workers received supervision and consultation in their working or learning environments (Botha, 2002; Engelbrecht, 2013). This was particularly as the SACSSP indicates in Section 5.2.1.e that the supervisor may be held responsible in the event of the supervisee presenting with unprofessional or unethical behaviour (SACSSP, 2006). Botha (2002) asserts further that supervision is an essential component of social work practice as the latter is unpredictable, non-routine and non-standardised (Botha, 2002; Engelbrecht, 2013).

2.5.5. **The service user**

The service-user in social work practice is the recipient or beneficiary of social work services. Commonly used terminology for a service-user includes client, customer, patient, and beneficiary of service (Denvall, Heule, & Kristiansen, 2006; Sheafor & Horejsi, 2008). According to the Policy Guidelines for Course of Conduct, Code of Ethics and the Rules for Social workers (and Student social workers), a service user includes an individual, family, a group, and community (SACSSP, 2006, p. 1). This will include those who are in direct service contact with the student, as well as the family members and other significant others close to the service user. While the term service user is commonly identifiable in the context of microwork, it encompasses beneficiaries of social services across the spectrum of group work, working with families, and working within and across communities (Austin & Isokuortti, 2016; SCIE, 2004).
2.6. Field instruction partnerships and relationships

One of the success factors in any field instruction programme is the collaborative working arrangement amongst the personnel working in the interest of the student learner. The CHE argues that professional partners internal and external to the university are committed to providing developmental workplace opportunities for the student (CHE, 2011).

This section sets out the various field instruction partnerships and relationships that are necessary for the training of social work students. As field instruction is an integral part of the education of social work students, field instruction partnerships should be seen as education partnerships and any relationship between the role-players concerned are solely for the benefit of the student.

![Figure 2.1. The field instruction partnership and relationship](image)

The partnership is depicted in Figure 2.1 using a square and is discussed in Section 2.6.1, and the relationship is depicted in Figure 2.1 using a triangle and is discussed in Sections 0 and 2.6.3. The various education partnerships and relationships, as seen within the field instruction training in social work education, are divided into two sections, namely the university-student-agency-supervisor team, which is usually the first step of the field instruction programme, followed by the agency-student-service-user relationship. However, this list is not viewed as exhaustive, as the nature of the partnerships and field instruction relationships are contextual and dependent on various situational factors on field instruction sites. In this section, the terms university and practice educator are used interchangeably with the practice educator being the representative of the university.

2.6.1. The university-student-agency-supervisor partnership

The term partnership in this context refers to an agreement between and amongst members of the field instruction education team. It is generally accepted that the partnership is an agreement or a
working alliance to support the training of the student within the university’s field instruction programme (Hoffman, 1990; Kiser, 2016).

**Figure 2.2. The university-student-agency-supervisor partnership**

Figure 2.2 depicts the overall partnership comprising various sub-partnerships, namely:

1. the university-agency partnership as the university needs resources on an ongoing basis in order to fulfil the training mandate of the curriculum;
2. the university-student partnership as the student is prepared for field instruction as part of the academic programme;
3. the university-agency-supervisor partnership as the agency provides the placement opportunity and the university ensures that a supervisor is allocated to the student during that placement period;
4. the student-agency partnership where the student is expected to fulfil his/her placement requirements at the agency in line with the curriculum requirements;
5. the university-supervisor partnership where the university ensures that a social worker is allocated or appointed to supervise the professional tasks of the student during the placement;
6. the university addresses the university-student-supervisor partnership where any challenges experienced by the student in the supervision process; and,
7. the supervisor-student partnership that ensures that the student receives appropriate supervision whilst abiding by the requirements of the supervision process.

Universities tend to formalise the partnerships with written contracts or agreements which set out the operational plan and procedures concerning the respective partnership and how it will handle any challenges, as well as the requirements and roles of each member (Boitel & Fromm, 2014, p. 57; CHE, 2011). These contracts ought to give effect to the terms of the placement and the commitment of the agency to provide a conducive learning environment that would support the requirements of
the field instruction programme within the specified model and timeframe that is required by the
university (Hoffman, 1990; Rogers et al., 2000; Wilson, 1981).

2.6.1.1. The university-agency partnership

The basis of this partnership is the traditional model of field
instruction which uses community-based human service
organisations as the venue for field instruction practice (Nandan
& Scott, 2011). In order to facilitate these field instruction
opportunities for students, universities need to reach out to the
relevant organisations and carefully screen and subsequently enter into agreements with selected
agencies.

A basic tenet of this partnership is ensuring a commitment to developing social work education, the
offering of strong organisational support and resources, building effective collaborative and
reciprocal relationships and to embed learning in the real world in order to produce competent
practitioner-graduates (Bogo & Globerman, 1995).

A structured approach to seeking placements is essential. The university gains a placement
opportunity for the student, whilst the agency has the opportunity to train its social workers as student
supervisors and as potential supervisors. It is not unknown that some agencies benefit from this
partnership by taking on students to further their human service mandates, or as substitutes for
qualified social workers.

Partnership models between the university, its various departments, and the agency are covered
reasonably extensively in the literature, particularly concerning the aspect of generic workplace
learning. In addition, much of the South African literature on such partnerships is found on the
community service-centre learning model which is being used extensively at a South African distance
education university (Du Plessis, 2011a). The partnership illustrated in the Bright Site Project service-
centre learning model is argued to have had a positive impact on developing student’s practical social
work skills, provided opportunities for multi-cultural interventions, increased students’ coursework
knowledge, bridged the open distance learning gap, and encouraged mutual learning (Osman &
Petersen, 2013). The community service learning model is suitable for both open distance learning as
well as residential universities.

A definite prospect from the service-centre learning model is an interdisciplinary collaborative
approach to working with service users, especially with refugees, victims of crime, the elderly, and
other vulnerable population groups. It creates opportunities for disciplines like law, nursing and the like to venture their students into the learning centre at the same time and offer a team approach to working with service users.

Similarly, Ivry, Lawrance, Damron-Rodriquez, and Robbins (2005) showcase the university-agency partnership in its research on the Geriatric Practicum Partnership Program. They argued that such a partnership could foster a long-term partnership in the training of students, albeit using the rotational model of field instruction.

**Selection of field placement.** It is imperative that due diligence occurs in the selection of agencies for student placements. Placement agencies that are unable to meet the requirements for student practice do not support student learning, whilst some agencies may offer only a specialised field of service which may be interpreted as restricting practice learning.

According to Royse et al. (2012), there are varied methods for selecting placement agencies, including the practice educator directly approaching human service agencies, or inviting human service agencies to contact the university. In addition, as argued by Lomax et al. (2010) it is not unusual for students to contact agencies of their choice directly for placement opportunities. The latter allows students to gather information of agencies that fall within their geographical area of residence and offers them the scope of sourcing placements in a field of choice. Irrespective of how agencies are approached, it is imperative that the university considers the agency’s programme, nature of services and details of learning opportunities for students.

It is widely agreed that the responsibility of the practice educator is to ensure that assets such as competent staff to provide supervision, a commitment to social work ethics, and a propensity to work with diverse students and populations are actualised in each placement site (Jeffery, 2011; McSweeney & Williams, 2018; Royse et al., 2012). In addition, it is important to check whether the agency’s mandate aligns with the university’s educational objectives and whether the students would be able to obtain sufficient experience in order to meet the university requirements within the specified period (Kapp, 2006). Furthermore, an assessment is required of the agency’s capability to cater for students with disabilities and other special needs. Subrayen (2017) argues that the lack of provisions like ramp access for students in a wheelchair significantly disadvantages the student and the even service-users who access the facility.

The specialised nature of some placement agencies may result in students not getting the desired overall exposure to the workplace. It is therefore argued that agencies need to create opportunities for students to experience work at various practice levels (Kiser, 2016). Nandan and Scott (2011)

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A Systems Analysis of Field Instruction in Social Work Education
describe an innovative project that combined field instruction and community-based partnerships to teach community-organising skills to social work students and citizenship skills to primary school learners. Their research into the success of such a project revealed that the social work students were able to demonstrate mastery of macro work as a core competency of their field instruction requirements. They also found that social work students were able to demonstrate knowledge and practice skills in social work advocacy, ethical decision-making, personal reflection of values and biases, and application of theoretical frameworks. Nandan and Scott (2011) concluded that social work programmes should provide students with opportunities for field practice that lies beyond traditional learning organisations.

Matching of students with agencies. The matching of students with the agency is arguably an essential aspect of the field instruction process but is not forthcoming in literature. Ideally, the student’s needs and the agency requirements should be met, together with factors like the previous field instruction experience of the student. A student with a fear of hospitals may be unwilling to accept placement in a hospital setting or may not participate avidly in such a setting (Royse et al., 2012). On the other hand, a student may prefer a specific placement working with a particular group of people, for example, a student may prefer to work with children; therefore a placement at a child and youth care setting may be ideal.

It is argued that students should obtain a varied experience during their study. This implies that students be placed in different settings over the number of years of the field instruction programme, or at least have one generic placement during that time or be given a different a scope of work if placed in the same agency continuously (Hoffman, 1990). These varied opportunities will provide students with an extensive educational experience (Royse et al., 2012). However, the onus is on the practice educator to assess the student’s needs prior to the placement in order to ensure that the student can fit into the agency (Royse et al., 2012).

Agencies may request to interview potential students in advance as a form of screening, to test the students’ knowledge of the agency’s mandate, or even as a form of gatekeeping. This may also be seen as a method of matching the student with the needs of the agency (Mathews et al., 2014). This process may also inform agencies on other aspects like gender factors, disability, equity, and diversity of students (Daniels & Adonis, 2005; Subrayen, 2017).

Other factors that the practice educator need to consider during the matching phase include factors like transport and access to the agency, the geographical proximity of the agency and student, working hours of the agency, and extended work that may be required (Engestrom, 2006; Mathews et al.,
2014). This may be illustrated by an agency that runs a street shelter whose operational hours may extend into the late evenings when its service-users are physically at the shelter itself and the student be available at such hours.

Another argument purported by Lewis et al. (2016) is that the university-agency partnership extends beyond the placement requirement of the student. Their research argues that universities involve agencies in curricula change efforts. They viewed this initiative as part of the ongoing attempts by the university to narrow the gap between classroom and field learning. This argument was also part of a much earlier study by Krop (1974) whose research was based on the belief that the university-agency collaboration was necessary for the agency to be recognised as an educationally-focused learning experience for the student. Krop’s study further revealed that the partnership between the university and agency was dependent on a commitment to good communication, integrating class and field teaching, and involvement of the agency in teaching roles at the university.

It is, therefore, imperative that the university and agency work together, that the student sees him/herself as part of that partnership where his/her contributions are valued, and his/her voice is heard (Ivry et al., 2005). This is also the view of Nandan and Scott (2011) who argue that the university, student, and agency should engage in clear and open communication to ensure that the student experiences all levels of intervention available at that placement.

2.6.1.2. The university-student partnership

The university-student partnership is the actual engagement of the student in the field instruction process. Students register for the specific module as per the requirements of the curriculum and are prepared for the placement. They may only enter the placement upon approval from the practice educator depending on the content and structure of the curriculum. In SA, a student may only enter the field instruction placement if registered with the SACSSP, a process that is generally completed at the beginning of the second year of the BSW degree (SACSSP, 2006, 2011) and indeed before a student starts with the field instruction practice. The university is tasked with gatekeeping this regulation by ensuring that students are informed timely and that the regulation is enforced.

In preparing the student for field instruction practice, the university takes on the responsibility in the partnership of ensuring that a structured teaching and learning programme takes place (Hoffman, 1990). Tropp (1969) reflects that in the early 1960s the basis for this partnership lay in the authenticity of the role of the practice educator, who is deemed to be informed and knowledgeable in
understanding the curriculum in its entirety. Tropp’s argument still rings true that the practice educator should be in robust contact with everyday events and changes in practice, allowing the student to excel beyond what the expectations are of the field instruction programme.

Beyond the matter of teaching the field instruction module, the university ensures that students are matched with their placements where possible (Royse et al., 2012) and that students receive supervision from registered social workers (SACSSP, 2006) in line with competent standards (McSweeney & Williams, 2018). These three aspects are complementary yet not always recognised as such. A study of fieldwork practice of fourth-year students at the University of Limpopo (SA) by Dimo (2013, p. 29) argues that the university is responsible for teaching intervention ideas, advancing of theory, skills, attitudes and learning styles, and directing and monitoring student field instruction training. Similarly, Tully (2015) argues that the university ensures that theoretical concepts from the classroom are transferred to the internship setting, particularly in practice, assignments and projects.

In addition, the task of assessments of students is firmly the responsibility of the university. Furness and Gilligan (2004) and Nel and Pretorius (2017) argue that the university keeps students informed about the assessment practices to be followed and are responsible for setting clear and fair assessment techniques and guidelines for students. This is key to a solid partnership between the university and the student in the field instruction programme.

2.6.1.3. The university-agency-supervisor partnership

Once the university and agency have agreed with the placement opportunity for the student, the agency indicates the availability of a social worker who will be allocated to supervise the professional tasks of the student. Bogo and Globerman (1995) argue that the university-agency-supervisor partnership is built on the traditional field education type of partnership, wherein (a) the student is allocated to a student supervisor located at an agency, or (b) a university-driven setting where the supervision of a student at an agency is rendered by a student supervisor employed by the university or (c) the student supervisor is employed by a collaboration of neighbouring agencies to meet the different educational requirements. Another arrangement between the university and supervisor may be a split arrangement where a staff member at the agency may guide some aspects the student’s non-professional activities whilst a student supervisor oversees the student’s professional progress (Humphrey, 2011, p. 55).
Ideally, the student supervisor is a part of the staff establishment of the agency, be familiar with the functions of the agency, and have access to the agency’s caseload in order to identify potential cases and service-users for the workload of the student. There may be instances where the agency is under-resourced and, therefore, unable to avail one of its social workers to supervise the student. The agency may enter into an agreement with a neighbouring agency for supervision purposes (Bogo & Globerman, 1995). Alternatively, the university may identify and appoint a student supervisor on the basis that the agency supports the appointed supervisor in identifying cases and service users for the student’s workload and facilitates access to the student at the agency for supervision purposes.

Mathews et al. (2014) declare a preference for the student supervisor to be based at the site of the student’s placement. This would then be commonly known as the on-site student supervisor who may work at the agency and who takes on the day to day responsibility for organising and monitoring the placement and the work that the student undertakes. The on-site student supervisor will bear responsibility for the allocation of work, provide daily guidance and support, contribute to the student’s learning and assessment, writing of reports for the portfolio, and contribute to the final decision about the student’s practice (Mathews et al., 2014).

2.6.1.4. The student–agency partnership

The student–agency partnership entails placement agencies providing a platform for teaching the student about work values and ethics, and enables integration of the student’s theoretical knowledge into practice (Beverley & Worsely, 2007). The onus is also on the placement agencies to create the space for learning for the student. Physical factors like an office suitable for counselling interviews, secure filing space for the filing of service-users’ confidential documents, secure access to technology for typing of reports, and access to staff facilities should be provided (Royse et al., 2012). As a potential employer, placement agencies provide the student with guidance on working procedures, human resource policies and other labour issues (Coetzee, 2012; Newman et al., 2019).

Human service agencies rarely receive financial incentives from universities for the field training of social work students (Royse et al., 2012). However, placements may benefit cash-strapped agencies to take on students for its social work programmes. Thus, agencies may see this as an opportunity for using social work students, particularly at the fourth-year level to perform some tasks of social workers or social auxiliary workers. Social auxiliary workers are designated to less-qualified persons who may assist social workers in daily non-therapeutic tasks (DSD, 1978, as amended). In this way,
agencies are seen as making space for learning whilst simultaneously continuing with its services to its service-users (McSweeney & Williams, 2018; Royse et al., 2012).

While the agency is a resource for student placements and is viewed as a benefit to the university, it is equally important for the student and university to understand what it is that the agency requires from the student, and to see this from the agency’s perspective.

Agencies feel valued when a student demonstrates knowledge of the agency before the first meeting. Students should have obtained all relevant information about their placement agency in preparation for their placement (Cleak et al., 2015). This appears to be the first expectation that an agency has of the student. Thereafter, students need to obtain an overall perspective of the placement agency by profiling the agencies’ functions, statements of intent, ethical codes, networks, funding, and the functioning of the specific agency itself. Students are also required to reflect and take a critical viewpoint of their working environment (Fook, 2004; Jones, 2009; Royse et al., 2012).

The personality of students is a critical factor that agencies consider before and during the placement itself. The agency values a student who displays a strong desire to help others, who shows interest in the agency’s work, and possesses the ability to function in a particular setting (Brody & Nair, 2014). The agency may view the emotional and intellectual maturity of the student, whether he or she has developed a balance between self-directed activity and an understanding about self-competence. In addition, factors like honesty, integrity, and owning up for errors are important factors that agencies would look for (Royse et al., 2012). After all, it is the reputation of the agency that is at stake and a student’s behaviour may bring the agency into disrepute in the community and threaten funding opportunities.

2.6.1.5. The university-supervisor partnership

The university-supervisor relationship is arguably a key facet of the field instruction process. Beverley and Worsely (2007) argue that the university-supervisor relationship sets the tone for the field instruction process as it is through the supervisor that the university can articulate the translation of theory and practice. This is a similar argument that is contained in Dimo (2013) and in Shokane et al. (2016) whose research studies within the South African rural contexts echo the need for the university to provide the student supervisor with clear and unambiguous information on the curriculum requirements. Included in this relationship is the need for the university to provide training to the supervisor so that the supervisor is empowered and
competent to also address other needs of the supervision process, such as which models of supervision and which supervision programme is to be followed.

The demarcation of roles of the university and the student supervisor needs to clearly stipulate who is responsible for tasks like monitoring of the students’ placement and more importantly who is responsible for the assessment process. In some instances, the student supervisor is solely responsible for day to day supervision and for checking that the student complies with university requirements, while the assessment of the student’s progress may be the responsibility of the university (Hoffman, 1990). Alternately, the assessment of the student’s progress may be a shared responsibility of the supervisor and the university (Cleak et al., 2015).

2.6.1.6. The university-student-supervisor partnership

In addition, to the physical context for the student to engage in field instruction, there needs to be a supervisor to guide the student’s professional engagement with service users. Therefore, the university-student-supervisor relationship as part of the supervision process is one of the most critical aspects of the field instruction process. Bor and Watts (2011) view this partnership as a central component and a reliable indicator of a successful placement, arguing that it is about creating a trusting working alliance that in turn affects the counselling relationship with service users.

Once the supervisor is appointed to the student, it is imperative that the university, student, and the student supervisor meet to discuss the requirements of the curriculum so that all have a uniform idea of the field instruction requirements. The student is kept informed of the role of each member and is particularly interested in who will be responsible for his/her field instruction assessment (Cleak et al., 2015). One such supervision partnership calls for a singleton arrangement where the student supervisor is responsible for the assessment of the student (Humphrey, 2011, p. 55).

In this partnership, the student is also informed of whom to contact when encountering challenges in the placement and the supervision process, and that the university is overall responsible for dealing with any breakdown in the relationship between the student and the supervisor. All members of this partnership are responsible for ensuring a successful field instruction process. Although Dimo (2013) views the partnership as comprising just the university, supervisor and student, he argues that the practice educator takes the lead in the partnership. This argument is also found in Tully (2015) who
states that despite this significant responsibility, the practice educator is inevitably responsible for bridging the relationship between the university, the agency, and the student.

2.6.1.7. The supervisor-student partnership

Supervision is the structured meeting time between the student supervisor and the student in meeting the requirements of the field instruction process, as well as meeting the student’s practice training needs (Lomax et al., 2010). Parker (2006) argues that the nature of the supervisor-student partnership is dependent on the quality of supervision provided by the student supervisor. Poor supervision that may leave the student in angst or experiencing feelings of mistrust in the supervision process, whilst proper supervision instils in the student self-confidence in his/her knowledge and skills.

The supervisor-student partnership sets the basis for the development of the student’s attitudes, values, and professional identity. Wilson (1981) argues that differing expectations may influence the relationship between the supervisor and student, attitudes, learning styles, communication patterns, and the way issues of authority are dealt with. Differences in age, ethnicity, cultural or religious backgrounds, and gender-related factors may also influence how each reacts in the relationship (Jones, 2009). All these factors ought to have been addressed both at the outset, as well as continuously in supervision sessions to support a cordial and mutually beneficial partnership between the student and the supervisor.

In a similar light, an online survey by Sosland and Lowenthal (2017) into students’ experiences of their field instruction experience revealed that the field instruction placement is mutually beneficial to the student and the student supervisor as both have the opportunity to learn from each other. This study further revealed that the student supervisor develops or enhances his/her own mentoring experience, whilst simultaneously encountering fresh perspectives from the student on updated theory and knowledge learnt at university (Sosland & Lowenthal, 2017).

However, one of the critical factors necessary for the supervisor-student partnership in field instruction and which appears to be scarce in social work literature is research on regularity, is the amount of hours, purpose and structure of supervision sessions for the social work degree. This is an area worthy of future research studies.
2.6.2. The agency-student-service user relationship

The next two sections draw attention to the relationship between and among the agency, student, and service-user. Arguably, the focus on the service user is central to the student learning process, to the supervision process, and the field instruction system as a whole. The focus is pre-determined by the way services are developed and provided within the agency at which the student is placed. Most human service agencies have a particular service-user group or population that they serve, and most agencies may serve more than one service-user group. On a macro level, the agency may serve large communities, providing students at a specific placement agency with a range of service users.

In addition to providing the site for the student’s learning and to serving a range of service users, the agency is accountable for the quality of services that it renders. Therefore, the agency calls out to its service-users to evaluate the effectiveness of its services by encouraging service user participation in service delivery (Parker, 2006; Taylor, 2004). Agencies may use means like the consumerist and democratic approaches (Boylan & Dalrymple, 2009; Lomax et al., 2010) to encourage service-user involvement in the agency functioning rather than mere recipients of services (Lomax et al., 2010). This is also commonly referred to as a rights and justice approach as students actively engage service-users in the field process (Boylan & Dalrymple, 2009).

2.6.3. The student-service user relationship

The student-service user relationship has received varied attention in the literature. Lomax et al. (2010) focus on teaching students to work with service-users by understanding various models of service-user engagement. Theoretical models like the Ladder, the Bridge and the Hub and Spoke, help students to deepen their understanding of service user perspectives and participation at an organisational level. The Ladder model allows for the student to encourage service-user involvement at various and successive levels and facilitates the ideological climb of the service user to each rung based on the complexity of decision-making (Lomax et al., 2010). Students use the Bridge model to encourage service user participation, as this allows the flow of ideas, conversations and negotiations with the understanding that there would always be a gap or imaginary river under the bridge of ideas that need to be addressed in the service delivery process (Lomax et al., 2010). The Hub and Spoke model involves structured service user participation around a central hub of activity with the spokes that emanate from a hub representing specific areas of
involvement or duties that should be undertaken (Lomax et al., 2010). These theoretical models were presented to demonstrate the complexity of service user involvement is an integral part of the field instruction process.

Research also revealed a project known as the gift exchange programme that was specifically aimed at integrating social work students and service users (Kjellberg & French, 2011). Gift exchange is based on the norm of reciprocity and the principles of gift economy, which is to give, to receive, and to return. Kjellberg and French (2011) explain that the idea of gift exchange is a new pedagogical approach that allowed the service user to feel empowered by participating in the education and training of social work students. This participation included involvement in the planning and approval stages of academic and service-based programmes, as well as contribute to policy changes. This was the approach taken at the School of Social Work at Lund University, Sweden, where service users are included in the teaching element, whereby they are invited to share their testimonies with student social workers. The idea was for social work students to learn about sustainable integration and social exchange through encounters with service users on equal terms in the classroom (Denvall et al., 2006). Research by Kjellberg and French (2011) into this pedagogical approach reveal that the potential for reflexivity in students learning from the experiences of service users promoted student-service user relationships. This is to inspire social workers and student supervisors that service-users are part of their social change process (Engelbrecht et al., 2010; Kjellberg & French, 2011). From my experience as a practice educator, I use this pedagogical approach in the classroom where I annually invite members of community support groups like Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Al-Anon (a support group for families of persons in AA) into the classroom to share with students in my third- and fourth-year classes their personal experiences with the alcoholism. This approach is intended to empower the students with information and testimonies, as well as with social exchange with actual service-users.

The factor of ethical considerations when working with service-users, whether in direct or indirect contact is an important debate. The protection of the rights of service users and indeed the profession of social work itself has been the focus of various statutory bodies like the SACSSP (SACSSP, 2006). This implies that various issues relating to ethics and protection of confidential information need to be considered. To this end, the student, supervisor, and practice lecturer are governed by an Ethical Code (SACSSP, 2006) that is enforced by the SACSSP. Issues of divulgence of confidential information regarding service users, negligence, and unprofessional behaviour are governed by various sections of the Rules relating to acts or omissions of a social worker that would constitute unprofessional conduct (DSD, 1993). These efforts to protect the service user are paramount in
professional practice, and it is the duty of all involved in the field instruction system to uphold the values enshrined in the Ethical Code.

Two rights relating to confidentiality are indicated by the SACSSP (SACSSP, 2006, p. 15)

The right to privacy is premised on two dimensions, namely the right against intrusion and the right to confidentiality. The right against intrusion means that people have the right to keep certain information about themselves away from others, to keep secrets, and to prevent others from prying into their affairs. This dimension regulates the extent to which social workers can encroach on the client's sphere of privacy. The second dimension namely, the right to confidentiality is the right to maintain control over information the client chooses to share with a social worker. This regulates the extent to which information a client shares with the social worker should be kept confidential or private between the social worker and the client.

I recall my experience into divulgence of bits of confidential information amongst colleagues:

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From my journal of 20 April 2018.

One so-called “bad” behaviour that I recall having learnt in my fourth-year field instruction training as a student way back in 1986 was the idea of sharing bits of information about our service users, without actually revealing their names of course. The practice was simple: we would have debriefing sessions during morning tea-break in the staff common room. My supervisors, colleagues, and peers would sit around the table around a cup of tea, and reveal bits of information about the types of clients we counselled, like a client involved in an extra-marital affair, and another being an alcoholic, etc. Whether we were innocently participating in an informal debriefing exercise was immaterial.

In retrospect though, this was done in the privacy and comfort of the tea-room which was for the exclusive use of staff, and away from the clients visiting the office. But this was no excuse.

It was only much much later that I realised that we were in fact not debriefing but indulging in idle and unwarranted gossip. It was never meant to harm anybody, but we were actually discussing confidential information, even though we did not disclose their names. And we were not upholding the basic value of our profession, that of protecting the rights of our clients. The fact was that I was party to this unprofessional behaviour. Thankfully we stopped when we had the good sense to do so.

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The SACSSP as the statutory body governing student social workers in South Africa determines the rules and policies relating to the professional and unprofessional behaviour by its registrants. The
rules relating to acts or omissions of a social worker, student social worker or social auxiliary worker (DSD, 1993, Section 4) provide a guide on the handling of confidential information of service users, revealing that:

The following acts or omissions of a social worker regarding behaviour towards [service users], shall be deemed to constitute unprofessional or improper conduct:

(1) The divulgence of information, which came to his attention in the course of the execution of his professional duties, concerning a client, or a deceased person who during his life was a [service-user] except-

(a) to the extent that the divulgence is in the [service user’s] interest, or is necessary for the proper management of the case of the [service-user] concerned or of other cases; or

(b) if the social worker is ordered to do so by a competent court or is otherwise legally bound to do so: provided that if disclosure of such information is not part of a recognized statutory function of the social worker in question, that the information may be divulged only under protest; or

(c) with the express consent of the [service-user] or if the [service-user] cannot give his consent-

(i) his curator personae, or

(ii) in the case of a minor, his parent or guardian; or

(iii) the surviving spouse, or if there is no surviving spouse, a major child of a deceased [service-user] or if there is no major child, an executor appointed by the Master of the Supreme Court (DSD, 1993, Section 4).

These Rules also dictate that behaviour by [student] social workers which may affect the status and dignity of the profession, and does not comply with the generally accepted standards of practising the profession may include:

(1) The administration of a (service user’s) money in an inefficient, irresponsible or negligent manner.

(2) The receipt of any bribe, or agreement to receive any bribe in connection with any matter which is directly or indirectly related to his professional duties or practice.

(3) Discrimination against a (service user) on account of social or economic status, sex, race, religion, language or nationality.

(4) The performance of an act belonging to a professional field other than social work, including the performing of psychometric tests for purposes of diagnosis and therapy, unless he is properly qualified therefore or legally authorized thereto.

(5) The preventing of a client from procuring advice or assistance from another person who is authorized by law to advise or treat persons concerning their social welfare (DSD, 1993, Section 4)
Another factor is maintaining clear and appropriate open boundaries with service users (Kiser, 2016, p. 98; Royse et al., 2012). This is clearly described in the Policy guidelines (SACSSP, 2006, pp. 24-25):

> [student] social workers should under no circumstances engage in sexual activities or sexual contact with current [service-user], whether such contact is consensual or forced. [student] social workers should not engage in sexual activities or sexual contact with (service user)’s relatives or other individuals with whom [service-user] maintain close personal relationships when there is the risk of exploitation or potential harm to [service-user]. Sexual activity or sexual contact with [service user’s] relatives or other individuals with whom [service-user] maintain personal relationships has the potential to be harmful to the (service user) and may make it difficult for social workers and [service-user] to maintain appropriate social work boundaries. [student] social workers – not [the service user] or relatives or other individuals with whom the service user maintain personal relationships – must assume full responsibility for setting clear, appropriate and culturally sensitive boundaries.

In summary, the service user is a central figure in the learning process. Students need ‘live’ subjects in order to implement their skills, knowledge, and values. The service user is central to the translation of the student’s theoretical knowledge into practice and is seen as an active participant in the process of learning. The service user rightfully receives full protection from statutory bodies like the SACSSP, particularly regarding their rights to privacy, protection of confidential information, and protection against the harmful practice by some unprofessional students and social workers alike. However, the onus is always on the professional, including the student, to ensure that the service user is not exploited and participates voluntarily in the process. However, not all service users may readily accept or co-operate with students during their field instruction process.

This section has raised issues relating to partnerships and relationships in field instruction programmes that are unlike other research studies. Whereas, Parker (2006, p. 66) viewed everyone related to the supervision process as key members in an interrelated system, Hoffman (1990) and Dimo (2013) argue that the university, supervisor, and student are key, whilst Nandan and Scott (2011) view the university, student, and agency as key. In addition, social work literature argues that a partnership may either give the impression of harmonious working relations (Hoffman, 1990) or present a grim, hollow notion indicative of a failed agreement (Kendall, 1967). Both viewpoints have an impact on the student experiences in the field instruction process.

### 2.7. The field instruction process

Field instruction is a process within the scholarship of teaching and learning. It is a series of steps that are followed in the student’s active involvement in integrating theory from the classroom to the
practice in the field (Cleak et al., 2015). After all, it is argued that students and alumni alike in social work reported that their best learning occurred whilst in their field instruction placement (Wayne et al., 2010). This section explores the four phases in the field instruction process as identified by scholars like Wilson (1981) and Cleak and Smith (2012) and the models of field instruction which form the basis for the selection criteria referred to in Chapter 4 of this thesis.

2.7.1. The phases in the field instruction process

The process primarily involves four interrelated phases, namely the preparation for the placement, the commencement, middle, and end of the placement. There is vast and significant literature on these four phases in the process of field instruction, ranging from the older works of Wilson (1981), Brown and Gloyne (1966), Danbury (1994) and Rogers et al. (2000), and Royse et al. (1999), to more contemporary works by Royse et al. (2012), Lomax et al. (2010), Cleak et al. (2015) and (Kiser, 2016). An overview of the four phases is presented in this section.

What is unanimously agreed upon in literature on field instruction is that the process is labour-intensive and requires planning and a commitment to a team approach to meeting the professional and developmental needs of the individual student (Auslander & Rosenne, 2016; Cleak et al., 2015). In essence, the student is assigned to a practice setting for a prescribed minimum period (Mathews et al., 2014) and is to be supervised on field experiences by a registered social worker (SACSSP, 2006). It is also commonly accepted that each phase has unique preparatory steps that aim to develop the student’s personal and professional competencies as it takes the student through processes of decision-making and the application of knowledge, skills, and values.

2.7.1.1. Preparation for the placement

In preparation for the placement phase, it is ideal that a student is matched with a specific agency or practicum setting, where the student could articulate strengths and weaknesses in working with specific groups of people (Royse et al., 1999). This may involve an interview between the agency and the student to determine the student’s fit in line with the vision of the agency. This phase requires an initial agreement between the practice educator (particularly in the role of the fieldwork placement liaison), the agency, the student supervisor, and the student. In this initial phase of engagement, all parties are required to be familiar with the purpose of the placement and understand academic and practical placement requirements. Specific student-centred contractual agreements and documents are in place in this phase and the student may have to attend an induction programme at the agency (Lomax et al., 2010; Rogers et al., 2000).
2.7.1.2. Commencement of the placement

The second phase involves the student’s actual commencement of the placement where active learning takes place (Royse et al., 2012). The contractual agreement that was set up in the preparation phase is enforced. It is in this phase that the role of the student supervisor (also seen as the fieldwork supervisor) is critical in order to guide and mentor the student into the profession. Generally, it is at this phase that the student’s portfolio of evidence starts to take shape (Royse et al., 2012), when the student experiences a process of attempting to understand the concrete experience (Collins & Van Breda, 2010), as well as the process of reflective observation (Jones, 2009). In this phase, the practice educator and the student supervisor use planned and unplanned activities to create experiences for the student in order to foster learning. These could be in the form of role-playing, case studies, and passive observation of interviews. With regard to reflective observation, students are encouraged to keep a journal to reflect on the impact of observed events and introspect on how these events impacted on their learning (Knott & Scragg, 2013).

2.7.1.3. The middle phase

The middle of the placement phase that follows tests the student’s knowledge, values, and skills in the implementation of the various methods of social work. In this phase, students should be able to identify and implement an integrative social work practice, effectively utilise skills learned in class, and find solutions to challenges that they encounter. It is also in this phase that issues of ethics and decision making are inherent and where the student attempts to use theory to rationalise abstract concepts (Austin & Isokuurtti, 2016; Collins & Van Breda, 2010).

2.7.1.4. The final phase

The final phase is the process of active learning and experimentation which takes place when the student is continuously engaged in questioning learning and progress (Royse et al., 2012). This contributes most to the student’s personal and professional development as introspection and feelings of self-inadequacy come to the fore (Rogers et al., 2000). A further consideration in this phase is the process involved in the conclusion or termination of services by the student social work. This usually occurs during the end phase of the placement which signifies that the student will be leaving the placement agency soon (Kanengoni, 2014). The process of termination with service-users requires pre-planning, starts early in the professional relationship if possible, and includes a process of tapering-off to reduce anxiety about termination (Cleak et al., 2015). This process should also include a hand-over phase so as not to leave the service user in a state of abandonment or to feel neglected (Mathews et al., 2014). The process of termination with the service-user is possibly one of the most
challenging aspects of leaving the internship placement. In line with the above, students are also cautioned about prolonged engagement with service users after termination of services:

[student] social workers should not engage in sexual intimacies with their former clients since sexual intimacies with former clients are so frequently harmful to clients. Such intimacies may undermine public confidence in the social service professions and thereby deter the public's utilisation of needed services. Should [student] social workers elect to engage in such activity following the termination of the social work relationship, they and not their former client should assume the responsibility of demonstrating that the former client was not exploited, coerced or manipulated (SACSSP, 2006, p. 25).

The final phase is also marked with dealing with all outstanding issues, portfolios of evidence are finalised, supervision reports are completed and termination procedures with clients and the agency are in place. It is further noted that during this phase, students experience the most anxiety as they realise shortfalls and gaps in their learning just when they are about to graduate (Mathews et al., 2014).

2.7.2. Models of field instruction

Three basic time-bound models of the block, modified block and concurrent placements are prevalent in South African social work field instruction programmes. The choice of model is dependent on many factors, including the duration of the programme and the availability of resources.

Block placement. A block placement in social work education refers to a continuous and full-time period that a student is placed at a specific agency to practice skills learned in the classroom environment (Brown & Gloyne, 1966; Dhemba, 2012). Like other placements, it is time-bound, but restricted in terms of its duration. During the course of the block placement students report to the agency for a full 30-40-hour week for usually up to 3 months continuously and usually do not attend classes at the university during this period.

Rotational block placement. A rotational block placement is a planned and systematic movement of students between two or more field practicum sites with supervision from more than one field instructor (Ivry et al., 2005). Rotational block models may entail students undertaking short block placements within a particular agency. To illustrate, within a hospital setting students could spend a month each in the different hospital units (for example with paediatrics, surgery, medical ward, or outpatients wards) (Birkenmaier, Curley, & Rowan, 2012). This model provides students with exposure to varied units within a particular site. Research by Bogo and Globerman (1995) argue that a rotational type of field instruction within a single, wide-ranging and multi-faceted type of setting,
for example, a correctional facility, a hospital or a rehabilitation centre provides the student with varied experience in the many units within the same placement.

**Modified block placement.** A modified block placement is a variation of the block placement that allows students to be at the agency for four days of the week and spend the fifth day taking academic courses on campus (Royse et al., 2012).

**Concurrent placement.** A concurrent placement is a 9-12-month placement at an agency, whilst still attending set classes at university. In this model, the student takes three to four theory courses plus field placement simultaneously (Liu, Sun, & Anderson, 2013). Classes are usually scheduled for two days per week and students are at their placements for the remaining two to three full days of that week. It is argued that that unlike in block, this weekly exposure to classroom theory provides the opportunity almost immediately to implement in practice the concepts learned in class. In addition, students can bring experiences from the field into the classroom for discussion as they happen (Royse et al., 2012).

Research into the models of placements has produced varying results. The pros and cons of block versus concurrent placements have many and varied arguments, added to whether an agency decides to take on students from many universities simultaneously. Researchers have found that the concurrent model can positive implications for service delivery. For example, in a block placement a student in micro practice only sees the micro-level service-user for a 3 month period at most, but in a concurrent placement this can go on longer, so a student can track a family for 9 months as opposed to 3 months for block placement (Royse et al., 2012). On the other hand, a student in macro practice may be disadvantaged in a block model as macro-level work may require a more extended period of community engagement which may suit arguments for a concurrent model to be followed (Danbury, 1994). Additionally, students may feel confident to enter field practice only after receiving the required theoretical knowledge (as in a block model) or may require constant consultation with the practice educator during the placement (as in the concurrent model).

Research studies have investigated students coping with various models and the impact on the student’s personal and professional development. Two different evaluative, qualitative studies by Rock and King (2010) at the University of West Indies in Barbados, revealed that lengthy block placements of up to one year provided students with continuity of time and practice to apply and practice skills and theories. They argue that block allows for placement at agencies that were situated long distances away from the university. Arguably, whilst this benefits the student who may then be placed closer to his or her place of residence, the distance factor had cost implications for monitoring.
student activity. Thus, contact between the university and agency were less frequent. However, Rock and King (2010) found that block placements allowed students to be more immersed in their practice, attend staff meetings and other training, and were less distracted than those students who had taken concurrent university courses. Placements in the concurrent model usually occur close to the university for easy access for the practice educator (or field placement liaison) and other resources. However, in contrast, Cuzzi, Holden, Chernack, Rutter, and Rosenberg (1997) found that the absence of classroom interaction with theory lecturers and peers can alienate the student. Furthermore, as students do not take formal courses during the block, the gap in what was learned in the previous semester becomes evident. Ironically, an impact study conducted on students in the UK by Theriot, Johnson, Mulvaney, and Kretzschmar (2006) on student professionalism and well-being, found that there was no difference in measures of professional competence, depression, assertiveness, and self-esteem in the block or concurrent models of field instruction.

Studies by Cuzzi et al. (1997) of different sets of students within the rotation model versus the year-long concurrent and block models revealed varying results. Whilst students in the rotational model received a different exposure within a single larger setting like a hospital, the constant rotation of the student between the units created pressure on learning and completion of academic tasks. Students were unable to create meaningful relationships with their supervisor and colleagues, there may be many supervisors to whom the student is accountable, and service delivery was short-term. Consequently, the study by Cuzzi et al. (1997) found that the rotational and the short block placements did not support either student self-efficacy or competencies in professional development.

However, with emphasis on a different practice environment, a study by Ivry et al. (2005) supported the rotational model for educating students on geriatric social work practice. Ivry et al. (2005) conducted a cross-site evaluation of this model where, at the end of their placement, participating students were asked to rate their satisfaction with the model. Students responded positively to their involvement in this model, thereby supporting the researcher’s views that to become competent geriatric social workers, students had to be trained in multiple settings with diverse and multi-generational older adult populations, thus their strong support for the rotational block model.

A more recent and local study based in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa also supports the use of rotational models of field instruction. Schmidt and Rautenbach (2016) used a qualitative approach to gather descriptive data from students and agency supervisors from four field instruction programmes, focusing on the strengths, weaknesses, and constraints that were faced by field instruction programmes in that province. One of the recommendations from that study was support for more extensive usage of the rotational model where students could also be rotated among a block,
concurrent or rotational model. However, this suggestion needs further exploration as factors like geographical location, access to and availability of resources, and other related factors needed to be considered.

Each model of the field instruction process in social work education has unique benefits, and such benefits are not exclusive. The introduction of fieldwork rotations and the departure from the two primary and traditional models of the block and concurrent require time, effort and a robust university-student-agency partnership. It may be argued that that field rotations are more useful at a postgraduate level as such students have already had exposure to generic human service organisations at an undergraduate level.

However, the disadvantages of some models cannot be ignored. Ultimately, as Shulman (2005b) argues, it is factors like student efficacy and professional development that should be the underlying factors. Furthermore, factors like the availability of internal and external resources, student needs and the curriculum of the university in determining the choice of model to be followed, should be considered.

Finally, brief reference is made to the international placement model of field placements or International Social Work (Ghiitu & Mago-Maghiar, 2011; Nuttman-Shwartz & Berger, 2011). First, the independent/one-time placement model refers to the placement of students in host countries, usually driven by the interests of the student or the student’s experience in a particular geographical region. Second, the neighbour-country model allows students to be registered at universities outside of their country’s border yet near home, allowing the student to return to university for academic classes whilst undertaking their placement in the place. Third, is the on-site model where an onsite-adjunct faculty member usually resided in the host country and served as the liaison person or even the supervisor for the student. Finally, exchange model where the home university developed a student and faculty exchange relationship with a foreign university or organisation where modules and field training was shared between the home and host countries (Nuttman-Shwartz & Berger, 2011; Pettys, Panos, Cox, & Oosthuysen, 2005).

From a South African perspective, it appears that these international models are not a common practice among South African universities and students, perhaps due to a lack of direction from the SACSSP in the training and registration of such students, the assessment procedures to be followed, and possibly the university’s curriculum requirements

In summary, this section presented research on the benefits and shortcomings of the block, concurrent models, and its variants like rotational and block rotational. These models will be illustrated further
in Chapter 6 of this thesis with exemplars in field instruction systems in social work education in South Africa. In addition, this section contained references to field placements within international social work models. Whilst this is not common practice in South Africa, international social work models are not without merit but require further research and debate.

2.7.3. The assessment process

The assessment of students in various field instruction programmes is a characteristically rigorous process and comprises a series of formative and summative evaluations. Universities have developed individual and curriculum aligned assessment procedures. The basis for all assessments is that students leaving a university social work programme and entering the profession are ready and fit for purpose (Taylor et al., 2019).

Traditionally, the focus on assessments in the field instruction programme has been mostly on the collecting of evidence, demonstrated in a portfolio of evidence. Wilson (1981) and Danbury (1994) explain the types of evidence that students prepare in their portfolios, ranging from case studies, submission of tasks and assignments, to the recording of diaries, log sheets, and agency records. The evidence-based portfolios are now in e-portfolio format as per Kiser (2016) which gives the student the opportunity to archive and analyse their work over time. A continuing and critical issue, however, is that if the learning is purely focused on the assessment outcome, the student will inevitably do only that which is required of him or her to succeed. This argument is also contained in Beverley and Worsely (2007) that if students are tested for facts, then that is what they will learn, implying that if students continue to be tested by conventional means, then they will produce conventional learning.

This leads to arguments as to what is required of students in the social work profession and then how to interpret the term ‘fit for purpose’. One suggestion is made by Furness and Gilligan (2004, p. 466) that when assessing students, there is “less focus on understanding the reasons for people exhibiting certain types of behaviour and more emphasis on how to respond to and influence behaviour”. Rodriguez-Gomez and Ibarra-Saiz (2015) argue that assessments be based on the student’s ability to utilise reflective and analytical thought processes as a real-world skill. Therefore, the assessment tasks need to test the student’s ability to be analytical and reflective as to its impact on the service user, and organisation, amongst others (Knott & Scragg, 2013). Students are required to become self-assessors, reflecting on their learning and training needs and developing plans to meet those needs within the context of practice (Parker, 2006).

The assessment process has moved from a single assessment conducted solely by the practice educator and supervisor (Wilson, 1981), to a “transparent and dialogical approach” that emphasises
the need for inclusion of the student participation in their assessments (Nel & Pretorius, 2017, p. 3). Cognisance is taken of the views of the person with whom the student works, and that the student realises that he/she should possess skills of self-reflection. Students are, therefore, encouraged to engage in reflective practices to understand their work output, dilemmas, and challenges.

Assessments are underpinned by the principle of fairness in that it eliminates a bias towards one group of students over another, be reliable in terms of consistency of judgements by all practice educators, and serve the principle of validity, whereby assessment tools should measure what it is intended to measure (Beverley & Worsely, 2007; Nel & Pretorius, 2017; Rodriguez-Gomez & Ibarra-Saiz, 2015).

Assessments occur within a taxonomy of learning domains. Diagnostic assessment is taken at the beginning of the assessment process and, thereafter, continuously to identify the learning needs of students and are matched with the learning strategy to help the student (Beverley & Worsely, 2007). Formative assessments are conducted continuously during the field instruction programme to provide students with feedback on their learning, strengths, and weaknesses in order to motivate students to improve their academic progress (McSweeney & Williams, 2018). Summative assessments take place at the end of the field instruction programme where the practice educator makes a judgement on whether the student has met the learning outcomes and is ready for professional practice (Beverley & Worsely, 2007; Engelbrecht, 2013).

Within higher education, all forms of assessments serve the purpose of directing and enhancing student learning, confirming learning outcomes and maintaining standards. However, within the South African social work landscape, the assessment process is shifted from providing evidence on meeting exit level outcomes to a focus on the attributes of the student entering the profession.

Two key documents approved by the Council on Higher Education in SA bear reference. The first is the Framework for Qualification Standards in Higher Education (CHE, 2013a) which forms the basis for understanding the assessment of students within various qualifications. This document directs that the focus has shifted to understanding graduate attributes in line with level descriptors for the qualification. Thus, there is a migration from assessing students within the previously used 27 exit level outcomes when assessing students in the BSW degree, to incorporating focus on graduate attributes, whether students being able to demonstrate knowledge usage and whether the graduate is recognised according to the level descriptor (SAQA, 2012) on the National Qualifications Framework (SAQA, 2008). The BSW degree in SA is recognised at level 8 on the NQF as a professionally oriented degree, wherein the level descriptors relating to the scope of knowledge, knowledge literacy,
problem-solving skills, ethics and professional practice, accountability, and accessing, processing and managing information, amongst other level descriptors, are described.

The second document, recently approved, by the CHE is the Qualification Standard for Bachelor of Social Work (CHE, 2015) which forms part of the higher education qualifications sub-framework. The BSW has always been recognised as a professional degree in SA, with “a higher volume of learning and a greater cognitive demand” as compared to the general bachelor degrees, and prepares students for “professional training, postgraduate studies or professional practice” (CHE, 2015, p. 1). The BSW Standard, therefore, recognises that in line with recommendations from the Framework for Qualification Standards in Higher Education, a scaffolded approach to assessment across the years is adopted “to ensure the incremental integration of theory and practice and capacity for reflexive practice” (CHE, 2015, p. 13). These documents have recognised the shift from a checklist approach to assessment to a comprehensive and extensive graduate attribute focus that places BSW graduates in line with other professional degrees in SA. The new policy will now be incorporated into the university programme curricula so that assessments are aligned with the latest BSW Standard document (CHE, 2015). What follows now is for the SACSSP as the professional registering body for the social work discipline to align and make compatible specific criteria for approval of programmes with the CHE and to affirm graduates’ competence prior to entering professional practice.

This shift in the South African higher education climate then calls for arguments about whether assessments should be referenced against specific pre-determined criteria or should it be referenced against norms established by the professional body. A report on graduate attributes based on a baseline survey from the perspective of employers revealed that universities should increase the student’s career literacy, encourage the development of life skills, soft skills, personal initiative and importantly instil a work ethic (SAQA, 2009a). Therefore, the practice of continuous and scaffolded assessment techniques within the field instruction process is undoubtedly vital to graduates entering professional practice, with the university at the pinnacle of the list of gatekeepers for such graduates leaving their programme.

2.8. Conclusion

The centrality of the field instruction programme is widely recognised in social work education as the most significant means through which theoretical knowledge is translated into practice. The university leads the process of the field instruction, whilst the student supervisor is the means to guide the student’s practice expertly. Human service agencies are the venues for field instruction.
placements, whilst service users are the vehicle for gaining practical knowledge in the field. Ultimately, it is the student who is central to the field instruction programme. Therefore, the field instruction passage is a complex process that requires the student’s active engagement with learning in order to imbibe the issues of the context of the placement, working with real-time issues in the lives of people, and applying knowledge, skills, and values appropriately, uniformly, and without favour.

However, the field instruction process is not without its challenges. Whilst there is sufficient literature to attest to challenges it suffices at this point to reiterate challenges such as the availability of suitable placements, financial resources, constraints in matching students to placements, supervisory incompetence (Bennet et al., 2013). Furthermore and perhaps most importantly, the transformation of the pedagogy from conventional field practices to that which is more appropriate to meet the needs of the community is crucial (Tamburro, 2013).

Challenges that need further exploration include preparatory, and termination phases that are hastily completed depending on various and extenuating circumstances, or students may start the academic year later than their peers, or agencies may face closure which results in students being forced to change placements midyear. Supervisors may change, the relationship between the student and supervisor may deteriorate, or the student may not have sufficient work at the agency. In addition, the student’s circumstances may impact the placement causing downtime and general interruption to the placement, and issues relating to ethics and unprofessional behaviour may be prevalent.

This chapter laid the foundation for understanding field instruction in social work education. The following chapter sets out the theoretical framework of this dissertation, namely understanding systems theories as relevant to this study.
Chapter 3. Theories on social systems

3.1. Introduction

This chapter provides a theoretical orientation to the study, using selected knowledge and properties of systems and systems theories as a means of analysis. This chapter argues that it is the general ontology of systems thinking that guides one’s epistemology. The lens of the researcher, in viewing the world as an interactive, self-organising and non-linear or cyclical set of interactions, is critical in setting out the arguments for this chapter.

Research is presented on systems that explain human behaviour as intricately interwoven into multiple systems and subsystems, and where subsystems influence other parts of the whole. Key characteristics from relevant systems theories identified in this chapter will form the basis for an analysis of the data in Chapter 6.

Much has been written in the literature about the use of systems concepts in the discipline of social work, particularly in the field of family therapy, even arguing that understanding client relationship from a systemic perspective is what sets disciplines apart within the social sciences field (see section 3.2.6). The works of seminal systems theorists like anthropologists Gregory Bateson (Bateson & Donaldson, 1991) and Margaret Mead (1968), environmental scientist Donella Meadows (Wright, 2009), and family therapist Salvador Minuchin (1998) are vital to the understanding of systems analysis in the social sciences.

Perhaps the view of Aristotle that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts is the first reference to the thinking of the world, physical or otherwise, as a system. Theories on systems, when used in the social sciences, develop a holistic view of individuals within an environment or a particular situation, implying that contextual understanding of behaviour will guide appropriate interventions.

3.2. Systems theories in the social sciences

This section provides an overview of selected and relevant theories on systems in the social sciences. Descriptions of general systems theory, complex and chaos theory, cybernetics, ecological theory, family systems theories, as well as organisational theories, are discussed.
3.2.1. **General systems theory**

The emphasis of general systems theory (GST) is on interactions that are influenced by the immediate and broader environment. In the social sciences, GST is a multi-levelled approach that views systems as a process of interaction and was deeply attentive to the issue of relationships (Bateson, 1972; Ritzer, 2008). GST is embedded in inter-relationships and interdependence among people and between people and events, e.g. within an intergenerational relationship, or to the underlying systems surrounding and influencing an individual (Bateson & Donaldson, 1991; Parsons, 1977). These basic systems could be identified as the school, church, extended family unit, the neighbourhood, work, social networks, and even leisure activities.

GST is arguably a metatheory, intended to guide the selection and application of other theories already in use by the practitioner (Boulding, 1956). As such, GST is also seen as the foundation of the development of family systems theory and was being used increasingly within the profession of social work. (Hudson, 2008).

In social work practice, GST provides practitioners with a means of understanding changes within different contexts. According to Forte (2014b), GST became popular amongst the social work profession in the 1960s, and as a theory of preference in the 1970s, with Berrien (1968) arguing that GST was fast becoming an integral part of knowledge and a way of doing things in the social sciences. GST was perceived as ignoring levels and types of interventions in some social work contexts (Mattaini, Lowery, & Meyer, 2002). However, Payne (2005) and Healy (2005) dispelled this notion, arguing individually that GST provides a framework for understanding problems and issues, yet complements rather than rejects existing structures in the social work profession, and supports psychological theories in understanding human behaviour (Payne, 2005, p. 148).

However, a challenge in applying GST was raised by Siporin (1980) arguing that social workers experienced difficulty in understanding and using GST. Similarly, Hudson (2008) argued that GST lacked clarity in its application. Hudson (2008) revisited components of GST and noted that GST was famously known as a system of hierarchies, particularly within systems and subsystems, but was limited in explaining how to use feedback and feedback loops in understanding communication and interactions within hierarchies. This is the gap in general systems theory that is addressed under cybernetics (Section 3.2.3).

In summary, GST provides the basis of understanding social systems as sets of connected and interactive units.
3.2.2. Complex systems theory and chaos theory

In this section key factors relating to complex systems theory and chaos theory are raised about how systems function within the social sciences, and specifically within the discipline of social work. It is generally agreed that there are similarities between complex systems theory and chaos theory (Brown, 2006; Hudson, 2008) and thus, are placed under one grouping in this research.

Complex systems theory. Complex systems theory (CST) is argued as a successor to GST as it pursues the understanding of relationships and interactions, but within larger situations (Brown, 2006; Hudson, 2008). Complex systems refer to systems like large-scale organisations that contain many components which are in constant interaction with one another, on multiple levels (Warren, Franklin, & Streeter, 1998). CST argues that complex systems feature openness and stability in patterns despite having a complex structure (Brown, 2006). CST also argues that interactions of the present are attributed to the system’s ability to recall events from the past (Jackson, 2006). CST further argues that complex systems are nested within a range of systems that together make up the whole, for example, the functioning of a large organisation (Brown, 2006; Jackson, 2006). CST argues that complex systems have the propensity to self-organise, as is evident in interactions between and among levels and structures, as well as nonlinear relationships, and feedback loops (Healy, 2005).

A significant aspect of CST is that changes or shifts in human behaviour occur without warning (Warren et al., 1998). This is useful for understanding behaviour in studies on organisational behaviour as human behaviour can shift from one phase or pattern of complexity to another within the organisation. However, as argued by Healy (2005) CST emphasises that complex systems display properties that are less stable, undergo constant change and use constant feedback loops, not unlike chaos theory.

Chaos theory. Chaos theory presupposes that unpredictable behaviour can take place within organised systems. A state of chaos arises when systems and subsystems experience traumatic situations or dilemmas that make their next action deemed to be unpredictable (Hudson, 2008). This seems paradoxical considering that organised systems are structured to function in such a manner that it can predict foreseeable chaotic conditions.

When applied to the social sciences, the application of chaos theory is on the system’s ability at any level to self-organise, mostly in a spontaneous manner (Kaufman, 1995). Chaos theory is useful in the field of crisis mediation, where an individual may be unable to deal with a perceived catastrophic event, sometimes leading to suicide or suicidal ideations (James & Gilliland, 2017).
Psychologists Duke (1994) and Grotstein (1991) suggest the importance of understanding the butterfly effect within chaos theory. The butterfly effect argues that upheavals, dysfunction, and other positive and negative events occur in people’s lives and over time and emphasises the ability of people to adjust or react to such events. Other research indicates that the butterfly effect helps practitioners to understand stability and variability in human development (Hudson, 2008).

Within the context of social work, social systems are likely to contain significant chaotic processes and unexplainable changes (Hirsch, Smale, & Devaney, 2003; Hudson, 2008). These processes will undoubtedly influence an individual’s or a system’s ability to interact with other individuals or other systems.

3.2.3. Cybernetic theory and second-order cybernetics

This section will raise key arguments on cybernetics, cybernetic theory and second-order cybernetics within the social sciences.

Cybernetics refers to the study of communication and communication patterns and includes concepts like feedback and feedback loops (Bateson, 1967). The study of cybernetics allows practitioners and researchers alike to assign meaning to situations and the functions of systems. This meaning is usually in the form of feedback or feedback loops (Wiener, 1948). Closely associated with cybernetics is sociocybernetics (Bale, 1995) which emphasises the development of a theoretical framework, as well as information technology tools which map out or measures intervention in human behaviour. Thus these tools would be useful to receive and record feedback. Bateson (1967) contends that sociocybernetic explanations are usually contrary as they take into account why such reactions occur as opposed to any other form of reaction. However, Bale (1995) argues that sociocybernetics seeks reasons and make meaning of such events as riots, community etiquette, and community mobilisation.

Between 1950 and 1975 two sets of cybernetic theories were established to lend understanding of behaviour. First-order cybernetics (FOC) explained human behaviour in relation to self-regulation, feedback and corrective feedback (Ashby, 1957; Bateson, 1979), and second-order cybernetics (SOC) required the researcher or investigator to be placed as part of the system that is being studied (Bateson, 1972; Mead, 1968). Therefore, central to SOC is the location of the self, as a participant in the process under study. Unlike in FOC where the researcher’s epistemology is not as relevant, SOC requires that the researcher’s epistemology of the event under study, descriptions and observations that are reported may be the researcher or investigator and not the supposed causes.
Cybernetic theory includes concepts such as closed and open systems. In the discipline of social work, a closed system may be evident within a family, identifiable in communication patterns. This example may indicate that there is poor communication within the family system, and further illustrates boundaries or barriers between the family members and between the family and the environment; on the other hand, an open system is identified by the family’s ability to adapt, be flexible and able to change in response to changes in the social environment (Leon & Armantrout, 2007). Sheafor and Horejsi (2008) argue that open systems indicate stability in families through positive or negative feedback, rigid or flexible boundaries, and norms, rules, hierarchies and power struggles within the family.

The concept of equifinality is used mostly in open systems, whereby it suggests that similar yet varied reactions to events may be achieved under different initial conditions (Von Bertalanffy, 1969). Equifinality implies that similar conditions would present a predictable result. For example, in psychology, equifinality refers to how different early life experiences can lead to similar outcomes, where psychologists may argue that it is likely that persons who experience parental divorce, physical abuse, or even parental substance abuse may present with symptoms of childhood depression; implying also early life experiences can lead to the same psychological disorder.

When viewed within a family, equifinality may be seen as the family system aiming to accomplish the same goals through alternative or different routes. However, equifinality argues that a single effect or outcome may result from several different causes (Von Bertalanffy, 1969). On the other hand, the concept of multifinality argues that a single cause or action may produce different effects or outcomes (Sheafor & Horejsi, 2008). Multifinality may be seen in families’ attempts to bring a sense of balance or homeostasis between the challenges they face and the resources available to them as systems. Yet it is not always possible for families to restore that sense of balance and in such instances, this affects the family dynamics, relationships and communication (James & Gilliland, 2017).

Both FOC and SOC stress the importance of feedback. Feedback is explained as outputs of a system being routed back to the system as inputs (Bateson, 1979). Similarly, feedback loops are explained as a process that allows for mutual sending and receiving of feedback as part of a loop or chain effect (Mead, 1968). This is indicated in Figure 3.6 and further argued in Section 3.3.5. Feedback loops are evident in family systems theory to describe the patterns or channels of interaction and communication in the family (Mead, 1968). Feedback loops, either negative or positive, provides the family therapist with insight into the family’s willingness and ability to change or affect change (Leon & Armantrout, 2007).
Another concept frequently argued in FOC and SOC is causality. Causality refers to the source or reason events or interactions occur and usually indicates relationships between events indicating a reaction to a catalyst or an event (Bale, 1995). Reactions and actions in relation to causality may be depicted on a continuum of being linear, non-linear or circular in its actions. Social systems usually display properties of non-linearity or circular causality. Figure 3.1 presents a diagrammatical overview of the concepts of circular, linear and non-linear causality.

Figure 3.1. Circular, linear and non-linear causality

In explaining causality and patterns in interactions of systems Bateson (1979, pp. 55, 63-64) argues that “causality does not work backward”, “number does not determine pattern” and “language commonly stresses only one side of any interaction”. These phrases include reference to the law of cause and effect, and causation. However, these are also relative to the phrase “every action has a reaction” or cause and effect relationships (Bartley, 2015; Bateson, 1967). Thus causality is comparative to precipitating factors of an event or need where the reaction was bound to happen (Krishnan, 2010), or to contributory factors that are external to the system, e.g. a person’s physical development (Bale, 1995).

Traditionally, systems were seen to be characterised by order and stability and emphasise boundaries, equilibrium and homeostasis. However, Hepworth et al. (2013, p. 20) argue that systems are in the process of constant change. Systems must, therefore, adapt and be sensitive to outside influences, for
example, to changes in macro policies and changes in the circumstances of a member or members within the system or subsystem.

![Circular causality diagram](image)

**Figure 3.2. Circular causality**

On the other hand in the social sciences, circular causality as illustrated in Figure 3.2 and adapted from Ashby (1957, p. 53), is not easy to identify without gathering all relevant information, mainly as the issues of need, sufficiency and contributory factors may be widespread or far-reaching. Reactions to these issues may be evident in the breakdown of relationships which may only come to the fore later. Reactions may also be evident in the system’s ability or inability to cope with a given situation, and in the strengths or weaknesses of individual members to handle stressors (Ford, 2010). Another factor that is linked to the issue of circular causality is probability (Soccio, 2011). Probability refers to the likelihood of a repetition of a reaction. In circular causality, the element of probability or likelihood of an event recurring is highly probable when the same set of circumstances are at play.

Arguably the concepts linear and non-linear refer to the direction that causation takes (Figure 3.1). Using the example of a straight line, linear would be identified as lying within a straight line with no linkages between the concepts except for that in the continuum of the straight line. Linear causality is prominent in the physical and computer sciences as it allows processes to be pursued without affecting other systems and without necessarily requiring input from another system (Copley, 2015). Conversely, the concept non-linear causality refers to a form of causation where cause and effect can flow in a two-directional manner between two or more systems or subsystems (Bale, 1995). As can be seen, non-linear causality attempts to demonstrate that the actions of one system may affect one or more other systems either simultaneously or at different times (Straube & Chatterjee, 2010).

What is implicit nonetheless is that the concept causality or causation connects one process or cause with another process and in essence results in an effect. Arguably this would imply that the first process or cause is responsible for the second process and determines whether the second process is
dependent on the first process. Furthermore, substitution of the term ‘process’ with system or subsystem would imply that the actions of one system or subsystem may have either a linear, non-linear or possible causative effect or reaction on the other. Therefore, it is arguable that irrespective of the reaction, the causative factors must be explored in as broad a perspective as possible.

3.2.4. **Ecological systems theory**

The influence of the environment is fundamental to the social sciences, thus the study of the ecological systems theory in this chapter. An overview of three environmental perspectives relevant to ecological systems theory in the social sciences is presented: ecosystems theory, the ecological systems perspective, as well as the person-in-environment approach.

**Ecosystems theory.** Ecosystems theory, attributed to Tansley (1935), was arguably the foundation for understanding how the environment influenced a person’s interaction with others. Cook (2012) defines ecosystems within social systems as all the interactions and interactive influences put together that operate within a person’s life. These influences and interactions are not static and could vary in interactions.

Ecosystems theorists argue that the behaviour of an individual relates to the person himself, implying that behaviour is contextual, and is influenced by the physical environment, as well as the culture of interactions within which the individual operates (Anker, 2002; Cook, 2012; James & Gilliland, 2017). Ecosystems theory also argues that behaviour is interactional, implying that an individual is influenced by contact with the immediate environment. Furthermore, ecosystems theory maintains that individuals attempt to control and make sense of their environments, referring perhaps to matters of career preferences, romantic choices, which church to attend, and even which recreational activities to participate in (Anker, 2002; Cook, 2012). Thus, the basis of ecosystems theory is that people continuously attempt to make meaning of their environment and act on the meaning and opportunities offered.

**Ecological systems perspective.** The ecological systems perspective argues that environmental components within the larger system influence a person’s development, behaviour, and interactions (Bronfenbrenner, 1995). Placing these on a continuum range of environmental levels ranging from Microsystems to Macrosystems as per Figure 3.3. Bronfenbrenner’s theory on the ecological systems perspective argues that environmental levels are also systems levels. These system levels explain a particular system’s place within a hierarchy of systems, determined by virtue of the size of the systems or by their complexity.
Figure 3.3. Ecosystemic model

The ecosystemic model illustrated in Figure 3.3 was adapted from Bronfenbrenner (1995), James and Gilliland (2017, p. 587) and Forte (2014b). As indicated in Figure 3.3 the first and immediate environmental component is microsystems wherein lies the relationship between an individual and the environment in an immediate setting. This component is relative to the role that the person may engage in within a small, set environment, for example, a teacher-student relationship. The focus of study in microsystems is on interactions, taking into account roles and behaviour displayed, as well as the activity, process, purpose, place, time, and role (Bronfenbrenner, 1977).

The next environmental level in Figure 3.3 is mesosystems or sets of mutually directed microsystems. This level includes interactions beyond microsystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1977), for example, an individual’s interactions with a school, church, family, and peers.

Macrosystems form the third level (Figure 3.3) and refer to interactions with components that lie external to the micro and mesosystem combined. Examples of macro systems include the economy, the legal system, health, politics, and educational systems, all of which have either a direct or indirect impact on a person within that system, either individually or combined (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Macrosystems may include institutional patterns of culture or subcultures on an overarching scale which impacts on an individual’s development. A university is typical of a macro system as it is viewed as an overarching system, with a particular programme or set of related modules perhaps comprising the microsystem.
Bronfenbrenner (1995) includes exosystems and suprasystems as levels that lie external to macro systems (Figure 3.3). Exosystems include larger social structures like society, the neighbourhood, the world of work, the media, transport structures, different levels of a government and informal social networks. Such systems or social structures may impinge on the person’s role or place by virtue of its role in society. On the other hand, suprasystems (Figure 3.3) refer to a more extensive system that comprises many component systems organised in interacting relationships, usually with a common goal or objective (Stapley, 2006), for example, the world’s view of political systems. The chronosystem in Figure 3.3 lies on the extreme outer-circle level and includes the patterns of environmental, social and historical events over one’s lifespan (James & Gilliland, 2017).

Whilst these environmental levels are not exhaustive, they are also recognised across disciplines for their versatility in understanding the influences of the environment on human behaviour.

**Person-in-environment approach.** The person-in-environment approach is the third approach in this section and views the individual in relation to the immediate environment as forming an ecosystem. Hare (2004) argues that the individual is viewed as a person within his/her immediate environment, as well as in relation to other environments, with environments viewed as dynamic and interactive systems. It may be logical that Hare’s (2004) reference to environments in this instance is congruent with sub-systems. Reciprocal actions within the ecosystem form the basis of the person-in-environment approach. This is confirmed by Weiss-Gal (2008) and Hare (2004) whereby the individual under study is influenced by interactions with all related systems and subsystems.

Understanding the influence of the levels within ecosystems theory helps the social work practitioner in understanding and promoting adaptation between the individual member of the system and the environment, thus improving the relationship or the transactions between members of the system (Healy, 2005).

Myer and Moore (2006) argue that intervention must also be based on understanding the reciprocal effect of the environment on relationships in which the individual engages. Relationships are therefore seen as primary, especially where the individual is directly linked to another, for example, a relationship between a learner and teacher. However, a secondary relationship may be having a mediator like a school counsellor to help the learner overcome challenges in the class or with the teacher.

All three approaches and theories in this section have a strong emphasis on the influence of the social environment. These approaches are fundamental to understanding individuals within systems and
subsystems. The application and utilisation of these approaches would depend on the epistemology of the practitioner.

3.2.5. Organisational systems theory

Organisations are viewed largely as social systems, providing analytically useful views based on ontological conceptions. An organisation is a purposeful system as it is always focused on a common purpose which provides its identity. Without a common purpose in an organisation, the elements would not work together as it is unable to identify or align with an outcome. Therefore an organisation has a functional division of labour in pursuit of its common purpose (Ackoff, 1971).

In the pursuit of its purpose, organisations go through various processes of change. Lewin (2009), argues that organisation change undergoes a process of unfreezing the status quo of changes in behaviours, ways of thinking, processes, people, and organisational structures. This is to ensure that employees in an organisation are aware of the necessity for change in order to create or maintain a competitive advantage in the market. The next step is to change or create the perception that the change is needed, then moving towards the new desired level of change whereby the change is implemented and solidified as the norm (Lewin, 1951; 2009).

Thus the ontology of organisations is that they are rational or highly formalised collectives designed to meet specific goals (Scott & Davis, 2007), are natural social systems, forged by various social interactions (Mele, Pels, & Polese, 2010), and are open systems with activities that involve coalitions of participants who each have different interests in society (Scott & Davis, 2007). All of these perspectives underpin organisation systems theory (OST).

Organisational systems theory views GST as underpinning the logic of why and how organisations function and influence the environment (Hatch, 2006, pp. 37-41). Similarly, organisational theorists like Fink and Yolles (2015) and Scott and Davis (2007) argue that GST is useful to understand organisational structures and emphasises the effect of subsystems on organisational performance. These theorists also argued that GST assists organisations to restructure in order to maximise efficiency within a super-system, namely the environment.

Scott and Davis (2007), Brody and Nair (2014) and Mele et al. (2010) argue that organisations are cybernetic systems. Cybernetic systems are capable of self-regulating through the development of subsystems related to feedback loops. This perspective emphasises the importance of basic operations of the organisation, as well as control mechanisms, and goals (Scott & Davis, 2007). On the other hand, inputs, throughputs, and outputs are vital as they demonstrate the relationship between the
organisation’s objectives, resources, and activities involved in achieving the organisation’s goals. (Brody & Nair, 2014; Mele et al., 2010).

Organisational theorists argue that change within organisations is a constant and that habits and behaviours that are not conducive to the prosperity or integrity of an organisation need to be changed. Simultaneously, it is argued that the process of change must be accompanied by a process of clear and constant communication (Fink & Yolles, 2015) where employees or relevant persons are informed about the change, the logic behind the change, and how the change will benefit all (Brody & Nair, 2014). Therefore, by adopting a clear communication pattern, Lewin’s change theory (Lewin, 2009) can help an organisation’s leader make radical long-term change by minimising disruption of the structure’s operations. Finally, another typical viewpoint of organisations is that it is seen as hierarchical systems, with roles clustered into workgroups, departments, and divisions (Scott & Davis, 2007). This implies that at least one subset of an organisation has a system-control function.

The inclusion of organisational systems theory in this chapter provides a diverse viewpoint, as well as attempts to draw in specific systems’ issues relevant to this study.

3.2.6. Family systems theories

The systems approach when applied to families, has played a significant role in the development of family systems theory, as well as the later development of family therapy which is a means of therapeutic intervention with families. Family systems theory (FST) emphasises the family as a social system and as a unit comprised of individual members. FST argues that the family is as an emotional unit and as a non-linear system with boundaries, with members interacting with each other within the system and within a set of family rules and roles (Bowen, 1966; Collins, Jordan, & Coleman, 2007). According to Janszen and Jordan (2006), the development of FST helped to explain the behaviour of complex and organised systems in families as it explored inter-relationships between individual members while supporting a holistic family view. Therefore, it is argued that the family as a system is understood as a whole and not by merely examining individual members, their roles, and functions in isolation. Thus family systems theory views the system as more than just the parents and children (Thomlison, 2007). This argument then reverts to Aristotle’s view of the whole being greater than the sum of its parts.

In this section, selected theories on families as a system are presented in order to provide insights into the assessment of systems. These include an overview of theories that emphasise behaviour patterns, namely Strategic family therapy, Structural family therapy and Functional family therapy, Milan
systemic family therapy that emphasises beliefs, and Multisystemic approaches that emphasise contexts. Finally, in this section an overview of the Metaframeworks model as an integrative system for assessing families will be presented.

**Strategic family therapy.** Strategic family therapy, pioneered by Jay Douglas Haley (1923-2007), has the underlying assumption that family conflicts and problems arise out of the inability of members within the family system to communicate and resolve conflicts effectively. Family therapists design specific directives to help the family overcome feelings of ambivalence to change whilst providing the family with the opportunity to resolve interpersonal problems relating to symptoms of their problems (Carr, 2012). Thus the practitioner’s emphasis on creating specific tasks for the family, as well as teaching skills to explore, identify and treat patterns of interactions between family members and building interactions among members (Haley, 1996; Sheafor & Horejsi, 2008).

In strategic family therapy emphasis is on the identification of specific problems in which the family wants help, clarifying patterns of interaction around the problem, clarifying the role of hierarchical incongruities, and helping the family manage issues of power and mutual respect (Carr, 2012). Two types of strategic tasks are used by the therapist, namely directive tasks and paradoxical tasks. Directive tasks disturb unlikeable family patterns by altering problematic sequences of interactions (Dallos & Draper, 2000). Allocating paradoxical tasks helps families who are resistant to change, and the tasks are set out to do the exact opposite of what the therapist intends to happen (Haley & Richeport-Haley, 2007). Both of these tasks aim to disrupt dysfunctional homeostatic patterns of relating, often from the current dysfunction to another dysfunction, before moving towards more functional patterns (section 3.2.5), similar to Lewin’s concept of unfreezing (Lewin, 1951).

**Structural family therapy.** Structural family therapy, pioneered by Salvador Minuchin, identifies and re-orders the organisation of the family system (Minuchin, 1974). Special attention is given to the delineation and interactions of the spousal, parental and sibling subsystems (Wilk & Storm, 1991). Structural family therapists argue that change occurs when the roles and responsibilities of family members and subsystems are clarified and agreed to by all. The central issue in structural family therapy is that problematic family organisational structures may compromise the family’s capacity to meet various demands in their lifecycle (Simon, 2008). Structural family therapists join in the family interactions while actively avoid becoming triangulated into diffusing conflicts between and among family members (Carr, 2012; Mojta, Falconier, & Huebner, 2014).

**Functional family therapy.** Functional family therapy is an integration of aspects of structural and strategic family therapy, combined with behavioural family therapy. Functional therapists consider
relational functions pertaining to connection and hierarchy in therapy (Carr, 2012). This is evident in the therapist’s attempt to create distance within relationships, or by addressing power structures within relationships. Assessment in functional family therapy considers the family member’s personal styles, strengths and weaknesses as either constraints or aids to problem resolution. A key aspect of functional family therapy intervention is reframing in order to reduce blaming, develop positive alliances and conceptualise differences as a shared yet solvable problem (Carr, 2012; Sexton & Alexander, 2003).

**Milan systemic family therapy.** Milan systemic family therapy regards the family as a system characterised by its homeostatic tendency and its capacity for transformation (Reiter & Green, 2015). These contradictory functions within the family help the family with the notion of totality where the family as a whole function independently of its constituent parts and can autocorrect and can change. Milan therapists usually start with a team-based hypothesis, use circular and neutral questioning, rely on family rituals and positive connotations, and prescribe homework as part of and at the end of session interventions (Carr, 2012; Reiter & Green, 2015). Milan systemic family therapy is included in this study due to the influence of Bateson’s systems theory and second-order cybernetics.

**Metaframeworks.** Metaframeworks is included in this section due to its alignment with systems theory. This model is used in family therapy to provide therapists with an integrative system for assessment as it draws from multiple approaches to provide one or more hypotheses as a point of entry for working with clients (Carr, 2012). This model also assumes that each individual has a central self, as well as has the potential to influence behaviour in and out of the system in which they function. The Metaframeworks model of family therapy focuses on the development of the individual at multiple levels, as well as the reading of feedback in such a way that it allows hypotheses to be either confirmed or discarded.

In summary in this section on theories, it may be argued that the social sciences drew from GST to understand how societies functioned. Social work as a discipline, in turn, drew from scientific terminology and affixed its own meaning and interpretation to understand families and for use in intervention strategies (Healy, 2005).

The next section draws key system constructs and related properties from each of the theories in this chapter thus far, and hereon form the basis of the theoretical framework for this research.
3.3. **System constructs and properties**

Literature on systems theories reveals a lack of a common framework, a standard set of concepts or even a typical list of properties of systems. Justifiably, therefore, the issue of a general systems framework and a set of universally understood systems constructs in the social sciences require scholarly review.

In this section, I draw from the above theories to present six basic constructs which form the basis of the theoretical framework for this research. These constructs, together with sub-characteristics, identify the context or environment of systems, systems as a set of interrelated elements, as being goal-directed, yet systems may display properties that change over time. Furthermore, it is realised that systems rely on communication and feedback. The final construct in this chapter is holism where a system is regarded as greater than the sum of its parts. This section also forms the basis of the analysis in Chapter 6 in relation to the findings and discussion of the data, as well as a system’s informed framework for field instruction in Chapter 7.

3.3.1. **Systems are contextual**

Systems contend with general issues and activities relating to context, needs, processes, transitions, interactions, as well as relationships with other systems (Hoffman & Sallee, 1994). In this section, systems are viewed in relation to three sub-characteristics, namely the environment, hierarchies, and boundaries.

3.3.1.1. **The environment**

The environment, commonly referred to as the milieu in the social sciences, refers to the context or setting within which a system exists. The environment contains elements internal and external to the system, including matters which impact on that system (Jones, 2007; Perrow, 1986; Stuart, 2009). Internal elements of the environment comprise events and relationships pertinent to the direct activities of the system, which in turn may include communication patterns, each member’s background, employment status and scholarly background. The external environment includes the impact of the economy, the legal system, the health system and religion. These larger external environmental factors may either support or cause a strain on the system (Stuart, 2009). Factors relating to the environment and specifically its relation to the ecological and ecosystems theories are argued in Section 3.2.4.
3.3.1.2. Hierarchies and heterarchies of systems

The concepts of hierarchy and heterarchy refer to the ordering of systems. Hierarchical structures are generally vertical, with the leading element having status and power (Scott & Davis, 2007). Subgroupings or subsystems within larger systems create the space for identifying which system takes precedence or has power over the other (Scott & Davis, 2007). In an example of an organisation, clusters of subsystems in the form of workgroups, departments, and divisions are delineated by their respective work functions, status, and power. The organisation as a system may also be a subsystem of a larger corporate structure, network or alliance (Jeffery, 2011). The degree of power or authority vested in a particular system or subsystem will determine the level that it is placed on an ascending or descending hierarchical structure (Scott & Davis, 2007).

Heterarchies are generally seen as a horizontal paradigm, and includes elements that are unranked or non-hierarchical, or may have the potential for a hierarchy but remain unranked then (Fook, 2004). The ranking and dominance of elements of a system or situation may be the point of influence on whether a system moves from a state of heterarchy to a hierarchy (Coetzee, 2012; Fook, 2004). The position of power and authority is placed on a horizontal platform as opposed to a hierarchy where these are on a vertical or matrix level. Heterarchies are less common in formal organisations and traditional systems, but more prominent in subsystems, informal systems or smaller groupings. Heterarchies illustrate the privilege of decision-making amongst participants or members of that subsystem (Coetzee, 2012).

Both hierarchies and heterarchies are necessary for understanding how systems function in the social sciences.

3.3.1.3. Boundaries as contextual

An essential characteristic of systems is boundaries and the system’s ability to maintain such boundaries. Boundaries generally refer to the outskirts, borders or even margins that are used to divide or separate entities, individuals or groups from one another (Lewin, 1992). Bhattacharya (2011) refers to boundaries as perimeters, either displaying properties of rigidity or flexibility, arguing that rigid boundaries featuring prominently in closed systems as opposed to open systems.

The presence of boundaries, whether visible or unseen, is present to keep out certain individuals and keep in only that which fits into the genre of that group (Coetzee, 2012). Yet boundaries may be open, porous, sometimes flexible, or even serve as a guide to membership to a particular group (Payne,
2005). Payne (2005) argues that systems may have gatekeepers who restrict entry to those who do not belong to that system or subsystem.

Boundaries are problem-dependent, temporary, perverse and confusing. However, boundaries are also necessary for organisation and clarity. In the social sciences where open systems thrive, boundaries are seen to be flexible, and in this way accept new subsystems into its fold or releases subsystems out of its borders (Stapley, 2006). Therefore, and particularly within human relationships, boundaries have great significance for the individual, organisation and society. Psychological boundaries occur where an individual typically constructs a mental line around individuals or groups, thus determining self-identity (Stapley, 2006). Thus, an individual may have distinct values about relationships and anything considered ‘not me’ is situated outside of the psychological boundary. However, Stapley (2006) warns that psychological boundaries that are fixed and structured can hinder, hamper or even stop learning; so if an employer enforces the rules of the workplace, he is adhering to a structured and inherent boundary between him/herself as the employer and his/her employees. When that boundary is crossed or tested, it could result in disobedience and disciplinary action being taken by the enforcer of the rules relating to that boundary. On the other hand, should a dual relationship exist, such boundaries are subject to the possibility and temptation to cross that boundary and may impact on the quality of work, learning or co-operation between individuals in that relationship (Stapley, 2006).

However, systems are on a continuum of risk mainly when goals are not met. This affects the system’s ability to overcome transitions and determine the degree of success or dysfunction of interactions with other systems.

### 3.3.2. A system is a set of interrelated elements

Systems are interconnected, with a focal system linking all subsystems or smaller systems within its respective boundaries.

#### 3.3.2.1. Relationships as interrelated elements

Relationships refer to the interpersonal connection, association or interaction between members within a system or a subsystem; or interactions between or among subsystems themselves (Keeney, 1981; Perlman, 1979). Various characteristics of relationships are argued upon in a general perspective. Arguments such as relationships being dynamic and may change suddenly are commonly agreed upon in most research on social systems (Perlman, 1979). This may be linked to the characteristic of roles within systems and subsystems, as roles may dictate the nature of relationships.
A symbiotic relationship occurs when a change in one part may have an impact on other parts (Sheafor & Horejsi, 2008).

Relationships may also be seen as fluid and flexible, due to their ability to adjust to new circumstances and events (Perlman, 1979). An individual within one system may have either simple or complex relationships with other members of that system. Subsystems themselves would also have varying degrees of interaction in their relations with each other or with other systems (Eagly & Koenig, 2014).

Relationships become dysfunctional or broken when mistrust, distrust, and disrespect are present amongst individuals in a system (Hartman, 1995). A person who enters a relationship within a system with feelings of mistrust and apprehension may experience difficulty in adjusting to the rules of that system. On the other hand, a person who feels a sense of trust and confidence in a system may find it easier to adjust to change or to new members entering that system (Mynhardt, Baron, Branscombe, & Byrne, 2009).

Organisations exist as collections of people in various segments, also foster or support the development of relationships, although this is between departments, as well as between people within departments (Hoffman & Sallee, 1994). Organisational boundaries are related to the rules of the organisation. When an organisation’s boundaries are not clearly articulated, rules may be broken, relationships may be affected, and roles may be minimised.

Boundaries that underpin social relationships within organisations are less rigid and more fluid and are determined by behavioural aspects of people within subsystems within the organisation (Scott & Davis, 2007; Scragg, 2013).

Relationships reveal patterns of interaction and interdependent activities. Scott and Davis (2007) argue that relationships within organisations are determined by members of particular structures of an organisation. This may influence power, authority and the nature of relationships within the organisation.

Professional relationships require strict boundaries. Relationships illustrated in counselling relationships, doctor-patient relationships, and even teacher-student relationships fall under closed systems and maintain rigid boundaries (SACE, 2000; SACSSP, 2006). Crossing the boundary of a professional level to a personal level impacts on the integrity and ability of members of that subsystem to maintain any degree of objectivity, or to carry out designated roles properly during that relationship (DSD, 1993; SACSSP, 2006).
3.3.2.2. Roles as an interrelated element

Roles are a set of connected behaviours, rights, beliefs, norms and even obligations in any given situation, shaped by social structures which in turn are created by individuals and groups of people. Roles within systems are broader than merely being a function within a system. A role is a pattern of behaviour assigned or taken on by a member within a system (Hoffman & Sallee, 1994). This role could be determined by an individual, group, system, or a subsystem, and have a specified or designated status; each member within a family has clearly defined roles. Roles are characterised by the function that it serves, and can be rigid or flexible (Eagly & Koenig, 2014; Lunenburg, 2010).

Role identification or role identity in systems and subsystems is influenced by the purpose of the formation of the subgroup within the system or the relationships among members. Roles are related to issues of power where such persons may lead the system or subsystem to achieve the purpose that was set out. Conversely, members with no leadership role may easily be influenced or coerced into decision-making functions of that system or subsystem. Roles change continually depending on the situation, and individuals may have more than one role within a system. However, each role has a set of rights, duties, expectations, and ways of behaving and unspoken or formal rules that a person within that system has to fulfil.

A role is often linked to the issue of status, yet are distinctly different. Eagly, Wood, and Diekman (2000) argue that status refers to a particular position that one occupies while a role is the part one plays. Role theory considers the everyday activities that individuals play within socially defined categories. Role conflict occurs when an individual in one role must deal with conflicting requirements of another role that he may play. Intra-role conflict occurs when an individual faces several demands on his/her responsibilities in particular roles (Karmeshu & Jain, 2003; Kihlström, 2011). For example, within an organisation, an employee may receive two sets of conflicting commands from two supervisors; and people may experience role strain with multiple statuses within a single role (Kihlström, 2011).

3.3.3. Systems display behaviours that are goal-directed

Systems display behaviours that are goal-seeking, state-maintaining, purposive, purposeful, reactive and responsive. These factors also respond to a system’s need for homeostasis and its ability or not to adapt or bounce-back from distress.
3.3.3.1. Goal seeking behaviour

Systems seek goal attainment and balance, despite the upheavals and challenges that they may encounter in time. A goal-seeking system (Mele et al., 2010) responds to events in a manner that will enhance its own outcomes or construction and is responsive as opposed to reactive as it is fixed on fulfilling what it has started out to do. A purposive system can pursue different goals and different means to achieve that goal (Mele et al., 2010).

Systems may have single or multi-faceted goals or may be multi-goal seeking systems where different systems have the same purpose and share common properties (Mele et al., 2010). Purposeful systems select both the means and the end in search of goal attainment with the probability that some outcomes can be achieved with relative certainty, and within specified timeframes (Ackoff, 1971). Purposeful systems rely on the attainment of goals in a series of steps. For example, a student or a learner must complete specific modules in one year before advancing to the next year of study. Thus in a purposeful system, passing the second year is a subsequent goal for the student whose ultimate objective is the attainment of a degree. Ackoff (1971) argues that purposeful systems can change goals or change the means to achieve that goal.

Examples of a goal-seeking system are workplace learning and field instruction programmes. These are related to the attainment of the objective of graduation with an academic qualification. While these may be seen as displaying properties of abstract systems, the goal is to develop student learning in preparation for the workplace. Goal seeking systems can respond differently to internal and external events until it produces its desired state or outcome (Ackoff, 1971). This means that such a system has a choice of a behavioural response to events or changes in any of its subsets. It is also understandable that not all goal-seeking systems may achieve their quests of a goal, and this is evident in concepts like adaptation and entropy which is also raised in this chapter.

3.3.3.2. Resilience as a behavioural response

Masten (2014, p. 10) defines resilience as “the capacity of a dynamic system to adapt successfully to disturbances that threaten system function, viability, or development”. This implies that systems react positively to disturbances and events by adapting to the threat by restoring the system’s functional equilibrium. These disturbances may be short-term fluctuations, or sporadic outbursts, and even system failure, all of which may be seen as regular cycles of activity in that system (Reiter & Green, 2015).
Resilience is also broadly identified by the ability of an individual or groups of individuals to recover and return to normal functioning after a catastrophic or traumatic event (Greene, 2007). A system demonstrates resilience when survival strategies and the system’s capacity to transform or change persists. In such instances, Masten (2014) also suggests that this reaction is a means of survival or even a transformation to a different or another purposeful state.

Systems also survive despite adversity, which places a strain on the system and its subsystems and challenges the system’s outcomes, as well as its capacity to be resilient (Van Breda, 2018). This statement is illustrated in Masten (2014) where a resilient organisation may survive using self-preservation, which in turn may result in further calamity or upheaval. Conversely, Wright (2009) argues that a system may be seen as static and unresilient as it focuses solely on its static nature and fails to acknowledge its power to recover or to self-organise.

Thus, resilient systems are dynamic as it works within a rich structure of many interactive feedback loops to restore a system even after a significant disturbance.

3.3.3.3. State-maintaining systems behaviour

A state-maintaining system is a reactive system, with functions determined by the causing event and its ability to differentiate between internal and external states to changes in which it reacts (Ackoff, 1971, pp. 661-670). The aim is to ensure that changes in the system are minimal and reactions to change may be adaptive or attempt to maintain the homeostasis of that system.

The concept of homeostasis refers to a person’s ability to adapt to stressful situations while maintaining a stable psychological condition (Rodolfo, 2000). A society or a community is seen to display levels of homeostasis depending on its ability to maintain a level of stability during periods of discord, for example, labour unrests, service delivery protests and political unrest. On a similar note, an example can be a family’s ability or inability to maintain a sense of homeostasis during what it perceives as family trauma or discord.

The characteristic of homeostasis within systems theory, therefore, refers to a sense of balance within the systems and amongst subsystems. It defines the manner in which that system maintains its sense of balance, as well as the tendency of that system or subsystem to return to its balanced state after a traumatic event (Payne, 2005). The impact of a traumatic event on a relatively stable system may be one of coping, or this may be either a positive or negative impact on the functioning of the rest of the system. Alternately there may be a ripple effect on other subsystems within that system. Therefore, homeostasis also refers to the system’s maintenance of the status quo, irrespective of what the status
was before the interruption. The response of systems and subsystems in dealing with trauma and stress is relative to how they rally around to maintain a sense of stability and homeostasis. Each system and subsystem has its own way of maintaining stability or at least striving to do so.

3.3.3.4. The system’s ability to adapt to events

Adaptation is the ability or process of members within a system or within a subsystem to adjust to one another or to adjust to new situations (Forte, 2014b). Factors such as changes within an organisation can be seen as internal factors to the system as a whole but as external to some of the subsystems within that environment. External factors to the organisation include the economy, political changes and labour unrest. To a family system, external factors include loss of income or loss of the breadwinner, while internally the family must adapt to deal with the new situation that it faces.

A system is adaptive if it can modify or change in order to regain some of its lost efficiency. Change in the environment impacts on the ability of that system to attain its goal (Kihlström, 2011). Hepworth et al. (2013) argue that adaptation includes the ability of the members of the system to interact with multiple systems, and do not react uniformly to stressors. Thus, the ability of any given system to adapt to either internal or external stressors would determine the system’s ability make adjustments in order to process new situations that it faces, and find new ways of dealing with that situation.

State-maintaining systems are adaptive out of necessity, while goal-seeking systems are selective in their behavioural response to an event. Thus, a system is adaptive in that it may modify its behaviour or reaction in response to a change in its internal or external state.

3.3.4. Systems are dynamic and change over time

Systems are differentiated by the notion of similarities and differences and are therefore in a constant state of change. Abstract systems are systems whose elements are conceptual for example language and philosophical ideations (Wright, 2009), whereas concrete systems include relationships and are commonly found in the social sciences (Ackoff, 1971).

Responses and reactions to stimuli, events or changes are typical of open systems. Hartman (1995) refers to the concept of morphostasis in family systems, which is the ability of a family system to maintain consistency despite challenges faced. On the other hand, morphogenesis is the ability of the family system to show growth over time while adapting to changing needs (Hartman, 1995).
3.3.4.1. Open and closed systems

Open systems and closed systems are familiar concepts both in the natural and social sciences. Open systems are described by Von Bertalanffy (1969) as systems that allow interactions between the internal elements of the system and the environment. Open systems display processes of input, throughput and output. Open systems must acknowledge the process of feedback, whether positive or negative. Negative feedback could be used to correct deficiencies in the transformative process.

Closed systems do not allow the flow of energy in and out of systems (Astrom & Murray, 2010). Closed systems are common to the natural sciences like mathematics and thermodynamics. Unlike open systems, closed systems prevent or disallow exchanges, and resist forces of external entry to that system (Von Bertalanffy, 1969). In other words, closed systems appear always to contain the same matter, and is seldom affected by external influences. Closed systems are less common in the social sciences and are evident in relationships and boundaries that are less rigid and more flexible.

3.3.4.2. Understanding system entropy

Entropy generally refers to the tendency of a system to break down or become dysfunctional. The inability of parts of the system or a member within a system to adapt to new situations may lead to the entropy of that system (Hepworth et al., 2013). Entropy (sometimes referred to as social entropy or systems entropy) is used to measure the breakdown or decay within a social system, mainly dealing with the disintegration of social structures or the declining of social divisions. There may be a natural progression towards disorganisation and even complete breakdown of the system (Von Bertalanffy, 1969). Why this happens may be explained by the characteristics of systems specifically related to relationships, human behaviour or perhaps development (Fook, 2004).

Negative entropy, on the other hand, is the tendency of the system to progress to meet the demands of the current situation it faces (Baldwin, 2004; Fook, 2004). System entropy may decrease if that system engages with more productive systems or if the dysfunctional system receives support. Baldwin (2004) argues that negative entropy is a process of growth and advancement of that system. Members of a system are continually evolving and growing, gaining new knowledge, learning new and progressive strategies, thus allowing the system to flourish instead of floundering. Progressive field instruction systems will flourish as long as negative entropy is fostered and not prevented from progressive methods of teaching (Baldwin, 2004). Members of progressive systems are flexible and amenable to policy change and growth in keeping with trends and modern-day practices and principles.
3.3.5. **Systems rely on communication and feedback**

At least three processes apply when open systems or open subsystems receive information, namely input, throughput and output (Valentinov, 2012; Von Bertalanffy, 1969). This section argues the concepts of input, throughput and output, while also including the process of feedback and communication within the system.

3.3.5.1. **Inputs**

Inputs refer to what crosses the boundary of a system and enter a system. In an organisation, input would refer to resources like human resources, materials, financial or information resources from its environment which are used to provide a service or product. Input, therefore, includes incoming communication and transactions received for action by members within the system (Brown, 2006).

![Diagram illustrating inputs, throughput and output](image)

**Figure 3.4. Diagram illustrating inputs, throughput and output**

3.3.5.2. **Throughput**

As indicated in Figure 3.4, throughput occurs when the system processes incoming information (Stapley, 2006). This is a process of change that occurs as a result of the input. Throughput then is the transformation process in order to convert input into an output.
3.3.5.3. Output

Output refers to what happens after an input is processed. It is then defined by how information is actioned, or whether it is actioned at all and released back into the environment. Output then is the transformed messages or resources that is sent back into the environment (Brown, 2006). An example of output may be located in a university that educates graduates (throughput) to be accomplished citizens (output) now entering the open labour market.

However, the perspective and role of a particular member of a system determine whether one member’s input may be another’s output (Hudson, 2008). This may be illustrated in an example of a decision or instruction meted out by an educator. This instruction is seen as input received by students. This input must be processed by the students (throughput) and actioned (output). However, as Hudson (2008) suggests, the original instruction by the educator is the output for the educator.

![Diagram depicting the feedback process:](image)

**Figure 3.5. Feedback process**

3.3.5.4. Feedback

The feedback process presented in Figure 3.5 was adapted from (Lunenburg, 1991, p. 18). Figure 3.5 illustrates the process of feedback, represented by the arrows showing the to and fro of information. This suggests that systems and processes create feedback (Lunenburg, 2010). Feedback is observed mostly in the form of communication and interactions within the system, by individual members and collectively by the system. Such feedback can change or alter the direction initially set out. As a
result, individual systems are seen as never static. The movement that the system undertakes, according to Hoffman and Sallee (1994), is the precondition forcing the system to either change or adapt to change.

Feedback is common in most theories on systems, particularly cybernetics and occurs when outputs of a system are routed back as inputs (Bateson, 1967). Thus, feedback refers to a system’s ability to respond to stimuli or input and its ability to then communicate that input using a response or an output (Bateson, 1967; Keeney, 1981). Feedback is also the inter-relationship between the input and output (Lunenburg, 1991). Feedback could also be described as the system feeding back into itself and would inform a system or a unit whether a particular plan should be continued or not.

Feedback may be negative or positive, (Hudson, 2008), although negative and positive labels do not characterise the communication as good or bad and no value is implied in the labels (Bhattacharya, 2011). Negative feedback refers to patterns of interaction that maintain homeostasis and stability while minimising change in a system. Positive feedback may result in feelings of higher commitment to work and a general feeling of work satisfaction. On the other hand, negative feedback is not viewed favourably by the employee and may result in feelings of despondency.

3.3.5.5. Feedback loops

Feedback loops are the process that allows for mutual sending and receiving of feedback (Mead, 1968). This belief is linked to the principle of cause and effect as outputs are routed back into the system as inputs and as part of a chain or loop.
The illustrations in Figures 3.4, 3.5, 3.6 and 3.7 indicate system structure. Structures determine what behaviours are latent in the system. Feedback loops, as reflected in Figure 3.6 allows for constant, circular communication. For example, an educator gives student feedback, and the student’s response constitutes feedback to the educator. A positive feedback loop may indicate that a system or an organisation is functioning well, while a negative feedback loop is a reflection of problems in the system or organisation that needs to be corrected (Hudson, 2008). The educator’s role is to monitor feedback loops. It is expected that the educator would likely reinforce a positive feedback loop. Thus the process becomes a reinforcing loop (Hudson, 2008). On the other hand, it is expected that the educator would correct problems or put into place remedial action that responds to a negative feedback loop.

Feedback and feedback loops are equally essential when analysing interactions and relations within systems and subsystems. Feedback refers to the input that is received after the enactment of an output (Mead, 1968). Feedback loops are also a result of outputs, which explain the impact of processes that occur within a system (Bale, 1995).

3.3.6. **Systems are more than the sum of their parts**

Systems thinking is based on understanding system structure and behaviour. Various components that make up a system each contribute to the state of that system. This section discusses the need to view
systems as a whole, and when individual parts are put together, creates a reaction that is larger and more significant than just the system itself.

3.3.6.1. The function of holism

The concept of holism refers to reactions to change by focusing on the system as a whole, rather than on the actions of individuals or groups of individuals (Jackson, 2006; Smuts, 1926). Holism is the system’s ability to adapt to change and instability in the environment by focusing on the effect of the problem on the organisation at large (Jackson, 2006). This discourages focusing on problems, individual issues or isolated incidences, and instead on the emergent properties of the whole system.

Holism is used when describing principles of whole systems (Anker, 2002; Zinn, 2007). Holism is practised when systems focus on the whole rather than the parts (Jackson, 2006, p. 6)

The different size systems each have their distinct individual characteristics. Researchers and practitioners who favour the holism perspective, concentrate their attention at the organisational level and ensure that relationships are functional so as to contribute to the organisation as a whole. Jackson (2006), therefore, argues that holism recognises the significance of structure, development and processes in a system, and allows one to have a worldview of how the system functions in relation to the environment. It can, therefore, be argued that holism, from the perspective of systems theory, is critical in the social sciences.

3.3.6.2. Viewing subsystems as part of the larger system

Subsystems, also seen as subsets, are often microsystems or smaller groupings, adding to the knowledge of systems that are recognised for the whole being greater than the sum of its parts. Given that systems are made up of subsystems, the interactions with and between subsystems collectively are more significant than the effect of individual systems. Thus, when there is a focus on the whole as a combination of subsystems, it could turn out to be an entity with new conditions and variables.

Within organisations, subsystems refer to smaller groups of employees who work together within the larger organisational system (Nadesan, 2005). Examples of subsystems within organisations would include departments, projects, teams, programmes and even informal collections of employees who work together to complete specific work processes.

Subsystems are generated by interaction amongst smaller units or groups of people within the large system rather than allocated groupings of people (Kihlström, 2011). Subsystems are the secondary or subordinate systems within the more extensive (or macro) system. Subsystems form part of the whole
system and are mostly seen as breakaway groups, or smaller systems within a more extensive system (Stapley, 2006). In any given environment where interaction amongst groups of individuals occurs, there may be many subsystems prevalent. These may be in the form of dyads, triads, cliques or even more members of a smaller group. Thus, subsystems are known to have their own purpose, as well as serve a purpose within systems.

A system is not limited by any number of subsystems, it can contain several subsystems which are either interdependent or operate independently of each other. In such cases, James and Gilliland (2017) argue, it is useful to refer to the components of a system as "subsystems" and to the larger system surrounding the system as the “supra-system”. Suprasystems are the most extensive or most encompassing system as it includes both the system and subsystems. Smaller groupings within a subsystem would then be referred to as sub-subsystems (Davern, Gunn, & Giles-Corti, 2017).

Theorists agree that a subsystem may also be regarded as a system, as it shares the characteristics of being a grouping of individual units and of having interacting or interdependent component parts forming a complex or intricate whole (Davern et al., 2017). The boundaries within subsystems in social systems are mostly open and flexible. Interaction and relationships between members of subsystems and between one subsystem and the other are observable. However, subsystems, like systems, may have its own rules, boundaries, coalitions, smaller groupings or alliances and unique characteristics.

Within families, subsystems may refer to a grouping of family members according to their roles, responsibilities, age or relationship. These subsystems may also be differentiated by marital, parental or sibling units (Algood, Harris, & Hong, 2013). A subsystem’s role may be gatekeeping of information that is shared amongst other family members. Stapley (2006) argues that such subsystems seek integration whereby members fit together and must communicate in order to achieve that subsystem’s objectives. These subsystems also pursue a pattern maintenance where the subsystem as a whole adheres to basic rules and conventional procedures. Further, these subsystems strive for goal attainment, and they are forced to adapt to environmental and other changes.
Subsystems are arguably a vital resource within the larger system and as smaller segments of social systems. Systems and subsystems may develop implicit or explicit norms which shape members’ behaviour in such a subsystem (Garvin & Galinsky, 2008; Hepworth et al., 2013; Toseland & Rivas, 2009). This then serves to regulate how that group functions and possible sanctions (implicit or explicit) may arise.

3.4. Summary of chapter and conclusions

This chapter raised key and pertinent arguments of relevant theories on systems in the social sciences which in turn form the basis for the analysis of systems, which is crucial in this research study. As can be seen there does not appear to be a single unified conceptual framework for social scientists on theories on systems. However, a review of literature relating to systems revealed an understanding of several constructs about systems thinking which were presented in this chapter.

This chapter also argued on the renewed emphasis on relationships and open interactions with the environment rather than systems as being closed to other interactions. It was also argued that the attention is on circular causal loops as opposed to linear causality, with more research on self-organisation and self-analysis. Scholars seem to give attention to inter-system interactions, concentrating on observations and reflexivity by members of the system, leading to thinking on
systems analysis. Such arguments depict paradigm shifts in the way researchers and theorists think about systems while identifying critical issues for further scholarly review.

This chapter, therefore, followed a deductive approach in identifying salient constructs of systems inferred by relevant theories in the social sciences. Six core properties were inferred; namely of systems being contextual and relative to the environment, that systems should be viewed as an inter-related set of elements, that systems display behaviours that are goal-directed, that systems are dynamic and change over time, that systems rely on communication and feedback, and finally that systems must be viewed as more than the sum of its parts. These six properties of systems form the basis of analysis of the findings presented in chapters six and seven of this study.

The next chapter sets out the methodology for this research, explaining the selection of the research approach and design, and describing the steps used to identify the population and select the sample for this study.
Chapter 4. Research methodology

4.1. Introduction

This chapter argues the epistemological and methodological aspects of the study. This chapter opens with the research approach and design, followed by an overview of the theoretical framework presented, details on the data collection process, data analysis strategy and measures to ensure the trustworthiness of the research. This chapter also includes a section on the role of the researcher wherein issues of self-reflection and reflexivity over the research process are argued and will conclude with details on how ethical requirements were met.

With the focus of this study on the field instruction system in social work education, the objectives of the study were to:

a. Identify and describe the elements and processes that comprise the field instruction system.
b. Analyse, using systems theory, the field instruction programme as a social system.
c. Determine what critical factors in the field instruction system optimise or hinder the process of learning.
d. Formulate and recommend a framework supporting the factors that can be built into field instruction systems.

The processes used in the research methodology follow.

4.2. The research approach

Consideration was given to the primary research approaches for this study, namely qualitative, quantitative and the mixed methods approach, the latter which is a combination of the two mono approaches. The quantitative approach uses a numerically oriented system of research involving a large representative sample (Fouché, Delport, & De Vos, 2015). With the primary aim being to test a hypothesis or statement regarding the relationship between two or more variables, this approach implies the use of a survey or a standardised questionnaire to collect information (Chambliss & Schutt, 2013, p. 129; Dunn, 2010). In addition, Bless et al. (2013) argue that quantitative researchers adhere to a rigid set of steps, use statistical procedures to convert data into numbers for ease of interpretation and analysis, and generalise findings from a relatively small sample to the entire population. Key characteristics of the quantitative approach are the use of independent and dependent variables that are in turn used to establish cause and effect relationships about phenomena, the ability
to generalise findings beyond the confines of the research sample, and the ability to replicate the study in similar contexts (Bless et al., 2013).

On the other hand, the qualitative approach provides researchers with the opportunity to engage in descriptive analyses of data and phenomena, of understanding the experiences of participants from their narratives and of providing opportunities for personal perspectives from the point of the research participants (Bless et al., 2013; Levitt et al., 2018). In presenting the characteristics of the qualitative approach, Struwig and Stead (2001) and Bless et al. (2013) argue that of importance are the perspectives of the participants and the researcher, the issue of context, the process of examining interrelated events along a continuum, flexibility in implementation and use of theory. The researcher’s role in qualitative research includes the collection and studying of relevant documents, having individual and group interviews, observing, documenting and reflecting on observed behaviour and making field notes (Maxwell, 2013). The position of a researcher is instrumental in the qualitative data collection process, focusing on meaning-making and interpretation of the data collected in understanding situations, interactions, experiences and contexts. This focus allows for qualitative data to be examined in its raw form (Dunn, 2010) as the richness of the human experience is examined. In terms of the sample size, the quantitative approach favours a large representative and mostly randomised sample in a controlled setting, whilst the qualitative approach uses smaller samples, relies on eliciting the views of the respondent to investigate a problem, and supports the use of the natural milieu to understand phenomena (Tetnowski, 2015).

A third research approach considered was the mixed methods approach, with either a qualitative or quantitative approach at the core and the other as a secondary approach (Bless et al., 2013; Leech & Onwuegubuzie, 2009). In considering this approach, I was required first to identify the dominant approach, and then decide how and at which point the qualitative and quantitative data would be mixed. Thereafter, I had to decide on the data collection tools, namely the appropriateness of using a combination of questionnaires or surveys (quantitative) and open-ended interviews, case studies or observations (qualitative), and then decide whether the data was to be mixed at the data collection stage, the data analysis stage or after the interpretation of the results (Bless et al., 2013).

Careful consideration was given to the suitability of these three approaches to this study. This study required an interactive focus on the human experience that was essential to generate rich, meaningful descriptive data, achievable using the qualitative approach (Bless et al., 2013). Guidelines for selecting research approaches were located in Struwig and Stead (2001, p. 20) ranging from understanding the philosophical belief of the study to alignment with the research question. The philosophical belief of this study related to what I viewed as the multiple constructed realities in the
various elements of the field instruction system. In this light, Bless et al. (2013) and Maxwell (2013) argue that the quantitative approach relied on scientific views of the absolute truth, whilst Porter (2007) was of the view that the qualitative approach supported the belief that truth, knowledge and understanding of the world was not absolute but somewhat relative to the constructs of personal assumptions, acknowledgement of biases and prejudices. The beliefs underpinning the qualitative approach guided the research questions, which were both exploratory and interpretive.

Personal factors like writing styles, attention to detail, a preference for technical and scientific writing, or a preference for using a rigid structure aligned with skills in statistics and deductive reasoning be taken into account (Struwig & Stead, 2001). In this regard, my background as a social worker and strength in the use of literary and narrative skills allowed me to listen to and understand the participants’ perspectives whilst maintaining a high quality of questioning and being flexible in the interviews yet not compromising the structure and integrity of the study. These epistemological guiding factors complemented the need for understanding experiences and meaning afforded to field instruction and related systems constructs in the investigation and supported my epistemology and skills as a researcher. In this study, I wanted to understand how participants assigned meaning (Maxwell, 2013, pp. 87-95; Merriam, 2009, pp. 5-19) to their field instruction experiences.

Another key consideration was alignment with the theoretical framework of this study. This study used the system’s perspective where both linear and non-linear relationships prevail. A linear relationship between two elements in a system can be drawn on a graph with a straight line as it a relationship without constant proportions. A non-linear relationship is one in which the cause does not produce a proportional effect as it is illustrated with curves and not a straight line (Wright, 2009). Quantitative approaches represent a closed systems view implying that the data is not open to new and novel information since the categories and responses of interest are decided in advance (Dunn, 2010). This view is contrary to a preference for characteristics of open systems, and thus the quantitative approach was excluded.

Diverse views on the qualitative approach were also taken into account in this thesis. Hammersley (2008) argues that unlike the quantitative approach, the qualitative approach did not rigorously measure concepts, nor document such measurements and had no statistical control. Likewise, Dunn (2010) argues that qualitative approaches are time-consuming in its analysis of data, and did not allow generalisations from one set of qualitative observations to another. Yet another factor was the concept of anecdotal reports where Struwig and Stead (2001, p. 12) argue that the qualitative researcher merely reports on the perspectives of the participants without the consideration of reflecting and providing commentary or analysis of these views. Although I did not agree with the last point made
by Struwig and Stead (2001), I took heed of the strategies located in Mills and Birks (2014) to mitigate these diverse beliefs on qualitative research. As guided by Mills and Birks (2014), I needed to be flexible yet scientific in finding a best-fit in relation to the research question. These arguments underpinned the researcher’s epistemology in selecting the qualitative approach over the quantitative and mixed-methods approaches.

In line with the selection of the qualitative approach for this study, arguments for a case study design as the preferred research design will be discussed in the next section.

4.3. The research design

A research design refers to the strategy that is best suited to answer the research question (Bless et al., 2013). According to Yin (2003, p. 21), a research design typifies a blueprint or a work-plan of the study, aimed to guide the researcher during each of the processes of data collection, analysis and interpretation.

In order to achieve the objectives of this study, various qualitative research designs were considered. Qualitative designs are seen as less structured (Fouché & Schurink, 2015) and are guided by factors such as the purpose, the nature of the study, the research question, interpretation of the data skills and resources (Yin, 2003). This section includes reference to selected but relevant qualitative research designs and highlights the selection of the most appropriate design for this research.

4.3.1. Ethnography

Ethnography refers to the study of particular cultures or cultural histories (Dutta, 2014), with data primarily gathered through observations over a prolonged time spent by the researcher in the field within a particular culture (Creswell, 2012; Emerson, 1995). The literature on ethnography indicates that this design is noted for its emphasis on reflections of lived cultural experiences within the phenomena under study. Fouché and Schurink (2015, pp. 314-316) suggest that ethnographic researchers aim at writing actual accounts of lived experiences while on fieldwork, capturing field notes, events, social processes and values and norms relevant to a particular group of people. This argument was initially illustrated in Bateson and Mead (1942) who suggested that for one to understand a culture, one must observe from within that culture’s perspective. On the other hand, Schmidt (2015) used ethnography to focus on her own experiences within the university’s communication system and particularly with university-student communication. Her research, using auto-ethnography as a variation of ethnography, used self-reflection to understand effective learning in a distance-learning environment.
Ethnography is used widely in disciplines like sociology and anthropology as it is designed for the in-depth exploration of cultural phenomena and experiences (Bless et al., 2013). Ethnography, therefore, is a useful design in helping researchers to gain insight into cultural practices and developing awareness of cultural phenomena or social issues.

As this study will not be exploring cultural or similar phenomena, ethnography as a research design was not considered as appropriate to meet the study objectives.

4.3.2. Phenomenology

Phenomenology is the in-depth study of the understanding generated from experiences of persons in relation to their own experiences and situations (Usher & Jackson, 2014). Researchers using this design are concerned with describing the participants’ lived experiences of a particular aspect of their lives, or of a phenomenon under investigation as experienced by the participant. Rule and John (2011) suggest that phenomenology is a philosophical approach where the researcher sets aside pre-existing assumptions and focuses on detailing participants’ experiences of a phenomenon to gain new insights into the issue. In most instances, phenomenologists spend time closely observing all matters that may have been previously taken for granted or categorised according to pre-existing concepts (Rule & John, 2011, p. 98).

Much consideration was given as to whether phenomenology was suited to this research as it does have some relevance to two of the objectives of this study. I wanted to elicit perspectives and descriptions from participants on the factors that supported or hindered their respective field instruction experiences. However, this research was more than eliciting the views and lived experiences of participants. This research aimed to study each of three field instruction systems and wished to incorporate a review of specific documents related to the field instruction programme, in order to gain a deeper and broader understanding of the phenomenon of field instruction in social work education. For these reasons, phenomenology was excluded as a preferred research design for this study.

4.3.3. Grounded theory

Grounded theory is an approach that seeks to develop or generate theory about a phenomenon inductively (Rule & John, 2011) after a systematic analysis of data related to the phenomenon under study. Bless et al. (2013) suggest that grounded theory is nearly always qualitative as theory develops from emerging data and where the data is the sole source of information. Another point of view is Hancock, Ockelford, and Windridge (2009) who suggest that theoretical sensitivity is important in
grounded theory design as the researcher should enter the project naïve of relevant theory, but must be capable of extracting important data while being sensitive to the emergence of a new theory.

Similarly, it is suggested that grounded theory emphasises the emergence or development of theory from the data without the analyst’s conceptual theory being used to interpret the data (Frost, 2011; Mills, Birks, & Hoare, 2014). In order to illustrate these statements, two recent research studies on grounded theory come to mind, namely those of Van Breda (2015) and Hlungwani (2017). Van Breda (2015) used grounded theory analysis to construct a theory of care leaving that identified the social processes that male care leavers engaged in, as they transitioned in their journey towards independence. Similarly, Hlungwani (2017) also used grounded theory methods to analyse data and gain insights into the social-ecological resilience processes that facilitated successful journeying toward independent living. Hlungwani’s research used the resilience perspective as a theoretical lens to identify the processes that were central in the journey of young women towards independent living. As can be seen, the research by Van Breda (2015) used the grounded theory approach to recognise the emergence of theory, while Hlungwani’s research contributed to the development of theory on resilience.

As this study did not foresee the emergence of a new theory, nor the development of existing theory, grounded theory was excluded as a research design.

4.3.4. The case study design

The appropriate research design considered for this study was the case study design as it was found to be most aligned to the objectives of this research and will, therefore, be discussed in detail. A case in education or the social sciences may refer to a group or groups of people or programmes where the researcher seeks to understand their uniqueness, commonality, or “functioning in their ordinary pursuits or milieus” (Stake, 1995, p. 1).

4.3.4.1. Defining case study designs

Gilham (2000) derived the definition of case study from the word case to refer to either an individual, group, institution or community, and study to refer to an investigation in response to a specific research question. However, one of the most comprehensive definitions of case study design is that by Yin (2003, p. 14) who viewed case study design as a comprehensive research strategy that took into account the “logic of the design, data collection techniques, and specific approaches to data analysis”. Yin (2003, p. 14) attempted to clarify this by referring to the scope, as well as the context of the study, arguing that the case study was an empirical inquiry that explored contemporary, rea-
life phenomenon whilst relying “on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion”. This definition was suggestive in guiding the use of the case study design, notably as it supported the gathering of evidence from a variety of sources as a means of triangulating the data.

A further definition on case study designs is offered by Rule and John (2011, p. 4) that it is a systematic and in-depth investigation of a “particular instance in its context in order to generate knowledge”. They argued that case study designs supported depth rather than superficial exploration, was versatile so that it could be used together with a variety of methods and was manageable given its bounded nature. As can be seen from these definitions, a case study design is a process of investigating a phenomenon, event or context and offers various benefits in qualitative research.

4.3.4.2. Selecting case studies

Case studies are arguably bounded systems as it may refer to a single person or a complex integrated system as long as the researcher can define or limit the boundary around the system being researched. Merriam (2009, pp. 40-45) viewed a case study as an “in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system”, referring to an entity surrounded by a boundary or one that is located within a fixed setting. However, in contrast to this definition presented by Merriam (2009), Yin (2003) further argued that a case study was an empirical inquiry that need not be restricted by boundaries or context, with possible blurred boundaries between the phenomenon and its context. The field instruction system which is the subject of this research may be seen as a natural system of boundedness which comes together for a common purpose, within a specific time frame (Merriam, 1988), for example for one academic year.

However, arguments contained in Greenwood and Lowenthal (2005) and Smith (2009), indicate that case studies offer insights that would not be easily availed by means of aggregated data and may at times be the most suitable option, if not the only strategy in some research studies, drawing links between routine processes and outcomes. This indicates that the researcher is tasked with elaborating on descriptions, processes and meanings that emanate from the study, and seen as tacitly depicting different perspectives of the situation under study.

Gilham’s definition of the word case raises questions about whether a case should comprise a single unit under study or multiple units. A single case may comprise an individual, institution or community, each seen as a single unit, and multiple cases may comprise a number of single cases within the study. Yin (2003) argues the research question determines whether single cases or multiple cases are appropriate, whereas Rule and John (2011) argue that this selection is determined by the
relevance of the case to the broader community. On the other hand, as argued by Struwig and Stead (2001) the characteristics and homogeneity of the sample may determine the number of cases to be studied.

**Selection of a single case.** One of the critical factors in the selection of case studies is the quality and depth of the case that would yield richness of results. In selecting the appropriateness of selecting a single case to be studied, Yin (2003) identified factors like uniqueness, typicality, representativeness, whether the phenomenon under study was previously inaccessible, is a longitudinal study, or whether that was a critical case required to test a theory. Further requirements for single case selection are set out in Rule and John (2011) who stressed that consideration must be given to the depth of the case, whether the case can, in fact, be studied in depth, and to the insider knowledge and experience that the researcher may have on that case. However, literature also revealed that findings from a single case under study might not be generalised to other cases, nor does such a study offer a parallel dimension in research (Bassey, 1999; Davern et al., 2017).

**Multi-cases.** The selection of multi-cases to be studied suggest the use of two or more single cases. Rule and John (2011) argue that selecting multiple, relevant and perhaps related cases allowed for broader representation of the phenomenon under study, contributed to the more profound understanding of events, policies or theory, and revealed common findings and generalisations for future research. They further argued that multi-case selection supported the idea of comparing cases, thereby providing for more in-depth and broader levels of investigation. A further advantage of selecting multi-cases was “methodological replication” (Rule & John, 2011, p. 21) where the same methods, techniques and instruments of data collection and analysis were used in similar circumstances. The replication logic implies that the selection of each case must be made in a systematic manner irrespective of producing similar or contrasting results. However, in the event of the results being contradictory, this may require retesting with another set of cases.

Strong support for multi-case studies are contained in Stake (1995, 2006). Stake (2006) argues that the multi-case project is seen both as a whole and also as made up of individual parts so that the researcher will address all parts of the system. This ties in much with the theoretical framework of systems theory which is the basis for analysis in this research. Stake (2006, p. 1) argues further that in multi-case studies, the researcher focuses on specific objects that are to be studied and he refers to these as the “quintain” (pronounced kwin-ton). This singleness of focus, he suggests, will provide an understanding of how the case study design will hold the cases together in the analysis stage.
In addition to the methodological replication and quintain arguments, multi-case designs are considered to be flexible and open to new information during the data collection process (Yin, 2003). However, such flexibility should not imply reducing the rigour in the selection of cases but could consider a modification to the original design process if needed (Yin, 2003).

Nonetheless, multi-case research is also not without limitations. It is not always easy to replicate the methodology across all cases (Rule & John, 2011). In addition, the predisposition of the researcher may still be a factor, mainly when unique features and differences in cases are ignored (Gilham, 2000; Rule & John, 2011). Therefore, to mitigate these factors, it was imperative to uphold issues relating to rigour in the selection criteria of the cases, and an awareness of the issues of typicality or representativeness of the population without neglecting cases that may be influential, unusual, diverse, extreme or perhaps deviant.

Having given due consideration to the above factors pertaining to single and multi-case studies, this study found that multi-case studies were most suitable as its design. In addition, consideration was given to arguments by Yin (2003) on descriptive or intrinsic case studies with a focus on testing hypotheses or in describing and relating aspects of the phenomenon under study. This study favoured an exploratory case study type research design and included elements of descriptive research.

4.3.4.3. Limitations of case study design

While all of these arguments were considered in opting for the case study as the most appropriate research design for this study; it is acknowledged that this design is not without limitations or risk. Smith (2009) argued that using a case study design may be selective and possibly anecdotal or circumstantial, while Rule and John (2011) insist that researcher bias may prevail in the selection of cases. To mitigate these and other potential limitations, it was imperative that I reflect on my limitations when understanding case study research, particularly as the risk of over-involvement, refusal to self-reflect, inexperience or time constraints could prevail.

In summary, it was essential to understand the types of case studies, and the reasons behind the selection of a single case or of multiple cases that in turn impact on the generation of richness of data. I also acknowledge that this design allowed me to understand the “how” as opposed to the “what” a phenomenon like field instruction does (Bassey, 1999; Tetnowski, 2015). I am aware that both single and multiple cases facilitate a better understanding of the complexity of interactions among multiple environmental variables, participants, outcomes and views. However, with due consideration, I opted for the multiplicity and flexibility that a multiple case study design offered.
In this study, the selection of the research design directed the nature of the data on field instruction systems to be collected and how such data were to be analysed and interpreted. This section has thus elaborated on the choice of research design with the final selection on the case study design.

4.4. The theoretical framework

The theoretical framework in this study is systems analysis. Systems theories are discussed at length in the preceding chapter of this thesis where systems were contextualised in relation to the analysis of systems, which is a crucial concept in this study. This research referred to various concepts used in understanding systems and relied chiefly on the meanings of some concepts of family therapy in order to understand how systems functioned within the field instruction process. The field instruction system as a unit of analysis is not dissimilar to a system such as a family. While each has peculiarities, the field instruction system is made up of members of a system with subsystems characterised by concepts like feedback and feedback loops, homeostasis, subsystems, and self-organisation (Holden et al., 2011). As argued by Robards and Gillespie (2000) systems theory is deeply enshrined in social work curricula and practice.

Systems thinkers focus on concepts like homeostasis or the system’s ability to develop recurrent patterns or interaction that help to maintain stability, particularly when faced with stressful situations (Dallos & Draper, 2000). Systems thinkers also understand the function of subsystems and the replication of patterns across subsystems of larger systems, and of equifinality where different interventions may have the same impact with similar developmental outcomes despite different intervention techniques introduced (Carr, 2012).

The field instruction system is mostly a process of learning, of implementation of theoretical knowledge in practice during which course various members of the educational team function with different intentions, yet ultimately striving to contribute to the student’s professional development (Auslander & Rosenne, 2016). This system is also seen as a unit of analysis due to its composition and the individual contribution by each member of the unit. Additionally, it can be argued that the functioning of each member of the unit may be analysed in terms of systems concepts in attempting to understand issues like a relationship, functioning and handling of adverse conditions.

Understanding the concept of field instruction from the perspective of a systems analyst was key to this study. Drawing from the varied literature on systems theory, I was able to identify six key constructs that were used in the analysis phases of this study. First, I examined factors within field instruction systems related to the presence of interrelated elements, roles and relationships.
Thereafter, I examined the participants’ views of the environment or the context in which field instruction systems were situated, focusing on aspects like hierarchies and boundaries. The third area of focus was the goal-seeking behaviour typical of systems, and I examined the singleness of focus of field instruction systems and the ability of its members to adapt to changes. The fourth aspect was field instruction systems being seen as dynamic and their ability to grow despite system entropy. Fifth and as this study was a multi-case study (Stake, 2006), I examined field instruction systems as being made up of subsystems with the whole being greater than the sum of its parts. The sixth and final aspect that I examined was the communication patterns within members of the system and how this contributed to the functioning of the field instruction programme. These six elements formed the basis of the analysis across the three cases in Chapter 6 of this research.

4.5. Population and sampling

This section discusses the population of field instruction systems in South Africa and describes the process that I followed in identifying the population with a view to obtaining a suitable sample. This is followed by a detailed description of the process of obtaining a volunteer sample of field instruction systems across sixteen field instruction sites in South Africa, purposively selecting three cases. Thereafter, in this section, I describe the population of people and documents and discuss the procedure followed in obtaining the sample of people and documents in this study.

4.5.1. Population of field instruction systems

The population in most data collection processes is argued as the totality of persons, organisations and events within which the research problem is concerned (Dunn, 2010). In this study, the population was the total number of field instruction systems in social work education in South Africa.
The field instruction systems are embedded in the BSW that are offered at 16 of the 27 public universities in South Africa as indicated in Figure 4.1 above (CHE, 2018, p. 33). Therefore, the population is the field instruction systems at each of the 16 public universities.

Of the now 16 universities from the total population, 13 offered field instruction from the host university campus, while at least three universities have more than one campus offering BSW instruction. By means of illustration of the latter, North-West University (NWU) has three campuses offering BSW, each situated in demographically and geographically diverse localities, the University of Fort Hare (UFH) offers the BSW at two diverse campuses situated in different geographical regions, and the University of South Africa (UNISA) as the country’s only distance-learning university has a number of BSW field instruction systems at its many mini campuses throughout South Africa (Osman & Petersen, 2013).
However, for the reasons alluded to below, I was not able to regard all 16 universities as suitable for this study. It was important to set criteria to identify the population for clarity and transparency on who or what was to be included and excluded from the population (Horn, 2012).

The first criterion was that the university offers the BSW as part of an on-site means of instruction. To clarify this point, there are two means of tuition offered within the target population, namely on-site or residential education and distance-learning education. Fifteen of the universities offer the BSW degrees on-site in residential education, and one university offers the BSW via a distance-learning tuition system (Osman & Petersen, 2013). As the criterion was that the BSW be offered on-site, the BSW offered at the distance learning university (UNISA) was excluded, thereby reducing the population to 15.

The second exclusion criterion related to my association with one of the universities that formed part of the population of 15. As will be later explained in this chapter, I am in the employ of the University of Johannesburg as a lecturer and teach field instruction modules. On this basis and to eliminate any risk of researcher bias, I opted to exclude the University of Johannesburg from the population, thereby further reducing the population to 14 universities (refer to Table 4.1 below).

Table 4.1. BSW programmes forming the population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Overview of the FIS within the BSW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Nelson Mandela University (NMU)</td>
<td>Main campus is in Port Elizabeth in Eastern Cape Province. Students are placed throughout the Nelson Mandela Metro which includes areas like Port Elizabeth and Uitenhage. Placements are in previously disadvantaged areas, urban and semi-urban.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 North West University (NWU)</td>
<td>Three campuses, namely main campus at Potchefstroom, with a major campus at Mafikeng (both in North West Province) and a campus at Vaal in Gauteng. The three campuses differ in their placement demographics. All campuses are based in urbanised environments, although students are placed in semi-urban and rural contexts, as well. Of note is that the Mafikeng campus was known as a previously-disadvantaged university.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 University of Cape Town (UCT)</td>
<td>Situated in Cape Town in Western Cape province. Students are placed in mostly urban and semi-urban environments due to the university’s location.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 University of Fort Hare (UFH)</td>
<td>Situated in the Eastern Cape Province with two campuses, namely in East London and Alice. East London campus is situated in the city centre, whereas the Alice campus is situated in a semi-rural environment. Of note is that this university is known as previously-disadvantaged.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 University of the Free State (UFS)</td>
<td>Situated in Bloemfontein in Free State Province. Students are placed in mostly urbanised environments due to the university’s location.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN)</td>
<td>Situated at the Howard College campus in Durban in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. Students are placed in urban and semi-urban environments due to the university’s location.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 University of Limpopo (UL)</td>
<td>Situated in Polokwane, Limpopo Province. Placements are in a mixture of semi-urban and rural environments. Of note is that this university is known as a previously-disadvantaged.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 University of Pretoria (UP)</td>
<td>Situated in Pretoria, Gauteng. Students are placed in mostly urbanised environments due to the university’s location.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Stellenbosch University (SUN)</td>
<td>Situated in Stellenbosch in the Western Cape province. Students are placed in mostly urban and semi-rural environments due to the university’s location.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Population Overview of the FIS within the BSW

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>University of Venda (UniVen)</th>
<th>Situated in Thohoyandou in Limpopo province. Students are placed in mostly semi-rural and rural environments. Of note is that this university is known as previously-disadvantaged.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>University of the Western Cape (UWC)</td>
<td>Based in Cape Town area in Western Cape province. Students are placed in mostly urbanised environments due to the university’s location.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>University of the Witwatersrand (Wits)</td>
<td>Situated in Johannesburg, Gauteng province. Students are placed in mostly urbanised environments due to the university’s location.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>University of Zululand (UniZulu)</td>
<td>Situated in Zululand, northern part of Kwa Zulu/Natal province. Students are placed in mostly semi-rural and rural environments. Of note is that this university is known as previously-disadvantaged.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Walter Sisulu University (WSU)</td>
<td>Situated in Umtata in the Eastern Cape province. Students are placed in mostly semi-rural and rural environments. Of note is that this university is known as previously-disadvantaged.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During 2013, at the time of conceptualising the study, all 16 BSW programmes were undergoing a national review by the Council on Higher Education for the reaccreditation of BSW programmes (CHE, 2016). I mention this here as the results of the audit, which were only released in 2015, led to the subsequent development of further exclusion criteria which are discussed later in this chapter.

It is also essential at this juncture to define the unit of analysis in this study. A unit of analysis, according to Bless et al. (2013), refers to the person or groups of persons from which data is collected and about which conclusions may be drawn. This is generally selected at the onset of the research or the problem identification stage (Fouché & De Vos, 2015) and may comprise groups, individuals, communities, organisations and even ordinary objects (Monette, Sullivan, & DeJong, 2011). Based on these factors, the unit of analysis in this study was the field instruction system (FIS) embedded in the BSW field instruction programmes located within the now 14 universities that comprised the population of the study (refer to Table 4.1). The field instruction system for this study, therefore, comprised individuals and groups of persons, more specifically practice educators, social work students, student supervisors, agency representatives and alumni from the BSW within the 14 universities that formed the population.

### 4.5.2. Sampling of field instruction systems

Once the population was identified, the next step was to identify a suitable sample of FIS that would be used in the research. The process of sampling involved the selection of FIS from the 14 universities that formed the population for this study. It was also important that the sample is derived from the population (Creswell, 2012), and be based on criteria that included similarities in characteristics or behaviours that were from similar settings within the population (TerreBlanche et al., 2006). I followed a two-stage process of first obtaining a volunteer sample which formed the sampling frame.
and then using purposive sampling (a non-probability sampling technique) to select the final sample of three cases.

4.5.2.1. Volunteer sampling of field instruction systems

At the outset of the research, it was important to compile a sampling frame, which is also referred to as the operational definition of the population (Horn, 2012) as it was a list of the units in the population from which a sample could be drawn (Bless et al., 2013). To do this I followed a process of obtaining a volunteer sample by inviting members of the population to participate in the study. A volunteer sample, according to Monette et al. (2011), is a non-probability sampling method that relies on data from members of the population who were willing to participate in the study.

Invitations to participate in this research were forwarded to all 14 BSW universities that formed the population (Appendix 2). Responses were received from nine of the 14 universities in the population, with responses from individual campuses also volunteering to participate. However, a decision then was made as to whether to select the nine universities inclusive of its many campuses as the volunteer sample or to accept the response from the individual campuses that would then comprise 12 field instruction sites forming the volunteer sample. After deliberations with my supervisor on this issue, it was decided to accept the 12 field instruction sites as the volunteer sample, as this would provide access and opportunity to diversify the sample. This, then formed the sampling frame as it provided the maximum number of possible field instruction systems that could be accessed during the data collection process. For reasons related to research ethics, the names of the volunteer sample listed on the sampling frame cannot be divulged.

The next part of the process of identifying the sample was the development of purposive sampling criteria to select three cases that would form the actual sample in this research.

4.5.2.2. Purposive sampling of three cases

Purposive sampling was used to obtain a sample of field instruction systems that were most characteristic (Strydom, 2015) and, therefore, purposively selected cases that were typical (Maxwell, 2013) and captured the heterogeneity of the BSW population (Creswell, 2012). In addition, a paradigmatic case sampling method (Flyvbjerg, 2011) was used to highlight more general characteristics derived from exploring the population at large.

Table 4.2 below contains a list of the 12 field instruction systems that formed the volunteer sample on the sampling frame. Table 4.2 also contains the criteria used to obtain a purposive sample in the
selection of the three cases to be studied in this research. In order to anonymise the field instruction sites, I used the code Case alphabet. The sites are presented in the order that they were received.

Table 4.2. Sampling frame

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sampling criteria</th>
<th>Case _A</th>
<th>Case _B</th>
<th>Case _C</th>
<th>Case _D</th>
<th>Case _E</th>
<th>Case _F</th>
<th>Case _G</th>
<th>Case _H</th>
<th>Case _I</th>
<th>Case _J</th>
<th>Case _K</th>
<th>Case _L</th>
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<tr>
<td>Model of placement</td>
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<td>Concurrent</td>
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<td>Geographical factors</td>
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<td>Urban</td>
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<td>Mostly rural/semi-rural</td>
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<td>Previously disadvantaged university</td>
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<tr>
<td>Access to participants and documents</td>
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<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>restri cted</td>
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<td>CHE accreditation (2013)</td>
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</table>

Table 4.2 reflects the 12 field instruction sites that formed the volunteer sample. Each of these sites met the preliminary criteria of the population in that all were located within the BSW programmes in South Africa and excluded the distance-learning university, as well as my employing university.

The next step was to develop specific sampling criteria to purposively select the most suitable sample. Two sets of criteria were developed. The first was preliminary sampling criteria which examined the underlying conditions and included the model of placement, geographical location of the site, access to all participants and to specific documents related to the field instruction programme.

Model of placement. The type of placement referred to whether a block, modified block or concurrent model was followed. In the initial information received, only one field instruction site indicated that it followed a modified block placement. However, this information was subsequently
withdrawn as it was found to follow a pure block placement model. Thus, there were just two models of placement, namely the block and concurrent. In order to obtain a diverse sample, it was essential to get at least one case from each of the models. As indicated in Table 4.2, six cases supported a block model (namely Cases B, C, E, G, H and I) and six cases that followed a concurrent model of placement (namely Cases A, D, F, J, K, and L). None of the cases supported a modified block or any other model of placement for field instruction.

One of the factors that was considered was the time period that the model was in operation. It was preferable that the model being used should have been in operation for at least one academic year at the time of the final data collection process for this study. Case A (Table 4.2) had only just adopted the concurrent model of field instruction, and this would, therefore, not have provided potential participants with sufficient experience in that model. The models practised in the other cases on the sampling frame had been in operation for more than a calendar year at the time of the final data collection phase. On this basis, Case A was excluded from the sample.

**Geographical factors.** The geographical factors refer to the location of the university as universities offering the BSW had sites located in urban and rural areas. Five field instruction sites were located in predominantly rural areas, namely University of Fort Hare-Alice campus, University of Limpopo, University of Venda, Walter Sisulu University and the University of Zululand. One field instruction site was located in a semi-urban area, namely the North-West University-Mafikeng campus. Notwithstanding the location of the campus, universities in urban areas, for example, do place students in rural and semi-urban areas.

Two universities from the population of 14 had more than one campus where the BSW was offered, leading the researcher to opt to use the field instruction sites and not the university as a case. Given the varied terrain in South Africa, it was essential to select cases from field instruction sites that offered a diversity of geographical locations, namely being urban, semi-urban, semi-rural or rural. As indicated in Table 4.2, of the remaining 11 cases, Cases C, G, J, K, and L were mainly based in urban environments where students were likely to have accessible placements and resources. Cases B, D, and E were situated in areas that were mostly urban yet had pockets of semi-rural communities. Cases F, H and I were situated in mostly rural environments, where access to placements and resources were known to be limited.

As there was more than one field instruction site within each category of this criterion, it was decided to explore which universities were recognised as being previously disadvantaged as a sub-criterion. South Africa has what is known as ‘previously disadvantaged’ universities, recognised by its
geographical locations, as well as other factors during the apartheid era. Combining the details contained in Tables 4.1 and 4.2, it was found that Cases B, F, H and I fell within this sub-criterion.

**Access to participants and documents.** It was essential to select cases that could provide access to all of the participants (which included the practice educator, fourth-year BSW students registered in the field instruction module at the university, student supervisors, agency representatives and BSW alumni), as well as access to documents (including the BSW field instruction policy and the fourth-year learning guide on field instruction). Cases D, K and L were unable to provide access to all participants and only limited access to documentation. As indicated later in this section, Cases D and K were only found to be unsuitable once the initial rounds of contact with the sites were conducted. These three cases were excluded from the study, reducing the number of potential cases to eight. However, it is also noted that not all universities had policies on how their field instruction programmes operated, and it was decided to instead focus on access to at least the fourth-year field instruction learning guide as the foremost source document.

During this purposive sampling process, it was also important to examine other criteria, like that related to the CHE accreditation and the staffing component.

**CHE accreditation.** As indicated earlier, all BSW programmes underwent a reaccreditation process in 2013 (CHE, 2016). The results of this process indicated that some of the BSW programmes lost their accreditation and had to design a new BSW programme. This implied that such BSW programmes were found to be not suitable at the time to continue with the BSW offering. It was also noted that some of the BSW programmes that were not reaccredited were in the process of remedying the situation. On the basis of the accreditation by CHE (2016), Cases H and I were excluded from the sample, reducing the sample to six.

**Staffing component.** It was decided to add this criterion of the staffing component, as some universities followed a process where the staff structure included staff who were dually responsible for teaching in the field instruction programme as practice lecturers, as well as for supervising student placements. Only one case (Case J) had alluded to this in the preliminary analysis, while others later were found to follow a comparable but not the same structure to Case J. Case J was, therefore, considered to be suitable for the final sample from the uniqueness of its staffing component.

**Final selection of three cases.** Based on suggestions by Maxwell (2013) and Creswell (2012), I selected the final sample using the purposive sampling technique. Based on all of the factors above, the final selection of three cases had to emanate from cases B, C, E, F, G and J. Notably cases B and F had met the criteria of being both previously disadvantaged and situated in either a mostly semi-
urban or rural environments and were, therefore, considered relevant to this study. Cases C, E, G and J were all situated in mostly urban environments with seemingly similar programmes; however, Case J had the advantage of a unique staffing structure. Of the four remaining, it was, therefore, decided to opt for Case J.

As indicated in Table 4.2, and the process alluded to in the purposive sampling process, it was important to have a balance of cases based on relevance, diversity and heterogeneity, thereby supporting a non-probability sampling technique. According to Bless et al. (2013), a non-probability sampling technique supports inclusion in a sample based on range and diversity of cases, as the probability of each unit of the population being included in the study is not known until the sampling criteria were applied. Therefore, the final three cases to be part of the research, selected during the purposive sampling process and using a non-probability sampling technique, were Case B, Case F and Case J. These cases will be, hereafter, identified numerically as Case 1, Case 2 and Case 3 respectively.

4.5.3. Population and sampling of people and documents

It was important to identify the population of people and documents within each field instruction system to provide in-depth and rich information on the descriptions of, and factors that contribute to or impede the field instruction system.

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 4.2. Maximum variation sampling**

A Systems Analysis of Field Instruction in Social Work Education
As indicated in Figure 4.2, two overarching factors comprise the research sample, namely people and documentary data. I will now describe and discuss the population and sampling of people, followed by the population and sampling of documentary data.

4.5.3.1. Population and sampling of people

The population of people within field instruction systems comprise practice educators, student supervisors, students, and placement agencies. Within the placement agencies, it is common practice for a designated person from the agency to liaise with the university, and in that sense would be deemed the agency representative. In addition to these members of the population of people, it was essential to recognise the voices of recent graduates whose knowledge and experience of the field instruction programme was valuable. Collectively, these five groups would be broadly defined as the population of people in this study, based on their roles within field instruction systems.

Each group of people was clustered as a sub-group and are identified by their roles. The five sub-groups of the population in this study are practice educators, fourth-year social work students, student supervisors, representatives from the agency, and alumni, as indicated under participants in Figure 4.2. These sub-groups are described as follows:

a. **Practice educators.** This term includes university lecturers and placement personnel in the employ of the university who are directly involved in the field instruction programme at the fourth-year level. Included in this group was the field instruction coordinator, as well as the field placement liaison. While some field instruction programmes had separate field instruction coordinators and field placement liaisons, these persons were sometimes allocated teaching tasks within the field instruction programme. Therefore, persons designated as lecturers, placement officers and practice educators involved in any aspect of the implementation of the field instruction programme were included under “practice educator”.

b. **Fourth-year social work students.** Fourth-year social work students forming part of the study had to be undertaking field instruction as a module or as a means of field education practice. This level of student was selected as at this stage, he/she would already have experienced a high level of field engagement in micro, meso and macro work, as well as being emotionally and intellectually mature. Royse et al. (2012, p. 25) argue that such students have achieved “a balance between self-directed activity and knowledge about the limitations of their competence”.

c. **Student supervisors.** In this sub-group, each student should be allocated a supervisor who is a registered social worker (SACSSP, 2006), who provides direction and guidance to the
student on day to day professional activities (Humphrey, 2011). Within this category were persons designated as field supervisors, field instructors, fieldwork supervisors and agency supervisors.

d. Agency representative. This category referred to a representative of the placement agency. An agency representative included the agency manager, the agency contact person, and the agency-based or on-site supervisor. On-site supervisors who were employed at the student’s placement organisation were seen as representatives of the employing organisation.

e. Alumni. Alumni refer to recent graduates of that school’s field instruction programme. This category of the sample was important as they were seen as able to reflect on the FIS from an external perspective as they had since completed the BSW programme.

Having identified and categorised the sub-population of people, I then identified persons who would form part of the availability sample, based on generally known numbers of the sub-population at field instruction sites. Details of the participants, categorised into groups of practice educators, fourth-year students, student supervisors, agency representatives and alumni, were obtained from the gatekeepers. From common knowledge of each of the cases, there appears to be on average one to two persons per field instruction programme whom this research labelled as practice educators, an average of 90 fourth-year students per programme, an estimate of 60 supervisors per programme, at least 40 placement agencies per programme and an average of 80 alumni each year. As it was not possible to interview all of the members in each category, and as this was a qualitative study, it was necessary to restrict the numbers of the categories of the sample. Thus, it was deemed appropriate to interview up to three practice educators, five fourth-year students, three student supervisors, one to three agency representatives and five recent alumni per field instruction site.

a. Practice educators. The number of practice educators per field instruction site was limited, with mostly a single person tasked with the coordination of the field instruction module and placements. Thus at least one practice lecturer at each site formed part of the sample.

b. Students. The number of fourth-year students in each field instruction programme varied. In this study, I opted to sample up to five students per field instruction site. These students should have completed at least half of the academic year, thereby having gained suitable and sufficient experience of the field instruction module.

c. Student supervisors. In sampling student supervisors, this group of persons must be rendering supervision to fourth students. I noted that not all student supervisors were stationed at the placement agencies as some student supervisors were contracted by the university to provide on-site supervision. Included in this sample were university-based supervisors who were also tasked with student supervision. Ideally, the supervisors in this
population should have been supervisors of the student interviewed in this study and up to three student supervisors per field instruction site were identified.

d. Agency representatives. The number of agency representatives per field instruction system was not defined due to the limited availability or access to such persons. Thus student supervisors who were based at the placement agency were included in this sample. Up to three further agency representatives were included in this sample.

e. Alumni. Contact details of graduates of each field instruction programme were not always easily obtainable. Therefore, a sample of up to five alumni was sought.

In order to negotiate entry and recruit the sample, it was imperative to follow all protocols within each host institution, particularly as the research would involve views on the universities’ field instruction programmes. Therefore, the first point of call to access the sample was through the research office of the host institution as institutional permission was required. Concurrently, the permission of relevant Heads of Department of the BSW programme was sought. Thereafter, the participation of field instruction coordinators was pursued. All these personnel were deemed to be formal gatekeepers and the official support and approval for the research. The gatekeeper has the designated authority to provide access or approval to the participants (Fouché & Schurink, 2015; Maxwell, 2013). Such encounters were viewed by Seidman (2006) and Maxwell (2013) as the beginning of the interactive relationship between the researcher, the case under study and each of the participants.

Access to participants was met with varied responses from the field instruction gatekeepers. While some cases provided access to fewer than the requested number of participants, there were limitations regarding access to documents and personnel. Cases 1 and 2 provided restricted access to participants due to the distance of placements and the schedule and unavailability of students on either the site of the campus or the agency. Through a concerted effort, I was, however, able to visit some students, student supervisors and agencies who were at a distance from the actual campus, and in one case up to 400km away from the campus. In this way, the study was able to address matters of sufficiency of the participants (Maxwell, 2013), as well as saturation or adequate numbers of participants so that all relevant information could be collected (Davern et al., 2017; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

4.5.3.2. Population and sampling of documentary data

The second set of the population and sample relates to documentary data. In addition to interviews with the sample of people, it was important to peruse documentary sources of data (Strydom & Delport, 2015) as these provided a background to the field instruction programme, set out the
requirements of the field instruction processes and provided pedagogic guidance to students. Three sets of documents were seen as documentary data, namely the purposive sampling appendix that was completed by universities (Appendix 3), the field instruction policy of the BSW programme at the university, and the fourth-year field instruction learning guide, otherwise known as the field instruction manual.

The first document, namely the purposive sampling questionnaire, contained necessary details of the university programme and served as a filter for selecting the cases to be studied in this research. The second document, namely the field instruction policies contained valuable information on the field instruction systems across the four years of the BSW study, detailing the policy of that field instruction system in relation to the requirements of the BSW. The field instruction policies also were a source of information of the BSW field instruction programme in the years preceding the fourth-year programme. Of note, however, is that at this juncture the field instruction policies and manuals from the respective universities were based on the existing 27 BSW ELO outcomes and not on the Qualification Standards for the BSW (CHE, 2015) as the Qualification Standard for the BSW was not implemented at the time by the respective universities. Another point of note is that not all of the cases had a field instruction policy or manual in place, and this resulted in a gap in the information that I sought on the BSW field instruction programme, particularly in Case 1 of this research. The third document in this section was the fourth-year field instruction programme which contained guidelines and requirements on aspects like student placements, student supervision, assessment procedures, as well as ethical and conduct issues.

In sampling the documentary data, I commenced with the purposive sampling appendix which contained brief information on each field instruction programme. This was obtained at the stage of initial data collection and formed part of the volunteer sample. Information in this document included the geographical location of the field instruction site, the model of field placement and information regarding the management of supervision at the field instruction site. The second document – the field instruction policy – was not easily accessible. Only case three had a field instruction policy document in place. This document was useful as it provided a context and background to the field instruction programme across all the years of the BSW. The final document of relevance was the field instruction learning guide for the fourth-year programme. This document was available in each of the three cases and contained valuable information on the requirements that students should meet in the programme itself.

In concluding this section, the sampling of people and documents were regarded as using multiple sources of data (Greef, 2015; Maxwell, 2013; Rule & John, 2011). Multiple sources of data in this
study supported the triangulation of the data (Maxwell, 2013) thereby providing credibility to the conclusions of the study. Triangulation is discussed later in this chapter.

4.6. Data collection

This section describes the method of data collection and data collection instruments used in the research.

4.6.1. Data collection method

Rule and John (2011) suggest that at least two data collection methods be employed in case study research and could be derived from multiple methods within a single case. Therefore, in each case, the data collection methods included single-person interviews, group interviews and the collection of documents. In addition, mapping or visual representations from interviews were used.

In setting up the interviews, arrangements were made through the gatekeeper in each field instruction programme. The gatekeeper in each of the cases was the practice educator responsible for the fourth-year field instruction module. In Cases 1 and 2, access to the participants was solely at the discretion of the gatekeepers. Similarly, in both cases, arrangements for either single-person interviews or group interviews were made mostly by the practice educator except for one student, student supervisor and agency were arranged. In Case 3, the practice educator provided a list of students, alumni and supervisors as potential participants and this allowed the participants to be interviewed randomly. Participants were contacted either directly by me or by the practice educator, and participants had a choice of being part of a single-person interview or part of a group interview.

For the interviews held on the campus site, I was provided with either an office or boardroom facility where available. All interviews with supervisors and agency representatives were held in an office at the respective placement agency.

Interviews were scheduled for between 60-90 minutes each to allow sufficient time for depth of discussion. However, there were two shorter single-person interviews; one due to the participant’s time constraints due to own work schedule, and another, despite all attempts at using probing questions to elicit detailed data, was mostly mono-syllabic in responses. There was no need for follow-up interviews as the time was sufficient to generate the data from the participants. All participants consented to the audio recording process and the transcription of their interviews.

Participants were free to decide whether to be interviewed individually or in a group interview. This was crucial to support the requirement of voluntary participation where participants could not only
elect to participate but also had the choice of being interviewed individually or in a group. Some of the factors that influence this choice were the geographical location, preference and availability of the participant.

**One-on-one interviews.** One of the means of interviewing participants for this study was in the form of one-on-one interviews (Monette et al., 2011). Although these individual interviews were used when the required data was of a “specific, detailed and individual perspective” and can be time-consuming (Horn, 2012, p. 122), one-on-one interviews allowed for participants to opt out of group discussions. This was evident in Case 3 where one participant preferred not to join the group interview, but waited until the group interview was over for a one-on-one interview. In Case 2, I had to move a participant out of a group interview as there were confidential matters raised which I realised could have the potential to be detrimental to the existing supervisor-supervisee relationship. There were 21 one-on-one interviews across the three cases in this study and these are indicated in Table 4.3.

**Group interviews.** This study also used group interviews to elicit information. Group interviews allowed for groups of homogenous participants where possible to contribute and share their views and experiences in the presence of other members and in a non-threatening space (Bless et al., 2013; Monette et al., 2011). There were three sets of heterogeneous group interviews, mainly at the request of the participants at that interview site. This was accepted on the basis that members could elect to leave the interview if they were not comfortable and consequently be interviewed separately. The number of members in the group interview once again depended on preference and availability of the members. While it was envisaged that each group interview would have up to six persons, there was one group interview with eight homogenous participants. There were 16 group interviews held across the three cases in this study.

As the My role in the group facilitator interviews, supporting all participants, particularly those who would not speak openly unless they were comfortable with the group interaction, as well as to allow all participants an equal opportunity to respond or to express themselves. Group interaction prompted discussions and varying viewpoints and debates on the questions posed (Maxwell, 2013). Group interaction was also helpful as it provided a range of ideas and responses to particular topics or questions, provided new information, as well as substantiated information that was already received in the one-on-one interviews. I personally conducted all interviews. During the process of the individual and group interviews, it was important that all skills befitting to the researcher as an interviewer and as a facilitator came to the fore, particularly as the interviews could become intense, involved and last for a long time if not checked. This, according to Greef (2015), is because the
The interview itself goes through an unwritten series of stages commencing with making the participant to feel comfortable and sufficiently at ease in order to disclose relevant information as part of the research.

One of the challenges experienced in the group interviews was the tendency of a few members to refer to a preceding speaker and say “Ja, what s/he says” (pointing to the previous speaker) without elaborating further. Another challenge was that some members were not audible sufficiently for the transcriber to capture every word of what was said. In addition, in Case 1, the agency representative and the student supervisors requested to be interviewed together as a heterogeneous group, whilst in Case 2, the student supervisor requested that the student be a part of the interview, but asked that the student be excused when specific information was discussed. On the whole, most groups were homogenous, but the combination of categories of people resulted in having three heterogeneous groups. Heterogeneous groups were not ideal, and I had to be alert as to the possibility of scarcity of information from both categories of the sample, particularly if disclosure of information was not forthcoming. This was overcome by both the skilful use of interviewing techniques, together with the warmth and ease of communication that prevailed.

The group discussions were mostly positive as it allowed for group participation, debates, new ideas to be shared, and provided a broader insight into the discussion than what would have been obtained from a one-on-one interview. The group interviews also required that the researcher be skilled in multi-tasking by providing each member with an equal opportunity to be a part of the discussion, monitoring proper use of time, and gatekeeping to ensure that the discussions were full, relevant, aligned to the questions in the interview schedule and that the discussion was not derailed unnecessarily.

To this end, the statement of two participants, one from a single person interview and one from a group interview reflected that the discussion provided an opportunity to debrief after a long year of field instruction.

*I think I found it interesting. This actually got me thinking about our situation, which I’ve never done before. It’s always been like – oh its supervision time and now we go out, we come back from internship, but now that I’m talking to you I’m beginning to see the gaps- wow what am I doing? [Case1_StSup5_D4_L55]*

*I think that this was a good chance for us to reflect on our internship. We really didn’t have this chance to do this before today. [Case1_A14_D2_L221]*
It appears that there is little opportunity for students to meet as a collective or as a subset to share with each other the strengths, weaknesses and experiences in the fourth year and this research met that gap.

4.6.2. Data collection instruments

It was important to select appropriate data collection instruments or tools for the study. This study opted for the use of semi-structured interviews with pre-set semi-structured interview questions, as well as questions that flowed from the interview. Seidman (2006, p. 10) argued that semi-structured interviews were ideal in investigating what he referred to as ‘social abstractions’ like education (or in this instance field instruction systems) as it elicits information on the experiences of individuals from where perceptions of such abstractions are built. Thus, in line with the qualitative approach of this study, semi-structured interview schedules were developed (Greef, 2015) in the form of pre-determined questions written to guide the interview.

The types of questions that were developed were aligned with the theoretical stance of the study. These questions featured a strong alignment to systems thinking in order to elicit the experiences of participants in their respective field instruction systems. The questions are also aligned with the aim and objectives of the study, as well as to the research questions relating to the participants’ experiences of the field instruction programme.

Detailed and multiple interview schedules (Mouton, 2006) were developed that were specific to the role and context of the participants in the field instruction system (Appendix 4). The multiple interview schedules went through a series of refinement after each round of piloting was conducted. At this point, it would be prudent to add that the refinement of the multiple interview schedules was also enhanced during the process of preparing the data as I had the opportunity while listening to the initial round of interviews to reflect on the questions.

Biographical data was obtained by the use of Participant Consent Forms. During the supervision process, it was realised that the collection of demographics pertaining to race, gender and age bore little relevance to the study and would be excluded. Regarding the interview schedule, I attempted to gain information about the field instruction experience in the second- and third-year. This question was, therefore, put to students and alumni. Thereafter, questions focused specifically on their experiences of the fourth-year field instruction programme pertaining to placements, supervision, involvement of the key educational partners and suggestions from students and alumni on enhancing the field instruction experience. Questions to supervisors and agency representatives were more specific to relationships between the university and the agency and supervisor, communication...
matters and experiences of supervision. Questions to the practice educators were focused on student enrolment, the management of the field instruction process, sourcing of placements, monitoring of student placements and management of the supervision process and overall coordination of the field instruction programme.

The interview schedules were used as a guide to inform the discussion and to ensure that all relevant and necessary information was covered. Flexibility was essential in the way the interviews were conducted and developed to allow for diverse views and debates. The group interview guide was developed parallel to the interview schedule and focused on putting forward the questions conversational manner, with clearly articulated language so that it was interpreted in the same manner by all members in the group (Greef, 2015).

Participants were afforded the opportunity to express themselves via the use of visual presentations, otherwise referred to as mapping and drawing (Rule & John, 2011; Tetnowski, 2015). This option was explored in supervision and it was agreed that mapping or drawing would provide opportunities for participants to express themselves differently and possibly more clearly. Rule and John (2011) viewed drawings as a means of creative expression for participants, particularly if they had limited language skills, or if they had a preference to reflect on the discussion creatively. Likewise, visual presentations by the participants also provided for creative space (Stake, 1995; Tetnowski, 2015) as participants felt free to depict their views of the field instruction system as they saw it.

All participants were provided with a blank A3 sheet of white paper and several colours of felt-tipped pens that they could use to depict, draw or map out their view of the context. Participants were advised that this was not to be viewed as a doodling exercise, but preferably as a way of depicting whom they saw as members of the educational team, as well as other characteristics of field instruction systems. Participants were free to map out, list, draw, write or communicate in any relevant manner they wished to answer any of the questions.

It was observed that while the possibility of language challenges could not be ignored, some participants preferred to start with the visual depictions and mind maps and thereafter, sought to verbalise their points and explain their drawings in the interview. Participants found this to be especially useful when depicting lists, groups and hierarchies of the persons whom they felt played a role in field instruction systems. Interestingly, many participants embraced this exercise with enthusiasm, using a combination of text and drawing to depict their perspectives. However, two participants chose not to use visual presentations, and this was respected. Also, in two of the group interviews, participants delegated the visual presentation to one participant while the others
contributed to the diagram being depicted. This was not ideal as the participant designated to illustrate the conversation was sometimes left out of the discussion but was later drawn into the discussion by the facilitator.

4.7. Pilot interviews

Greef (2015, p. 370) regards the use of pilot interviews as one of the “cardinal rule(s) of research” implying that all questions, questionnaires and interview schedules used in research be tested before used in the final study. The questions in this study were developed through a series of pilot testing and revisions. The first step in this process was the tentative schedule of questions that was presented for approval to the ethics committee of the university. Thereafter, a detailed multiple interview schedule was presented to my research supervisor for approval.

The third step was the piloting of the multiple interview schedules. The interview schedules were initially piloted with my colleagues (lecturers and student supervisors) and alumni, none of whom formed part of the study itself. This allowed me to rephrase the questions where necessary. This step was aligned with suggestions by Delport and Roestenburg (2015) that newly constructed data collection instruments in their semi-final form be subject to testing before use in the primary investigation.

I then proceeded to conduct my research at two FISs which I had identified early in the research as being suitable cases. After having completed a series of one-on-one interviews and group interviews with students, alumni, supervisors and lecturers at these two FISs, I realised that these two sites did not prove fruitful as I was unable to access all participants and documents. However, I then used this process to enrich my questions and further amend the interview questions. In this way, the research questions were piloted amongst three sets of unrelated field instruction sites. In addition, my supervisor also had the opportunity of providing input into the piloting of the questions and the collection of the data early in the data collection process and provided guidance on changes to be made where appropriate.

I needed a process of recording the data. I obtained a good quality digital recorder but admittedly was initially not familiar with the device. At the end of the first full day of data collection, I realised that I did not check the batteries of the recording device and realised only midway through one interview that the device stopped recording. Fortunately, I had the voice-note feature on the mobile cellular telephone as a back-up. This experience was educational in that I then developed a habit of regularly
checking the recording equipment, having an extra set of batteries on hand, and having a backup recording system available.

The above activities provided for errors in the interview process and in the schedule to be rectified. It also provided for ambiguous questions to be less vague and more direct and avoidance of leading questions. All of these achieved the objectives of pilot testing, which were to improve the interview schedule, as well as to estimate the length of the interview (Delport & Roestenburg, 2015). Therefore, the pilot interviews allowed a refinement of the questions in line with the study objectives, as well provided enlightenment on the responses before implementation.

The pilot interviews also revealed one interesting change that needed to be made to the group interviews process. It was found that in the pilot group interviews, the drawing and mapping exercise was delegated by members to one member while the rest of the group continued with the discussion. I found this to create a state of unfairness as it put a sense of pressure on the member who was compiling the list of role players and their relationships. This also deterred the said member from actively participating in the discussions. In subsequent interviews, I allowed a 10-minute pause at a point in the discussions to afford all members the opportunity to reflect together and use this exercise in a productive and meaningful manner. The pilot testing process also made me realise and accept that some participants would not embrace the use of visual presentations.

4.8. Data analysis

The preceding sections in this Chapter typified the filling in of the case in case study research (Bassey, 1999; Rule & John, 2011). In this section, I describe the steps used in the analysis of the data. Data analysis involved a process of organising and interpreting raw data to create an understanding of and draw conclusions that reflect the interests, ideas and theories that initiated the inquiry into field instruction systems (Babbie, 2014; TerreBlanche et al., 2006). Typically in case study research, suitable and comprehensive strategies are sought to facilitate a well-managed process of data analysis.

A palette of strategies for data analysis was located in the literature; however, not all were suitable to multi-case study research. I, therefore, explored strategies from case study experts like Rule and John (2011), Yin (2003) and Stake (2006), as well as qualitative experts like Maxwell (2013) and Schurink, Fouché, and de Vos (2015). Their suggestions were synthesised and adapted to suit the needs of this study and are the five steps that I followed in the data analysis process. First was preparing the data (Rule & John, 2011); second, managing the data (Maxwell, 2013); third, working within individual cases and uploading documents (Maxwell, 2013; Smit, 2005; Stake, 1995); fourthly, working within
individual cases in reducing the data (Schurink et al., 2015; Yin, 2003); and finally, the process followed when working across the three cases (Rule & John, 2011; Stake, 2006; Yin, 2003). While all these steps are detailed in this section, steps four and five are expounded in Chapters 5 and 6 respectively when the analysis of the actual data is presented.

**Figure 4.3. Steps followed in analysing the data**

The five steps followed in the analysis of the data are graphically presented in Figure 4.3, forming part of the audit trail of how the data was processed.

**4.8.1. Step 1: Preparing the data**

The first step in the analysis process was to prepare the data (Step 1 in Figure 4.3). In order to start with preparation, I worked from capturing and summarising the categories or documents and participants. As indicated in Table 4.3, a total of 70 participants took part in the study with 24 from Case 1, 25 from Case 2 and 23 from Case 3. In Case 1, six were students, six alumni, one practice educator, six student supervisors and two persons from the placement agency. In Case 2 there were four students (as the programme’s block model was already in operation and many students were placed away from the campus), 14 alumni, two practice educators, four student supervisors, and two persons from the placement agency. In Case 3, ten students, five alumni, one practice educator, four student supervisors and two persons from the placement agency were interviewed. There were 21 one-on-one interviews and 14 group interviews held. I had to ensure then that all the interviews, transcripts and documents were in readiness for data analysis.
Table 4.3. Sources of data and participants within each case

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Documents</th>
<th>CASE 1</th>
<th>CASE 2</th>
<th>CASE 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 3</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field instruction policy</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning guide</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Case 1</th>
<th>One-on-one interviews</th>
<th>Group interviews</th>
<th>Case 2</th>
<th>One-on-one interviews</th>
<th>Group interviews</th>
<th>Case 3</th>
<th>One-on-one interviews</th>
<th>Group interviews</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>21 (30%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alumni</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25 (35.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice Educators</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4 (5.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Supervisors</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14 (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency Rep</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6 (8.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Preparation of the data in case study analysis (Step 1 in Figure 4.3) involved a process of checking and cleaning the data in readiness for analysis (Rule & John, 2011). The preparation commenced with the way the data was captured and stored. All interviews were recorded with the use of a digital recorder, which allowed the discussions to be electronically captured in its entirety, and I could then focus on what was being discussed during each interview while making simple notes of key points from the discussion. Transcription of the interviews occurred as soon as possible after each interview. The transcribing of the interviews were outsourced; however, once received from the transcriber, I went through each written transcription together with the corresponding recording, in order to ensure that all relevant information was captured and that it was captured correctly and in full. Fortunately, I had kept notes immediately after each interview and during each interview, which together with the visual presentations by participants helped me to fill in the gaps the transcriber left blank when the voices were sometimes poorly audible. This meant ensuring that interviews and documents were captured and checked against capturing errors.

Reading the transcripts to check for errors was a strenuous exercise, but well worth the effort and time. It provided me with an opportunity to have a first of many rounds of attempting to understand the data in terms of the study’s theoretical lens (Frost, 2011).  

A Systems Analysis of Field Instruction in Social Work Education
Two sets of written transcripts were maintained per interview; namely, one that had the identifying information as part of the interview and the second was an anonymised written transcript with neutral pseudonyms and codes replacing identifying information. Printed and electronic copies of transcripts were maintained. Documents and visual representations were scanned and uploaded electronically onto the research folder on my computer.

Thus, in preparing the data all interviews and documents were captured, checked against capturing errors and kept in readiness for the next step, which was managing of the data.

4.8.2. Step 2: Managing the data

The second step was to manage the extensive collection of data. Data was collected over a period of a year, requiring a structured filing system to store all information for easy retrieval. This involved a process of both manual filing of hard copies of documents, as well as by electronic filing on my computer. I had a manual filing system in place for each case using lever-arch files, where all hard copies of information, which included all written communication, documents and letters of consent from participants, were kept. This required attention to detail and a systematic approach to filing. Folders were opened in Microsoft Outlook to store emails, and the main research folder on my personal computer and the cloud was used to store all other documents and literature searches.

Simultaneously, I compiled a comprehensive table as suggested by Rule and John (2011), tabulating details of participants in each case, creating a checklist of when transcriptions were captured, checked, analysed and went through the various stages of coding, uploading of documents, as well as uploading of the visual representations. The data on this table was updated after each activity and are tabulated and presented as a list of participants, documents, transcriptions and coding process in Appendix 5.

It was also important at this stage to get into the habit of using labelling and storing conventions, mainly for ease of retrieval. Transcripts from the interviews were saved as case number, participant designation, participant number, document number and line number (Case#_Al#_D#_L#); documents were saved as case number, document type and document number (Case#_LG_D#); and visual presentations were saved as case number, participant designation, visual, document number (Case#_Al#_Vis_D#). These are also reflected in the list of participants, documents, transcriptions and coding process in Appendix 5.

I used a computer software programme called Atlas.ti in order to manage the vast amounts of data for this research (Friese & Ringmayr, 2003). This programme was useful in containing, maintaining and managing the data in a systematic manner. Using computer-assisted programmes also accelerate
traditional techniques in the management of data (Chambliss & Schutt, 2013; Paulus, Lester, & Dempster, 2014). I opened one large project file on Atlas.ti to serve as the main folder for the research and labelled this Field Instruction Cases Studies. I then proceeded with working within this large file to upload all documentation.

4.8.3. Step 3: Working within individual cases

In this third step of data analysis, I describe the process of uploading written documentation and transcripts Step 3 in Figure 4.3) and the opening of individual cases.

As indicated above, the main folder called Field Instruction Case Studies was opened. Unlike when working on Microsoft Word, Atlas.ti regards all folders, files and indexes alike as documents. This main document folder on Atlas.ti served as a composite folder as it contained all of the documents that were uploaded. Atlas.ti automatically allocated a number to each uploaded document; even if a document was deleted, the number was retained on the system. This allowed for the development of an indexing system and was useful in creating hyperlinks within the project. This indexing also served as a cross-reference and helped to locate documents easily. These document numbers are included in the quotations in Chapters 5 and 6 of this report.

From the main folder that was opened when preparing the data, I then proceeded to open three sets of sub-folders for documents and transcripts. This was necessary to separate the data for each case and allocate such documents to the respective case number. Atlas.ti called this process one of grouping. Thus the next step was to group the data and copy this to the respective case number while still retaining the original document on the main document folder. The three cases, therefore, served as mini project folders to save documents and transcripts relevant to each case. I proceeded to open three individual cases, and labelled these as Case 1, Case 2 and Case 3. This was followed by a process of firstly identifying documents (including manuals, policies and transcripts) relevant to each case, and thereafter, transferring the documents onto each respective case number. In this regard my strategy of having a structured, manual system of managing the data as tabulated in Appendix 5 proved useful. Using these techniques also helped to shape my thinking early about the data and the relationships among the data.

4.8.4. Step 4: Reducing the data

In Step 4, I focused on how the data was systematically reduced (Step 4 in Figure 4.3) into information that was manageable and relevant to the theoretical framework of the study. The process of reducing the data entailed a lengthy process of coding (Saldaña, 2009; Schurink et al., 2015). Maxwell (2013,
p. 107) refers to the process of coding as the strategy of categorisation aimed to “fracture” or rearrange the data into categories that supported comparisons and helped develop theoretical concepts. This process also involved finding wide-ranging meanings of the data and then categorising this into broad themes and issues (Maxwell, 2013). This further involved working methodically per case, first with the written documents, then with the transcripts and thereafter, with the visual presentations (Figure 4.3) mainly as written documentation are a symbolic representation of the case, person or organisation that it belonged to (Rule & John, 2011).

This step also comprised a series of readings and review of relevant written documentation from each case in order to obtain an overall understanding of the case. When working with the written transcriptions, I focused on the actual narratives of the participants and how I could see its relevance towards systems theory. This was not easy as I had to constantly remind myself of what relevance was the narrative to the objectives of the study. In addition, I was accustomed to interpreting hidden messages and non-verbal cues from everyday social work observations and had to limit what could be included and excluded (Mouton, 2006; Smith, 2009).

When working with documents like the fourth-year BSW field instruction policies and the fourth-year learning guide, I used the following list of questions as a guide:

a. In what way did the document indicate how the field instruction system (FIS) was to be managed?

b. What information was provided of the role players and resources available in that FIS?

c. What information was indicated relating to the placement community, for example, geographical locations and community demographics?

d. What was the information provided that reflected the model of field instruction utilised? Was there information indicating the model of field placement across the BSW?

e. What time periods for the placement were set out, for example, in terms of hours and days, which semester/s was/were used?

f. What was the reference to the interface with the academic theoretical programme?

g. What was indicated on how the supervision of the student would be managed?

h. What details were provided on how pedagogical and other challenges within the placement, supervision process and the process of learning was to be managed?

These questions were developed from my own reading and knowledge of the value of policies and learning guides in the fourth-year BSW field instruction programme.
When working with the visual representations from the interviews, I took cognisance of its legibility and relevance to the research. Not all visual representations were uploaded as many were indecipherable so it would have been pointless to upload such documents.

**Figure 4.4. Coding and reducing the data**

While still using the computer-assisted programme and continuing to work with the three cases individually, I then followed a process of re-reading and analysing each transcript and document for content, and allocation of codes (Step 4 in Figure 4.3). Three processes were followed when reading, attempting to make sense of the content and reducing the data and are indicated in Figure 4.4. These processes included opening new codes (called open codes or in vivo codes) (Paulus, Woods, Atkins, & Macklin, 2013), then reducing the data by using axial codes and finally selecting themes that encompassed selectively coding the data (Saldaña, 2009). I followed an iterative process as far as possible where the collection and analysis of data were done in segments, allowing me to review the questions and processes from time to time.

**Open and in vivo coding.** Open codes were the labels that emerged from the segments of text used to identify an idea, theory, argument, statement or similar content (Saldaña, 2009). Open codes in this study comprised a list of a few predetermined words or themes from the literature search and theoretical framework, as well as words or themes resulting from the text. Following a similar pattern of labelling or linking of the data, in vivo codes were used to capture and represent the actual words of the participant or document at this stage. I commenced by identifying keywords, concepts or a segment or segments of text in each document or transcript and then allocating either open or in vivo
codes. This was seen as the initial coding process (Saldaña, 2009). In retrospect, I realised that I had followed a combination of inductive reasoning in coding where new descriptive labels were allocated to segments and deductive reasoning where some preconceived theories or words emerged from the literature (Saldaña, 2009). This then allowed me to compile a code list (Paulus et al., 2013; Smit, 2005) which was a list of all the open and in vivo codes from the documents. At the end of the first stage of coding, I realised that I had a lengthy code list of 386 open and in vivo codes (Appendix 6), which was quite an overwhelming number to work with. Thus followed a process of searching for similarities within the codes in this list and located overlaps and parallels which were then grouped under larger categories called axial codes (Appendix 7).

**Axial coding.** Axial coding allows for the development of categories when grouping codes that have similar meaning or content. Saldaña (2009, p. 151) suggests that axial coding is used when describing “a category’s properties and dimensions and explores how categories and subcategories relate to each other”. This further allows researchers to identify actions like “if, when, how and why something happens” in coding (Saldaña, 2009, p. 173). In this study, using axial coding was particularly useful in reducing the large number of codes derived from the open and in vivo code list. In this round of coding, I was more focused on identifying relationships between codes. Broad categories were developed to group similar ideas and concepts. This then resulted in a new code list of 16 axial codes (Appendix 7).

**Selective codes.** The third step in coding involved further grouping the axial codes by generating themes and allocating selective codes (Saldaña, 2009). Selective coding is arguably a principal process in data analysis, where a core category is selected from a group of categories (Rule & John, 2011; Schurink et al., 2015). Salient themes, recurring ideas or patterns that linked the codes together were identified. In this way, I was able to identify codes that contained vast amounts of similar raw data and reduced this to broad themes without losing the essence of the data. 16 selective codes were identified (Appendix 8). The selective codes comprise four broad themes and 12 sub-themes. These are described and discussed in relation to the literature and the theoretical framework of this study and are presented in Chapter 5 of this thesis.

It was expected that during each step of the coding process the refining of the original codes would occur, that codes would be subsumed by other codes, relabelled or even dropped altogether (Saldaña, 2009). This was evident during the stages of axial and selective coding in the analysis of the data. In addition, during each of the above stages, it was logical to keep a list of memos (Schurink et al., 2015) which were comments or annotations of codes. These memos served as code notes or a reminder of the meaning of each of the axial and selective codes that were assigned.
At this stage, I would like to refer to personal reflections of my experiences in using Atlas.ti as a means of data management and coding:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From my journal of 19 June 2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reflections on the coding process:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I hadn’t realised that coding, the cleaning of codes, identifying themes and categories would take so long. I prided myself on learning Atlas.ti that I was going to confidently use to manage my data. I prepared myself over several months of labouring over Atlas.ti over youtube teaching videos, using Atlas.ti webinars and attending 2 basis Atlas.ti presentations with a certified Atlas.ti trainer. This was all in the hope that this software programme would be able to not only manage the data but also generate custom-made reports at my request.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlas.ti was useful in managing the data and was a simple enough process in helping me with the coding. But the fundi’s were wrong about the custom-made reports. I tried and tried and tried to get tailor-made reports and quotations pertinent only to individual cases. Perhaps, I should have stuck to my guns when I wanted to have 3 separate project files (one for each case) as then I wouldn’t be faced with reports of over 1400 pages in length, with umpteen repeats in quotations and codes. I spent over 10 days labouring over the codes and cleaning up just those reports, painstakingly deleting duplicated quotations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out of frustration, I messaged my supervisor this morning for motivation (he was at a conference overseas). “It’s a step by step,” he messaged back. “Keep moving forward. Have something else to work on, and now and then take a break”. He continued: “It can be a slog but requires diligence to keep moving forward.” I kept on working. After cleaning and removing duplicate codes, I was left with 435 pages of solid data linked to my over 280 open and in vivo codes. The 435 pages were still a lot but better in comparison to 1400 pages, but it still meant working with over 1100 sets of quotations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Steps 1-4, I worked within the individual cases as I waded through the data and categorised the codes. In the next step, I describe how I worked across the three cases intending to use more deductive codes to focus on the theoretical analysis of the data.

### 4.8.5. Step 5: The three cases

In the final steps of data analysis, I examined all three cases individually and as a collective. While this was initially founded on the inductive approach to research, I realised that in order to draw in my theoretical focus in the analysis stage, I had to include themes that were deductively generated as indicated in Chapter 3 of this report.
Figure 4.5. Analysing the three cases

Figure 4.5 above depicts the processes used so far, namely (1) the data collection stage where documents and interviews were generated in each of the cases and (2) the process of reducing the data as part of the data analysis stage.

In line with multi-case research (Stake, 2006), the next two processes were used to provide an understanding of each of the three cases (Stage 3 in Figure 4.5), and then an examination of the three cases as a collective (Stage 4 in Figure 4.5). These steps were a prelude to Stage 5 where the research findings are presented. Thus, during the first process, I attempted to understand the data as it pertained to each case, thus developing a narrative of each case. I identified underlying themes in each case that described the elements and processes of the field instruction programme. This information addressed Objective 1 of this study and is presented in Chapter 5 of this thesis.

During the subsequent process, I attempted to identify common threads across the three cases (Figure 4.5), paying attention to the characteristics of systems and system theories which were the theoretical framework of this thesis and presented in Chapter 3. I used these characteristics to draw comparisons across all three cases while concurrently addressing Objectives 2, 3 and 4 of this research.

In a cross-examination of the three cases, there were 70 participants in total (this figure excluded the 20 persons from the pilot phase of the study). As indicated in Table 4.3, of the 70 participants in all
three cases, 30% were students, 35.7% alumni, 5.7% practice educators, 20% student supervisors and 8.6% were persons from the placement agency.

There were 21 one-on-one interviews and 14 group interviews held (refer to Table 4.3). Most interviews were held on the campus of the respective universities, and visits were made to agencies to interview student supervisors and agency representatives. In one instance (in Case 1), a visit was made to another province to interview a student supervisor and student due to the placement being a distant one. While I had an initial pre-determined thinking of the number of persons per category per case to be interviewed, the numbers in some categories had varied with some categories being under the number and some exceeding the identified number, mainly due to the availability and willingness of participants to be part of the research. This, however, did not affect matters of saturation or sufficiency (Davern et al., 2017; Maxwell, 2013) as every attempt was made to gather sufficient data during the course of the interview itself across all categories of the sample of persons. The research questions that I focused on during this process were:

a. How did the field instruction system operate as a social system?

b. What were the elements and processes that comprised the field instruction system across all three cases?

c. What were the critical factors across the three cases that were seen to either optimise or hinder student learning?

The information from the second process of analysis above is presented in Chapter 6 of this thesis.

In summarising the process undertaken in the data analysis phase of this study, it is noted that the analysis process was an elaborate one, commencing during the research design. Having followed all of these five steps in the analysis it was a natural progression to create reports of the data analysed, together with the various codes allocated. These reports provided the basis of a concise, methodological analysis of the data (Paulus et al., 2013; Smit, 2005) supporting arguments by Smit (2005, p. 110) that using computer-assisted data analysis techniques added “intellectual sophistication to qualitative data analysis by means of good data management, closeness of data, speed of searches, rigour and audit trail”.

Data analysis was, therefore, not an independent or stand-alone process. In qualitative research, the analysis of data is seen as a process that involves various steps and rigorous procedures (Hancock et al., 2009). It was, therefore, important that each step of the analysis process was documented to support an audit trail, as well as ensure that issues pertaining to trustworthiness of the research were complied with. Therefore, the process of interpreting each case was achieved through systematically
working with the data (Rule & John, 2011). One interesting factor found in literature is that the selection of an appropriate method of data analysis is influenced by the researcher’s academic discipline, ontological and epistemological views, as well as theoretical and conceptual frameworks (Saldaña, 2009). In this study, I outlined my discipline’s views, as well as epistemological and theoretical views, all of which influenced the data analysis process.

4.9. Ensuring trustworthiness of the study

Trustworthiness refers to the level of trust that can be given to the research process and the finding, addressing issues of quality in the processes of data collection, analysis and interpretation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In addition, Rule and John (2011) argue that in order for research to be considered as trustworthy, the study must demonstrate having used criteria and strategies for making judgements about the case. In this study, the said criteria related to factors like the development of the research question, the manner in which the data collection process and instruments were strategised, the analysis of the data, engagement with theory, and presentation of the data.

To highlight and ensure trustworthiness in this study, a step by step description was provided of how quality in the processes of data collection and analysis were upheld. This study utilised the model purported by Lincoln and Guba (1985) based on the constructs of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability unlike in quantitative research where the quality of data is assessed through concepts like reliability and validity of instruments (Chambliss & Schutt, 2013). Cognisance was also taken of recommendations by Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, and Spiers (2002) that the methodological strategies for demonstrating trustworthiness be a continuous process, and if left to the end of the study the risk of missing threats to these measures may not be corrected. In addition, I also considered issues relating to triangulation of the data, which lies across all four measures and include this in the section below.

4.9.1. Credibility

Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe credibility as the extent to which the research findings and conclusions make sense and can be trusted. This is elaborated by Rule and John (2011, p. 107) who argue that in order to demonstrate credibility, the researcher must demonstrate the “extent to which a case study has recorded the fullness and essence of the case reality”. In this regard, a concerted effort was made to focus on what the study set out to do in order to meet the study objectives. Detailed descriptions were provided of the selection of case study research design against the backdrop of other research designs relevant to qualitative research (Section 4.3.4), the process of selecting a
suitable sample based on specified criteria, the process of engaging the participants, and the ethical issues related to this research.

4.9.2. Confirmability

Confirmability refers to how confident the researcher is that the views of the participants and the inquiry itself are authentic while addressing concerns about the researcher’s influences and biases in the study (Porter, 2007; Shenton, 2004). This required that there be full disclosure of the research process, limitations of the study, researcher positionality and ethical requirements. Shenton (2004) and Bless et al. (2013) argue that confirmability requires the researcher to demonstrate honesty and objectivity in the study, and in so doing allow the study to be replicated elsewhere. In this and the next Chapter, I describe step-by-step the processes followed in the development of the data collection instruments, in obtaining raw data, in undertaking the interviews, in transcribing and editing the interviews, and in the process of coding and structuring of themes, categories and relationships. In addition, examples and self-reflections of various steps of the process were presented.

One of the key methods of ensuring confirmability was to maintain an audit trail (Bassey, 1999; Rule & John, 2011), whereby each step taken in the data collection and analysis processes were systematically documented. The audit trail comprised electronic communication to and from each of the units in the population and the sampling frame, several sets of electronic communication to and from the three units in the final case studies sample, as well as field notes and journal entries reflecting on the decisions made during the data collection, analysis and coding process. In addition, this thesis contains an audit trail in the form of hypertext links which was important to demonstrate synergy in the research, to defend decisions taken, as well as to demonstrate accountability in the process (Bless et al., 2013). More importantly, there was a strategic focus of the audit trail on the analysis of the findings in order to ensure that the key findings and the evidential basis for propositions could be traced back to the data and sources (Bassey, 1999; Morse et al., 2002).

4.9.3. Dependability

Dependability refers to whether the findings will be consistent if the research were to be conducted with the same participants or in similar contexts (Shenton, 2004). This implies that there be precise descriptions of the strategy for data collection, coding and analysis, therefore, the emphasis on presenting the research process in a logical, well-documented manner so that the results are an accurate reflection of the participants and the field instruction sites that were studied. It was also important to comply with methodological rigour and coherence (Rule & John, 2011) so that the
findings and case accounts that were generated could be accepted with confidence by the research community.

4.9.4. Transferability

Transferability refers to the extent to which research findings can be transferred to other settings (Shenton, 2004). I also followed suggestions to support transferability offered by Shenton (2004) and Mouton (2006) by providing elaborate descriptions on the context in which the data was collected, as well as providing the broadest possible range of information on the processes that were followed so that the study can be applied to other situations.

Transferability also included arguments on the positionality of the researcher (Creswell, 2012; Rule & John, 2011) and ensured that I was always aware of my position regarding the study context, my relationship with the participants, and any biases I may experience during the research process as a whole.

4.9.5. Triangulation

Triangulation refers to the inclusion of multiple sources of data collection which in turn increases the trustworthiness of the findings (Mouton, 2006). In this study, I described in detail the inclusion of written documents as source material relevant to the field instruction systems which formed part of the cases, as well as a diverse range of participants. This sampling of a range of persons to provide diversity is what Dervin (1983, p. 3) refers to as “circular reality” so that a clearer and stable view of the field instruction systems could be obtained from a variety of perspectives. Therefore, triangulation of data was achieved through a diverse range of participants, and using different data collection methods, namely the collection of documentary data, one-on-one interviews and group interviews.

4.10. Researcher reflexivity

Reflexivity, as argued by Paulus et al. (2014) is a process that is utilised to examine one’s perspectives, attitudes and beliefs that may have contributed to or influenced the research design or any part of the research process itself. I used this process to self-reflect on issues of personal bias, fears, unexplored assumptions, confusions and other feelings and experiences (Collins, 2014). The practice of reflexivity provided transparency to the research process. I reflected on epistemological factors, namely that my perception of reality may differ from the next person’s (Fouché & Schurink, 2015). Therefore, it was important that I understood how I was positioned in my own reality (Mills & Birks, 2014). This was particularly as I have explained that my epistemology was as a lecturer in
social work, and the field instruction coordinator at my university. I explain this further in my reflections below:

**From my journal of 10 March 2016**

When I entered this study I was fully aware of my own biases regarding field instruction which could be potentially detrimental to my study. I had been a supervisor of students from 3 different universities within one province. I knew then, way back in the 1990s, that not only do students have different learning styles, but that universities had different teaching methods, with varied knowledge emphasis and a preference for certain theories.

Thereafter, I entered the realm of the SACSSP, and as manager for ethical conduct of social workers, social auxiliary workers and students in the profession nationally, I could not ignore issues of breach of confidentiality. One such complaint comes to mind, that of students excitedly debriefing about their cases whilst seated in a public taxi, ignorant of the presence of a social worker amongst the other passengers. In this portfolio, I was fortunate to have travelled to all universities to promote the SACSSP code of ethics to all students. I attended the oath-taking ceremonies where students would swear to abide by the ethical code of the profession. Moreover, I had held many workshops with thousands of social workers countrywide on the SACSSP policy guidelines for course of conduct, code of ethics and the rules for social workers. The training of students as well as the ethical dilemmas of student supervisors was also a point raised at some of the discussion.

When I entered UJ, I was immediately thrust into the 4th year internship module. Each year over the past 5 years I made changes and amendments to the module and the learning guide to meet the growing demands of the profession and to ensure that the students were adequately equipped for the real world. So I had a mental picture of a typical social work graduate and I hoped that my research focus would enlighten me and others of what is so important in field instruction.

Therefore, I ventured into keeping a research journal as it created space for thoughtful self-reflection (Rule & John, 2011). The research journal was started two years before commencement of this research study. I attempted to detail information on my experience as a social work practitioner with 32 years of postgraduate experience, and of my engagements with all role-players and stakeholders in the discipline of social work that may influence my position as a researcher. I reflected on my six year experience as a national manager at the SACSSP overseeing the professional ethics of over 40 000 social workers, social auxiliary workers and student social workers. I also reflected on the last six years as the coordinator and facilitator of the fourth-year field instruction module at the university where I am employed, as this could have implications for my relationship with participants in the
study, as well as the possibility of being viewed as biased should this university have been used in the case studies. This necessitated the concerted reassurance as to my singleness of focus in this research which bore no influence on my current employ.

In the reflection below, I allude to my own epistemology:

**From my journal of 20 June 2015:**

In order to assist and articulate my epistemology, my supervisor advised that I use a reflective journal to look at how I define myself and the nature of my reality. This was also useful to understand how I saw the relationship between myself and the participants. Mills and Birks (2014) argue that the multiple selves that we live out (or our multiple hats that we use) influence what we ask, and what methodology or approach we use. Thus, I must be conscious of my philosophical position as being a qualitative researcher, particularly, as qualitative researchers must be reflexive (Mills & Birks, 2014, p. 25).

So to be reflexive implied that I had to systematically develop insight into my own work so that I had a critical review of my own involvement in the research process. This knowledge also implies a logical or a systematic way of thinking. So in this study, I will explore the reality of individuals, whilst respecting the perspectives from which they come and how they arrive at their knowledge or logic. This will shape me as a researcher, how my data is collected, what my data consists of and how it is analysed.

I could have used web logs or blogs that could provide open space for documenting these reflective thoughts and issues that arise during the research process (Paulus et al., 2014). But I am a private person and such open platforms don’t sit well with me. Maybe when I gain more confidence as a researcher I will be able to use such media to link with other like-minded researchers.

**From my journal of 29 March 2018:**

I went against my own self-imposed restriction on blogs a few weeks ago when I started blogging as part of a group of aspiring doctorates in a mentorship study. I found this scary but comfortable as the blog was restricted to only the 30 odd participants in the study, and we all shared the same objective - that is to reflect on our research journeys.

Additionally, applying reflexivity allowed me to use “experiential wisdom” (Chambliss & Schutt, 2013, p. 4; Knott & Scragg, 2013), served to strengthen the analysis of the data (Chambliss & Schutt, 2013), as well as added to the quality of the research itself (Mills & Birks, 2014, pp. 221-234). I understood why these authors argued that it was imperative that trustworthiness is evident in both the research and its processes and that the research must have credibility with the potential end user, in
this case, persons involved in field instruction in social work education. In my journal entry of 10 April 2014, at the commencement of this research study, I questioned my purpose for this study:

**From my journal of 10 April 2014:**

_Frequently I asked myself:_

- What am I finding out?
- What am I contributing to the scholarship of social work?
- Do I want to forever be known as the internship researcher?
- Am I clear about the research objectives?
- How are my research instruments working?
- What do I need to change or adapt?
- How can I improve my methods of data collection?
- Is the data that I am gathering relevant to my research?

Another aspect of reflexivity was to acknowledge my limitations and strengths to conduct research, my affinity for qualitative research as opposed to quantitative studies and having skills in scholarly writing, project management skills and accessing of resources (Mills & Birks, 2014).

Gillies and Alldred (2012) argue that research and the values that go with research should be grounded in partial, invested viewpoints. This statement was reflective of my quandary at the commencement of this research process. On the one hand, I am based at a university where field instruction in social work education is a core module of the discipline. On the other hand, I elected not to use this university as a source of the research in a concerted effort to remain impartial. I reflected on these issues in my journal which I provide below:

**From my journal of 10 September 2017:**

_I found myself conflicted on at different levels. On the one level, the research process traverses into my work at UJ as a lecturer internship module. On another level, I had to adhere to guidelines for ethics which meant that I must be guarded not to let my work at UJ influence my researcher hat._

**From my blog of 14 March 2018 (Vula mentorship programme)**

_So my research focus currently is in the field of field instruction in social work education. In essence, I am studying the issue of workplace learning that all social work students must complete. In fact, as I write this, I am on my data collection phase far rural ... interviewing students and lecturers on their fieldwork and supervision experiences._
I experienced one challenge yesterday that I would like to share, and also get feedback on, with the anonymity of my respondent respected:

I had to interview a student supervisor, noting that a student must be supervised during the workplace learning programme by a registered social worker (someone with a 4 year BSW degree and practice experience). So my participant was a supervisor with 6 years’ experience working at a state office. The SV (supervisor) indicated her reluctance to take on a student and voiced very negative views on supervising the student and on the profession in general. I was at a loss at the time. I let the tape [recording] run, but I wasn’t sure if I should ’counsel’ her in the form of mentoring her to be a better social worker and thus a better supervisor, or should I not interfere and just let her ruin the student’s life. I was in a quandary. I knew that in research, the researcher must not get involved. But, having come from working as a senior manager for ethics in a professional statutory body, I couldn’t let this opportunity to mentor a colleague slip by.

My blog of 14 March 2018 brought upon a realisation that I have multiple perceived responsibilities and sensitivities as well (Bell & Nutt, 2012). Translated into this research study, this included my ethical responsibility towards organisations, students, colleagues at other universities, supervisors and service users alike. Perceived responsibilities will include adherence to the academic agenda, as well as the agenda of statutory bodies controlling education, for example, the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP, 1978), as well as the Council for Higher Education (CHE, 2004b, 2015).

4.11. Ethical considerations

This section examines the conventional standards and considerations utilised in ensuring that this research is ethically accountable. Ethics refers to values, morals, standards of conduct, rules of behaviour and issues of integrity (Chambliss & Schutt, 2013), implying that integral to this research is the practice of research standards that are above reproach (Makhubele et al., 2018). Ethical debates in qualitative research include issues related to discipline-specific requirements, obtaining ethical clearance, the researcher-participant relationship, and issues relating to confidentiality, avoidance of deception, obtaining informed consent and voluntary participation, research with vulnerable populations, and ethics in analysis and reporting, amongst other factors. It was, therefore, important that the success of this research be based on the principles of research ethics like participant autonomy, non-maleficence, justice, and respect for the participant’s rights and dignity (Bless et al., 2013; Padgett, 1998).
Prior to commencement of the research, ethical clearance and approval to conduct the research were obtained from the University of Johannesburg’s Faculty of Humanity’s Research Ethics Committee (Appendix 1). From a discipline perspective, I am a registered member of the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP) – the statutory body that regulates the policies and practices in the discipline of social work (www.sacssp.co.za) with registration number 10-10156. By implication, I am obliged to adhere to the ethical considerations for research as contained in Section 5.1.4 of the Policy Guidelines for Course of Conduct, Code of Ethics and the Rules for Social Workers (SACSSP, 2006).

Chambliss and Schutt (2013, pp. 44-67) argue that ethical guidelines in research are designed to protect research subjects, to maintain honesty and openness, to achieve valid results and to encourage the appropriate application of research concepts. Miller (2012) examined various issues related to the researcher-participant relationship, noting that the issue of research should be designed to protect the participant and avoid or minimise coercion. To protect research subjects, issues pertaining to the avoidance of deception and avoidance of causing harm to research participants, obtaining informed consent, maintaining privacy and confidentiality were addressed. Therefore, a detailed letter in the form of a Research Information Sheet (Rule & John, 2011) was provided in advance to the gatekeepers at the case study FISs and to each participant, explaining the purpose and nature of the research (Appendix 9). The Research Information Sheet also contained details of the voluntary nature of participation, and that each was free to withdraw from the study at any stage without consequences. In addition, participants were informed that if their participation in the research caused them distress, then I would arrange for counselling and support with their respective student counselling offices or with peers in the case of supervisors interviewed. However, after each interview a short debriefing session was held in order to offer clarity on field instruction or answer related questions that participants may have had. In this regard I refer to my journal entry on 11 September 2017:

So one of my key concerns was a reflexive one, or maybe not even considered to be reflective, that is how to become self-regulatory and to manage my responsibilities so that all ‘parties’ would consider my study to be ethical. In short, perhaps it is how to ‘stand outside’ and reflect on the processes unfolding. Bell and Nutt (2012) paper presented helpful ways of managing reflexivity. They explored reflexivity pertaining to issues of confidentiality, negotiation and access, and of course that of seeking informed voluntary consent from participants. Indeed as a researcher and more so as a social worker, I must be wary of when and how to disclose information without breaching confidentiality. I must negotiate my entry into the field instruction programmes of other universities with a self-imposed...
caveat not to influence participation. I must ensure that participants are given sufficient and all-inclusive information so that they could make informed choices on participation.

I am however challenged by how to deal with issues of ownership and dissemination of the research findings versus seeking to balance the rights of the research participants and the research process itself (i.e. not naming the agencies or individuals in the final report). Somehow someone may recognise his or her university as a case in the study, after all we have only 16 universities in SA offering social work. Of these, we have only one which offers distance education. We have some that are easily identifiable in view of their location but, I must be ever vigilant in not disclosing key identifiable details.

Thus in my efforts at self-regulation, I needed to be aware of my own (in)competencies, of professionalism, of theoretically based knowledge, as well as tacit knowledge, skills and values.

Every effort was made to respect the confidentiality of the participants and the participating field instruction sites (Bless et al., 2013). This was taken into the interviews itself; where more than one participant was interviewed, as in the case of the group interviews, participants were requested to maintain in confidence the group member’s discussions even after the session. All documents received, visual mapping and transcripts from interviews were anonymised (Chambliss & Schutt, 2013). In order to protect the confidentiality of participants, I opted to maintain two sets of transcripts, one which contained the names and personal identification as indicated in the interview, and another where identifying information was removed. Participants were also informed of the remote possibility that they might recognise his/her own responses in the extracts, but this did not mean that others would recognise them, as identifying features may be changed.

One of the key issues that was stressed was that all information obtained in the research was for the sole purpose of a thesis project and not for disclosure to the University of Johannesburg where the candidate is employed. This was disclosed in the letter to participants and is contained in Appendix 9. I refer to this particular aspect in my journal entry of 10 February 2018 below.

From my journal entry of 10 February 2018

I can understand how participating universities and gatekeepers would always see me as part of UJ. I had to think of practical strategies of how participants would then see me as a researcher first. Okay, I had opened a gmail (neutral) email address but responses always came back to my UJ email address somehow.
The most significant approach that I think supported my so-called individuality as a researcher was taking a year off work as a sabbatical and giving up the entire fourth-year Internship module during this period. In this way, I was no longer hands-on in the field instruction module at UJ, and I informed participants of this at the outset of the interviews.

**From my journal of 1 April 2015:**

One of the debates in research has been that of ethical considerations regarding electronic communication. Miller (2012, pp. 38-39) suggested the use of a designated project email address, and possibly a project mobile phone and number to help to maintain the privacy of the researcher and the researched. I decided to create a designated project email address, namely varosh4research@gmail.com solely for the purposes of this research. The neutrality of the username was particularly chosen to reduce the association between myself as researcher and me as an employee at a university (which is also involved in field instruction in social work education). And I got a new number for my (old) phone too. I hoped this would help to avoid blurring of my role as a lecturer and my role as a researcher.

Participants were informed of how extracts of the data will be used in the final research or in articles that may emanate from the study. In addition, an electronic copy of the study will be made available to all BSW programmes, including participating universities. Participants were also informed of the benefits and risks of participation, as well as the use or dissemination of the data (Chambliess & Schutt, 2013).

Permission was also sought from participants for the interview to be digitally recorded, with access granted only to myself and my supervisor. All recordings were transferred from the digital recorder to the candidate’s personal computer which itself has password protected access (Creswell, 1998).

The issue of ethical consideration during the data analysis stage as reflected in Chambliss and Schutt (2013) and Bless et al. (2013) was an important factor in this research. I had to be constantly aware of issues of researcher integrity, self-reflection on the quality of the research and compliance with rigour. I also had to be cognisant of elements of bias and the potential misuse of results as risk factors. One strategy to eliminate researcher bias was to avoid using my employing university as a source of data collection.

Miller (2012) recognised that initiatives to mitigate risk would reduce anxieties for the participant and would foster trust and rapport between the researcher and participant. The ethical issues contained above were considered as necessary practical guidelines to ensure that standards of research were
upheld. Where ethical issues were unclear, efforts were made to consult with my supervisor and peers. Above all, important values like respect for participant’s rights and dignity were at the forefront of the data collection process.

4.12. Summary

This Chapter provided details on the research methodology, approach and design. Research and evidence were provided as to the suitability of the qualitative approach for this study. Justification was also provided for the choice of the case study method as the research design and details on the data collection process with specifics on the population and sampling processes were provided.

The synergy and relatedness in the selection of the approach, design and methodology are important in any research study. While this synergy was portrayed in this Chapter, I was ever mindful of alignment with the research objectives so that the study has veracity and relevance. It was also important to ensure that the methodological orientations and research tools supported the research objectives and research questions.

Issues related to trustworthiness and rigour were critical in addressing the quality of qualitative research and have been included in this Chapter. So too are the self-reflections included under issues of research reflexivity that are interspersed in this Chapter. It is also noticeable that in this Chapter I located myself in the research process, and therefore, opted to write in the first person. This was necessary, particularly as this Chapter required me to introspect as a researcher. Finally, in this Chapter, concerns pertaining to ethics and accountability were included as these were important to ensuring the integrity of the study.

The next two Chapters present the findings that emerged from the data. These are the heart of the study, that being the analysis and discussion of the results. The analysis and discussion in Chapter 5 are presented primarily with narratives from the data in order to provide an overview of data obtained within each case, while the analysis and discussion in Chapter 6 are aligned to the theoretical framework of this study, presented across all three cases.
Chapter 5. Analysing the cases

Systems need to be managed not only for their productivity or stability, they also need to be managed for resilience - the ability to recover from perturbation, the ability to restore or repair themselves.

(Wright, 2009, p. 78)

5.1. Introduction

In a multi-case analysis, it is recommended that the findings are presented on individual cases as well as on a cross section of the cases (Stake, 2006). This thesis, therefore, contains two Chapters on the findings of the study. In this Chapter, I present a discussion of the findings of each of the three cases in the study, highlighting narratives from participants and documents in relation to key themes identified in the data.

This Chapter addresses Objective 1 of this research which is to identify and describe the elements and processes of field instruction systems. Each case is based on narratives from respective participants, with limited literature to illuminate the findings. Each case is presented individually and is contextualised with a background, a brief overview of relevant demographic factors, an exposition of the four themes emanating from the data, and finally a summary of the discussion of the case. The data for each case was obtained from interviews, as well as documents. Interviews were held with practice educators, fourth-year social work students, student supervisors, alumni, and persons from the placement agency.

The process of data analysis entailed a systematic reduction of the data (Saldaña, 2009). This was completed in the following manner:

1. First, by using open or in vivo codes to label key phrases, sentences or groups of text. In this step there were 386 open codes identified (Appendix 6);
2. Second, by systematically reducing the open codes by grouping the codes with similar meaning and contexts. In this way 16 axial codes were identified (Appendix 7); and,
3. Third, by further synthesising and grouping the axial codes into four broad themes. The four broad themes are indicated per case in Figure 5.1 below.
Figure 5.1. Identification of themes: Objective 1

The four broad themes indicated in Figure 5.1 emanated from the empirical data obtained per individual case. Based on the above themes, various sub-themes were identified per case and are tabulated in Table 5.1:

Table 5.1. Themes and sub-themes in this Chapter

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case #</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Sub-theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Case 1</td>
<td>Policy documents on field instruction</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participants’ views of the field instruction programme</td>
<td>Describing the field instruction requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participants’ views of the field instruction programme</td>
<td>Supervision as a requirement of field instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participants’ views of the educational team</td>
<td>Integration of theory into practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participants’ perspectives of the placement relationship</td>
<td>Professional behaviour as a requirement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participants’ perspectives of the placement relationship</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case 2</td>
<td>1. Policy documents on field instruction</td>
<td>1. Describing the field instruction requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Participants’ views of the field instruction programme</td>
<td>2. Supervision as a requirement of field instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Participants’ views of the educational team</td>
<td>3. Integration of theory into practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Participants’ perspectives of the placement relationship</td>
<td>1. The student supervisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. The practice educator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. The placement agency</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4. The student</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1. Obtaining placements for students</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Verification and monitoring of student placements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case #</td>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>Sub-theme</td>
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<tr>
<td>Case 3</td>
<td>1. Policy documents on field instruction</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Participants’ views of the field instruction programme</td>
<td>Describing the field instruction requirements</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Model of placement</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Supervision as a requirement of field instruction</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Integration of theory into practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Participants’ views of the educational team</td>
<td>1. The placement agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. The student supervisor</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. The student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4. The practice educator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Participants’ perspectives of the placement relationship</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data in this section is based mainly on narratives from participants obtained during the one-on-one and the group interviews, as well as from documents from the cases, and are presented as themes and sub-themes as indicated in Table 5.1.

The details of the participants in this study were anonymised. The key to evidence cross-referencing is contained in Table 5.2 below and listed alphabetically.

**Table 5.2. Key to evidence cross-referencing**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evidence Code</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agency#</td>
<td>Agency representative number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AI#</td>
<td>Alumni number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D#</td>
<td>Document number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIP</td>
<td>Field instruction policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Interviewer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L#</td>
<td>Line number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LG</td>
<td>Learning guide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P#</td>
<td>Page number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PracEduc#</td>
<td>Practice educator number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSA</td>
<td>Purposive sampling appendix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St#</td>
<td>Student number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>StSup#</td>
<td>Student supervisor number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vis#</td>
<td>Visual representation number</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.2 reflects the key used to identify the participant and document details and is aligned with Appendix 5. As examples, the cross-reference [Case1_LG_D31_P2] refers to Case 1, Learning Guide, Document 31, Page 2; and cross-reference [Case3_PracEd1_D16_L10] refers to Case3, (interview with) Practice Educator 1, Document 16, Line 10.

As per the data collected, below are the descriptions and analysis of each case.

### 5.2. Case 1

Case 1 is a fourth-year field instruction programme at an HDI positioned in a semi-urban part of South Africa. Prior to 1994, this university was considered as located outside of the borders of South
Africa. Subsequent to 1994 the university was included within South Africa, and more recently merged with another university in the same province. The site of this case, however, is still considered to be historically disadvantaged (DHET, 2014).

Table 5.3. Case 1: Participant profiles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Practice educators</th>
<th>Student supervisors</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Alumni</th>
<th>Agency representatives</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As indicated in Table 5.3, in Case 1 there were 21 participants. One practice educator who was responsible for the teaching, coordination and monitoring of the field instruction programme, was interviewed. Six student supervisors were interviewed, with one based at the university, four at non-governmental organisations near the field instruction site and one at a community-based organisation in another province. There were six students interviewed, five of whom were placed at non-governmental organisations within a 10km radius of the campus and one at a community-based organisation in another province approximately 400km away from the campus. Six alumni were interviewed, three of whom were employed as social workers, and three were enrolled in postgraduate studies in social work at the same university. Two agency representatives were interviewed, one from a non-governmental organisation and one from a state child and youth care facility, both organisations lying within a 10 km radius of the field instruction site.

Figure 5.2. Case 1: Gender and designation distribution

A total of eight males and 13 females were interviewed in Case 1. The gender distribution is tabulated in Table 5.3 and is presented graphically in Figure 5.2.
The pictures below depict the housing and community typical to the area.

Figures 5.3 and 5.4. Pictures reflecting the area surrounding Case 1

In the following section, the four themes, together with sub-themes that emerged are presented and encompass participants’ views on the elements and processes in field instruction systems within Case 1.

5.2.1. Theme 1: Policy documents on field instruction

This section is based mainly on information contained in the learning guide. Only one document was availed from this site, namely the fourth-year field instruction learning guide. Case 1 does not have a policy document on their field instruction programme as indicated by the head of department of the site. The learning guide was observed to be a comprehensive manual guiding students on the requirements of the module. However, this document was for the previous academic year and not the year that the data was being collected. Requests to the practice educator for an updated learning guide were unanswered. An updated learning guide would have provided information on the curriculum since the groupwork requirement was phased out [Case1_PracEduc1_D3_L4].

The learning guide indicates two forms of training for the field instruction module, namely “internal practice training” and “external practice training” [Case1_LG_D31_Pvii]. The internal practice training entailed students attending preparatory modules on campus before the commencement of placements, as well as a further six classes after completion of the module. The external practice training referred to a three-month block field instruction placement in semester two of the academic year. Students were, therefore, expected to complete a period of theoretical training before commencing field instruction placements.

The learning guide sets the requirements of 80 days or 640 hours for the completion of the block module [Case1_LG_D31_Pv]. Students were required to spend 17 weeks or 75 days of the second
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semester (between July and November) at a placement agency to complete all three methods of social work simultaneously.

5.2.2. Theme 2: Participants’ views of the field instruction programme

In this theme, descriptions of the field instruction programme are reported. Participants described the field instruction requirements, supervision as a requirement of field instruction, the integration of theory into practice, as well as professional behaviour, as a requirement of field instruction. The four aspects are reported as sub-themes in this section.

5.2.2.1. Sub-theme 2.1: Describing the field instruction requirements

In this sub-theme, the participants’ views of the pedagogic requirements for the fourth-year field instruction programme are reported. In order to contextualise the field instruction experiences of the students, general inquiries on the prior years’ placements were requested. In their second and third-year field instruction modules, students were exposed to minimal contact with service users. They reported that in the second year they were required to report on an interview with elderly persons; this formed part of a theory module for casework. Third-year placements were mostly at schools and after-school care facilities, both near the university. One student summarised the third-year experience as: “It was just kids from disadvantaged families [who came] after school for meals. We help them with their homework and if there is a big issue we can conduct a home visit and assess the family situation” [Case1_St4_D4_L4]. Students described these tasks as elementary and did not prepare them for the intensity of the fourth-year programme.

During the fourth-year block placement, students worked on tasks for casework, groupwork and community work concurrently. Students were expected to spend “approximately 10 hours on this study section...; describe the requirements for casework...; list different cases...; discuss different interviews in casework, and integrate casework theory into your reports...” [Case1_LG_D31_P3]. However, the learning guide did not specify the type or intensity of cases or the number of clients or the number of interviews. In response to this query, one student indicated that at fourth-year level: “For casework submission, it’s one case” [Case1_St 3_D10_L103]. The minimal effort required in this task did not seem adequate for students at fourth-year level. This requirement neglected the BSW exit level outcomes to assess service users’ social functioning; and plan, implement and evaluate appropriate social work intervention strategies and techniques with service users (CHE, 2004a).

The expectations for groupwork and community work, in this Case, were that students were to identify projects at the agency or in the community and to integrate theory into groupwork and
community work reports [Case1_LG_D31_P7-9]. The types of groups were not specified, namely whether these be educational, therapeutic or other groups (Nicholas, Rautenbach, & Maistry, 2010; Toseland & Rivas, 2009). The students could select any type of group as per the needs of the community, as long as students submitted ten reports for groupwork and five reports on projects implemented for community work [Case1_LG_D31_Px].

There was a curriculum restructuring process in place where groupwork as a requirement for the fourth-year was being phased out “as it was covered comprehensively in the third-year programme” [Case1_PracEduc1_D3_L4]. This concern was raised by the practice educator who felt that it crushed the mutual benefit of having groupwork: “Any relationship between the university and external organisations must benefit both organisations. Our students fill that gap in organisations... and the supervisors continue to sustain those groups” [Case1_PracEduc1_D3_L113]. This concern focused on the relationship with the placement agency yet shied away from being seen as a gap in training on the readiness of that student’s learning experience in the fourth-year.

One student reflected on having benefitted from the developmental nature of classroom teaching in the field instruction module: “You have to do presentations. One skill that any person should have in life it’s that self-confidence. So [you are] exposed to public speaking within the classroom or the lecture room” [Case1_St5_D17_L75]. This reflects the nature of the internal practice training component of the module.

5.2.2.2. Sub-theme 2.2: Supervision

A key requirement for all social work students is that they work under the supervision of a registered social worker at all times (SACSSP, 2006). The importance of supervision for enhancing skills and improving the student’s field practice experience is highlighted in many social work texts (Botha, 2002; Carroll, 2010; Engelbrecht, 2013; Parker, 2006). Supervision involves planned and regular periods of time when students and supervisors meet to discuss student progress and the student’s work during the placement (Botha, 2002; Parker, 2006).

The emphasis in the learning guide is on supervision for social workers already in practice, which seemed irrelevant to students. The learning guide in Case 1 does not provide information to students on the nature and frequency of supervision but notes that students “will be subjected to supervision, by both the lecturer responsible for your placement and the agency supervisor” [Case1_LG_D31_P15]. The above statement in the learning guide alludes to but does not specify the presence of two types of supervisors, namely a university-based person as well as an agency-based supervisor. There is no other indication in the learning guide that there would be two supervisors
allocated to students, nor are the roles of either supervisor spelt out. From interviews with a university-based supervisor [Case1_StSup5_D4], as well as with students and alumni, it was common cause that there were two supervisors allocated to each student, one from the university and one from the agency. It will be demonstrated in this Chapter and Chapter 6 that the lack of clarity of such roles has a propensity to lead to confusion for students on issues of accountability, particularly for the approval of projects and for placement issues. This point will be argued in Chapter 7, as student supervision should be structured in order to foster student development.

Supervisors did not reflect on training received from the university before the placement before receiving students on how to supervise students. The interview with the practice educator reflected that the university was unable to hold training sessions with supervisors due to distance and cost factors [Case1_PracEduc1_D3_ L42]. Thus, it appears that the starting point for the agency-based student supervisors appears to be the learning guide; as one supervisor reflected: “When they give us the guideline, we go through the guideline with the student, we see that these are the things we do on a daily basis” [Case1_StSup_D6_L126].

Students described supervision as an essential part of their development. “In supervision, I was taught to say ‘if you are in the session, these are some of the things that you have to look out for”” [Case1_A11_D1_L32]. Another student described supervision as a “debriefing” and “refuelling” session after an intensive casework interview [Case1_St5_D17_L33]. The student further reflected on supervision as:

It’s educational because you get to learn interviewing skills, and ...marriage counselling ...or pre-marital relationships, marriage, divorce, stuff like that so they always give you those heads up. Okay in this situation you can do that, in this situation that is acceptable and you get to learn [about] the code of ethics [Case1_St5_D17_L33].

The above narrative reflects on the value that the student derived from the teaching component of the supervisory process; the supervisor was the mentor and guide to developing the student’s skills in practice (Ross & Ncube, 2018).

However, not all students viewed supervision as a necessary part of development. One student described supervision as restrictive on his ability to work with service users:

A supervisor [must] give one more freedom. Sometimes if they if they are too involved or like they think [that] supervision is all about being on his case and what not, then you don’t feel a part of things, you don’t feel like you are going to grow cos let’s say for instance if you have a client then since you are a student they say you have to have a supervisor at all times.
Sometimes, it’s not ideal. It’s not ideal because they may take over an interview sometimes [Case1_St5_D17_L35-37].

This student had a misconception of the purpose of supervision in students’ field instruction education. Such misunderstanding is bound to have negative effects on the student’s learning and practice, as well as an impact on the supervisor-student relationship.

5.2.2.3. Sub-theme 2.3: Integration of theory into practice

A key issue raised by supervisors was the failure of students to integrate theoretical learning with practical training. Parker (2006) argues that students experienced difficulty in integrating theory into practice, which resulted in poorly formulated assessments of service users. In Case 1, few supervisors referred to the students’ need to integrate theory into practice. However, one supervisor, in particular, was passionate about students using theory in their work. “When they come to [the agency] we say this is a fruit salad so put it all together. We call it multi-level intervention. Students must use theories, like ecosystems, reality theory, cognitive, behaviour, strength-based” [Case1_StSup4_D7_L90]. The student supervisor continued to expand on the implications of integrating theory in practice: “This agency specialises in domestic violence. What theories and acts did you as a student use to help the women, like the Domestic Violence Act? Children’s Act? Cognitive behaviour therapy? Behaviour modification or strength-based perspective?” [Case1_StSup4_D7_L84].

These quotes emphasise the knowledge base of the supervisor, encourages students’ knowledge to be relevant to practice, and stresses the importance of including theory in practice. These quotes also denote the supervisors’ practice wisdom in encouraging students’ knowledge and learning on key aspects related to work at the placement agency.

5.2.2.4. Sub-theme 2.4: Professional ethics

Adherence to professional ethics is a requirement for social workers and student social workers alike (Royse et al., 2012; SACSSP, 2006). In this section descriptions of the behaviour of students is highlighted. The learning guide highlights students’ understanding of what professional behaviour is, as indicated in the extract below:

At the end of this section, you will be able to demonstrate the ability to:

• reproduce in an oral or written form the role and structure of the SA Council for Social [Service] Professions
• explain the nature and implications of the Council’s Code of Ethics and the rules for professional conduct for social service professionals
• discuss the meaning of ethical decision making
• describe the procedures regarding the announcement and handling of complaints with regard to unprofessional conduct by a social service professional, and explain the necessity or not of professional insurance [Case1_LG_D31_P17].

From the above quote, it is evident that the university requires students to be able to describe professional behaviour, but there appears to be no obligation on students to demonstrate or practice such behaviour. A practice educator provided an example of unprofessional behaviour: “There was a case long ago whereby one of the students breached confidentiality by talking in the taxi about the client, mentioning names while someone who knew that client was seated in the taxi” [Case1_PracEduc1_D3_L69]. One may conclude that, when related to the omission in the learning guide to foster the practice of ethical conduct, the student was unaware of issues of disclosure of confidential information or adherence to other ethical behaviours.

In relation to professional behaviour, a university-based student supervisor indicated: “Obviously we want students that wouldn’t embarrass you or embarrass the university in any way. Students that are professional... that wouldn’t harm clients” [Case1_StSup5_D4_L29]. Similarly, when probed about ethics and professional behaviour, some students reported that: “They said that we should not have any sexual relationship with the children at the CYC. Most of the children are almost the same age as us [the students]” [Case1_St2-3_D10_L34-36]. In this quote, the student was able to provide an example of unethical conduct, yet was unable to identify this as primary in the Ethical Code of the profession (SACSSP, 2006). This was evident when the student was asked whether this example was relevant to the profession or the agency, and the student simply replied “my supervisor said so” [Case1_St3_D10_L35-36].

The learning guide also stressed the need for students to adhere to punctuality and the dress code of and at placement agencies. “Every little thing counts, from how the student must conduct themselves, like punctuality, to what is expected to be done at work, to conduct and guiding principles of the profession” [Case1_StSup4_D7_L35]. However, the ability to be on time for work was an issue for some students: “I use public transport every day. Sometimes I come [15 minutes] late because of public transport” [Case1_St6_D9_L168]. Similar reports were received from other students who were unable to adhere to the requirement of punctuality at the agency.

On the question of whether students should be reported for behaviour considered by the university, supervisor or agency as unprofessional, the practice educator was clear that students should be reported. “There are tensions between ourselves and the supervisors... because of the conflicts that they have with our students and the misbehaviour” [Case1_PracEduc1_D3_L69]. Supervisors appeared to be protective of the students and preferred not to report misbehaviour, lest this impedes
the student from completing the programme: “Cases might not be reported to us. Some supervisors think about the implications when reporting the student to the university” [Case1_PracEduc1_D3_L69].

Internal resolution of problems was preferred: “But we as a university also encourage the agency to resolve issues on their own...In one case the supervisor even involved their own service point manager to address the matter, but the student’s behaviour did not change and then we intervened” [Case1_PracEduc1_D3_L69].

In this theme, I presented the views of participants on the field instruction programme. In the next theme I report on the views of participants on members of their field instruction educational team.

5.2.3. Theme 3: Participants’ views of the educational team

Royse et al. (2012) argue that students encounter many persons during the placement who contribute to the field instruction experience, including the academic personnel, agency persons, supervisors and service users. This theme reflects on the views of participants as to whom they considered key to their field instruction learning. In Case 1, participants reflected on students, practice educators, student supervisors, placement agency personnel and past graduates as contributing to field instruction learning.

The field instruction staffing structure in Case 1 includes one practice educator, as well as university-based supervisors who are lecturers at the university. The latter are allocated to groups of students at one or more placement agencies. Their purpose has not been specified, nor does the learning guide provide clarity or any reference to university-based supervisors. In Case 1 there are also agency-based supervisors at the placement agency. The learning guide refers to agency-based supervisors as the students’ supervisors whose function is to render student supervision during the student's placement [Case1_LG_D31_P15].

Figure 5.3 depicts a visual representation by students illustrating a viewpoint of significant educational team members [Case1_St_D33_Vis1]. The first part of this visual was purposely removed to respect the privacy of the person mentioned:
Figure 5.5. Student’s understanding of the educational team

In Figure 5.5 the student depicts first the practice educator (personal details removed), then the agency supervisor, third the student and finally the service user as essential components in the field instruction programme and provides brief notes on their significance. These are reflected in the sub-themes below.

5.2.3.1. Sub-theme 3.1: The practice educator

The practice educator is responsible for creating authentic learning opportunities for students (Pillay, 2017; Royse et al., 2012). The focus of the practice educator in Case 1 is on coordinating the field instruction module and liaising with organisations for placements, as well as “to expose students to the realities out there. It’s to assist the student to integrate theory with practice, and to transfer knowledge and skills to the students” [Case1_PracEduc1_D3_L65]. As depicted in Figure 5.5, the practice educator is seen as primary, yet mainly as a coordinator and a decision-maker on fieldwork placements.

5.2.3.2. Sub-theme 3.2: The placement agency

The placement agency is the organisation where the student is afforded opportunities for working in a formal employment set-up as well as get exposure to working with service users (Anastas, 2010). According to the module learning guide students receive an orientation to the workplace and compile a report of the orientation:

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Figure 5.6. Extract from learning guide [Case1_LG_D31_Piv]

Probably one of the frankest reflections on student experiences relating to both the orientation and the field instruction programme emanated from this interview with a student:

St: *It’s a monster, ma’am. Even the internship itself. I think orientation towards it, what to expect. It was not proper.*

Int: *And how would you have liked the orientation to the internship to be?*

St: *They must tell us exactly what to expect. What do they expect from us?*

Int: *Can you tell me who “they” are?*

St: *The department of social work at the university. Because I did advanced group work last year, I did advanced casework, I did advanced community work; but then when you have a guideline, and they just give it to you maybe a day before, so maybe a day or maybe five days before then they run through it, but then it’s not enough because now you are used to doing group work this way. Then the guidelines say, ‘do it this way’. And then it’s a confusion. Who is going to mark what? Because you know that this lecturer prefers to do group work a certain way, then there are those that say ‘no this one is going to mark this’ or that he doesn’t want all of that.*

[Case1_St5_D17_L85-94].

The above quote in relation to the learning guide [Case1_LG_D31_Piv] in Figure 5.6 reveals that the university views orientation to the placement agency as important in the field instruction process. However, neither students nor the agency appears to have reported on this. Regarding the role of the agency representative: “[I am] the centre manager… I also have a responsibility to oversee that their practicals or that their training is going smoothly” [Case1_Agency2_D6_L32]. This reflection is indicative of the role of the agency representative in monitoring student placements at the agency.

The views of the students and alumni on their placement agency were also solicited; some experienced feelings of anxiety and fear. “I chose [the organisation] not knowing what I am letting myself into” [Case1_Al1_D1_L30], further reflecting that “the first challenge [was] that I went to an organisation whereby I was working with people older than me. I was the youngest” [Case1_Al1_D1_L32]. A student reflected that “the staff members [at the agency] created a warm and conducive environment for us” [Case1_St3_D10_L28]. The latter viewpoint was reiterated by students who turned to other staff members at the agency for assistance: “Basically all of them are..."
just my supervisors when [my supervisor] is not here so I can just go to them” [Case1_St6_D9_L182] and, “In the absence of my supervisor, they would also take me with them and help me” [Case1_Al6_D2_L72]. The agency representative is a significant member of the educational team and is explored further in Chapter 7.

5.2.3.3. Sub-theme 3.3: The student supervisor

In this Case, there are two supervisors allocated to each student, namely a lecturer from the same department at the university who is the university-based supervisor, and a supervisor based at the agency itself. As indicated in point 0, there is no indication of the relationship between these two supervisors, nor any indication of their roles.

I attempted to obtain clarity on the role of the: agency-based supervisor: “We are the university supervisors, and when we go to the agency, we meet with the students, and we talk to them” [Case1_StSup5_D4_L6]. The university-based supervisor also saw opportunities for mentoring the supervisor who had “been out of the loop for so long” [Case1_StSup5_D4_L9]: “I had to mentor two supervisors at agencies... one felt a bit lost and I had to put together a reading list and then send it to her” [Case1_StSup5_D4_L11]. The role of this supervisor is not clear, and indicated in this viewpoint from an alumnus: “The one from the university would go to where you are placed, just to check the progress and whether we got any complaints and whether everything is going well, but not oftenly. Maybe once or twice” [Case1_Al4_D2_L91].

Participants were also asked about the role of the agency-based supervisor. The agency-based supervisor was responsible “for the day to day supervision of the student for the four months that they are there” [Case1_StSup3_D6_L103]. Reflecting on the supportive role of the student supervisor, two agency-based supervisors reflected as follows: “When you are at the university and when you are in the workplace, it’s different. So, it is our duty to guide them hold their hand, step by step” [Case1_StSup3_D6_L104]. Student supervisors can recognise students who require emotional support: “I know [when the student] is emotionally drained. One student had lost her best friend recently. I could pick it up… I started asking her, ‘Are you okay? Do you want to talk about it?’” [Case1_StSup1_D5_L97].

Students and alumni described their agency-based supervisors as supportive and developmental. There were positive descriptions of agency-based supervisors which included the phrases “awesome and professional” [Case1_Al5_D2_L152] and “understanding” [Case1_Al4_D2_L154]. One student reflected on leaning on the supervisors at most times: “I consult [on] everything ... [I say] I don’t understand this, what should I do? What should I recommend? Where should I refer the client?”

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Another description reflected the protective nature of the supervisor: “She was always by my side. But she was like a mother bear. I was like a little baby bear and she would protect me in any way... I was a bit older than her, but she took me as her peer” [Case1_AI5_D2_L161].

Agency-based supervisors saw themselves developmental in their roles: “my role is to assist the students to integrate the theory into practice to ensure that that which they have learnt at the university, they put it into [practice] in the workplace” [Case1_StSup3_D6_L44]. One supervisor reflected further on the developmental role of supervision: “I’ll just let the student run with it... I will help her to probe... maybe in the first two weeks, she will observe. Just come in and sit and just [to] get the grip of what we are doing” [Case1_StSup4_D7_L41].

The positive descriptions from students on their supervisors were overshadowed by the many narratives from students and alumni alike of perceived negative qualities of supervisors, particularly regarding the habits and unavailability of agency-based supervisors to provide supervision when needed. “Mine was short-tempered” [Case1_AI3_D2_L155]; “she was too open and personal with people that are younger than her though she is a social worker... She says whatever about her husband to me” [Case1_AI5_D2_L217]. Yet another reflected on being derided by the supervisor: “this is the office [where] you do the office work, and the school work [you] do it at home” [Case1_AI3_D2_L211].

One alumnus revealed feeling “Scared [of the supervisor]... If I had a problem, I had to go to someone else” [Case1_AI2_D2_L172]. Agency-based supervisors were also described as lazy [Case1_AI2_D2_L174; AI3_L164] and appeared to exploit students by handing over professional tasks to the students: “Most of the time I had to stop my school work and do her stuff, her typing. So I was backlogged. Even after you finished typing the report she [said] ‘you need to write my name there. You can’t indicate that it was [done by] the student’” [Case1_AI2_D2_L174]. Another alumnus described the supervisor as “supportive, and she was lazy... I had to do her work for her, even her office was so deurmekaar [disorganised] ” [Case1_AI3_D2_L164]. The alumnus continued: “When I got there the first thing I did was to put her office in order and do her reports... knowing what is where”; and “She would even call me after the internship [and say] ‘I need this and this’. I had to tell her ‘on this row what and what to find’. It was so disorganised” [Case1_AI3_D2_L164]. These narratives present a poor reflection on the qualities of student supervisors and are explored further in Chapter 6 of this thesis.
Whilst the university and agency-based supervisors viewed their role as developmental and supportive, the experiences from alumni and students reflected both positively and negatively on supervisors.

5.2.3.4. Sub-theme 3.4: The student

Royse et al. (2012) argue that students are key figures in the field instruction process in order to meet the requirements of the curriculum. Field instruction at fourth-year level was a seemingly new and lonely experience for some students. As one student reflected: “It gets lonely sometimes. Gosh, I miss my lecturer!” [Case1_St6_D9_L230].

Students reported on learning new procedures in social work practice: “When you get there [to the agency], firstly you have to acclimatise. Probably for the first two weeks you are not doing anything [just] going there and you still have to try and figure out how things work” [Case1_A15_D2_L210]. This was an interesting statement and links directly to a period of orientation that was referred to in Figure 5.6.

Working with actual service users was a challenge for some fourth-year students. “The challenge is having to work with families, mothers, fathers, and couples. From where I’m standing I was still a young man. I didn’t have much experience with regard to other experiences of life” [Case1_A11_D1_L32]. On the other hand, another student was of the view that the onus was on the student to overcome challenges or feelings of despair during the placement: “You have to be prepared when you come here... [say] ‘I am going to put everything that I have learnt into practice’ because a client is confident that you are going to help him” [Case1_St6_D9_L260].

This sentiment reflects the enormity of the fourth-year experience, and appears to have been carried by other students too: “we are not entirely enjoying our placement... You have to also think about your reports. When you have to do these home visits you also have to think about your reports” [Case1_St1_D10_L119]; “I think that workload [in fourth-year] is more than what I had last year because we are dealing with children... We had a case where one child wanted to commit suicide so... eish” [Case1_St3_D10_L16]; and “The cases were so emotional [that] sometimes I struggled to hold my tears... I would ask to be excused because... I couldn’t cry in front of the client ...in a rape case... ” [Case1_St6_D9_L120-123].

Student 1 explained the pressures experienced in working within a mental health care facility: “Because families do not want [the patients upon] discharge, you have to look for other relatives... the doctor discharges them before we get to find them homes. The doctors say ‘no, I’m discharging
this patient regardless of your report’” [Case1_St1_D10_L62]. Students also felt disillusioned, pressured and undermined in some settings, particularly in a multi-disciplinary environment.

5.2.3.5. Sub-theme 3.6: The service user

The service user is integral to the students’ learning, without whom the student would have little actual practice experience (Austin & Isokuortti, 2016). Reflections from participants revealed that service users included: “they were the community, the foster parents and their children” [Case 1_Al 2_D 10_L 80]; “the agency clients [allowed] us to practise what we have learnt in the three and a half years of studying” [Case 1_St 2_D 10_L 27]; and “because they are the actual ones who benefit from the services and the ones who make us wake up in the morning and go out there and do the work that we do” [Case 1_St 1_D 10_L 29]. Such narratives reflected the wisdom of alumni and students towards their learning.

The descriptions of participants on the educational team varied with a strong need for supportive supervisors, to dismissive feelings of supervisors who were poor role models, and to the supportive roles of the practice educator, alumni, agency personnel and service users.

In the next theme, I report on the perspectives of participants of the relationship between the university and agency concerning placement issues.

5.2.4. Theme 4: Participants’ perspectives of the placement relationship

The narratives in this theme focused on the university’s role in obtaining placements, as well as on the university’s obligation to monitor the students during their placements.

The learning guide for the field instruction module is clear: “Practical placements are solicited for by the fieldwork instructor from social services organisations and institutions” [Case1_LG_D31]. However contrary to this statement in the learning guide, students in Case 1 were requested to seek their own field instruction agencies and placements. Students were also encouraged to seek placements nearer to their family home or residential address due to the reported or perceived shortage of placements in the area closest to the university. “Students are placed at agencies nearer to their homes, some are placed in rural areas whilst others are urban” [Case1_PSA_D26]. This was further explained by the practice educator in this Case:

We tell [the students] that they must go to their home towns so that tomorrow we don’t have the issue or challenge in terms of transport and accommodation. So that’s the advice. And when they submit their application forms for internships, their addresses are there; their
academic transcripts are attached. And in some instances when I suspect the address is not correct and that the student just want to come to this town, then I go to the faculty manager to confirm the address of the student, so they go to their home towns and not this town. This is because we don’t have enough capacity to accommodate them [Case1_PracEduc1_D3_L83].

This narrative from the practice educator indicates that students were compelled not only to seek their own placements but to venture into placements away from the university site and closer to their family residence. However, this practice left the students in limbo until able to secure a placement: “I just knew I had to be at some organisation. I don’t know which one” [Case1_St6_D9_L115].

The process then followed that once students obtained possible placements, the details were forwarded to the practice educator for a memorandum of understanding to be pursued with the placement agency: “We’ve got an MOU with the university that was created a long time ago. So if they place students here, they communicate through emails, informing us that students are going to come from this date to that date” [Case1_Agency1_D5_L6]. Similar arrangements were confirmed in a discussion with student supervisors from another agency: “Yes, our organisation has an established relationship with the university, even though it is far away. The agreement is not to consider other students except for students from [this university]” [Case1_StSup4_D7_L14].

With regard to placement of students, one agency reported on their dissatisfaction with the high number of students that are placed at the same agency: “We don’t have office space. So sometimes [the practice educator] brings four students. Then I would [say], ‘please just bring one or two…we don’t have the capacity or the manpower to roll out that which is expected from us?’” [Case1_Agency2_D6_L110].

It was expected that the university would monitor the students, as indicated in the learning guide that the university would conduct verification visits (see Figure 5.7) to the placement agency as was confirmed by the following:

The lecturer will visit the student at the agency a couple of times during the internship and each time a joint assessment session (which will not constitute part of the participation mark) will be held with the student and the agency supervisor to evaluate the student’s progress.

**Figure 5.7. Verification visits [Case1_LG_D 31_Pix]**

Two student supervisors described the university’s contact with the agency: “For the block placement, they come twice because I remember the practice co-ordinator came and the university supervisor came. And then, with the others, we will just be communicating by emails”
Another supervisor reflected that “I think she [agency-based supervisor] came to hand over the contract. I prefer that as opposed to the student coming with it. They come just to give you that sense of saying, should you get into hassle with the student, we are here” [Case1_StSup4_D7_L7]. However, one student supervisor reflected: “I think it ends at the point when the agency accepts the student” [Case1_StSup5_D4_L31]. This was indicative of the university failing to monitor such placements.

On the other hand, some students were disappointed that the university did not fulfil its obligation to conduct verification visits as promised. One student reflected that: “Maybe my lecturer or the university supervisor should come... at least twice a month or once in a month so that she can see and evaluate my progress and if I have questions” [Case1_St6_D9_L228].

However, the university’s reasoning as to the lack of visits appears to focus on personal commitments and costs in preventing such long-distance visits: “It’s supposed to be done twice per year, but [we have] financial challenges... from the university. Even for accommodation. So in that situation it becomes a challenge even if you want to visit” [Case1_PracEduc1_D3_L42].

Another factor related to placements was the failure of the university and or agency to assist students in liaising with communities prior to the student placement. This was particularly important in Case 1 where permission to enter the community is required from respected elders in the community. Case 1 is located in a semi-urban area, in close proximity to rural communities wherein students are placed for their field instruction programme. Students and alumni alike reported on delays in rendering casework, groupwork and community projects as they were hindered by the protocols to be followed in accessing the community. “You have to have permission; you have to be sanctioned to work within the community. By the authority. Might be the municipality, if it’s the location or township. So in the villages, it’s the chief, the tribal office” [Case1_St5_D17_L19-21]. This was confirmed by the student supervisor: “It’s very rural. Before you go to the community you have to ask permission from the local authorities or the tribal authorities.” The supervisor explained the protocols to be followed: “You write a letter. First, they give you a date that you come in. So it takes time”. [Case1_StSup2_D6_L123]. It appears that these protocols hampered and possibly frustrated students working in such communities due to the time limitations for the completion of the requirements of the field instruction module.

5.2.5. Summary of Case 1

In summary, Case 1 is located in a semi-urban part of South Africa and is regarded as an HDI. Students appear to have limited exposure to field instruction prior which resulted in anxiety when
entering the fourth-year field instruction programme. In the fourth-year, students are exposed to a block model of field instruction conducted in semester two of the academic year, spending a period of 75 consecutive weekdays of the second semester at the placement, focusing on casework and community work, with the phasing out of groupwork practice.

Social work students are required to receive supervision, yet one student was ambivalent as to the value of supervision. Regarding the quality of supervisors and supervision, the university needs to take cognisance of the unprofessional practice of some supervisors who were at times poor role models and exploited students at the placements.

The focus on professional ethics was a strong point from educators and supervisors, probably after having had students previously bring the university into disrepute by disclosure of client information in a public space.

Participants’ views on members of the educational team were varied. Students and alumni reflected the importance of their agency-based supervisor as well as other staff at the agency, particularly in the absence or unavailability of their allocated supervisor. The importance of the practice educator, as well as service users, were also considered significant. However, what was significant too was the centrality of the student in the field instruction process.

There was conflicting information on the selection of placements. The learning guide placed the onus of securing placements with the university, yet this was not practised, and students were compelled to seek their own placements. Students were also advised to seek placements closer to their family homes, often a distance away from the university itself. This had implications for those who had to meet with peers to complete group research projects. Students were still required to be on campus one day a week to complete a research project. Thus the arrangement of far-away placements was not entirely beneficial to students who still had to complete a research project concurrently, bear the cost of travel to the university, and experienced anxiety when placed away from the campus site.

However, the most concerning issue for students was the university-placement agency relationship where they felt let down by the university because it did not fulfil its mandate to seek placements and to perform monitoring and verification visits.

In conclusion, in Case 1 a few key areas require further deliberation. First, the mandate in the learning guide with regard to student placements and monitoring of placements be met so that student challenges and defaulting supervision practices could be identified early or even prevented. Second, the learning guide to emphasise the practice of professional practice by students and supervisors and
have proper reporting procedures for defaulters in place. Third, arrangements with regard to sourcing placements to be revisited, particularly for those students placed away from the university. In addition, the university could nurture a relationship with the local community or tribal authority to facilitate early access on behalf of students who were to be placed in such communities.

5.3. Case 2

Case 2 is a fourth-year field instruction programme situated at a university in a mostly rural part of South Africa as indicated in the photographs below. Figure 5.8 was taken during my visit for the research, and Figure 5.9 was obtained off www.google.com. Despite merging with a more affluent university, this campus is still considered to be historically disadvantaged (DHET, 2014).

**Figures 5.8 & 5.9. Case 2: Views of the communities**

As indicated in Table 5.4 there were 25 participants in Case 2. In this Case, two practice educators were interviewed, one of whom was solely responsible for the coordination of the fourth-year field instruction programme and one who oversaw the management of the programme. Three student supervisors were interviewed; one from a state department, one from a non-governmental organisation and one based at the university. Four students participated in the study, two of whom were repeat students who had failed the module the previous year. Fourteen alumni participated in the study, ten of whom were registered for a postgraduate qualification in social work. Two agency representatives were interviewed, one from a state department and one from a non-governmental organisation.
Table 5.4. Case 2: Participant profiles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Practice educators</th>
<th>Student supervisors</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Alumni</th>
<th>Agency representatives</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Total</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The gender distribution is presented in Table 5.4 and Figure 5.10.

**Figure 5.10. Case 2: Gender and designation distribution**

As indicated in Table 5.4, eleven males and fourteen females in total were interviewed in this Case. A discussion of the four themes and sub-themes pertaining to Case 2 follow.

5.3.1. **Theme 1: Policy documents on field instruction**

There were two documents relating to the fourth-year field instruction programme provided by the university, namely the fourth-year learning guide and a PowerPoint presentation intended for a training programme for student supervisors. The latter was not the equivalent of a formal policy document and had little information beyond that contained in the learning guide.

The learning guide (referred to in the document as the fieldwork manual) for the fourth-year programme was a comprehensive document that focused on student assessment, contained various assessment rubrics and provided guidelines for the field instruction requirements by students. The learning guide lists the 27 exit level outcomes of the BSW [Case2_LG_D61_P32-33]. These exit level outcomes were linked to the following reference:
This manual is proposed on the understanding that those who operate within the profession of social work in South Africa, would soon agree on key roles clearly stipulated within a national ‘Framework Specification’ document… These should be also be linked to an agreed set of ‘National Occupational Standards for Social Work (NOSSW)’ [Case2_LG_D61_P31].

The NOSSW is not practised in SA. According to Parker (2006, p. 92) the NOSSW refers to a document “underpinning social work education in England” which contained key standards and requirements to be met by social work students studying in the United Kingdom. It appears that the BSW exit level outcomes (CHE, 2015) and the NOSSW (Parker, 2006) document are two different sets of assessment criteria that are used in this Case.

The learning guide in Case 2 further refers to and lists “Key Roles [divided into] into 21 practice foci which would be required in order to fulfil these key roles and which would reflect any units set by the NOSSW” [Case2_LG_D61_P31]. The learning guide further elaborates that the “21 practice foci are presently linked to the BSW Exit Level Outcomes as set by the SACSSP” [Case2_LG_D61_P31]. However, the 21 practice foci are listed in the NOSSW document (Parker, 2006, pp. 93-94); a study thereof indicates that these criteria are not those contained in the BSW exit level outcomes. It is not known why this Case chose to assess students in terms of a document that is not relevant to South African BSW standards. Similarly, in the learning guide, reference is made to “an appropriate South African QAA Benchmark Academic Standards for Social Work” [Case2_LG_D61_P31]. Whilst the reference to “South African” is included in the statement, the reference to “QAA Benchmark Academic Standards for Social Work” is part of the assessment procedures in the NOSSW document (Parker, 2006, pp. 94-95). An enquiry amongst academics and the SACSSP for this document revealed that there did not appear to be such a document in place in South Africa.

Another observation was that the learning guide reflected dates referring to two academic years, which could be typographical errors or irresponsible updating of the document, particularly as the name and contact details of the practice educator was also not updated [Case2_LG_D61_P7].

The learning guide in Case 2 made several references to “the Degree in Social Work” [Case2_LG_D61_P6&8], that students “will be awarded the Degree in Social Work” [Case2_LG_D61_P6&8]. It is not clear why the learning guide uses this terminology as it would appear to ignore the correct naming of the degree as the Bachelor of Social Work degree or the acronym BSW (CHE, 2015).

An inaccuracy contained in the learning guide was that “at the time of writing there has been no statutory body responsible for social work education” (Case2_LG_61_P7). This is entirely incorrect
and ignores the role of the Council for Higher Education (CHE) and the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP) as two accredited and long-standing statutory bodies responsible for standards for social work education in SA.

The learning guide in Case 2 also provides for “students without credits for prior experiential learning” [Case2_LG_D61_P8]. By implication then, students are provided with credit for work that they have done outside of the degree or work in an unsupervised field instruction programme. This point is contentious, ambiguously written and alludes to an expectation that potential students could enter the fourth-year field instruction programme without having completed the recognised academic field instruction modules aligned with the BSW.

This theme focused on observations of the field instruction document in Case 2. In the next theme, I focus on participants’ views on the field instruction programme.

5.3.2. Theme 2: Participants’ views of the field instruction programme

The field instruction module in social work provides students with an opportunity to obtain both formal and practical training (Kanengoni, 2014; Reamer, 2012). In this section I report on descriptions provided by participants of the requirements of the field instruction programme, the requirement of supervision, and the integration of theory into practice. Sub-theme 2.1: Describing the field instruction requirements.

In Case 2, there is an average of 70 students at fourth-year level [Case2_PSA_D25]. The fourth-year field instruction programme is built on the premise that students would have completed approximately 20 days of field instruction in places like schools or creches at second-year level, and 60 days at the third-year with placements at non-governmental organisations, schools and community-based organisations [Case2_PSA_D25]. A student reflected on field instruction experience in the build-up to the fourth-year field instruction module:

\[At\] 3rd year when we were doing group work, what we were doing on the prac [practical] wasn’t what we were being taught at that time, now we do things in the prac and when you come back [to university] after maybe 2 weeks then that is when we are being actually taught what we were supposed to do before [Case2_St4_D22_L61].

According to this statement, the student reported on the timing disjuncture between the teaching and placement requirements, leaving students unprepared for field instruction practice.
Fourth-year students were required to spend four days a week over 19 weeks (totalling 608 hours at
the placement during the first semester of the academic year [Case2_PSA_D25], and “required to
attend supervision, fieldwork meetings and complete research during this time” and “on a Friday
students also attend research supervision at the university” [Case2_PSA_D25].

In describing the type of placement opportunities, the university reported that students were placed
in “disadvantaged areas and communities” where there was a “risk of very poor infrastructure, high
crime rates, izinyoka’s [illegal electrical connections]. These are commonplace during home visits”
[Case2_PAS_D25].

The learning guide elaborately described the assessments procedures for students but fell short on the
nature of and quantity of cases for assessments. The practice educator seemed oblivious of the
requirement for casework and reflected: “I said to my group because I have a large number of
students, I would prefer maybe six cases’’ [Case2_PracEduc2_D13_L64]. The requirement for
practice should be specified upfront to students and supervisors and be uniform for all students.

One major observation and concern that I had in Case 2 was that students started field instruction in
January of the semester yet were only registered as students in February. Students were not required
to be registered at the university for the field instruction module before starting the placement. This
meant that students started and continued with their field instruction placements without being
registered at the university for that academic year. The implication is that the student is accepted into
the placement agency without being a registered student at the university. This opens the opportunity
for the student to engage in professional tasks with service users, receive supervision and pursue the
requirements of the module. The placement agency may be placed in a litigious situation should there
be any professional misconduct from the student during that time. This practice has legal implications
for all those involved in the field instruction programme and needs urgent consideration to avoid
litigation in the event of a mishap. For example, there could be legal implications should the agency,
supervisor or service user realise that the student is not yet registered as a student for that year. Should
the student be involved in an accident at the agency or unprofessional behaviour, would that student
benefit from an indemnity; and there could be implications for the agency if the service user realises
and reports being attended to by an unregistered student.

5.3.2.1. Sub-theme 2.2: Supervision

All students practice field instruction under the supervision of a registered social worker (SACSSP,
2006). According to the learning guide provision was made for university-based supervisors to
oversee the student placement [Case2_LG_D61_P15]. However, this was not practised. Students

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encountered the agency-based supervisor as the primary and only supervisor, and with the practice educator as the fieldwork coordinator. The latter was also the view of the practice educator.

Regarding the process of supervision, this feedback from one agency supervisor seemed to demonstrate structure in the type and content of supervision rendered to a student: “I would ask them their expectations. What is their plan in terms of [supervision] and how did they come about choosing [this placement] to be the place of conducting practical work” [Case2_StSup4_D21_L14]. This supervisor provided the student with an induction to casework: “I [give] the student a very thin file to go through... Before writing the report [they] interpret it to me. What was their understanding? What did they pick up? What did they learn?” [Case2_StSup4_D21_L27].

On the other hand, a supervisor at another placement agency viewed the purpose of the student placement as easing her workload: “She is assisting me in my work. I show her how to do foster care reviews” [Case2_StSup1_D14_L38]. This statement indicates that the student experience was built on the supervisor’s workload, focused solely on reviewing foster care orders, and may not have provided the necessary field placement opportunity required by the university.

There were also views, mostly from alumni, on the lack of supervision from student supervisors: “the only time that I had supervision is the first week whereby I was introduced to how to write process notes and everything – and the rest I had to try myself” [Case2_Al13_D11_L121]. Another alumnus reflected that; “since my supervisor was not at work, nobody wanted to supervise [me]. They would say ‘I don’t have a student, I am busy’” [Case2_Al8_D18_L100]. This alumnus reflected that he was left to fend for himself when encountering difficult cases: “No one is supervising you; then the [other staff members] will tell you: ‘you are the social worker’. Sometimes we would encounter ... ‘a bomb of a case’ and you struggle to attend to this. You don’t know what to do” [Case2_Al10_D19_L31]. The feelings from students and alumni of abandonment by supervisors is a point for serious concern as the student’s development is now reliant on own initiatives to meet university requirements.

Another narrative from a student reflected the view that supervisors themselves failed to follow their advice on integration of theory into practice. The student’s observation of the supervisor’s practice revealed that “their [supervisor’s] counselling is not scientific; it’s just traditional; if a client comes they [supervisors] don’t follow the order like building rapport first and then...” [Case_A110_D19_L102-104].

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5.3.2.2. Sub-theme 2.3: Integration of theory into practice

Field instruction placements provide students with opportunities to practice what is learned in the classroom (Lister, 2012; Villanueva, 2013). In Case 2, the views of supervisors on the readiness of students reflected that students were ill-prepared on this aspect: “their [students’] inability to account for theoretically...what they did was very poor” [Case2_StSup2_D20_L46]; and “they had difficulty in the execution, and I think they fell back on what they knew” [Case2_StSup2_D20_L46].

However, the views from students and alumni indicated a naivety and confusion as to what was expected: “I was fortunate because I had to integrate theory into practice – that is all that I had to do” [Case2_Al3_D11_L121]. This statement reflected a naïve view of field instruction and the praxis. It further simplified the process of field instruction simply into integrating theory into practice. Another student reflected that: “Sometimes theory will say if you do this then expect this to happen; and that doesn’t take place and then you wonder what do I do from this moment onwards?” [Case2_Al10_D19_L30]. This statement further reflects naivety as well as a lack of understanding of praxis (Villanueva, 2013).

The next theme focused on whom participants view as significant in their field instruction education.

5.3.3. Theme 3: Participants’ views of the educational team

Field instruction requires that student learning occurs within a team approach (Dimo, 2013; Shokane et al., 2016). The following two visual depictions illustrate the views of two alumni.

![Figure 5.11. Visual presentation 1 of the educational team](image)

In Figure 5.11, the alumnus viewed the fieldwork coordinator or practice educator as the most significant and identified this with an asterisk. This participant also reflected that fellow students and...
lecturers were significant and ranked higher than supervisors, community members, administrative staff and social workers at the agency. Interestingly, this visual also lists the importance of the knowledge gained from literature and legislation that was significant during the process [Case2_Al_D38_Vis_4].

Figure 5.12. Visual presentation 2 of the educational team

In Figure 5.12, the alumnus identified the role of the supervisor at the agency and the lecturer at the university as vital to the field instruction programme. This statement further highlights the alumnus’ view on the relationship between the university and the supervisor. Figure 5.12 also reflects fellow students and agency staff as significant [Case2_Al_D37_Vis3].

5.3.3.1. Sub-theme 3.1: The student supervisor

The student supervisor is responsible for the transmission of knowledge on social work practice (McSweeney & Williams, 2018) as well as monitoring of the student’s compliance with student requirements at the placement agency (Kiser, 2016; Mumm, 2006).

The differentiation in roles of the university-based supervisor and agency based supervisor is depicted in the learning guide [Case2_LG_D61]. Despite this indication, it was not followed in practice. Thus in this section, only the role of the agency-based supervisor as emanating from the interviews will be discussed.

Views on the role of the student supervisor were offered from the perspectives of the university, the supervisors, alumni and students. One of the views from a supervisor was the difficulty in teaching
students skills in the workplace. The supervisor reflected that: “It is not easy to teach them [students] sometimes. They don’t want to work” [Case2_StSup2_D14_L46]. This statement judged students on the supervisor’s experience and reflected on students being unwilling to receive teaching. The supervisor reflected further on the administrative component of the supervision process: “and there is that form or booklet we need to fill in when they are going back. It is too long” [Case2_StSup2_D14_L46]. In this statement, the negativity of the student supervisor was also evident in the reluctance to complete evaluations of the student’s placement.

However, some alumni had reflected positively on their experiences with their supervisors: “She also commended me. She said since you were here, now I want to come to work. I am interested again in work. That was nice of her” [Case2_Al7_D18_L153]. This statement reflected on the renewed passion in the supervisor that the student brought into the student-supervisor relationship.

Further positive reflections of the student-supervisor relationship were reflected in the following statement:

Mine [supervisor] was perfect with everything. She told me that you need to bring the best of yourself. She said ‘I need to know who you are? What are your strengths and your weaknesses? And the only thing that will tell you that is when you are writing those reports. You are not here to copy and paste from other reports, you need to read them and see how they are written, but now you need to bring yourself out and be able to write those reports yourself’ [Case2_Al_D11_L118].

The above statement revealed the supervisor’s ability to direct the student’s learning positively, facilitating the way to mastery akin to that reflected in literature on the Circle of Courage (Brendtro, Mitchell, & Jackson, 2014), where young people develop from and become proficient at difficult tasks. This was evident in the alumnus’ following statement: “So I was able to write my own report. I was able to stand in front of the magistrate, to present my own case with Miss X on my side. So I never had a problem” [Case2_Al_D11_L118].

On the other hand, the negative qualities of supervisors were also reported. Alumnus 6 indicated: “My supervisor... didn’t have a backbone.” [Case2_Al6_D2_L153]. This statement was indicative of an alumnus who viewed the supervisor as a poor role model unable to make decisions or perform supervisory functions (Kiser, 2016).
Agency-based supervisees are employees of the agency who are tasked with rendering social work services and student supervision. However, in the following example, the agency-based supervisor abandoned social work tasks to the students while having a second job:

*My supervisor would sell ‘Home Choice’ [student explained that Home Choice was a private company that sold blankets, curtaining and bedding via a catalogue system]. And I would have to do her job. She would go around offices selling it during work hours. She would walk to the Town and show the catalogue [while] we [students] would have to sit in the office [Case2_Al7_D18_L109].*

In the above statement, the alumnus reported on the supervisor’s unprofessionalism, indulging in private non-social work tasks during official working hours, and in so doing teaching students that such behaviour was acceptable in the field. This alumnus elaborated further that the supervisor abandoned her supervisory duties and it was left to other professional and non-professional staff to train the student: “The co-workers [at the agency] always assisted me on how to do casework, how to do conduct a case, [and] how to write a report. Her [the supervisor’s] co-workers taught me how to do those things [Case2_Al7_D18_L110]. In addition to feeling abandoned, “She [supervisor] did not have time for me [Case2_Al7_D18_L111], the alumnus felt exploited as a student: “I was like an assistant to rescue her out of her workload” [Case2_Al7_D18_L111]. The alumnus explained that in order to cope with the anxiety of having such a supervisor, she developed the following strategy: “Sometimes I would escape and hide in the boardroom to do my reports” [Case2_Al7_D18_L111].

This is indicative of the unease and intimidation experienced by the student who explained that “If I said I couldn’t help her, she would say ‘you have to do it’. It was too much” [Case2_Al7_D18_L111].

Such behaviour of a supervisor indicates a severe breach of the Ethical Code of the profession (SACSSP, 2006), the lack of respect for the employer (SACSSP, 2006) and brings the profession of social work into disrepute (DSD, 1993).

Students’ entry to the agency is a planned process (Mathews et al., 2014). From experience, I have found that a supervisor is usually designated to have a student prior to the students’ arrival at the agency and plans are made for such arrival. However, this does not seem to be in practice in Case 2:

*[My] supervisor lacked knowledge. She didn’t know what to do with me. We [students] sat for 2 months with no work. We would just come to the office and sit and then when the client comes was the only time we did work. Then I did say to her ‘look I can’t do this, I am not here to sit’. She said, ‘no, relax man, you are still a student, and there is lots of time’. I said ‘no’. Until I spoke up – ‘I can’t do this. I am here to learn. Give me something to do’, and that is
when she went to the office supervisor and asked for files that she gave me. She did have her own files. She would pick up the phone and say ‘there is no airtime’. Then she puts the phone back. Then when it is time for a home visit – she would say ‘no, there is no car. We don’t go’ [Case2_AL8_D18_L74-84].

The above narrative further demonstrates the lack of supervisor commitment to the growth and development of the student, whilst also reflecting on the student’s resolve to engage in activism, albeit within the supervisory relationship. However, this example also demonstrates that this situation could have been addressed had the university paid close attention to the needs of the students and the monitoring of placements.

Supervisors’ unprofessional behaviour was heightened during a period of industrial action taken in 2017. “There was a big strike, so we had to sit at home. The strike was radical. They [striking staff] used to beat people up” [Case2_AL8_D18_L85]. It was further reflected that students were prevented from entering the premises at the agency: “The gate [to the agency] was closed. They [striking staff] prevented anyone from coming into the building. I was told not to come because it was going to be dangerous for me to come in” [Case2_AL8_D18_L86]; “They [striking staff] burnt cars. All the tyres were slashed, so cars would not move. On top of the lack of resources, they damaged the cars” [Case2_AL8_D18_L99]. These statements indicate the impact of the industrial action on the students and the fact that students were not oblivious to the unprofessional actions of their supervisors.

But it appears that the attitudes of some supervisors are not unknown to the university. The practice educator was cognisant of this when preparing the students for their placements:

*For instance, when I prepared [students] last year – I told them ‘guys be ready. There are things that for the first time you will deal with in the work environment. And you will be surprised more especially to the behaviour of the professionals. We see the professionals when they are outside, but when they are inside their offices, they are different. And our ethics, our principles, they [supervisors] tend to forget about them. Be prepared for that. Don’t be surprised. You must know that is the work environment’ [Case2_PracEduc2_D13_L175].*

The narratives on the qualities and behaviour of supervisors, the lack of preparation to accept students, and the supervisors’ unprofessional behaviour is cause for concern for the training and development of students and in the development of the profession. The failure of reporting such behaviour by either the students to the university or by the university to the professional body is a point for further discussion.
5.3.3.2. Sub-theme 3.2: The practice educator

The role of the practice educator is crucial to the field instruction programme (McSweeney & Williams, 2018). The interview with practice educator 1 [Case2_PracEduc1_D12] focused on the overall student BSW programme, with a discussion on the geographical location of the site and the resource availability within rural communities. The interview with practice educator 2 [Case2_PracEduc2_D13] who was responsible for the fourth-year field instruction programme bears relevance to this section. The educator reflected on role functions: “I am a social work coordinator for the field placement. That is my speciality. To deal with all those who are doing placement” [Case2_PracEduc2_D13_L177].

Taking into account the discussion in the earlier section on the behaviour of supervisors in practice, the practice educator had this to say about students entering the profession: “I tell them [students] ‘because you are a student they [the agency] will expect you to finish that caseload and you must stand up so that you know that you are here for a short time and you are expected to learn most of the things in a short space of time’” [Case2_PracEduc2_D13_L177]. This advice for the students was based on the practice educator’s experiences within the profession: “but the unfortunate part [is] we are preparing people who will join that corrupt system. With the hope at the end of the day they won’t be corrupt” [Case2_PracEduc2_D13_L177]. This advice appears to present a clouded judgement of supervisors and social workers at agencies who practice ethically, and this then impacts on communication given to students of the learning environment within the workplace.

Two other factors relating to the role of the practice educator are noted. First, the learning guide indicates the presence of a “university supervisor” responsible for attending three review meetings with the student and agency supervisor, as well as the assessment and evaluation of specified tasks [Case2_LG_D61_P15]. According to the practice educator, this Case did not have any university-based supervisors in practice, and it was left to the practice educator to carry out such a task in addition to regular field instruction co-ordination.

Second, the learning guide refers to the use of “second opinion practice educators” in this Case [Case2_LG_D61_P7]. It was unclear who or what a second opinion practice teacher was until this was researched. According to Parker (2010, p. 4), “a second opinion practice teacher has been used as a means of introducing a fair, objective process when dealing with placement difficulties”. Parker (2010, p. 3) further elaborates that this term was recognised within “The Higher Education Academy subject centre for social work and social policy (SWAP) in the UK”. The learning guide in Case 2, therefore, were further aligned with UK standards.
5.3.3.3. Sub-theme 3.3: The placement agency

The placement agency is the basis for students to obtain practical experience during their fourth-year field instruction training (Mathews et al., 2014). The views on the relevance of the agency emanated from discussions with alumni in this research.

There were differing views from alumni in Case 2 on their placement agencies. One alumnus commented on the placement agency positively: “I’ve seen people working together like a family. It’s just a small department there, so the relationship between them, although there may be some conflicting disputes but the love of family, it’s amazing” [Case2_A13_D11_L45]. On the other hand, others commented on the issue of infrastructure and behaviour of staff. Commenting on the lack of office space: “In each office, you will find about eight social workers and a chair here, a chair there” [Case2_A13_D11_L65]. Commenting on the professionalism of the agency staff, another reflected the following: “social workers would eat in front of a client. And there was no confidentiality. You worked at an open space, and sometimes the clients don’t feel comfortable with communicating their feelings and experiences with the social worker” [Case2_A13_D19_L41].

5.3.3.4. Sub-theme 3.4: The student

The student is central to learning (Bogo & Wayne, 2013; Mathews et al., 2014; Royse et al., 2012). One student reflected on entry into the agency and the office backlog. “I had to make 86 phone calls on one day to call foster parents” [Case2_A14_D11_L22], referring to the agency backlog of long-standing foster care cases. Another student reported on the casework experience and nature of home visits undertaken: “we would find out the house is not clean. We [students] would clean it, and we would pray...we could not leave out the spirituality so we would pray. That made us happy” [Case2_A15_D18_L30]. These experiences of the previous students reflect on unique roles taken on in the profession and the skewed focus of the students on being happy as opposed to focusing on the needs of the service user. The focus on foster care cases has been reported on across all three cases. On the other hand, the student’s reflection on having to clean the home of a service user is not a typical social work function. In addition, the matter of religious prayer is open for debate, mainly when seen in relation to the principles of social work practice (Hancock, 1997; IASSW-IETS, 2018).

One of the questions posed to participants was their view of working primarily in rural and poorly resourced communities. The responses were mostly from alumni who reflected on the community resources and protocols: “Working in rural areas means the struggle, lack of resources, lack of empowerment. People are not empowered. You try by all means to do what you can, but people are
not motivated” [Case2_A1_D11_L152]; “And you cannot walk from village to village. It’s the gravel road – because you have just come on the main road between the villages” [Case2_A11_D11_L158]; and “You have to meet with expertise of the community people like the Inkosi [Chief]. You may have a meeting. You take them to the available resources” [Case2_A12_D11_L159].

Students also referred to the patriarchal views in rural villages: “In the rural areas people would see you as this woman that is a social worker and look at your age and be like- ‘you are never going to help us. You can’t come here and think that you will change how we live’” [Case2_A13_D11_L160]; “In the rural areas it is believed that if you are not married then who are you to talk with us. We are the men in this village so how can you come here and stand here and tell me what to do and when to do it” [Case2_A14_D11_L161]; and “[As a] a woman. I can’t go to that place wearing a pants [trousers], so I have to wear a dress and have a doek [scarf] on my head. That is very important. We learn [about] cultures and we adapt” [Case2_A13_D11_L162].

These sentiments provided by the students reflect insight into working in rural communities and calls for a deep understanding of cultures and ethnicity by students before entering such communities. Similar arguments have been put forth by researchers working in rural communities (Kreitzer, 2012; Thabede, 2008) and strengthen recent arguments in humanities and the social work profession on decoloniality and understanding indigenous practices of communities (LeGrange, 2014; Lekganyane, 2018; Tamburro, 2013).

5.3.4. Theme 4: Participants’ perspectives of the placement relationship

The placement relationship in this theme refers to the relationship between the university and the placement agency. Research by Kiser (2016) and Wilson (1981) argue that the practice educator facilitates the placement relationship. Such a relationship would entail networking with human service agencies for placements for students and matching students with the placements.

5.3.4.1. Sub-theme 4.1: Obtaining placements for students

According to communication with the field instruction site before the research, it was learnt that “the fieldwork coordinator finds placements, matches students to agencies, draws up service level agreements, and visits new sites for screening. Each student has an onsite social work agency supervisor” [Case2_PSA_D25]. I was unable to obtain written confirmation of this in the leaning guide for Case 2 [Case2_LG_D61]. However, what I noted from the learning guide is that students were required to have experience in “at least two practice settings” at the fourth-year level [Case2_LG_D61_P20]. There were no verbal indications from any participant in this thesis of the
requirement to have two practice settings. Another note is that in addition to the field instruction placements, students were expected to take the “initiative by finding various social work agencies where they might be able to do [an additional four days of] voluntary work across a three year period during the degree” [Case2_LG_D61_P9]. Participants did not seem aware of this requirement, nor of the reasons.

Regarding the sourcing of placements, the following was reported by students and alumni: “We had to look for placements ourselves. I go to an NGO that is not even registered [as a non-governmental organisation]” [Case2_Al6_D18_L52]. The alumnus further reflected that: “I was just called [by the university] and asked where are you doing your placement? That was it. The university did not ask for the telephone number or if it was really there” [Case2_Al6_D18_L52-57]. These statements do not reflect well on the university’s attempts to place students with suitable human service agencies.

Students were permitted to obtain placements closer to their family home: “for me it was an advantage to have to look for my own because it was closer to home and it has less expenditures” as “if the university maybe places me in a far-away town, then I will have to rent out a flat, pay for transport” [Case2_Al3_D11_L85].

From the above discussions, it appears that the sourcing of suitable placements is of concern to the students. Had this been clearly spelt out in the learning guide, students would have recourse to address their concerns.

5.3.4.2. Sub-theme 4.2: Verification and monitoring of student placements

The university’s ability to monitor students during their placements is generally through a process of continuous contact with the student, supervisor and agency representatives. Monitoring of placements ensures that student and agency challenges are timeously addressed. In Case 2, the general response from alumni was that they were disappointed at the lack of contact between the university and the placement agency.

One alumnus reflected that the lack of contact from this site was seen in response to the frequency of contact from other universities who placed students at the same placement agency. The alumnus explained: “I was at a placement with a student from another rural university and that university used to visit the organisation” [Case2_Al7_D18_L150]. The alumnus reflected feeling neglected as there was little if any contact from her university which resulted in “the [agency-based] supervisor gives more attention to students whose universities visit than those students from universities that don’t visit the agency” [Case2_Al7_D18_L150]. Similarly, another alumnus reported: “all other
universities came [to the agency] to discuss all the problems for the 6 months. So this university [Case 2] did not. So I had to start later” [Case2_A15_D18_L74].

Some agencies required students to attend a preliminary interview as: “we want to see you as a person, not the university because we know that they [the university] will never come” [Case2_A12_D11_L127]. The following reflection also supported the above statement: “No-one [from the university] came. Even though it was written in the [contract] that the supervisor from the university will come on a certain date. We would wait for her” [Case2_A14_D11_L96]. The disappointment from one student was evident in this narrative: “My supervisor was always asking ‘where is your university supervisor?’ and then I gave her the contact to call her and then she told me ‘she said she is coming next week’. Come next week, no one is coming” [Case2_A13_D11_L119].

The university does not take the lead in sourcing placements, verifying student-initiated placements, and monitoring placements for the duration of the placement. While there were many concerns from alumni in this regard, I did not have the opportunity to obtain the university’s response to these complaints, particularly as the alumni referred to a previous practice educator who was not a participant of this research. Under this theme, the views of participants on the relationship between the university and agency were perceived as largely dysfunctional due to the failure of the university to obtain suitable placements, monitor the student placements and support students during their placements.

5.3.5. Summary of Case 2

Case 2 is located in a rural part of South Africa that comprises 45 villages across a wide radius. The area itself has limited resources. What was unique about the placements was that students were placed mostly in communities where there were protocols to be followed before placements commenced. The protocols determined access to the communities for any form of intervention and controlled by gatekeepers in the form of the ‘inkosi’ or chief, as is typical of rural communities (Kreitzer, 2012). The implication for the student placement is that placements can only commence upon consent of the community leaders. Unless the university has had pre-engagements with the community leaders to facilitate the student’s entry to the community, it was likely that students would experience delays in accessing the service users. These delays would have a ripple effect on the completion of the field instruction programme during the time frame set by the university.

Case 2 followed a block model of field instruction. This was undertaken in the first semester when students began their placements before registration for the module at the university. Commencement of field instruction before being registered for the module ignores the possibility of litigation by
affected persons being served by students. Students did not have legal entrance to the agency. This practice also has the potential to place the agency and university at risk. Students should be registered for the year at the university before entering the placement agency in order to obviate and mitigate any risk to the student, agency, service user, supervisor and the university.

Students reported varied experiences at placement agencies. Some placements offered only training in foster care cases instead of allowing the student an array of counselling opportunities. Students reportedly focused on administrative tasks, in helping agencies in clearing foster care backlogs rather than being trained how to render efficient social work services. This impacts on whether the students, in fact, meet the requirements of the field instruction programme, noting also that the requirements of the field are not aligned with the learning guide.

A persistent concern, in this case, was its alignment to UK based standards. These incongruences have the potential to misguide and mislead students as to assessment standards. In addition, this would place students at a disadvantage during external examination procedures and would have repercussions for any external evaluation of the programme.

The learning guide indicates the presence of a university-based student supervisor; this was not the practice. Thus it was left to the practice educator to serve this function in addition to coordination of student placements.

The lack of contact between the university and placement agency was also reported on. There were reports of failure by the university to source suitable placements, verify placements, as well as monitor student activities at the agencies. Also relating to placements is the delay in students accessing service users in rural communities as a result of community protocols. This would call for the university to facilitate the students’ access by networking with community leaders in advance and before placement commencement.

Further concerns related to the behaviour of supervisors, as well as the attitude of supervisors towards taking on students. It has been reported that some supervisors resorted to unprofessional conduct and were poor role models. This kind of behaviour of supervisors was not unknown to the university. In addition, the interviewer encountered one supervisor who demonstrated a lack of motivation to supervise, was extremely ill-prepared, and expressed resistance and a lack of commitment to student supervision. Many of the above factors will be addressed in subsequent Chapters in this thesis.
5.4. Case 3

Case 3 is a fourth-year field instruction programme positioned in an urban and well-resourced part of South Africa. Three images of the area are presented in order to provide a visual overview of the type of housing in the vicinity of the site. Figure 5.13 reflects the urban type housing in the area, while Figure 5.14 reflects homes in previously disadvantaged areas. Figure 5.15 reflects the informal dwellings that are generally located in pockets in various parts of the geographical area within which this site is based.

Figure 5.13. Case 3: View of homes in urban developments

Figure 5.14. Case 3: View of homes in previously disadvantaged areas

Figure 5.15. Case 3: View of informal dwellings
Figures 5.13, 5.14 and 5.15 (obtained from www.google.com) provide a visual overview of the area pertaining to field instruction placements. While the field instruction site is located in a well-resourced urban environment; cognisance must be taken of communities which were seen to house previously disadvantaged persons, as well as informal dwellings located both within and on the outskirts of the city (Noyoo & Sobantu, 2018).

As indicated in Table 5.5, there were 24 participants, comprising four males and 20 females. The participants included a practice lecturer, three university-based supervisors, two agency-based supervisors, eleven students, five alumni and two agency representatives. Regarding the staffing structure within the field instruction unit at the university site, the university-based supervisors also taught the field instruction theory within the classroom within smaller groups. The practice educator, in this Case, was the fieldwork co-ordinator who also served as a university-based supervisor to a small group of students.

Table 5.5. Case 3: Participant profiles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PRACTICE EDUCATOR</th>
<th>STUDENT SUPERVISORS</th>
<th>STUDENTS</th>
<th>ALUMNI</th>
<th>AGENCY REPRESENTATIVES</th>
<th>TOTALS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>FEMALE</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The gender distribution is tabulated in Table 5.5 and is presented in Figure 5.16.

Figure 5.16. Case 3: Gender and designation distribution

A Systems Analysis of Field Instruction in Social Work Education
In Case 3 there were four persons that the university and students identified as practice lecturers in the fourth-year field instruction programme, all of whom also serve as university-based student supervisors, and one of whom is responsible for the overall coordination of the programme. Of the four university-based student supervisors, one is also based at- and oversees student placements at a non-governmental welfare organisation. Taking this structure into account, it became practical to redefine these participants as one practice educator and five student supervisors, of the latter, there were three university-based supervisors, and two were based at agencies where students were placed.

11 students were interviewed, both at the campus and at the field placement site. There were five alumni interviewed, two of whom were in employment, one unemployed and two enrolled for a postgraduate degree in social work. Two agency representatives were interviewed, one based at a non-governmental organisation and one at a private health care facility.

5.4.1. **Theme 1: Policy documents on field instruction**

This Case provided access to two documents for this research, namely a BSW field instruction policy for the field instruction component of the degree [Case3_FIP_D23] and a fourth-year field instruction learning guide [Case3_LG_D45]. The BSW field instruction policy documented the structure of the programme, spanning first to the fourth year. The document indicated a building block approach to field instruction. The policy also revealed that social work students in the first year were introduced to community projects via a process of volunteerism; in second-year casework, co-facilitated group work held mostly on the campus, and community work conducted in the local communities. The third-year field instruction process is a build-up from the previous years with students placed at local schools and gaining more experience in case, group and community work [Case3_FIP_D23_P6-9].

The fourth-year learning guide was a comprehensive document that detailed the requirements for the module, the requirements for assessment, and the responsibilities of the educational partners in the field instruction programme. This document was in the process of being restructured as it was based on the former exit level outcomes of the BSW and has not as yet included the new qualification requirements [Case3_LG_D45].

5.4.2. **Theme 2: Participants’ views of the field instruction programme**

The construction of any field instruction programme is the responsibility of the university (Royse et al., 2012). The curriculum is based on established policies and procedures aimed to support student interaction in various social work situations (Wilson, 1981). In this theme, I explore participant views on the field instruction programme in Case 3.
5.4.2.1. Sub-theme 2.1: Describing the field instruction requirements

The requirements for field instruction are set out in learning guide of the field instruction programme. Thus the requirements for field instruction in Case 3 are documented in the fourth-year learning guide [Case3_LG_D45].

The requirement for casework is one individual case submitted for assessment to the university-based supervisor [Case3_StSup3_D16_L38]. For groupwork, “they need to have a group, either feeding into the project or sustaining or enhancing the project so it’s one study unit although they still write a separate proposal and process notes for the group work” [Case3_StSup2_D16_L37]. For community work, the emphasis was on long-term planning and implementation of projects: “[Students] must be involved as from February until October in the community. They must have a task team, and an action committee” [Case3_StSup2_D16_L42]. These requirements were aligned to the learning guide [Case3_LG_D45]. Whilst there was a common understanding of the field instruction requirements, the view of the agency-based supervisor revealed a different approach to community work: “In community work [the agency] has a theme for every month. They focus on emotional intelligence [with] a specific theme or emotion they deal with every month” [Case3_StSup4_D59_L52-54]. This meant that community work projects were predetermined, based on the needs of the agency.

A key requirement of field instruction is the timeous completion of administrative tasks. This was emphasised by the student supervisor, particularly given the multi-disciplinary approach followed at the placement. As this was a health-care facility, students interacted within a multi-disciplinary team. Such placements required students to maintain two sets of recording processes, namely a simplified one for the common agency file and a detailed set of process notes which are maintained by the student supervisor. In addition, students are required to complete detailed process recordings for university assessment purposes [Case3_StSup4_D59_L105].

The requirements for the field instruction programme were documented and this provided students with clear guidance on what was expected during the placement.

5.4.2.2. Sub-theme 2.2: Model of placement

This Case followed a concurrent placement model as students were at both the agency and the placement for the duration of, and throughout the academic year. Students were expected to complete 450 hours of field instruction, with a minimum of 16 hours per week at the placement, between “1 February until mid-October… [terminating] direct interventions for assessment purposes by the end
of September” (Case3_LG_D45_P2). The concurrent placement model meant that the academic programme at the university was structured to include formal lectures and supervision times scheduled on campus for two days per week.

While some students preferred the concurrent placement model, some students preferred being taught theory prior to commencing placements: “We had done group work [theory] before... I saw it come to life in the group work setting. Oh my gosh! It was so amazing to see it come to life whereas if I start with practice and I go back it’s like, ‘oh, ok, I saw it’” [Case3_St_D60_L88]. Another student preferred a block model [Case3_St_D60_L81] as a challenge was experienced in attendance at both the agency and university concurrently during the placement. Another student realised that the block model provided useful theory first: “I am only introduced to them after I have worked with that [service user]... It would be good for us to get a theoretical kind of basis [first]” [Case3_St_D60_L86].

One student supervisor preferred to see the model of the field instruction programme as a semi-concurrent model as the theory on groupwork and community work was completed in the student’s third year and so the lectures in the fourth year focused on “social development, supervision and management, specialised theories and research” Case3_StSup_D16_L 175-180].

While some participants preferred to have a block placement, the underlying factor was that the theory is provided before the students enter the field placement.

5.4.2.3. Sub-theme 2.3: Supervision

Engelbrecht (2014, p. 125) argues that effective supervision contributes to “competent professional practices that serve the best interests of service users”. This argument forms the basis of most discussions on supervision as a requirement of field instruction. Notwithstanding this, supervision is a requirement of any social work student during the field instruction process (SACSSP, 2006). In this section, the views of student supervisors focused on the management of the supervision process whilst the lone view presented by the student was on the learning experience.

The learning guide in Case 3 pointed to a structured and scheduled process of supervision [Case3_LG_D45]. Students were required to initiate “supervision appointments with the field supervisor [agency-based supervisor] and practice lecturer [university-based supervisor] on a regular basis” [Case3_LG_D45_P15]. Students were required to maintain a “supervision diary which includes a checklist indicating every supervision appointment [with the supervisor]”
Another requirement was that students enter the supervision session prepared for the discussion and any assessment tasks [Case3_LG_D45].

The process of supervision at the agency focused on daily consultations between the agency-based supervision and the student: “Every morning, they [the students] come to my office ... to see what the preparations [are] for the day” [Case3_StSup4_D59_L58]. This practice implied that the supervisor was actively involved in monitoring and managing the work of the student at the agency. Referring to the frequency of structured supervision at the agency, an agency-based supervisor reflected that “we do supervision once in 2 weeks on a Friday” [Case3_StSup4_D59_L58]. Supervision sessions follow a format, beginning with questions about the students’ coping skills in the work environment. This is what is referred to as ‘flourishing’ (Engelbrecht, 2014, p. 124) or concern with the coping skills and “overall well-being of the supervisee” (Engelbrecht, 2014, p. 124). This was also evident in the following narrative from a university-based supervisor: “at times we sit them down and say: ‘I see that you are not shining. I see that you don’t look okay. What is the problem?’” [Case3_StSup3_D16_L85]. It appears that structured supervision then moved from inquiring into the student’s coping to a more developmental approach “and then we focus on ... individual clients, with the community work, with the group work and then administration” [Case3_StSup4_D59_L60].

Cognisance was taken of the students’ academic and work pressures: “when the students are in their practical placements, they are the foot soldiers so if they are injured” continuing that “if they are not emotionally okay it will mean that clients will not get the best out of the service.... At times it is very difficult to separate our role ... with being a therapist” [Case3_StSup3_D16_L84]. And the supportive function of the supervisor took the form of mentorship and coaching at times, noting that students “have a lot of work and they have a lot of juggling and they go into a new place and they don’t really know what is expected, so we do a lot of coaching and guiding” [Case3_StSup3_D16_L87]. In addition to this, an effort is made to assist students in this way: “for example handing in process notes and assignments can now be done online”. This implied that “they don’t have to come in to hand it in to me, they don’t have to be on campus – they can just be on their computer and email it” as it “saves a lot more time not only in printing costs but in practical time of handing in” [Case3_StSup4_D16_L87].

Views from the university-based supervisors revealed the developmental nature of supervision (Botha, 2002). “In our small group discussion classes, at times we actually do not [have] pre-set case studies and scenarios. We at times ask the students to come up with a scenario... because it is something that they can identify with” [Case3_StSup3_D_L83]. This practice meant facilitating student-initiated discussions on cases.
The views of the supervision process from students was complimentary as supervision was viewed as part of the process of learning: “as much as we can be taught theory on what to do we cannot just go into it and just do whatever…this is where supervision comes in” [Case3_St_D60_L42].

5.4.2.4. Sub-theme 2.4: Integration of theory and practice

Students construct a body of knowledge based on theoretical knowledge and application of theoretical knowledge into practice with service users (Anastas, 2010; Parker, 2006). Students are taught how to integrate theoretical knowledge at university, but it is during practice that students actually realise the application of such theories (Botha, 2002). Thus a structured supervision process is integral to assisting students to integrate theory into practice (Ross & Ncube, 2018).

In this sub-theme, I explore the role of the university-based supervisor. By implication, this supervisor would have a firm awareness of the university requirements on praxis where the supervisor reported that based on classroom-based learning, students could then follow “step 1, step 2, step 3 [of the theory]” [Case3_StSup 4_D16_L78]. The dual roles of university-based supervisors resulted in an emphasis on aspects like reflection: “much of our focus in fourth year is on reflection. They [students] need to reflect to see what did they do? What is it that they can do differently next time because they already have the skills” [Case3_PracEd1_D16_L76].

Students and alumni were cognisant of the emphasis on the social developmental perspective of the BSW and attempted to draw this into their work: “It took me a month to understand [social development] then I have [realised] that communities are not socially and economically developed” [Case3_A1l_D27_L19]. “Social development actually opened our eyes to the broader perspective of social work...particularly about funding” [Case3_A12_D27_L20]. The developmental approach that was referred to by the students formed part of the teaching component on welfare services in South Africa (Patel, 2015), as well as a social developmental approach to supervision (Ross & Ncube, 2018).

However, the teaching of theories was not solely the task of the university. As reflected upon by an alumnus: “I felt like I needed to know more than I already did. So I did a lot of reading...like on trauma and bereavement” [Case3_A1_D27_L48]. This reflection indicated that students needed to take the initiative for learning that went beyond just what was discussed in class.

5.4.3. Theme 3: Participants’ views of the educational team

The team approach to field instruction in social work education is essential in helping the student during the process of learning (Rogers et al., 2000).
5.4.3.1. Sub-theme 3.1: The placement agency

In social work education, students complete the field instruction programme mainly at human service organisations (Shokane et al., 2016). The intention of such placements is to provide students with a holistic experience wherein all methods of social work may be practised (RSA, 1972; Sakaguchi & Sewpaul, 2011). In Case 3, students in the fourth-year field instruction programme were placed at human service agencies ranging from schools to non-governmental organisations to state facilities like hospitals and the police services. The views of an alumnus at the police services’ employee wellness section “focused mainly on the employees and immediate family members of the police” [Case3_Ai4_D56_L8]. The nature of this placement was also reflected upon positively by a current student but who also commented on the bureaucratic nature of the placement agency: “They respect one another; however they are very structured when it comes to the hierarchy” explaining that “If you want to talk to [a colleague about a case] you can’t just go directly to them” and that it was a tedious process. “You have to go through your supervisor. Your supervisor has to speak to them or speak to someone else for you to get to that person. It is just a long process” [Case3_St5_D60_L36].

It was the student’s view that this bureaucracy hampered collegiality among peers. However, on reflection by an alumnus on another placement agency, it was realised that collegiality was positively entrenched. Support was sought from other personnel at the office, for example, the project manager at the office who provided orientation and support during the placement and “was there to orientate me on the operations of the organisation [and] was actually helpful throughout the process” [Case3_Ai3_D27_L13].

Thus, the placement agency is seen as a resource for student practice and should, therefore, be carefully selected and suit the requirements of the field instruction programme.

5.4.3.2. Sub-theme 3.2: The student supervisor

The student supervisor is arguably a significant role-player in student development (Dimo, 2013). In Case 3 there were two types of student supervisors, namely university-based supervisors and agency-based supervisors.

The university-based student supervisor was seen as the hands-on supervisor who had structured weekly contact with an allocated group of students on campus [Case3_StSup_D16], as well as was responsible for the assessment of key aspects of the student’s performance [Case3_LG_D45]. Students were clear on the role of the university-based supervisor, particularly as they were actively
part of the university-based supervisors’ smaller cohort of students who met regularly for discussions and supervision [Case3_PracEduc1_D16].

Students and alumni were able to reflect positively on the role of the student supervisor: “She noticed when something was wrong with any of us. She knew all of [13 of] us by name in the group, [even though] we were at different placements” [Case3_A14_D56_L74-77]. Another reflection on the supportive function of the agency-based supervisor helped the student overcome the language barrier at the agency: “When my group members wanted me to speak Afrikaans, I thought they were racist” [Case3_A15_D28_L74]. The alumnus elaborated on the supervisor’s role when working with challenging or older service users: “but my university supervisor assured me that it was not about me, it’s just about the perception that older persons have that they brought now. Because they lived for a long time, they [these service users] were also in the apartheid years” [Case3_A15_D28_L74]. Thus, the alumnus was positive about her placement as she had received supportive and developmental supervision from the supervisor: “She [the supervisor] just encouraged me to hold on because we will find difficult clients in the future and I must start now to understand” [Case3_A15_D28_L74].

Views on the agency-based supervisor emanated from interviews with alumni and students in Case 3. Agency-based supervisors were significant in integrating the students into the workplace (Sosland & Lowenthal, 2017), particularly workplace environments where working in multi-disciplinary teams was essential (Taylor, 2004). “In a multi-disciplinary team you need to respect everybody and she knew the ins and outs. She knew the people” [Case3_A13_D27_L14]. Thus, the knowledge and ability to introduce the student to the many facets of the workplace may be a key factor in selecting student supervisors.

Agency-based supervisors were also seen to support the developmental approach to supervision (Bennet et al., 2013). “There were a lot of times when I wasn’t really used to getting criticised, but she was extremely honest and that was so helpful” [Case3_A13_D27_L14]. This student (now alumnus) explained the supervisor’s stance in reflecting on the student’s practice in such a way to develop the protégé’s capacity in the field. The student was initially not receptive to such critique: “I couldn’t understand what am I doing wrong? ‘You want 110 %’. ‘I am doing the best I can’. And then she would tell me ‘it’s not good enough’. I would be in tears because I am working so hard” [Case3_A13_D27_L14]. Such responses to new experiences in field instruction are not unique to this student’s encounter. However, the way the supervisor assesses the student’s knowledge and practice and subsequently effects change according to practice requirements is essential.
Another alumnus reflected on the support shown by a supervisor in terms of ethnic issues. The alumnus was placed at an agency where she was exposed to new cultures and a language barrier. However, it was not only the student (alumnus) who faced this challenge but also the supervisor who was from a different culture than the student. **“She [My supervisor] even practised speaking isiZulu just so that she could be on my level, in my shoes. In the Township they speak Sotho. I am a Tswana, but my supervisor was English-speaking but understood isiZulu”** [Case3_A15_D28_L64]. The supervisor’s actions is a further example of the supportive role of supervision (Kiser, 2016).

However, not all participants had supervisors who were available to render supervision. One student reflected on the absence of supervision from the agency-based supervisor. The student reported in the interview that the agency-based supervisor **“was absent for over a month. They say I should go to the chief social worker for supervision but [the chief social worker] is always busy and not always there in the office”** [Case3_St8_D60_L44]. The student deliberately did not reveal this to the university-based supervisor who could intervene in this matter. This student also failed to recognise that students may not function without the supervision of a social worker (SACSSP, 2006).

Students had varying views on reporting challenges to university-based supervisors. On the one hand, one student indicated that: **“I am just doing everything on my own currently and if I tell the [university-based supervisor] and she talks to them [the agency], they act like I reported them so I don’t share it with her. They [the agency] don’t even check my reports”** (Case3_St8_D60_L45). On the other hand, another reported **“I was having a disagreement with the top management to the point where my [agency-based] supervisor had to set an appointment with the [university-based supervisor] to say that these are the challenges we’re facing [regarding ethics and sharing of information]”** [Case3_A11_D27_L5-8]. The structure of having two supervisors, such as that evident in Case 3, should serve to protect students from challenges with supervision in the field. Thus, students are encouraged to report such challenges to the university-based supervisor.

5.4.3.3. **Sub-theme 3.3: The student**

Whilst it is generally agreed that students are central to the field instruction programme (Chen & Fortune, 2017), it is also essential that students receive adequate preparation for practice (Kourgiantakis et al., 2018). The newness of student experiences on the field may leave students bewildered, particularly as at fourth-year level students are exposed to intense social work situations. One student reflected on the type of new social work experiences: **“[We worked] with teenagers. We’ve had cases of sexual abuse. We’ve had cases of domestic violence and of teenage pregnancy.”**
"We’ve had family issues, dynamics within families” [Case3_St4_D60_L15]. The intensity of such experiences was new to the student.

Other new experiences were working in semi-urban communities or communities with limited resources. “I worked at the agency’s satellite office in the township which is a Black community...They are under-resourced there” [Case3_A15_D28_L54]. Another reflected: “I have never been to the informal settlements nearby. I want to go there but [was] told that I am going to have challenges in terms of implementing the programmes” [Case3_A12_D27_L40]. Here was a student who was keen to experience new situations in the field but was shielded from this by the supervisor. The supervisor’s suggestion to the student instead was: “[I was told that] political leaders have an influence on the community work projects so in a way I have to get them [political leaders] to be on my side” [Case3_A12_D27_L40]. This is yet another example of teaching students to engage with community leaders when working in certain communities.

5.4.3.4. Sub-theme 3.4: The practice educator

In this sub-theme, I report on the views of the practice educator as part of the educational team. The practice educator is responsible for ensuring that the student is exposed to the best possible field instruction experience with the available resources (Anastas, 2010). The practice educator is also responsible for the assessment and training of students during the duration of the field instruction programme (Parker, 2006).

In Case 3, the practice educator was responsible for the overall coordination of the field instruction programme at the university site. Given that the practice educator was also responsible for his/her own cohort of students, it was understandable that students were not entirely clear on the role function. “For me, since it was a new placement and I’m the first student to have went there, and the practice coordinator didn’t know what was going on in the placement” [Case3_A12_D27_L45]. This statement reflected the need for greater involvement of the practice educator in monitoring placements. However, this reflection from the student on the qualities of the practice educator is important: “Actually, she’s a leader. ... She is a perfectionist. So she wants everything done to the best. So it’s either you’re in it or you’re not” [Case3_A14_D56_L30].

In this theme, I reported on the various members of the educational team who were seen as significant in student learning in field instruction. In the next theme, I report on participants’ views on the placement relationship.
5.4.4. Theme 4: Participants’ perspectives of the placement relationship

A well-constructed relationship between these team members is essential in order for the student to have a well-rounded field instruction experience (Jones, 2015; Parker, 2006, 2010). In Case 3, one of the key findings was the implementation of the university structure of the field instruction programme that supported ease of contact between the university and agency. This created a firm footing in agencies, thereby supporting communication and supervision. This was evident in having a university-based supervisor who also supervised a student unit at a local non-governmental organisation [Case3_StSup3_D16_L108-109]. The responsibility of this employee was indicated in the following statement: “My responsibility is to liaise with the field supervisors [at the agency]” [Case3_StSup3_D16_L108-109]. This dual responsibility at the university and the placement agency appeared to enhance the monitoring of students at that placement agency.

The functioning of such practice was explained as: “We speak of having a student unit [at the agency], so we usually have about 8 -9 students that go to [the agency]. [The agency has] a specific student unit” [Case3_StSup3_D16_L108-109]. The student supervisor and agency representative was responsible for ensuring that students at the agency student unit were placed with designated agency-based supervisors, as well as served as a link between the agency and the university [Case3_StSup2_D16_L110].

The relationship between the university and agency was also strengthened by the frequency of contact. “We meet with the whole field supervisor group at least 2 to 3 times per year” [Case3_StSup2_D16_L156]. This practice had a positive effect in that supervisors established their own communication network via social media: “[Supervisors] formed a supportive structure for each other...[A supervisor] poses a question and the answer is right there” [Case3_StSup1_D16_L155]. This practice was observed by the students who reflected that “the field supervisor and [university] supervisor have a relationship, I know that they also meet just as supervisors and lecturers to discuss our progress” [Case3_St5_D60_L26].

Another strategy in Case 3 regarding placements was to place cohorts of students with particular university-based supervisors who understood the agency or that sector of work: “We actually have clusters where we try and look at our fields of interest and then we cluster our students under our supervision so those four or five organisations [are aligned with] the strengths of that lecturer” [Case3_StSup4_D16_L125]. The views from the students indicated the clarity of the relationship: and a student who regarded her agency based supervisor as the field expert, for example in the field of substance dependency, the “university supervisor has various topics to deal with, I think it wouldn’t
be as effective but if anything I have to do academically I ask my university supervisor. I think it works very well” [Case3_St4_D60_L25].

Another aspect regarding the relationship was the prior sourcing of placements. “This is done at the end of the 3rd year we have an information day and then the different agencies come present, recruit and the students make their preferences known” [Case3_PracEd1_D16_L35]. The strategy included using existing students to reflect on the agency experience: “the organisations usually bring along a current 4th year student so that the student then tells the 3rd years about his or her own experiences, challenges and things like that so that they also make an informed decision from a student perspective” [Case3_PracEd1_D16_L35]. This practice further supported making students aware of the specific requirements of the agency: “The agencies have the opportunity to say if there are some criteria, some need, for instance people who can speak Sotho, they can say this is more or less the language spoken in this specific area” [Case3_PracEd1_D16_L71-75], and provided information on other requirements and access to the agency: “If you need a vehicle and need a [driver’s] licence. Is there public transport available? How do you get there [to the agency]?” [Case3_PracEd1_D16_L71-75].

The strategies followed by the university in Case 3 appeared to support a structured relationship between the university and the placement agency and would be necessary for monitoring of placements.

5.4.5. Summary of Case 3

Case 3 is situated in an urbanised part of the country with easy access to varied resources. There are also opportunities for students to gain field instruction experience in working within the accessible communities that were considered previously disadvantaged, as well as working with communities in the informal community developments in the vicinity of this site.

Case 3 followed a concurrent model of field instruction where students shared time weekly at the agency and the university as part of a structured field instruction module. There were mixed feelings about the value of the concurrent placement model versus being in a block placement. Some students preferred the status quo to remain while some suggested that a block placement would provide opportunities for learning theory before entering field practice.

One of the key issues, in this Case, was the supervision structure. There were two types of supervisors in Case 3, namely the university-based supervisor and the agency-based supervisor, both of whom were to work closely with each other. The university-based supervisor also served to monitor the
placements and to ensure that students received supervision. This practice was not fool-proof though as there was one report of a student who did not receive supervision. This Case also divided students into smaller cohorts allocated to university-based supervisors. This was a strategy to ensure close monitoring of the students and support the student experience both in the field and at the university. However, in one known instance, this strategy failed one student who was not confident enough to disclose a lack of agency-based supervision to the university-based supervisor or the practice educator. This meant that students in such a position would practice without supervision, contrary to the profession’s Ethical Code, and thus risked exposing the university and placement agency to unethical conduct.

The staff structure, together with the strategies employed by this Case to monitor student field instruction, is unique. A clear demarcation of duties is noted. Students and alumni have reported mostly positively on their experiences of the relationship between the university and the placement agencies. Such a relationship was fostered by the constant contact between the university, the agency-based supervisor, and the agency itself.

5.5. Summary of cases

The table below contains a summary of the key themes taken from each of the three cases. These themes are presented per case and list the factors that hinder student learning and those factors that optimise or enhance student learning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case #</th>
<th>Chapter theme</th>
<th>Hinder learning</th>
<th>Optimise/Enrich learning</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| 1      | Policy documents on field instruction programmes | • Lack of overall or structured policy on field instruction [Case 1]  
• Learning guide focus on theory and expectations, not on implementation and failure to meet requirements [Case 1] | • Fourth-year learning guide in place [Case 1] |
| 1      | Participants views: describing field instruction programme | • Second and third-year placements appeared minor and effortless [Case 1].  
• Insufficient intensity of cases to prepare for the fourth year [Case 1_St4_D4_L4].  
• Groupwork removed from fourth-year programme [Case 1_PracEduc 1_D3_L113]. Practice educator of the view that this impacted on university-agency relationship [Case 1_PracEduc 1_D3_L113].  
• Specifications inconsistent for each method of social work [Case 1_LG_D31_Px] vs [Case 1_St3_D10_L103]. | • Class presentations [Case1_St5_D17_L75].  
• Supervision used as a debriefing session for student [Case1_A11_D1_L32]. |
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<th>Case #</th>
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</table>
| 1      | Participants’ views on praxis | • No indication in LG of university-based supervisor; thus indication of role differentiation of university-based vs agency supervisor  
• University is unable to train supervisors due to cost and distance factors [Case1_PracEduc1_D3_L42].  
• Student misconception of supervision as restrictive [Case1_St5_D17_L35-37].  | • Supersision seen as important to development [Case1_A11_D1_L32-33].                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 1      | Participants’ views on professional conduct and ethics | • Breach of confidentiality incident [Case1_PracEduc1_D3_L69].  
• No indication in learning guide of implications of breach of ethics  
• Students unable to relate to the profession’s requirements [Case1_St3_D10_L35-36].  
• Transport difficulties affect student punctuality at agency [Case1_St6_D9_L168].  
• Tensions about reporting misconduct [Case1_PracEduc1_D3_L69]. | • Learning guide stresses theoretical understanding of professional conduct [Case1_LG_D31_P17]  
• Some students aware that sexual relationships with clients forbidden [Case1_St3_D10_L35-36].  |
| 1      | Participants’ views on the educational team | • Breach of confidentiality incident [Case1_PracEduc1_D3_L69].  
• No indication in learning guide of implications of breach of ethics  
• Students unable to relate to the profession’s requirements [Case1_St3_D10_L35-36].  
• Transport difficulties affect student punctuality at agency [Case1_St6_D9_L168].  
• Tensions about reporting misconduct [Case1_PracEduc1_D3_L69]. | • Responsible for creating authentic learning opportunities [Case1_PracEduc1_D3_L65].  |
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<td>1</td>
<td>Participants’ views on the placement verification</td>
<td>Early permission needed from traditional councils [Case1_St5_D17_L19-21], [Case1_StSup2_D6_L123]. Not considered by university</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Participants’ views on the placement monitoring</td>
<td>University fails to monitor [Case1_StSup5_D4_L31], [Case1_St6_D9_L228]. Financial challenges at university [Case1_PracEduc1_D3_L42].</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Policy documents on field instruction programmes</td>
<td>Lack of overall or structured policy on field instruction Features of learning guide not aligned to South African standards Aspects of learning guide misguide students [Case2_LG_61_P7].</td>
<td>Learning guide in place [Case2_LG_D61].</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Participants views: describing field instruction programme</td>
<td>Theory taught after return from block field placement [Case2_St4_D22_L61]. Students commence field instruction prior to registration for the module (litigious implications) Safety risks during home visits [Case2_PAS_D25]. Inconsistent requirements by university [Case2_PracEduc2_D13_L64].</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Participants’ views on supervision</td>
<td>LG provides for university-based supervisor [Case2_LG_D61_P15], however not practised Students placed to ease social workers’ foster care backlog [Case2_StSup1_D14_L38]. Lack of supervision Students unable to manage difficult cases without support [Case2_A10_D19_L31].</td>
<td>Structured supervision noted in one instance [Case2_StSup4_D21_L14].</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Participants’ views on praxis</td>
<td>Unable to integrate theory in practice [Case2_StSup2_D20_L46]. Student viewed supervisor as not following praxis [Case_A11_D19_L102-104].</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Participants’ views on professional conduct and ethics</td>
<td>Lack of interviewing space [Case2_A13_D19_L41]- breached confidentiality principle</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Participants’ views on the educational team</td>
<td>Supervisor complained of administrative requirements of the university [Case2_StSup2_D14_L46].</td>
<td>Placement co-ordination [Case2_PracEduc2_D13_L177].</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Participants’ views on the practice educator</td>
<td>Workload includes monitoring placements [Case2_LG_D61_P15]. Workload unspecified LG includes “second opinion practice educators” [Case2_LG_D61_P7] but this is not known in practice</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Participants’ views on the placement agency</td>
<td>Poor agency support when supervisor absent [Case2_A18_D18_L100]. Lack of furniture, eg chairs [Case2_A13_D11_L65].</td>
<td>Positive reflection on unity amongst agency staff [Case2_A13_D11_L45].</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Participants’ views on the student supervisor</td>
<td>Supervisor had “no backbone” [Case2_A16_D2_L153]. Supervisor openly moonlighted during official hours [Case2_A17-8_D18_L109].</td>
<td>Developmental function [Case2_A11_D11_L118].</td>
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<td>Case #</td>
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| 2      | Participants’ views on the student | • Students unwilling to work [Case2_StSup2_D14_L46].  
• Over-focus on foster care [Case2_A14_D11_L22]. | • Positivity shown towards student [Case2_A17_D18_L153]. |
| 2      | Participants’ views on the service user | • Apathy, not empowered [Case2_A13_D11_L160].  
• Delays in access due to procedures  
• Limited community resources  
• Cultural barriers [Case2_A13_D11_L162].  
• Student’s gender and age as barriers [Case2_A14_D11_L161]. | |
| 2      | Participants’ views on the sourcing of placements | • LG states that students have two practice settings, but not practised [Case2_LG_D61_P20].  
• LG not aligned to working hours [Case2_LG_D61_P9].  
• Placement not sought timeously [Case2_A15_D18_L74], delayed student | |
| 2      | Participants’ views on the placement verification | • Placements not verified [Case2_A16_D18_L52-57].  
• Poor communication between university and agency [Case2_A110_D19_L98]. | |
| 2      | Participants’ views on the placement monitoring | • No monitoring by university  
• University fails to keep promises to visit agency [Case2_A14_D11_L96], [Case2_A17_D18_L150]. results in student neglected by supervisor | |
| 3      | Policy documents on field instruction programmes | • More clarity on requirements [Case3_StSup2_D16_L37]. | • BSW field instruction policy in place [Case3_FIP_D23_P6-9].  
• Detailed, updated and relevant learning guide in place [Case3_LG_D45]. |
| 3      | Participants’ views: describing field instruction programme | • Students ambivalent about model of placement due to workload [Case3_St_D60_L81].  
• Theory and skills received too late [Case3_St_D60_L86]. | • Preferred semi-concurrent, across two years [Case3_StSup_D16_L175-180]. |
| 3      | Participants’ views on supervision | • Student functioning without supervision [Case3_St8_D60_L45].  
afraid of reporting supervisor to university  
• Professional misconduct of supervisor noted [Case3_A11_D27_L5-8]-lack of confidentiality. | • LG stressed structured supervision process [Case3_LG_D45].  
• Online submissions touted [Case3_StSup4_D16_L87].  
• Supportive and developmental functions [Case3_StSup3_D16_L87].  
• Student participation in case studies and seminars [Case3_StSup3_D_L83]. |
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Participants’ views on praxis</td>
<td>• Supervisors stressed praxis [Case3_StSup 4_D16_L78].</td>
<td>• Practice educator unfamiliar with placement [Case3_Al2_D27_L45].</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Social development approach supported [Case3_Al2_D27_L19-20].</td>
<td>• Co-ordination function</td>
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<td>• Self-study initiated (e.g. trauma and bereavement [Case3_Al_D27_L48].</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Participants’ views on the practice educator</td>
<td>• Influence of political leadership on practice [Case3_Al2_D27_L40].</td>
<td>• Varied settings available [Case3_Al3_D27_L13].</td>
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<td>• Co-ordination function</td>
<td>• Mutual respect within multidisciplinary team settings [Case3_Al3_D27_L14].</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Participants’ views on the placement agency</td>
<td>• Student struggled to cope with supervisor’s demands [Case3_Al3_D27_L14].</td>
<td>• Two types of supervisors supported; e.g. university vs agency-based. Clear role differentiation [Case3_StSup_D16].</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Unavailability of agency supervisor [Case3_St8_D60_L44]</td>
<td>• Developmental supervisors [Case3_Al5_D28_L74].</td>
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<td>• Having two sets of supervisors advantageous in monitoring [Case3_StSup3_D16_L108-109].</td>
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<td>• University-based supervisor monitors student unit at agency [Case3_StSup2_D16_L110].</td>
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<td>• Bi-annual meetings with agency-based student supervisors [Case3_StSup2_D16_L156]. [Case3_St5_D60_L26].</td>
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<td>• Availability of university-based supervisor via WhatsApp group [Case3_StSup1_D16_L155].</td>
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<td>• University-supervisor allocated as per field of speciality/interests (e.g. hospitals, schools) [Case3_StSup4_D16_L125].</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Participants’ views on the student supervisor</td>
<td>• Placements sourced via a structured process in advance [Case3_PracEd1_D16_L35].</td>
<td>• Placements sourced via a structured process in advance [Case3_PracEd1_D16_L35].</td>
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<td>• Larger cohorts of students accepted at agency [Case3_StSup3_D16_L108-109]-special student unit noted</td>
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**5.6. Conclusion**

This Chapter focused on the elements and processes that comprised the field instruction system from the perspectives of the multiple participants, thereby responding to Objective 1 of the study as well as research sub-question one.

Each case was presented separately in this Chapter in order to provide a holistic picture of the respective case. Four themes were presented in each case. The first theme reflected on the policy...
documents of the case which provided insight into the requirements and management of the field instruction programme. Two documents in this regard were sought, namely the BSW field instruction policy (FIP) and the fourth-year learning guide (LG), both of which would serve as the standard operating procedures for the field instruction programme at the site. While all the cases had a learning guide specific to the fourth-year field instruction programme in place, only Case 3 had a formally constituted field instruction policy that guided the implementation of the field instruction programme across the years.

It is noted that Cases 1 and 2 originate from historically disadvantaged institutions (HDIs). These cases are located in semi-urban and rural areas respectively, whereas Case 3 is located within an urban environment. According to the Report of the Ministerial Committee for the Review of the Funding of Universities (DHET, 2014, pp. 14-16), HDIs were campuses or universities that were based in rural or similar locations, had poor resource potential and bore the effects of historical legacies in South Africa. Notwithstanding this statement, Case 3 also provided students with opportunities to work beyond the urban environment in view of the nature of the communities within access to the university site.

In this Chapter, reflections were observed of two types of field instruction models, namely the block and concurrent models. Both placement models appeared to be favoured by participants and were dependent on learning requirements. Another element in the field instruction process was the preparation of students prior to the placement and the preparation of the agencies and supervisors to receive the students. Many students felt that there was insufficient preparation prior to the placements, and some supervisors were ignorant of the requirements of the supervision process.

Theme 3 focused on the participant’s views of the members of the educational team. The element of the practice educator as central to the field instruction placement process was highlighted. Participants were of the view that both university-based and agency-based student supervisors played the dominant role. University-based supervisors were well placed to identify placement challenges and student issues, while agency-based supervisors were responsible for ensuring that students received a varied and supervised field instruction experience. However, there were many complaints of the lassitude and lack of commitment of supervisors. There were very few reports on supervisors who were able to transfer practice skills and wisdom to the students adequately. The resultant effect of having student supervisors who displayed such lassitude was that students were short-changed and poorly trained during the course of the placement.
In Theme 4, the focus was mainly on the university-agency relationship, and this related primarily to the sourcing and verification of placements. Students and alumni reported on the failure of universities to sometimes if at all, monitor the placements and this led to student dismay at the tardiness of the university. Irrespective, there are increasing demands placed on educators to deliver a high quality educational experience (Gorse et al., 2019).

The next Chapter discusses the findings of the cases in relation to the theoretical framework of the study and will present the six themes that emanated from the selective coding process. The findings will be presented across all three cases.
Chapter 6. Analysing field instruction systems

The whole is more than the sum of its parts.
Aristotle (384-322 BC)

6.1. Introduction

The previous Chapter reported on the findings of each case, using narratives from participants to identify and describe the elements involved in the field instruction process. This Chapter responds to Objective 2 of the study which is to analyse, using systems theory the field instruction system as a social system. The analysis was carefully crafted to respond to research sub-question two which was “how does the field instruction programme operate as a system?” This Chapter further responds to Objective 3, as well as Research sub-question 3 of the study, which is to determine what the critical factors are in the field instruction system that optimises or hinders the process of learning.

As the narrator in this thesis, I acknowledge that the construction of the meta-narrative is intricate and complex. It requires a solid understanding of the research questions and extracting from the data that which is relevant to the objectives of the study.

6.2. The identified themes from the research

This Chapter is based on the six key constructs of systems that were presented in Section 3.3 of Chapter 3. These constructs were construed from theories like GST, ecological, organisational and FST, and were adapted to form the six theoretical themes which are now used in this Chapter to analyse and understand the data on field instruction systems. These themes are presented in Figure 6.1.

Figure 6.1 presents an outline of the Chapter objectives, research sub-questions and key themes. This Chapter is predicated on data obtained on field instruction systems across all three cases. The unit of analysis is the field instruction system comprising the sub-groups of individuals and processes that form part of the field instruction programme.
Figure 6.1. Depicting the key objectives, research sub-questions and the six themes

Thus, this Chapter is descriptive but contains a strong analytical perspective that sets it apart from the narratives of the previous Chapter. A list of the themes and sub-themes is presented in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1. List of themes and sub-themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Sub-theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theme 1: Field instruction systems are contextual</td>
<td>Sub-theme 1: Contextualising field instruction systems</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Sub-theme 2: Hierarchies in field instruction systems</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sub-theme 3: Understanding parameters and lines of accountability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 2: Field instruction systems as a set of interrelated elements</td>
<td>Sub-theme 1: Significance of key persons</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sub-theme 2: Appointing supervisors with experience</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sub-theme 3: The value of placement selection</td>
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<td>Theme 3: Field instruction systems display goal-directed behaviour</td>
<td>Sub-theme 1: Field instruction systems are goal-seeking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sub-theme 2: Field instruction systems have common purpose</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sub-theme 3: Resilience and adaptation as behavioural responses</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theme 4: Field instruction systems are dynamic and change over time</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 5: Field instruction systems rely on communication and feedback</td>
<td>Sub-theme 1: Communication as a process of monitoring placements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sub-theme 2: Assessments and feedback in field instruction systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 6: Field instruction systems are greater than the sum of their parts</td>
<td>Sub-theme 1: Views on synergy and holism in field instruction systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sub-theme 2: Risks to the synergy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sub-theme 3: Students with special needs</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sub-theme 4: Financial constraints of students</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Sub-theme 5: The peer sub-system</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The themes and sub-themes listed in Table 6.1 are discussed in Sections 6.4 to 6.9 of this Chapter. In the next section, I describe the participants in the study.
6.3. Participant groups

A total of seventy participants from five groups or clusters of persons across all three cases formed part of the research. This clustering of participants was based on the maximum variation sampling technique suggested by Maxwell (2013).

The first group of participants included four practice educators, two from Case 2 and one each from Cases 1 and 3. Given that the norm for the number of practice educators per field instruction site was one practice educator, this figure implied that data saturation was met (Davern et al., 2017). Of significance is the years of experience of practice educators (Table 6.1). One of the four practice educators had eight months experience as an educator whilst the other three had more than five years each as a practice educator. In addition, each of the practice educators had several years of experience as social work practitioners prior to entering the university as educators. Three arguments arise from these statements: one is whether practice educators enter academia with experience as social work practitioners which provides the educator with a solid grasp of practice and its requirements; the second is whether the years of social work practice experience of the practice educator needs to be specified or be a prerequisite; and third is the academic experience prior to being appointed to the fourth-year field instruction programme.

The second group of participants were student supervisors. Fourteen student supervisors across all three cases were interviewed (Table 6.2). The student supervisors included on-site or agency-based field supervisors, as well as educators based at the university who were referred to as university-based student supervisors. Given that the study aimed to interview a total of nine student supervisors, this target was more than sufficiently met (Maxwell, 2013). The years of experience of student supervisors varied, from those who had just graduated thus having no practical experience, to experienced supervisors.

The third group of participants were the students. Twenty-one students were interviewed across the three cases (Table 6.2). The target was five students in each case, totalling 15 students, thus exceeding the target for sufficiency of participants (Maxwell, 2013).

Table 6.2. Distribution of participants across the three cases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRACTICE EDUCATOR</th>
<th>STUDENT SUPERVISOR</th>
<th>STUDENT</th>
<th>ALUMNI</th>
<th>AGENCY REP</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The fourth group of participants was alumni or recent graduates of the field instruction programme, which comprised the largest number of participants in this study. The target for the study was five alumni per case, however, the study reached 24 alumni (Table 6.2), thus reaching data saturation
(Davern et al., 2017). All alumni had completed the fourth-year field instruction programme within three years preceding the interview. This enabled a current and recent reflection on the field instruction programme.

The fifth and final group of participants in the research were the representatives from the agencies where students were placed for field instruction (Table 6.2). The role of agency representatives was, amongst others, to facilitate contact between the agency and university (Royse et al., 2012). Only four representatives from agencies participated, with at least one representative interviewed from each case. This figure fell short of the original target number intended for this study. This shortfall was attributed to availability, also noting that some on-site student supervisors participated in the research both as student supervisors and agency representatives.

Figure 6.2. Participant group distribution

Figure 6.2 provides an overall graphical representation of participant distribution. In summary, when compared to the proposed population of participants listed in Section 4.5.1, the numbers of students, alumni, practice educators and student supervisors were either higher or within the original targeted sample, while a reduced sample of agency representatives was interviewed.
6.4. Theme 1: Field instruction systems are contextual

In this theme, field instruction systems are found to be contextual and relative to participants’ experiences. Participants’ views on context, power dynamics and parameters or boundaries within placements are presented as sub-themes. I have drawn from the research of Bronfenbrenner (1977, 1995), who identifies various contexts of human development, which I reformulated in this thesis as student learning. In particular, Bronfenbrenner (1977) argues that the matter of context, particularly the context of the environment, is broad and nested in successive levels of microsystems, mesosystems, macrosystems and exosystems, amongst others (these were described in Section 3.2.4 of this thesis).

6.4.1. Sub-theme 1: Contextualising field instruction systems

Context and geographical location of placements are essential to student experiences in field instruction. Field instruction placements provide opportunities for students to implement classroom-based learning in professional practice (Kiser, 2016; McSweeney & Williams, 2018). Placement agencies that serve a single function, for example, a referral centre or a school aftercare facility provide limited opportunities to work with varied service users. Organisations that have multiple functions or serve multiple sectors of communities, provide students with opportunities to gain an integrated social work practice experience. When related to ecological systems theory, the context of the placement determines whether the student would gain experience from working within a micro, meso, macro or larger environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1995), signifying that the experience was relative to the placement.

Student experiences are also relative to the availability of placements. This argument is presented in response to the suggestion by a university-based student supervisor that semi-rural areas did not provide adequate fieldwork opportunities as urban areas in South Africa [Case1_StSup5_D4]. It is often argued that there are more resources in urbanised communities where resources are well-developed (SA, 2016; Sakaguchi & Sewpaul, 2011; Zunz & Oil, 2009), whereas in semi-urban or rural communities the availability and proximity of human service organisations to accept students in placements was limited (Shokane et al., 2016). This was reflected in an interview with a practice educator: "Like any environment, to be in a rural area is a disadvantage. In terms of resources, in
terms of open up to another world, you are just contained in this environment” [Case2_PracEduc2_D13_L147].

Across all three cases in this thesis, student placements were largely constrained: first to organisations in the immediate locality of the university, second to agencies that were known to or screened by the practice educator, and third to agencies that were willing to accept students. To expand their opportunities, students had the opportunity to seek placements beyond the immediate proximity of the university site at own cost of travel. This resulted in other constraints, like monitoring of placements. The availability and proximity of placements are critical to student learning, particularly given that some universities had large numbers of students requiring placements.

Another contextual factor was the type of experience gained at placements, which itself was seen as relative to the mandate of the agency (Royse et al., 2012). It was reported that the student placements at the state welfare department were limited to casework in order to “alleviate the foster care backlog” [Case1_PracEduc1_D3_L2]. Students and alumni alike [Case2_AI10-11_D19_L39-40] felt restricted by the limited placements available, as they were unable to practice an integrated system of social work. It can, therefore, be concluded that the limitations of placements were a further hindrance factor in the student learning process.

The implementation of uniform rules is essential to organisations. Universities are faced with students who requested long leave for pregnancy and medical, mental and personal reasons. The university rightly applies uniform policies due to the concern on the impact of the student’s extended leave of absence on the placement and on the service-user. One practice educator provided an example of where the university implemented such rule:

We had a pregnant student who was doing the internship in the hospital setting then she gave birth and she wanted to come back the next day [after giving birth]. Then her new-born was also sick and the student refused to take time off to heal; we [the university] assessed the situation and terminated the internship of the student for that year [Case1_PracEduc1_D3_L69].

From the three cases in this research, only Case 3 formally informed student of leave matters. These students were eligible for a limited time for vacation leave, study leave, family responsibility leave, sick leave and special leave [Case3_LG_D45_P2-3]. In Case 2, limited provision is made for students to take leave, and that was restricted to sick leave: “If they are sick, they are supposed to submit a medical certificate” [Case2_PracEduc2_D13_L106]. However, an alumnus in Case 2 claimed: “There was no sick leave, no study leave. If you come to the University for registration, you have to
‘pay back that day’ [Case2_Al8_D18_L64]. Another reported: “I wasn’t ill, but I attended a funeral and couldn’t get a death certificate as proof” [Case2_Al8_D18_L52].

Students felt unsupported by the University in terms of absenteeism and leave-taking, yet it is critical for universities to be proactive in first, applying uniform standards for leave, and second, taking measures to support students who experience trauma and giving students time to heal (Wade, 2009). Currently, some students do not complete field instruction requirements within the academic year for various personal reasons. University policies could be flexible in its curriculum implementation; thus a two-cycle approach to field instruction is suggested in Section 7.4.2.

Students and alumni reported on their exposure to new working environments and organisational cultures. In Cases 1 and 2, students were obliged to adhere to the working hours of the placement agency, whereas in Case 3 students were granted a degree of flexibility in structuring working hours at the placement agency [Case3_LG_D45]. The point of working hours was pointed out by a practice educator in Case 2: “Most of the students work from 8 to 4; those are the normal working hours, but they are supposed to be there for six months, and they are supposed to respect all the rules for that particular agency” [Case2_PracEduc2_D13_L106]. Students struggled to adjust to long and rigid working hours.

Resource availability at the agency, particularly office space at placement agencies were a challenge for the agency and the student. Students were faced with limited or no office space to conduct interviews: “Offices were crowded, we were five in one office… and interview with other people there” [Case2_A16_D18_L115]. The lack of office space is not a new phenomenon to daily social work practice. However, it had the potential for serious ethical default. Student supervisors supported the practice of lack of confidentiality: “It was only when a manager came through and said it was wrong – we cannot all be here, that it changed” [Case2_A17_D18_L116].

Another contextual issue related to lack of confidentiality and disrespect was reflected upon by an alumnus:

The thing is in the rural town, most of the clients are not knowledgeable; they are not educated. So, if the client who has the information says ‘I would like some confidentiality, I would like some privacy. I would like to be with my social worker’ then we leave. But if it is just someone like an old woman, we all sit in. Even the social worker who is not concerned in this situation would sit and listen [Case2_A17_D18_L117].

Students and alumni reported that other social workers seated in the same office inevitably interfered in interviews [Case2_A17_D18_L118]. One alumnus reflected:
There were also cases whereby you are interviewing someone here and maybe the person you are interviewing is not answering in a good manner and another social worker would comment: ‘Answer the question that the social worker is asking’. She is not even the social worker who is attending to the client [Case2_AL3_D18_L67].

These examples illustrate the unprofessional behaviour of social workers and student supervisors who fail to provide a professionally ethical practice (IASSW-IETS, 2018; SACSSP, 2006), or be suitable role models for students who need to learn proper practices before entering the workforce.

In summary, the issue of context is particularly relevant to the student experience. The experiences presented in this sub-theme typify what Bronfenbrenner (1977) views as development related to interrelations within a mesosystem which in this instance is the placement setting or working environment of the student placement. Thus, micro-systems found within smaller relationships of the placement setting impact on the interrelations that the student experiences, and collectively contribute to the student experience within the mesosystem of the placement agency. Against the background of the concerns, including students not completing the field instruction requirements in a single academic year, and time challenges, I have proposed a two-cycle approach to the four-year field instruction programme which I discuss in Section 7.4.2.

In the next two sub-themes, the issues of hierarchies and boundaries will be explored in context.

6.4.2. Sub-theme 2: Hierarchies in field instruction systems

Hierarchical structures are fundamental to organisations and structures. The scholarship of field instruction is also marked with hierarchies and power (Rodriguez-Gomez & Ibarra-Saiz, 2015). As a pyramid shape structure, the top layer of the hierarchy has decision-making status, for example, the authority invested by the university is the practice educator at the top level, and the student or learner at the lower level. Parsons (1977), a sociologist, viewed the top layer of hierarchies as the power potential. Hierarchies are inherent in teaching, learning, and more particularly in the assessment processes (Barrett & Keeping, 2005).

The impact of some actions from persons in power within the hierarchy may create fear in those at the lower levels of the hierarchy. Mathews et al. (2014) argue that students should be aware of and recognise hierarchies and power differentials in the placement. One alumnus felt this impact of power: “after that there was a friction because we were told that this and this one [student] is at [the supervisor’s] mercy; it caused a lot of friction” [Case1_AL4_D2_L114]. This fear was also illustrated
in another interview: “It was like they would terminate our internship and then we would have nowhere to go from there” [Case1_A15_D2_L115].

One means of upholding hierarchy is engaging in formal contracts with students and other role players in the educational process. The university starts by engaging in formal contracts, agreements or memoranda of understanding with students, supervisors and the placement agency To ensure a smooth flow in the placement. Contracts may be in place with the agency, for example, by means of a memorandum of agreement, with student supervisors setting out the requirements for the supervision process, and finally an agreement between the University and agency. These contracts set out boundaries that underpin the social relationships (Scott & Davis, 2007; Scragg, 2013) between the various members of the educational team. As indicated by a university-based student supervisor: “We have a service learning agreement that is formalised, and we meet 2-3 times per year formally where the whole group gets to meet” [Case3_StSup2_D16_L166].

The agreement between the University and student supervisor has many areas of foci as indicated in the following narrative: “There is a focus on communication because we liaise often, and we deal with challenging students” [Case3_StSup2_D16_L166]. The agreement also had a monitoring function: “It is a lot to do with [student] progress – because the student says, ‘We are doing well’, and then we talk to the field supervisor and they say, ‘Not so’. So, it’s also got to do with keeping in touch” [Case3_StSup2_D16_L166]. Thus, the contract between the University and field placement agency is vital to monitor the student’s progress and fulfilment of field instruction requirements. In addition, it is to monitor that the agencies fulfil their requirement to offer students this opportunity. This is discussed further in Section 7.2.2 under a governance framework system.

Students are usually required to sign a learning agreement. This sets out the agreed expectations between the university and student (Royse et al., 2012), as well as contains a standard set of values, attitudes and competencies that students are expected to develop and demonstrate during the course of their field instruction experience (Rogers et al., 2000). The learning agreement covers aspects like programme requirements, communication issues, and accountability issues related to hierarchies and structure. Two types of learning agreements were obtained during this research, from Cases 1 and 3, covering some of the aspects alluded to by Rogers et al. (2000). However, students did not see the benefits of having such protocols: “Whenever I want to do a project or something, I have to go through certain structures, it has to go through my supervisor and then other authorities”. These issues of protocol and structure seen by students to hamper productivity: “I need to set up a meeting with them and I have to sacrifice my time for them” [Case3_St3_D60_L39]. This was also raised by
another student: “There are protocols, but sometimes the protocols get in the way” [Case3_St4_D60_L38].

However, conflicts in the system as a result of power and hierarchy are not uncommon (Wright, 2009). For example, non-adherence to the contents of learning agreements and contracts may lead to transgression of boundaries and ultimately conflict. Managers of agencies take the lead in decision-making due to inherent status and power. Students complained about instructions from managers that took precedence over instructions from supervisors and their own work: “[Managers] don’t respect students’ time and they don’t respect your priorities” [Case3_St1_D60_L38].

Conflicts arise over resource allocation, lines of accountability and role expectations. Students felt that higher levels of the hierarchy disrespected them: “If she wants to call a meeting now, we must all go to the meeting. What about the patients? What about our clients? … That’s not right” [Case3_St1_D60_L38].

Power and hierarchies within relationships reflect the “fluidity of contemporary power dynamics” (Mathews et al., 2014, p. 120) and were exemplified in the following narrative: “[Supervisors] don’t respect the students. They like to talk to them as if they talking to little children, like hey why are you doing this? They even sent us to the shops to buy them sweets and airtime” [Case1_A15_ D2_L195]. Such an example is evidence of the abuse of power which is further illustrated by students who were required to perform the work of a social worker by writing reports required of the student supervisor and accrediting the supervisor with writing the reports [Case1_A2_D2_ L174].

Members of the education team are expected to practice “reflective modelling” by displaying professional and ethical etiquette (Brody & Nair, 2014, p. 133), yet these examples reflect the contrary. One student vented: “If you raise a question, there is drama [from the lecturer]; you can’t ask anything in a theory class” [Case3_St4_D60_L53]. “[Educators] were students 20 years ago and it is not the same [now]. Things have changed. Our schedules are so different. It is like ‘how do you compare 2018 social work to 1930 social work?’ It’s not the same thing” [Case3_St2_D60_L52].

Universities affected communication strategies to address student concerns: “And then we have evaluation forms. So, we are basically encouraged to speak out if we have a problem and the minute we speak out it is a problem” [Case3_St6_D60_L54]. Similarly, another student reflected: “Then they [the University] are like, ‘you guys don’t talk to us, you don’t communicate’” [Case3_St7_D60_L55].
One strategy used by a student to overcome feelings of being disempowered was to request to be supervised by the upper hierarchical structures, for example, the director at the agency, as the director was “more knowledgeable and provided more learning opportunities than a normal student supervisor” [Case1_Al1_D1_L18]. “So, to me, it was like I was in that level of saying ‘I am not a student that much’. I was putting myself in aiming high” [Case1_Al1_D1_L36]. This form of alignment with persons within the higher echelons of the hierarchical chain is not uncommon (Valentinov, 2012), and in this case, was used by the alumnus as a means to achieving his student outcomes.

Another contextual issue related to power and hierarchies is the specific requirements inherent in placements in rural communities (Kreitzer, 2012). Students undertake their field placements in communities where respect for hierarchies was prevalent and power was vested in the tribal head of the village. Rural social work practice also highlighted the power dynamics inherent in gender, age and marital status: “In the rural areas, people would see you as this woman that is a social worker [the gender factor] and look at your age and be like, you are never going to help us [the age factor]” [Case2_Al3_D11_L160].

The gender factor was combined with cultural adaptation and respect in the following narrative: “[As a] a woman. I can’t go to that place wearing a pants, so I have to wear a dress and have a doek [scarf] on my head” [Case2_Al3_D11_L162]. Then, in other examples, the marital factor was evident: “In the rural areas it is believed that if you are not married then who are you to talk with us. We are the men in this village so how can you come here and stand here and tell me what to do and when to do it” [Case2_Al4_D11_L161]. These narratives may seem patriarchal but require respect and acknowledgement. In second-order cybernetics, the researcher is part of and respects the community’s culture and practices (Bateson, 1972; Glanville, 2003).

General prototypes existing in the culture of the community “set the pattern for the structures and activities” that occur (Bronfenbrenner, 1995, p. 515). There are implicit rules that are followed through custom and practice in everyday life. “There’s this thing of entry, the gate keepers, the traditional council is who can get you entry to their villages that they control” [Case1_Al5_D2_L61]. However, the delays in accessing the community due to the protocols from the community gatekeepers hindered students effectively meeting the requirements of the field instruction programme.
System entities may be connected either directly or indirectly to each other. Relationships and influence are prevalent among elements and processes within field instruction systems (Weiss-Gal, 2008; Wright, 2009).

Systems are entities composed of elements which have their own interconnectedness (Topp, Chipkuma, & Hanefield, 2015). In this section, I discuss the interconnectedness of key persons in field instruction systems, roles and relationships, supervisor appointments and placement selection.

6.4.3. Sub-theme 1: The significance of key persons

During the interviews, all participants were prompted to identify persons or roles, provide reasons and rank in order who they viewed as important during their field instruction programme. The question was open-ended, and no predetermined list of designates was provided to participants. The following list was taken and ranked from the transcripts:

- role of the student supervisor (from 25% of participants),
- student being the centre of the programme (22%),
- role of the social work department at the University (20%),
- role of the agency and agency personnel (15%),
- role of community leaders and other organisations (10%),
- the service user (4%), and
- peer support at the same agency (4%).

Whilst the above is by no means a formal hierarchical structure; it presents viewpoints of participants. In the following sections, I analyse the observations that determined the above list.

6.4.3.1. The student supervisor

The feedback on the importance of the student supervisor emanated largely from students and alumni. There were reflections on the personality of the student supervisor. Whilst in other discussions in this thesis, the various qualities of the student supervisor are described, in this sub-theme, I highlight the positive qualities that students and alumni valued in their supervisors. The supervisor offered developmental and supportive supervision: “This student will not be forced to speak Afrikaans” [Case3_A15_D28_L34]. The alumnus further elaborated on the qualities of the same supervisor: “I think [it is] her personality, she is a nice person. She understands people. She is very fair and she communicated with me and she even practised speaking isiZulu just so that she could be on my level on my shoes” [Case3_A15_D28_L63].
The role of the on-site student supervisor was seen as: “Takes us through the whole practical experience and they can guide us into doing what is necessary for the clients or the agency” [Case1_St3_D10_L26]. Students elaborated that the on-site supervisor who helped “with integrating into the agency and also educational and supportive supervision” [Case1_St2_D10_L27], and “impacting her expertise in working with the most complex cases” [Case1_St3_D10_L28]. The student supervisor was significant in providing developmental opportunities for students: “She was so involved with me. She would even tell me that she ‘must be responsible’, she is ‘obliged to help me because the Head Office asked her to do so’” [Case3_Al5_D28_L63]. Another alumnus reflected that supervisors should “provide their students with the maximum practical work they can while you still have someone looking over you and supporting you and supervising you” [Case3_Al11_D27_L74]. Students felt encouraged by supervisors who viewed students as potential social workers: “Our supervisors will tell us that ‘you are no longer a student’” [Case2_St4_D22_L38]. Another student reflected that the supervisor indicated the following: “’You are no longer student social workers here, you are social workers here because you are doing the real thing’” [Case2_St5_D22_L39].

6.4.3.2. Students

The centrality of the students was noted. The visual depicted below was from the perspective of a practice educator but not dissimilar to that depicted by students and other participants. In Figure 6.3, the student is depicted as central to the learning process, with arrows pointing out relationships and interconnectedness amongst the role-players.

![Centrality of the student](image)

**Figure 6.3. Centrality of the student [Case2_PracEduc_V1]**

The role of the student was central to the field instruction system: “I think if this was a circle then I would be somewhere in the middle, going in all these different directions” [Case1_St5_D17_L23]. Students valued the opportunity to gain field instruction experience that would prepare them for practice: “I believe as the student I am the main key player in this internship programme because I’ll
have to practise what I have learnt throughout these years. And also that in the process gain more experience [and] exposure so that I'll be able to use that experience maybe next year” [Case1_St3_D10_L28].

The view of one practice educator was that the “primary role of students is to fulfil the expectation of the university. They [students] must be exposed to the practical component of the university [and] contribute towards achieving the objectives of service delivery in the organisations” [Case1_PracEduc1_D3_L52]. Another practice educator advised students to be vigilant and ethical:

> But now it depends on you, the student – your personality, how you were raised, what does this profession means to you? Then, if you have those values, you will be able to do what is right. And I said to them ‘You must stand for what is right because what [supervisors] will normally do, most of the time they [supervisors] will just send you out to go an buy vetkoeks [round doughnut], go and buy drinks, lunch and then you will find that at the end of the day you don’t have anything to report about because you are always out [Case2_PracEduc2_D13_D176].

A student supervisor reflected on the students’ role in the field instruction programme: “When we look at our students we don’t see zombies, we see people with full potential, so we actually see them as equal partners in the learning process” [Case3_StSup3_D16_L83]. The practice of requiring students to set the learning focus has had its merit, as one student supervisor reflected: “And students at the end of the year reflect and say we didn’t realise we knew as much, but because you let us talk about it so much, we realise we actually know this already [Case3_StSup2_D16_L82]. Thus, the role of the student in the field instruction programme is given prominence.

6.4.3.3. The university

The University is represented by the label practice educator in this thesis and is thus used interchangeably. Participants however identified as separate the University as being the teaching department who was “the custodian of the whole programme” [Case1_StSup2_D6_L43] and “supposed to be there as a custodian of teaching [Case2_PracEduc2_D13_L86]; the course co-ordinator as responsible for “placements and where you are going to be doing your practicals” [Case2_Al10_D19_L11]; and the practice educator as “coordinating the internship programme” [Case1_S2_D10_L27] and who determined the length of the placement [Case2_Al10_D19_L11].

One practice educator reflected on the role of the university and concluded the discussion by reflecting on outside interference in the teaching programme: “The university is playing a major
role... teaching students. In terms of policy, a university is supposed to play a major role because the university takes all the responsibility [as] the administrators” [Case2_PracEduc2_D13_L84].

Thus, the role of the university features prominently as a key contributor to student learning.

6.4.3.4. The placement agency

The placement agency is the grounding for student learning (Kiser, 2016; Mathews et al., 2014; Royse et al., 2012), yet this was mentioned in the interviews only by students and alumni.

The placement agencies varied from placements at schools, state welfare departments, to non-governmental organisations like child and family welfare societies, victim empowerment centres, homes for the elderly, and child and youth care facilities. In keeping with the requirements of the SACSSP, students worked under the supervision of a social worker and worked with “the administration staff, the office manager and social auxiliary worker” at the organisation [Case2_A114_D22_L24]. Students also recognised other members at the placement agency, including “co-workers, the people we share our office with” [Case2_A17_D18_L120]; “the school psychologist and school teachers” [Case3_St5_D60_L16]; “the nursing staff, parents of children at the hospital, the sister in command of the unit” [Case3_St6_D60_L17]. This was also best typified in the following quote: “I do not necessarily want to lock myself in my own office and not be able to communicate with other colleagues” [Case3_St7_D18_L14].

Placements within settings like hospitals and police services provided students with opportunities to work within specialised settings and within multi-disciplinary teams [Case1_St2 & St3_D10]; [Case1_A13_D2] and [Case3_St3_D60; Case3_St10_D59; Case3_A13_D27].

I understand that as a student social worker you have to understand diversity and learn that you will go to different environments not similar to yours so you should always understand and accept whatever environment and situation that you are placed in. People are different and environments are different [Case3_A15_D28_L52].

Placement agencies varied on the types of experiences obtained. State departments were focused on foster care placements [Case2_A1_D18]. One alumnus offered the following suggestion: “Put the students in NGO’s. I will encourage that. I benefitted a lot from the NGO, I learnt about shortlisting, organising events, fund raising and managing meetings” [Case2_A1_D18_L141].

Thus, the placement agency is viewed beyond the context of simply providing an opportunity for implementing praxis. It allows the student to learn employment and labour practices before venturing
into the open labour market. Therefore, field instruction opportunities require careful consideration and selection to meet field instruction requirements.

6.4.3.5. The community

In this segment, the importance of the community cultures was raised. Within semi-rural or rural communities: “We have to negotiate for entry” [Case1_St5_D17_L17], relating to permission required from authorities controlling access to working in some villages and communities: “I had to speak to the ward councillor to get an approval to say I can go ahead and do my practicals in that community” [Case2_Al10_D19_L1]; or “you start first with the traditional council as that is where you can get entry to their villages that they control” [Case1_Al5_D2_L61].

6.4.3.6. The service user

Whilst the service user provides opportunities for the student to implement the praxis, few acknowledged this role. One student indicated: “They are the actual ones who benefit from the services and the ones who make us wake up in the morning and go out there and do the work that we do” [Case1_St1_D10_L29]. One alumnus reflected that:

\[ I\ learnt\ to\ understand\ that\ we\ are\ not\ all\ the\ same,\ we\ are\ different\ and\ we\ also\ need\ to\ understand\ that\ you\ need\ to\ always\ fit\ in\ with\ other\ people.\ You\ need\ to\ be\ in\ their\ shoes.\ To\ understand\ culture\ and\ diversity\ and\ not\ to\ judge\ anyone\ for\ what\ they\ do,\ or\ what\ they\ believe\ in\ [Case3_Al5_D28_L20].\]

These reflections demonstrate that learning goes beyond simulated classroom activities (Forte, 2014b; IASSW-IETS, 2018; Sheafor & Horejsi, 2008). Moreover, students’ own values and principles are developed and enhanced whilst in the field.

6.4.3.7. Peer support

Placements with another peer present were seen as valuable to the student’s own development and support as “without her, I don’t know where I would have been now because we are always encouraging each other” [Case1_St3_D10_L28]. Two alumni reflected on the importance of fellow students in their placement settings: “To talk to another student and to get their perspective and to see if you are on the right track... was very supportive” [Case3_Al_D27_L28]; and:

\[ I\ was\ lucky\ to\ be\ placed\ with\ another\ student\ who\ was\ also\ in\ 4^{th}\ year\ and\ it\ helped\ me\ when\ there\ were\ two\ of\ us.\ You\ feel\ less\ intimidated\ because\ it\ is\ entirely\ new.\ To\ know\ you\ have\]
someone you can talk to about the things, sometimes as a student, you feel the things you want to talk about isn’t something that the supervisor would like to, because- ‘Why don’t you know that? It’s so obvious’” [Case3_A1_D27_L18].

These and other examples are explored in detail in Section 6.8.5 of this Chapter where the peer sub-system is discussed.

6.4.4. Sub-theme 2: Appointing supervisors with experience

In this study, there were 14 student supervisor participants, ten of whom had eight or more years of fieldwork experience, whilst five had eight or more years of supervising students. In one agency, supervisors took turns each year to supervise students. The latter was attributed to either an unwillingness by potential social work supervisors to supervise students, a high workload at the office, and perhaps a lack of commitment to supervise students. Some agencies overcame the unwillingness of social workers to supervise students by enforcing a practice of supervision rotations: “We supervise a student after every four years” [Case2_StSup1_D14_L24]. This practice was adopted to address the lack of interest by social workers to supervise students.

Another factor was the postgraduate experience by the social worker appointed to supervise students. Some agencies tasked new graduates to supervise [Case2_StSup5_D5] which placed stress on the placement due to supervisor having to simultaneously learn about social work practice whilst imparting knowledge to the student [Case3_StSup4_D16_L170].

Supervisory experience was essential: “We actually prefer that the supervisor would have been practising for more than three years. At least then they can relate or link practice to what the student is doing in theory” [Case1_StSup5_D4_L13]. This was echoed by an alumnus who reflected “they should actually appoint someone with experience and actual training and not just [allocate] students to anyone that does not have supervision experience” [Case2_A14_D11_L198].

The dearth of experienced supervisors willing to supervise students had a resultant effect on student supervision. “My supervisor had no experience on how to supervise” [Case2_A14_D11_L101], reflected one alumnus. This statement implies that new supervisors should be mentored. This was practised by a new graduate in Case 2 who indicated that he was groomed by his own supervisor at the agency to become a student supervisor [Case 2_StSup14_D22].

Equally important to experience was the behaviours and role modelling of supervisors. This was expounded in the previous Chapter under each of the cases. Overall there was a need for supervisors to commit to supervising students: “Supervisors must have passion to supervise”
“they are getting points for PMDS [a performance management system at some state departments] when they supervise students” [Case2_A18_D18_L147]. The lack of passion to supervise was evident in an interview with a student supervisor who reflected that despite having nine years’ of experience as a social worker, she has no inclination to supervise students, and dreaded completing the administrative work accompanying the field instruction process: “there is that form or booklet we need to fill it when they are going back- it is too long” [Case2_StSup1_D14_L46]. One field instruction site implemented planned support for student supervisors, ranging from an orientation programme to ongoing support. “We start off with an orientation at the beginning of the year for the field supervisors...every field supervisor receives a study guide” [Case3_PracEduc1_D60_L170]. A student supervisor reflected on the benefits of the orientation: "There is a discussion for the whole morning about what’s expected from me as a field supervisor” [Case3_StSup4_D16_L171].

It is, therefore, evident that supervision is a skill, attributed to postgraduate experience, role modelling (Sosland & Lowenthal, 2017), commitment and passion (Homonoff, 2008), and strategic leadership and training provided by the university.

6.4.5. Sub-theme 3: Placement availability and selection

The selection of placements pervades all cases. In Cases 2 and 3, placements were relative to availability, particularly as both cases were situated in geographical locations where welfare agencies were limited. In Case 3 the selection of placements appeared to have more scope, possibly due to its locality within a well-developed database of urban and semi-urban resources.

Student placements depended on the availability of placements. Practice educators from rural and semi-rural localities complained of the limited number of organisations: “Unlike universities in urban areas who are inundated with agencies, we don’t have that here” [Case1_StSup5_D4_L47]. As an alternative students could select placements closer to their family home; this could be in urban areas where more placement opportunities may be prevalent. However, opting to relocate from the residence of the university to seek placements created a challenge for some students who needed to return weekly to the university, at their own cost, to complete other academic modules and to attend to administrative matters. This was a further hindrance factor in the student learning process.

Each of the three cases had specified in the respective learning guides that field placement agencies were to be selected by the university, but this was not practised. Two cases did not follow due process in the selection, verification and monitoring of placements. In Cases 1 and 2, students complained that they had to source their own placements and that in such instances the placements were not
verified by the University. An alumnus reflected that: “When I went there it turned out that they didn’t know I was coming” [Case 1_A4_D2_L110]. This example reflects poorly on communication, as well as on the prior preparation of the agency by the university. It was also reflected that it was the agency that verified the placement after the unexpected arrival of the student: “The student is here. You sent her here, but we don’t know she was coming” [Case1_A14_D2_L110]. The verification procedures as to the suitability of the placement were lacking. It was left to the student to ensure that the placement agency met the requirements of the university. “[The agency] has no idea of what you want or what you want them to do to you”, recommending: “even if it is a phone call [to the placement agency] ...just to say ‘this is what we are expecting from your side’” [Case2_A13_D2_A192].

Such binary messages from the university create an impediment to student learning. Students and alumni expressed their frustrations with having to select own placements and recommended that universities extend themselves to make the effort to obtain placements closer to the university, confirm placements, and also fulfil its mandate to conduct verification and monitoring visits. However, the monitoring of placements was also a source of contention by the university, particularly when students selected placements that were far from the university: “Some of our students select placements in [other provinces and other countries] ...where it’s closer to their families so that they don’t spend much and we allow that. But, now, I discovered it’s a problem...Now they are so scattered” [Case2_PracEduc2_D13_L51]. “[Our lecturer] showed us someone and said: ‘this is the person who is going to come to you, whether you are in Zimbabwe, Cape Town, Jo’burg’. We were so happy knowing that finally, someone is going to come because the previous students already told us that the supervisor does not come at all” [Case2_AI3_D11_L126].

Some participants also voiced their unhappiness at the limited number of students accepted at some agencies. “[The agency] may request only 3 students but yet the university wants to place 6 there. So as a student you are compromised” [Case1_A11_D1_L58]. One alumnus expressed the following view: “Students should be given a platform to select where they want to go because you end up doing something you personally not going to do your best at and it’s not working out for you” [Case3_A11_D27_L75]. One participant suggested that universities “just needed to widen the university networks” in order to source more placements [Case3_A14_D56_L77].

Another crucial factor is availability of placements linked with convenience for the university: “The more students the agency takes, the lesser travelling for us. That is why ...I said: ‘Okay, if you can take more than 10 [students] it will be a pleasure for us ...It is easier for me to go around maybe twice a month just to visit them [locally]. But if they are far away, it will be difficult” [Case2_PracEduc2_D13_L13]. Given the resistance by some social workers to supervise students, the above narrative fails to take into consideration the needs of and the capacity of the placement
agency to accommodate large numbers of students. This statement also neglects the aspect of management of large numbers of students within a single agency or the availability of case files and projects within a particular agency. This could have a negative impact on student learning.

In this theme on field instruction as a set of inter-related elements I attempted to raise mixed arguments on the elements and their relationship to each other. Elements within the field instruction process display varied behaviour at different levels, relative to each other. In the next theme, which is linked to this theme, I explore the goal-directedness of field instruction systems. Understanding the dynamic nature of interactions is crucial (Topp et al., 2015), particularly in realising the impact and influences of these interactions on student performance.

6.5. **Theme 3: Field instruction systems display goal-directed behaviour**

Systems are goal-seeking and respond to internal and external stimuli until an outcome is achieved (Ackoff, 1971). Whilst field instruction systems are selective in its goal-seeking behaviour, it is not uncooperative or unapproachable (Mele et al., 2010). Rather field instruction systems are responsive as opposed to being reactive. This further implies that field instruction systems may seek alternate ways to accomplish the intended outcomes.

In this theme there are three sub-themes, highlighting first that field instruction systems are goal seeking, second that the systems act with common purpose, and third that these systems respond to trauma and unsettling events with behaviours akin to resilience and adaption.

6.5.1. **Sub-theme 1: Field instruction systems are goal seeking**

In Chapter 2 of this thesis, I presented the BSW qualification standard (CHE, 2015) and alluded to the former BSW 27 exit level outcomes (CHE, 2018). This is the backdrop for the goal-directedness of the BSW degree. The trajectory of the field instruction programme is embedded in the BSW and is generally described in learning guides and policies on field instruction. The purpose of field instruction in social work education was only vaguely discussed in the learning guides and the available field instruction policy of the three cases.
In Case 1, the learning objectives focused on knowledge about field instruction without stressing understanding application in practice [Case 1_LG_D 31_P xii]. In Case 2, student requirements and assessment processes in the field instruction programme were emphasised, without providing specific details on the purpose of the module. Interestingly, this case makes little reference to the BSW, but rather to the “Degree in social work” specifying UK based documentation as its basis [Case2_LG_D61_P1-8]. Reflections on the purpose of the field instruction module were indicated by one of the two practice educators in this case; “I expect them to go out to learn the working environment; to be exposed to all the challenges at work – how they are expected to conduct themselves in the work environment and also to be proactive” [Case2_PracEduc2_D13_L59]. Here the emphasis was on learning how to function in the working environment. The purpose of the field instruction module was however reflected nebulously in various assessment opportunities contained in the latter part of the fourth-year field instruction learning guide [Case2_LG_D61].

In Case 3, both the learning guide [Case3_LG_D45] and BSW field instruction policy [Case3_FIP_D23] were based on the BSW 27 exit level outcomes. These documents emphasised the goal of producing well-rounded graduates by focusing on practical applications of learning. Participants teaching the fourth-year field instruction module emphasised the build-up approach used from the previous years: “Much of our focus in fourth-year is on the issues of reflection. They need to reflect to see what did they do? What is it that they can do differently next time because they already have the skills” [Case3_PracEduc1_D16_L76]; “By now they should know how to use skills. But what was the impact of the skill? Did it work? Did it not work? What could you have done differently?” [Case3_StSup3_D16_L77]. The emphasis on utilisation of skills and reflection, however, is only part of the attributes stipulated in the new BSW qualification standards (CHE, 2015).

Goal seeking field instruction systems are both purposive and purposeful. As purposive, field instruction systems are multi-goal seeking systems (Mojta et al., 2014) seeking to meet the requirements of the BSW, whilst simultaneously focused on the attributes of its potential graduates (Taylor et al., 2019). Purposeful field instruction systems should produce the same outcomes in different ways. However, the purpose of field instruction should be clearly specified so that students, supervisors and the agency are aware of and work jointly towards the execution of activities to meet the purpose. It appears as if the purpose is known only to the university, who develop the field instruction learning guide. The mixed messages and lack of clear information is a hindrance to the learning process, particularly if incorrect and unfamiliar information is accentuated. For student learning to be optimised, it is critical that information and instruction provided to students are aligned with, accurately interpreted and appropriately represented as per the qualification standards for the degree.

A Systems Analysis of Field Instruction in Social Work Education
6.5.2. Sub-theme 2: Field instruction system elements have common purpose

Ackoff (1971, p. 669) argues that “Without common purpose, the elements would not work together unless compelled to do so”. The interrelatedness of elements of a system is guided by its common purpose (Ackoff, 1971) and the way each part of the system seeks to complement the other (Wright, 2009). In this sub-theme, I examine the value of common purpose of elements within the field instruction systems, namely the preparation by the university for students to enter the field placements, the value of a well-defined learning guide, and the preparation of students, agencies and student supervisors, and the teaching staff in the programme.

6.5.2.1. The field instruction learning guide

The first element is the field instruction learning guide that is developed by the university. Each case had a fourth-year field instruction learning guide, although only one case was able to provide a field instruction policy which provided details on the entire field instruction programme. Participants reflected only on knowledge of the respective learning guide, often referred to as a manual, which they found difficult to navigate and understand. “The supervisors couldn’t even understand the content of the manual [learning guide] even though they had supervised students before” [Case2_A13_D11_L117], indicating the view from an alumnus that the student supervisor may not have been aware what requirements were to be met by the student. Another alumnus also reflected that “I would be lying to say we as students were not taken through it, but we were only told of certain parts in that manual for 10 minutes. So we were not able to understand it clearly. And the manual was not user-friendly” [Case2_A17_D18_L63]. The learning guide is seen as the basis of the work done by the students [Case2_LG_D61] as it spelt out the requirement of students, supervisors and the university for the duration of the programme, despite its reference to non-South African requirements.

Closely aligned with the learning guide was the teaching strategy of the field instruction programme. This emanated strongly in Case 3 where students emphasised that they were taught a particular theoretical stance in which they practised: “We are always taught to engage in the developmental approach...a more holistic approach ...to serve a client holistically not just figuring the short process and moving on” [Case3_St_D60_L55].

A practice educator reflected on the teaching strategy used to manage large numbers of students. “We [divided into groups of] 15-19 students and meet once a week for 2.5 hours” [Case3_PracEduc1_D16_L81], suggesting that smaller groups and frequently set times were
The purpose of such meetings was indicated as useful and as a “support system where [students] get to know each other well” [Case3_PracEduc1_D16_L81],

6.5.2.2. Preparing students for placement

The second element is preparing students for placement. This usually begins with an orientation prior to the commencement of the field instruction programme. The experience of this student signifies the need for sufficiency of the orientation to the field instruction programme: “Even the orientation towards it, what to expect... It was not sort of like proper [as] I wanted to know exactly what the department of social work at the university expected from us” [Case1_St5_D17_L88-94]. The student indicated feelings of disillusionment with the process of being oriented into the module. Failure to take students through a planned, structured and elaborate orientation to the requirements as set out in the field instruction learning guide would serve only to hinder the process of learning in field instruction.

6.5.2.3. Preparation of agencies

The third element in this sub-theme is the universities’ preparation of agencies to receive the students. One student lamented that “a student gets to be placed in an agency of which they [the agency] has no knowledge whatsoever of what students have to do” [Case2_Al13_D19_L99], indicating that agency preparation by the university was lacking. “They were forced to take us. Not really like they wanted to” [Case3_St5_D60_L133].

Such a statement reflects a critical hindrance factor to student learning. This issue, however, was overcome by Case 3 which followed a pattern of inviting potential agencies to a workshop at the university site where agencies and past students were afforded the opportunity to inform potential fourth-year students of the agency mission and social work functioning. “At the end of the 3rd year we have an information day where different agencies- a mix of [agencies] come to present and recruit students make their preferences known” [Case3_PracEduc4_D16_L35]. This practice serves to optimise the field instruction process as agencies not have the capacity to supervise students, but are also well prepared to receive students.

6.5.2.4. Preparation of student supervisors

The preparation of student supervisors formed the fourth element in this theme. “As a placement supervisor, you know what students need. You know what students you want, what product you want to be. So supervisors need to know what are your objectives, what is it that you want to get out of
these students. Your final product” [Case2_Al9_D18_L142]. Supervisors were sometimes called to a group workshop to be orientated on the requirements of supervision. The learning guide in Case 1 [D31] indicated that agency-based student supervisors would receive an orientation to the field instruction training requirements. However, no indication as to how this would take place was provided.

Meetings with groups of supervisors in close proximity would incur fewer costs and inconvenience. This is suggested in Section 7.4.2. One practice lecturer felt disempowered by the distance of supervisors to the field instruction site at the university, expressing that “for us, with supervisors from other provinces, it’s practically impossible to invite them to our workshop” [Case1_PracEduc1_D3_L105]. The timing of the orientation of the supervisors should also be factored. One supervisor indicated that the orientation was done the day before the students started at the placement [Case3_StSup4_D59_L10-14].

Student supervisors were left on their own to navigate through the field instruction requirements. This resulted in some supervisors making little or no effort to empower themselves with such information. I observed one student supervisor display open naivety as to what was expected of the student. I had posed questions inquiring as to the kinds of group and community work projects that the student was expected to complete and the approval process for the student’s projects. The repeated responses from the student supervisor to both questions were simply: “I don’t know” [Case2_StSup1_D14_L95-97]. This is an example of a critical hindrance to the learning process as the supervisor demonstrated a lack of knowledge of expectations.

6.5.2.5. The teaching staff

The next element in this sub-theme was teaching staff for the field instruction programme. The teaching staff include all personnel who contribute to the teaching component, particularly the theory and practice-based lecturers. As the fourth-year field instruction module is but one of a host of compulsory modules for the BSW degree (CHE, 2015), it is anticipated that all modules be mutually complementary. Only one of the three cases in this study had formally acknowledged the preparation of the teaching staff towards working in a cohesive working environment for the field instruction programme [Case3_LG_D45] where such personnel were required to serve as role models, “co-partners” and support students in the learning process [Case3_LG_D45_P4]. This practice contributed to a team approach in teaching students and optimises the process of student learning.
6.5.3. **Sub-theme 2: Resilience and adaptation as behavioural responses**

Resilience in this instance indicates the ability of the field instruction system to overcome disturbance or disruption to its trajectory or to any of its elements or processes (Masten, 2014; Wright, 2009). Students across all three cases appeared to experience heavy workloads, time challenges and other stressors during the fourth-year field instruction practice. This was demonstrated in the following narrative:

'[On] a Monday, it takes its toll travelling there [to the agency], coming back and then you have traffic, you have to eat, you pass out. You wake up in the morning for class; you come into class. You don’t know how this lecturer has woken up and is angry for whatever reason, and now they bring it all onto you. Then you have your own emotional stress and then it is like ‘Okay, I have this issue’. Now must I raise this issue because this person is angry?' [Case3_St5_D60_L52].

Students also faced stressors in the workplace. ‘In fourth-year students need to get to the agency on their own, work from 8am to 4pm, be there every day if they don’t feel like going. I think it’s not easy for them; they get tired’ [Case3_StSup3_D16_L93]. ‘We were expected to be at the agency the whole day from 8 to 4; and later on you do your reports at home’ [Case2_Al13_D19_L59], ‘even if there is a school recess, you have to go to the agency’ [Case2_Al10_D19_L60].

Student supervisors reflected on the age of the student entering university. ‘They are 18, 19, 21, 22, so they are young adults’ [Case3_StSup3_D16_L91], indicating that students faced developmental challenges, as well as adjustment to university life. Such challenges are highlighted in studies by Van Breda (2011, 2017) who found that students felt burdened by the demands of balancing personal, university and academic requirements. One student supervisor reflected that even academically strong students felt the strain of trauma, also reflecting also that some students faced challenges relating to ‘serious mental health, pregnancies, HIV, AIDS, hospitalisation, parents’ deaths’ [Case3_StSup3_D16_L91]. One student who reflected on seeking professional assistance: ‘at first year I was extremely shy, very isolated, withdrawn, didn’t participate in class. So I met with the psychologist and after she helped me out, I could be calm’ [Case1_St5_D17_L27].

Having to work with older service users did not augur well for some students: ‘it was very emotional because some cases were like ‘I don’t want to do this anymore’; ‘this one is not for me, maybe somebody is a bit mature can handle it’’ [Case1_Al5_D2_L123]
Other participants reflected on the financial distress that students faced [Case3_StSup3_D16_L90], particularly as fourth-year students entered the workplace and “they have to look neat, they have to have nice clothes and that puts a lot of strain on lots of students. They have to go without something so they can get to their placements” [Case3_StSup2_D16_L92]. One response to studying without financial assistance was reflected in this narrative: “When I applied to study social work, I was looking for a state bursary, but didn’t get it ... and worked part-time to pay for studies” [Case2_Al11_D19_L29].

Given some of these stressors, this segment examines how students coped with challenges. In response to being tasked with tasks beyond field instruction requirements, one student reflected the following: “you tell them: ‘it’s not my work’. That’s what my supervisor told me to say. Just tell them politely but firmly that it is not part of my job description” [Case1_St2_D10_L83].

One alumnus reflected on the need for supervisors to be aware of their students “it’s important as a supervisor to check if your supervisee is coping with all the work” [Case1_Al3_D2_L168]. Another reflected on the importance of time management to adapt to stressors: “If you don’t know time management, you wouldn’t cope. We had a lot of assignments and submit this collectively in a short period of time”, reflecting further that his way of adapting was “there wasn’t really much time to focus on a social life, but then we had to focus on academic work” [Case3_Al5_D28_L38-40]. Two responses of adapting to the workload were: “I didn’t have a problem with my reports because I wrote them every day when I come from the agency I wrote every day” [Case2_Al13_D19_L73]; and “You just take it in your stride and hopefully negotiate after that session to say, but can we do it this way because if we do it that way then it’s not working out” [Case1_St5_D17_L41]. One participant reflected as follows: “I learnt in my first month at work that you tread carefully. There are some issues that you talk about and some issues that you don’t talk about”, explaining further that: “you learn to adjust to the environment and to the supervisor. You gauge [assess] the environment and the situation” [Case3_St4_D60_L30].

These narratives reveal students conflicting stresses (Rodolfo, 2000), and typified attempts to adapt by relying on their own resources and fitting in to the behaviour of the organisation (Parsons, 1977; Stapley, 2006). Thus, field instruction systems are goal-seeking amidst traumatic and disruptive events, and members adapt by means of restoring the balance, being resilient or fostering homeostasis. These systems attempt to maintain stability when facing internal or external changes to the system (Minuchin, 1974; Ruble & Turner, 2000). Such state-maintaining systems aim to keep changes to a minimum and react in ways that may be seen as adaptive or attempting to maintain the homeostasis of that system (Ackoff, 1971; Forte, 2014b).
6.6.  Theme 4: Field instruction systems are dynamic and change over time

System behaviour reveals itself as a series of events over time. Events accumulate into dynamic patterns of behaviour and the behaviour of a system in its performance over time. This is visible in its growth, stagnation or decline.

In this theme, I explore indications of field instruction systems as dynamic systems due to being in a state of constant change. Change is regarded as a constant in many systems (Jones, 2007) and field instruction systems are not excluded from this understanding of systems. Field instruction systems are not static, even small changes in one part of the system can affect student learning. In this theme, concepts of open and closed systems as well as system entropy are understood in relation to change, together with disturbances that result in changes in behaviour within field instruction systems. System entropy is relative to the system’s ability to self-organise and preserve homeostasis (Von Bertalanffy, 1969). Entropy is the ability to predict the reaction of the system to change. This is noticeable in what is typical of a butterfly effect (Grotstein, 1991), where elements of field instruction systems are sensitive to change. The flapping wings represent a reaction to change in the system, which in turn leads to a chain of events (Duke, 1994). Such is the complexity of field instruction systems. Systems that are considered entropic are observed to move toward a state of maximum disorder or disintegration, resulting in “members using their energy thoughtlessly or in a random manner” (Ruble & Turner, 2000, p. 123). The movement of the system at this point is towards entropy or disintegration.

Entropy is likely to occur in field instruction systems that have little structure. Working on a building block approach, the student’s professional development is heightened each year by a systematic means of exposure to social work tasks considered simple to professional. During the fourth-year the student is expected to complete tasks that are considered at a professional level. This progression of knowledge and training signifies change across the years, demonstrating changes in field instruction placements, training, levels of working within organisations and levels of working with service users.

Similarly, student supervisors are able to supervise students at each of these levels, noting that students at fourth-year level require a higher level of monitoring and supervision. The university acts with immediacy on providing support. “The last time you would hear from the university is when they would give you the letter and the manual and then I will see you see you when you come back from

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placement next semester” [Case2_AL2_D11_L97]. In this interview, the behaviour of the university was typical of closed systems where students were expected to fend for themselves. I prompted this participant for how challenges then would be addressed and received the following reply: “It’s your [our] own indaba [responsibility]” [L99]. Again, this signifies a hindrance factor to learning as students were left feeling abandoned during the field instruction process.

One of the facets of open field instruction systems is the willingness of members of the system to acquire knowledge. “Doesn’t mean when you are qualified now that you cannot learn from students” [Case1_StSup3_D6_L92]. Openness to accept change is critical to helping the learning system to grow (Wright, 2009).

The university system appointed university-based supervisors to bridge communication with students and student supervisors to promote openness and communication. University-based supervisors serve as an additional monitoring tool to ensure, amongst others, that student learning occurs at agencies. Provision for this is made in all three cases, yet is practised by just Cases 1 and 3. Moreover, the practice in Cases 1 and 3 differs; whereas in Case 1 this practice is kept at a minimum and is constrained by financial and other factors, the use of university-based supervisors are fully enforced in Case 3. Examples have been in provided in Chapter 5 of this thesis of students complaining about not having university-based supervisors; such neglect by the University to properly utilise this resource is a hindrance to student learning. Yet, with regular implementation and enactment, the significance of this functionary is a critical factor to optimise the learning process.

The involvement of other staff members and organisations in student training moves beyond monitoring of placements. “Social work lecturers and external role players like governmental and non-governmental organisations are allocated a slot to present at supervisor workshops” [Case1_PracEduc1_D3_L26]. “Students requested us to teach them the foster care process in our module for the internship, so I invited social workers from the field, even probation officers to address the students” [Case1_PracEduc1_D3_L50]. This indicates a willingness of the teaching system to adopt a team approach which fills in the gaps in knowledge. This is critical to foster learning; however as was also learnt, this practice was disrupted by financial and geographical constraints. This behaviour of enlisting a team approach to address knowledge gaps is reflective of the system’s ability to self-organise (James & Gilliland, 2017; Rodolfo, 2000; Schmidt, 2015).

Dysfunctional field instruction systems restore homeostasis by regulating its internal environment to maintain a stable, constant condition (Rodolfo, 2000). This is in reaction to changes in systems. Thus, the strategies reflected as part of open systems allows the field instruction system to flourish instead
of flounder, as long as negative entropy is fostered and not prevented from progressive methods of teaching. This change in behaviour is evident in open systems and is critical to foster student learning.

6.7. **Theme 5: Field instruction systems rely on communication and feedback**

Communication is perhaps the most relevant of tools in field instruction strategies. The communication strategists in field instruction systems in this thesis are the university represented by the practice educator, the student, the student supervisor and the agency representative, largely as there is evidence of interpersonal or face-to-face communication in the communication strategies between and among these groups (Stokols et al., 2013). Social work field instruction practice is steeped in interpreting both verbal and non-verbal communication (Egan, 2010; Hepworth et al., 2013; Quinn, Woehle, & Tiemann, 2012).

This theme highlights the importance of communication systems in field instruction. Two sub-themes have been identified, namely communication as a process of monitoring placements and assessment and feedback in field instruction systems.

6.7.1. **Sub-theme 1: Communication as a process of monitoring placements**

Systems are in constant interaction with their environment, indicating constant communication between the system and the environment (Valentinov, 2012). Systems, therefore, rely on a process of communication and feedback, from either internal or external factors (Astrom & Murray, 2010). Internal factors in the communication system include the educational team, each in their own way contributing to student learning. Earlier in Section 6.5.1, it was reflected that participants viewed the role of the student supervisor as key to their learning.

In this sub-theme, the practice educator is the key communication strategist that holds the communication processes together. This thesis has consistently argued that it is the practice educator who represents the university within the field instruction process, and who then holds the field instruction together on behalf of the university.
As the field instruction process occurs annually, each set of students is unique, and each academic year is set out to meet the expectations of the BSW, together with developments in the broader social work practice and policy environment.

One of the key inputs in the field instruction process is communicating with agencies to screen and receive students. There were recurrent complaints from students and alumni about the poor communication between the university and the placement agencies. One participant reflected that the agency “didn’t know I was coming so everything was communicated when I was sitting there, they had to wait for the letter” having overheard the communication from the agency to the university as, “the student is here. You sent her here, but we don’t know she was coming” [Case1_Al4_D2_L110].

One alumnus reflected that it was unprofessional for the university to use students to brief the agencies on field instruction requirements. This was the function of the university and not the student: “I think the practice lecturer must do regular visits at the placement. My practice lecturer never came where I worked so she would hear things from me. My supervisor would hear things from me. So I was the link [Case3_Al5_D28_L86].

Communication between the university and agency or student supervisor should be continuous. Meetings are scheduled during the course of the placement indicating that:

There is open communication. It also helps me when I am struggling with something and my supervisor isn’t there; I will come to my lecturer and say, ‘listen this is what is happening at the placement’. Then they will communicate and also I will have to then be part of that communication. And we would actually come with our heads together and communicate about what’s going to happen, on what’s the way forward [Case3_St2_D60_L29].

The above narrative supports the inclusiveness of communication by including the student in the discussions and is further explained in the following: “I [practice educator] will work with that person in that agency directly in the middle of the term for evaluation, I will sit with the agency supervisor and myself and the student. The three of us” [Case2_PracEduc2_13_L123].

Monitoring of placements is part of the field instruction communication strategy. “We can sense that the supervisor at that agency is not one of the easiest people... I would have removed the student” [Case1_StSup5_D4_L23]. Monitoring also revealed student deception where students submitted short-term cases as long-term cases for examination, saying: “they will try to manoeuvre their report so that it is a long-term report” [Case2_PracEduc2_D13_L68].

In instances where there were two supervisors, namely the university-based and agency-based supervisors, students were not always clear on role demarcations and whether there was
communication on the student’s workload between the two: “you are not really sure of what happens between the two supervisors” [Case3_St4_D60_L30], indicating further that in supervision with the university-based supervisor, “the student will say something and [the student supervisor] will be shocked – ‘oh really that happens?’” [Case3_St4_D60_L30]. Interestingly, a study by Poggenpoel (2018) also revealed the factor of lack of collaboration between university and agency-based supervisors.

In these examples, the frustrations experienced by students on the poor communication amongst some of the members of the educational team reflect factors that would hamper instead in enhance student learning. Open and honest communication is, particularly important when there are conflicting views or complex decisions to be made (Mathews et al., 2014). Practice educators responsible for decision-making take responsibility to accurately and comprehensively handle queries. Therefore, professionals and students in the team need to trust one another and feel supported by the decisions taken.

6.7.2. Sub-theme 2: Assessments and feedback in field instruction systems

This sub-theme emerged from the data. The element of student assessments in field instruction systems was not included in the original scope of this thesis due to the magnitude of this component of the programme. In field instruction programmes, the assessment is generally on praxis, assessing whether the student is able to apply the skills, knowledge and theory learnt in their work with service users (Nel & Pretorius, 2017).

However, student learning is relative to how they are tested, implying that if assessments are structured to test for facts, then a student will learn facts (Beverley & Worsely, 2007). In a study by Kourgiantakis et al. (2018) relating to the impact of feedback, key elements of the feedback process were identified, namely enhancing student knowledge, improved students’ skills, developed professional judgment, and increased self-reflection. Many of the assessment procedures and practices are contained in the learning guides in each of the three cases. In Cases 1 and 2, formative assessments did not appear to take place until the students submitted all tasks in their portfolio for assessment at the end of their block placement [Case1_LG_D31 & Case1_PracEduc1_D3]. This implies that feedback would only then be provided at the end of the placement. This implied further that students’ progress was not continuously monitored.

The learning guide in Case 1 also indicates that the university-based supervisor visits the placement “a couple of times during the internship and each time a joint assessment session will be held” [Case1_LG_D31]. This form of contact between the university and agency would have enhanced the student learning process. However, this did not occur in practice. Students repeatedly complained
about the lack of contact between the university and agency which resulted in students feeling abandoned by the university whilst on placement.

Another concern regarding Case 2 was that the students were not assessed according to the requirements of the BSW, but rather assessment criteria and standards were taken from the UK based “National Occupational Standards for Social Work (NOSSW)” and “QAA Benchmark Academic Standards for Social Work” [Case2_LG_D61_P7]. The non-alignment with South African standards indicates a distorted and misleading set of requirements for students [Case2_LG_D61_P7]. Regarding the role of the university and agency in assessments, one reflected that “the agency supervisor is there to make comments at the end of your placement…then the University supervisor will mark your work” [Case2_A11_D11_L136]. This narrative supported the role demarcation between the university and agency, and supported the summative assessment focus of the university.

Case 3 was found to enforce the use of formative assessments where students submitted assessment tasks periodically during the placement, thus getting feedback before embarking on projects [Case3_FIP_D23; Case3_PracEduc1_D16]. There was a clear demarcation between the roles of the university and the agency supervisors: “our field [agency] supervisors’ primary role is not to assess, their primary role is to supervise”, and “constantly in communication and the students know for your importance we will be connecting and talking” [Case3_StSup3_D16_L117].

Beverley and Worsely (2007) suggest that the importance of feedback to learners on their performance should not be dismissed or underestimated. The omission of formative or regular feedback in field instruction would serve to hinder the student learning process. Feedback is seen as a significant tool that supports student learning in supervision and field instruction. One student supervisor expressed that students were unable to meet the demands of supervision: “My problem was that I’ve expected too much of the student- to the point where the one really broke out in tears and they said to me they were not used to somebody asking their opinion” [Case2_StSup2_D20_L40].

Feedback should be constructive (Clemons, 2014; Giskeodegard, 2012), implying that feedback is specific, apt, and bridges theory and practice. This will build holistic competence in social work students. Students should be provided with frequent and timely feedback by the university- and agency-based supervisors in order to develop these key areas in the student learning process.
6.8. Theme 6: Field instruction systems are greater than the sum of their parts

Holism, as a concept in systems thinking, views each element of a system as a composite whole, each having its individual structure, function and character (Phillips, 1976; Smuts, 1926). In field instruction systems, each of the elements that have been presented in this thesis may be considered as separate wholes, as each element has been based on various functions and characteristics within the system. This theme argues that when put together, the elements are closely linked and intense and contribute to a larger entity. This may imply then that each part of the field instruction system functions towards the whole. The whole and its individual parts reciprocally influence and determine each other (Jackson, 2006). Moreover, the elements appear to merge and synthesise their individual characters and are reflected in its individual and holistic functions (Jackson, 2006; Nagel, 2012). Whilst elements of field instruction systems function individually, when combined, the effect is greater than the sum of its parts, impacting on the outcome of student learning. This also proposes that the success of field instruction programmes is determined by the successful merging of all of its elements.

Therefore, when all parts of the field instruction system are synthesised, their impact is greater than when viewed individually. However, this theme is not isolated from arguments in preceding themes of this Chapter. Five key sub-themes emerged within this theme, namely synergy and holism, risks to synergy of field instruction systems, the needs of students with disabilities, financial constraints of students, and the role of the peer subsystem, all of which are critical factors that affect student learning.

6.8.1. Sub-theme 1: Views on synergy and holism in field instruction systems

The statement on the whole system being greater than the sum of its parts indicates that when connected together to form one entity, individual elements of field instruction systems are more valued and constructive than if the parts were in silos (Westaby, 2012; Wright, 2009). This implies greater expectations from the sum of individual parts of the field instruction programme, as well as synergy and co-operation amongst parts of the system.

This sub-theme reflects on the views of participants on the model of field placement. Cases 1 and 2 followed a block placement model whilst case three followed a concurrent model of field instruction placement. Case 1 required students to undertake field instruction placements in the second semester.
after completing a series of theory lectures in the first semester. The reverse structure was followed in Case 2 where students commenced with block placements in semester one and returned to the university for full-time lectures in semester two.

Participants in block placements were of the view that theory modules should be completed at university first before block placements commenced. Alumni verbalised that students who were exposed to block placements in the first semester of the academic year could only participate in reflective exercises and by the second semester had forgotten some of their practice experiences [Case2_A16,7,8,9_D18_L122-125]. This was the view of many other students who supported block placements in the second semester: “Most of what we are taught in second semester is what we need to go with to the placement”, elaborating further that the theory modules “are related to placements” which students obtained after the field instruction placement and “I couldn’t put a name on it because I didn’t know what it was then” [Case2_A11_D11_L147]. Students did have their lecturers available on email or telephone, but “when you speak over the phone, it’s not the same when you are together and you have to explain everything” [Case1_St6_D9_L190]. When I inquired about the availability of resources for students to be on block placements at the same time, the response received from alumni was that: “The advantage is that we do our placements countrywide... We are not restricted to being in the same province so it could work. It is a matter of negotiating with agencies” [Case2_A16_D18_L139].

On the other hand, participants who preferred concurrent placements felt that the process allowed them to share experiences and obtain guidance from theory and practice lecturers simultaneously, during the course of the field placement. “Everything is immediate, so you do your theory, and while it is still fresh in your mind you go for your practical, and then while both of them are still fresh on your mind, then we write exams” [Case2_A114_D22_L58].

The length of the placements was a point that was raised:

I would change the length of the [block placement] because 90 days is not really enough, because for the first month you have to settle into the organisation, know how they operate and such. And at the same time, you are expected to do all of these reports. So I would extend the length of the internship [Case1_St2_D10_L116].

One alumnus reflected: “I would make it at least six months because at times, some students would even complete the internships and if you check they haven’t covered almost everything. There are still cases that are outstanding” [Case1_A11_D1_L50]. Notwithstanding, the hours are determined by the university in meeting the CHE requirements.
On preference for either model, there appeared to be a balance for concurrent and block models. Of the 21 students and 24 alumni interviewed, 48% preferred the block model, 47% preferred the concurrent model and the remaining 5% did not have a preference. Preference for the block model was echoed in this statement: “in the block [model] you just focus on one thing at a time so if you do two things at a time it would be strenuous for you because there is a lot of work at the agency” [Case1_A15_D2_L208]; and the concurrent model places pressure on the students who have to get ready for tests and examinations simultaneously [Case2_A113_D19]; whereas preference for a concurrent model was indicated by: “I would have more time at least. I would count on at least four days to work on my research including Saturdays and Sundays. So it’s a lot of time unlike now everything is congested, you just have to do everything in a hurry” [Case1_St4_D10_L126].

In this light, I wish to raise a risk identified where students commence field instruction placements prior to being registered for the fourth-year field instruction module with the university. This was particularly prevalent in Case 2 where students commenced block placements early in January of the academic year whereas student registration at the university was in February. This was confirmed by Alumnus 8 in the interview: “No, we are not registered” at the time of starting at the agency in January; “We register in late February” [Case2_A18_D18_L64-68]. My concern is on the legal implications of the student working as a fourth-year student with service users and within an organisation. This is a serious risk not only to the synergy of the field instruction programme but could result in litigation should there be any mishap caused by the student, by the university or to the student.

6.8.2. Sub-theme 2: Risks to the synergy

In this sub-theme, I examine participants’ views that may be seen as potential risks to the synergy of the system. Whilst issues of preparation and communication came to the fore and have been discussed in the earlier Chapter, most students and alumni complained about the behaviour of their supervisors which they saw as a risk to the field placement.

What about the laziness of the supervisor? I was allocated a supervisor who was lazy. She would have an appointment, and on that date, she won’t come [to work]. She would call me and say “you have to cover for me. I am not coming. I am sick. You have to do this and this and that”. Even the other day... [an organisation] would call for a file. She will say that I must look for this file. Now we are looking all over the office for this file as she doesn’t know where she put it. So she was lazy, my supervisor [Case2_A15_D18_L40].

The above quote demonstrates the attitude of the supervisor as a serious factor that hampers student learning.
Another risk factor pertaining to supervisors was the allocation of such: “I started at the agency in January, but I only got a supervisor in April”, continuing that “the supervisor knew I was coming to the agency, but she took leave” [Case2_Al6_D18_L47]. One student did not receive any supervision from the agency-based supervisor [Case2_Al3_D11_L106-109]. Both these complaints were not uncommon responses from students and raises concern as to the professional practice of students.

Added to this is the change of supervisors. At this point I reflect on an interview that I tried to set up with an agency-based student supervisor: “I [the researcher] was given the details by the practice co-ordinator to contact a Miss M who was the allocated supervisor. I was then referred to a Mr B, who then referred me to you as the current supervisor” [Case1_Int_D7_L15]. The transcript response from the participant student supervisor was as follows: “Miss M left, then Mr B had to step in as the senior social worker for a short while; we could not leave the student hanging….so I had to keep the student running” [Case1_StSup4_D7_L16]. These changes occurred within a four-week period and was a potential risk to the synergy of the placement as well as a risk factor to student learning.

Another responded that “The only time that they will supervise you is when you have a serious problem like I’m stuck with this case” [Case2_Al2_D11_L113]. This is a risk factor to student learning. Out of need, students fell back on the field instruction manual provided by the university instead of supervision [Case2_Al3_D11_L114], further revealing another risk factor to student learning: that her supervisor “doesn’t even know how to use the manual saying ‘It is this thick. And how am I supposed to know this? These are not the things that we did’” [Case2_Al3_D11_L114].

Another risk factor to student learning was when a student felt marginalised when reporting the unavailability of her supervisor: “My supervisor has been off for more than a month... They say I should go to the chief social worker for supervision, but she is always busy and not always there in the office” and “I tell the practice lecturer, but that is difficult because she talks to them, and they act like I reported them. So I don’t share it with her. They don’t even check my reports” [Case3_St8_D60_L44].

A different risk was mentioned by an agency-based supervisor: “I simply don’t have the capacity to supervise social work students and do the rest of my work” [Case2_StSup2_D20_L15], whilst a practice educator pointed out that new graduates, with no practice experience, were tasked with supervising students [Case1_PracEduc1_D3].

Some agencies also allowed non-social workers to supervise students, for example, social auxiliary workers were tasked with supervising students [Case1_Al6_D2_L70]. The latter is against policy as the SACSSP guidelines are clear that social work supervision may only be conducted by a person who is registered as a social worker (SACSSP, 2006).
Inconsistency was another risk to the synergy of field placements. Whereas all students are to have completed a stipulated number of cases, one university-based supervisor reduced the number of cases unilaterally: “I said to my group, because I have a large number of students, I would prefer maybe six cases” [Case2_PracEduc2_D13_L64].

A further risk to the synergy of the placement was when students were forced to change placements for varied reasons “let’s say we have placed a student in one of the organisations, then because of some challenges or issues we need to terminate the internship. Then the student needs to start afresh eight days from day 1 until they finish” [Case1_PracEduc1_D3_L87]. This was a risk factor to early completion of the field instruction programme.

The delays in accessing service users in traditional and rural communities were seen as a great risk to time frames to complete field instruction requirements. In order to combat this, it is vital that the university facilitates entry for students well in advance, prior to field instruction placement.

A factor that has consistently been presented as a risk in this thesis has been the lack of monitoring of placements. This was most prevalent in discussions with participants in Cases 1 and 2 both of which were block placement models, and both of which were situated in semi-rural or rural environments. The explanation of practice educators in such models was financial cost to the university [Case2_PracEduc2_D13], as well as personal sacrifices, family commitments and costs to make visits to places away from the university [Case1_PracEduc1_D3_L108]. It was also explained that other university-based supervisors also faced similar challenges: “It’s the lack of resources and the lack of support from the top management and even amongst colleagues. You will find that most of our colleagues here don’t want to travel far for monitoring visits” [Case1_PracEduc1_D3_L107].

The workload of the practice educator was also raised as a constraint: “I’m teaching the internship module and yet again I’m expected to teach other modules which it’s not practically possible for me to give the much full needed attention to this module” [Case1_PracEduc1_D3_L109]. It is suggested that the university employ staff for the purposes of field instruction co-ordination and monitoring.

The students’ workload at the fourth-year level was another risk factor for consideration. Both block and concurrent models required the completion of theory modules in the fourth-year, adding to the field instruction workload of the student. “It’s too much. It puts a lot of strain on you. Because how are you going to collate data while you are at the agency?” [Case1_St3_D10_L95]; “maybe you are placed at the psychiatric hospital, but you are doing research [module] at an NGO or about foster care. You can’t be in two places at the same time” [Case1_St4_D10_L97].

Another student expressed frustration at unilateral changes to the university workload which impacted on planning and achievement of set goals:
For me, it is now irritating because you plan everything and then there [are] 2 assignments on the same day and then the week before it was due] the lecturer had postponed that thing. And I think it is so unfair because for me I already started with it, and I am almost done and now she wants to postpone it. Great for everyone else who didn’t with start it, but there is going to be another assignment the next month [Case3_St_D60_L51].

The above narrative was echoed by another student who asked rhetorically of academic staff:

*Do you [lecturers] actually think when you are planning? Do you sit down and communicate what is going on? The research [assignment] is due this month and then the next chapter of research is due the next month and then it is like ‘now where must I fit this all in?’* [Case3_St_D60_L52].

These statements are indicative of the impact of the academic schedule on students and are not isolated to Case 3 alone. Similar arguments have been raised by students in Cases 1 and 2 when referring to their workload. These arguments should be taken into account by the university.

### 6.8.3. Sub-theme 3: Students with special needs

This sub-theme was identified to bring to the fore the special needs of some students. Special needs may be seen across a spectrum of student requirements, for example, sight impairment, physical impairment, gender issues, and racial and cultural needs (Algood et al., 2013; Brown, 2006; Subrayen, 2017). In a study of student teachers with special needs who were sent out on student training, Subrayen (2017) argued that students felt neglected and abandoned by the university whilst out on their student training placement. In addition, in an earlier study by Kasiram and Subrayen (2014), it was found that students are at risk if their special needs are not attended to in such a manner that they are assisted rather than hindered in their attempts to conform to the requirements of workplace learning.

Only one of the three cases in this study made reference to students with special needs in the learning guide or field instruction policy. The learning guide, in this one case, focused on the students’ disclosure: “Any concerns regarding students’ health due to chronic illness, pregnancy or disability will be maintained in confidence and will not be reported to any third party unless the student gives consent for the purpose of making special arrangements” [Case3_LG_P4]. This meant that the student could opt to not disclose the special need. The query that follows then is whether the university would intervene in circumstances of obvious disability, for example, a physical or sight impairment.
The learning guide in Case 3 further elaborated on the issue of disclosure, respecting the students’ need for privacy: “However, if students prefer not to reveal their circumstances to the practice lecturer or field supervisor, they need to realise that the field supervisor and practice lecturer will not be able to offer support in their specific situations” [Case3_LG_P4]. A further point is made whereby “Placements are expected to support students with special needs as far as possible without compromising the quality of the BSW programme” [Case3_LG_P4]. The last quote does not place responsibility on the university to ensure that placement agencies supported such students.

During this research, I discovered that there was one student participant who was severely physically challenged. The student was initially interviewed as part of the student group and thereafter, interviewed individually. I included the student’s narratives out of concern for students with special needs. Many issues were identified. The first issue was transport to and from the placement agency:

*I use a bus [public transport] to go to the agency. The bus has a ramp. But the problem is that there are a few buses, the ramps are not working. It is a big challenge for me because sometimes if the ramp is not opening, they just leave me. So I get late for the placement* [Case3_St9_D30_L4].

The student was of the view that the university could have done more to make to assist with access and transport to and from field placements due to the student’s dependency on a wheelchair. This argument however, is not isolated to this student. An online news report of protesters in Cape Town, South Africa came to the fore, when commuters who were dependent on wheelchair support, protested against the lack of available transport to suit their needs (Ntongana, 2018).

The student continued to explain the hardship experienced in cost and travel to and from the placement agency:

*I rent a flat in central town. I have to take public transport to go where I need to go to. First challenge was transport because it was very far. At first, the social work department provided money for transport. But then in the middle of the year, the money ran out, so I had to come up with a plan to go there. I had to use private taxis, the car ones, but it was not easy because it was expensive and money is a problem* [Case3_St9_D30_L5].

This narrative alluded to the university providing monetary assistance for transport, however, the student’s need went beyond financial assistance. The nature of her physical impairment means that she requires at least a part-time caregiver. She was offered university accommodation but the university reportedly could not also accommodate her live-in caregiver [Case3_St9_D30_L9].
This student was concerned about continuity of help for herself and other students with similar needs: “There must be a plan for students with disabilities. They [the university] cannot just expect a student to go to do practicals because transport is a very big problem. For instance, if a student who is blind, how do they expect that student to do it on their own or without anyone helping” [Case3_St9_D30_L16].

The university did support the student with suitable placements. In this instance, the student’s placement agency was at an educational institution for learners with physical disabilities. This, itself implied that the placement agency had structures in place to cater for persons requiring wheelchair access, as was required by this student.

However, the student was also of the view that the university considers a revised set of requirements to cater for her needs: “[The university should not] just expect that [disabled] person to go and do the work just like other students because it is a big challenge” [Case3_St9_D30_L32]. This student was severely physically challenged, wheelchair-bound, but had adapted to writing and typing despite the disability. Due to the ethical nature of research, I was unable to discuss this student’s concerns with the practice educator after the interview. Instead, I tried to verify the student’s statements the policy on students with special needs [Case3_LG_P4].

However, research by Subrayen (2017) and Kasiram and Subrayen (2014) of student teachers at another tertiary institution explore the challenges experienced by students with disabilities in greater detail. Both argue that there is a clear indication that universities need to cater for the special needs of students. Failure to formally address the needs of students with special needs is an impairment to student learning.

6.8.4. Sub-theme 4: Financial constraints of students

The financial constraints of students was a thread across all three cases. It is described in Chapter 5 where students in each case raised their concern about financial challenges, particularly regarding travel to and from the placement agencies: “I think it’s best if students are given taxi fare money. It was R90 to come and go back again. You have to have money for lunch, so that is close to R110 a day” [Case2_A111_D19_L107]. Another participant indicated “From my location to town I would spend about R45 per day to go to work and come back each day” [Case2_A15_D11_L89]. These amounts are substantial for students who rely on either financial aid from the university or on family support.

In Cases 1 and 2, the issue of transport is clearly spelled out in the respective learning guides. “All students are responsible for their own travelling expenses” [Case1_LG_D31] and “It should be noted
that all costs relating to fieldwork opportunity are the responsibility of the student” [Case2_LG_D61]. Interestingly, during the pilot phase of this research, it was revealed that there are universities that provide transport for students to travel to and from placement agencies. This was not explored as the pilot interviews were beyond the realm of the three cases under study. However, it must be considered that the factor of financial constraints particularly relating to transport costs is a risk factor that affects student learning.

A suggestion by another student relates to student nurses from the same university who are provided transport to and from their placements: “You are placed at the same hospital...but we can’t use that transport as its only for student nurses” [Case2_St5_D22_L54]; “the nurses’ bus passes in front of my house; they won’t stop for me because I am not wearing the blue and white or the white coat” [Case2_St5_D22_L55]. This suggestion should be considered by all universities as it is not only discriminatory but also trivialises the placement of social work students. This practice demands that social work students make their own provision for cost and travel for the compulsory field instruction module, unlike nursing students who are mostly provided with university transport. This practice also makes social work students vulnerable during their almost daily travel to get to and from the placement agency.

6.8.5. **Sub-theme 5: The student peer sub-system**

Subsystems are a common element in most systems behaviour. Jurich and Myers-Bowman (1998) argue that smaller units or subsystems are located within the larger unit that encloses the system. Identifying subsystems which are located within a unit may depend on one’s perspective (Jurich & Myers-Bowman, 1998). In field instruction systems there may be many subsystems, depending on the perspective of the researcher. In this study, I had identified subsystems located within the university comprising the practice lecturer, university-based supervisors and academic staff. Another subsystem was the student and the supervisor. A more predominant subsystem identified in this study was the student peer subsystem. As the latter was raised by several students and alumni, I present this as a sub-theme and explore the various roles of student peers as a subsystem.

Students appeared to network with each other in an attempt to cope with their academic workload. One strategy is support in projects: “I do the group work and then my student (peer) will make notes for me in that session; I then write the process notes for that session; and I do the same for her session” [Case3_St10_D59_L91]. This supportive practice helped the student to pay closer attention to the interview, to group dynamics and therapeutic interventions. The notes were then handed over to the student to write the groupwork report.
Another participant reflected that students tended to consult with each other on difficult tasks: “Whenever I could sense I was not coping I would go to a friend of mine and ask ‘how can we go about this?’” [Case1_Al6_D2_L142]. Some students reflected that they met after class at university to brainstorm ideas for their cases, which they referred to as “case-conferencing” [Case1_Al6_D2_L145]; and “we share on how to write reports...about child therapy” [Case1_St6_D9_L236]. The academic support provided by peers was aptly summarised by one student: “It’s sort of like having those friendships you know when we study together when we create resources or exchange resources, so it makes things a little bit easier” [Case1_St5_D17_L29]. Such support is indicative of supportive factors for student learning.

The importance of student peers who provided social and emotional support was found to be a thread across all cases. Students found that being placed with one or more students at a placement agency was favourable as it eased feelings of discomfort and intimidation: “I was lucky to be placed with another student. You feel less intimidated because it is entirely new. To know you have someone you can talk to about the emotional things” [Case3_Al3_D27_L18]. One participant reflected that “my classmates were amazing... at some point I had personal health issues and everyone was checking up on me regularly. If I missed class, they would either email me notes or someone will tell me what to catch up on” [Case3_Al4_D56_L36-38]. Therefore, social and emotional support by peers is critical to student learning.

Peers also offered therapeutic support, as was reflected by this student: “We were even counselling each other because you would come out from an interview with a patient and take all that information personally” [Case2_St5_D22_L35]. This was possibly intended as a form of debriefing particularly given the nature of cases that some students were exposed to.

However, some students who were at placements where no peers were, experienced feelings of loneliness. “I am alone in my placement and I don’t have peers that I can talk to, so I just make it work” [Case3_St8_D60_L77]. Another student expressed feelings of being used or exploited by peers: “I find that most of the time I get more duties. At the moment, I have more cases than she has”, explaining further that “if she feels that she cannot stand and talk in front of the entire group or bring up a matter, I have to take up that position all of a sudden. It’s like she just hides” [Case3_St6_D60_L74].

In summary, field instruction systems are nested, and the various components that make up the field instruction system each contribute to the state of the system. This section discussed the element of in field instruction systems. The system components had heightened value when understood in its entirety and then understanding when combined (Wright, 2009).
6.9. **Summary of themes and sub-themes**

A summary of the themes and sub-themes are contained in Table 6.3 below, with paraphrases of the narratives relating to each theme. Evidence to substantiate the paraphrase is contained within square brackets.

### Table 6.3. Summary of themes and sub-themes from Cases 1, 2 and 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Systems themes</th>
<th>Systems key issues</th>
<th>Systems hindrances to student learning</th>
<th>Systems that optimise student learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 1: Field instruction systems are contextual</strong></td>
<td>Contextualising Field instruction systems.</td>
<td>• Urbanised environments had greater availability and proximity of resources [Case1_StSup5_D4], [Case2_PracEduc2_D13_L147].</td>
<td>• Structured, intensive, integrated field instruction programme</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Large number of students requiring placements [Cases 1 and 2]</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Placements at state welfare developments provided narrow experiences, only focused on foster care  [Case1_PracEduc1_D3_L2], [Case2_A110-11_D19_L39-40]</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Reliance on traditional settings</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Experiences are relative to the limited availability of settings</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Unfamiliar long working hours [Cases 1 and 2]  [Case2_PracEduc2_D13_L106] vs semi-flexi hours  [Case3_LG_D45].</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Applying the rule: leave taking (pregnancy) - [Case1_PracEduc1_D3_L69][Case3_LG_D45_P2-3], [Case2_PracEduc2_D13_L106], [Case2_A18_D18_L64].</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Overcrowded offices at agency [Case2_A16_D18_L115], affected ethics [Case2_A17_D18_L116-7].</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Hierarchies in field instruction systems</strong></td>
<td>Power differentials and poor role modelling [Brody &amp; Nair, 2014, p. 133], [Case1_A14_D2_L114-5]. Students felt threatened, devalued [Case3_St1_D60_L38], [Case1_A15_D2_L195].</td>
<td>Students devalued lines of protocol [Case3_St3_D60_L38-39].</td>
<td>• Memorandum of understanding, contracts, contractual obligations [Scott &amp; Davis, 2007; Scragg, 2013]; [Case3_StSup2_D16_L166].</td>
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<td></td>
<td>University power experiences [Case3_St_D60_L52-54], students felt disrespected</td>
<td>Student recognised he needed to align with power icons [Case1_A11_D1_L36].</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Traditional communities: patriarchal views on gender, age, marital status [Case2_A13_D11_L160-162].</td>
<td>Second-order cybernetics [Bateson, 1972; Glanville, 2003]</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Traditional communities: gatekeepers and protocols [Case1_A15_D2_L61].</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Understanding parameters and lines of accountability</strong></td>
<td>Blurred boundaries [Case1_A15_D2_L217]</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ethics promoted [Case3_StSup4_D16_L160], [Case1_A11_D1_L36].</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Responsibility lies with supervisor [Case1_A11_D1_L28].</td>
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<td>Lines of accountability supported [Case3_St_D60_L39].</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Theme 2: Field instruction systems as a set of inter-related elements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key roles in field instruction systems</th>
<th>Systems hindrances to student learning</th>
<th>Systems that optimise student learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student supervisors exploit students (on errands, do their professional tasks) [Case2_PracEdu2_D13_D176].</td>
<td>Unavailability, reluctance, refusal of agency-based supervisors [Case2_StSup1_D14_L24].</td>
<td>Experienced practitioners better supervisors [Case2_A14_D11_L198]; [Case1_StSup5_D4_L13].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialised settings disadvantageous (eg state welfare department focus on foster care exclusively) [Case2_Al_D18]; [Case2_Al3_D11_L197]</td>
<td>New graduates tasked with student supervision [Case2_StSup5_D5]; [Case3_StSup4_D16_L170]; [Case2_A14_D11_L101].</td>
<td>Student supervisors need mentoring [Case2_Al4_D11_L101].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protocols delay entry into community [Case1_A15_D2_L61]; [Case2_A110_D19_L1].</td>
<td>Administrative functions of supervision seen as tedious [Case2_StSup1_D14_L46].</td>
<td>Supervisors must have passion and commitment for student supervision [Case2_A19_D18_L142].</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Poor role models (cut and paste reports, no therapeutic intervention, moonlighting during work hours, clock-watchers, and abandon students) [Case1_A11_D1_L28].</td>
<td>Structured supervisor training provided [Case3_StSup4_D16_L171].</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lack of training on how to supervise</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Appointment supervisors with experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Placement selection, monitoring</th>
<th>Systems hindrances to student learning</th>
<th>Systems that optimise student learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Limited placement opportunities in rural areas [Case1_StSup5_D4_L47].</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students source own placements; unsuitable placements; unverified placements [Case1_A4_D2_L110]; [Case2_A13_D2_A192].</td>
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<td>Unmonitored placements [Case2_A13_D11_L126].</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scattered placements hamper monitoring [Case2_PracEdu2_D13_L51]; [Case2_A13_D11_L126].</td>
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<td>Too many students per placement [Case1_A11_D1_L58].</td>
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<tr>
<td>Universities fail to widen networks to source placements [Case3_A14_D56_L77].</td>
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<tr>
<td>Practice educator supports student role to reduce backlog at placements [Case1_PracEdu1_D3_D52] instead of student growth.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Convenience of agency vs experience provided by agency [Case2_PracEdu2_D13_L13].</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Student supervisors provide field guidance [Case1_St3_D10_L26]; provide developmental and supportive role [Case1_St3_D10_L28]; [Case2_St4_D12_L38]; [Case3_A11_D27_L74].
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Systems themes</th>
<th>Systems key issues</th>
<th>Systems hindrances to student learning</th>
<th>Systems that optimise student learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 3:</strong> Field instruction systems display goal-directed behaviour</td>
<td>Goal seeking behaviour</td>
<td>• LG poorly constructed [Case1_LG_D31]; [Case 2_LG_D61]</td>
<td>• BSW learning outcomes guide goals</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Common purpose</td>
<td>• Supervisors and students unfamiliar with learning guide [Case2_A13_D11_L117], [Case2_A17_D18_L63]</td>
<td>• Uniform BSW standards in place</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Hurried orientation programme for students [Case1_St5_D17_L88-94].</td>
<td>• Social development focus [Case3_St_D60_L55]</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Agencies not prepared/ill-prepared for students [Case2_A13_D19_L99]; [Case3_St_D60_L133].</td>
<td>• Teaching strategies (small groups) [Case3_PracEduc1_D16_L81]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Belittled by supervisor [Case3_St_D60_L63]</td>
<td>• Structured and early agency recruitment process [Case3_PracEduc4_D16_L35].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Resilience and adaptation</td>
<td>• Students workload and inability to cope [Case2_A113_D19_L59];[Case2_A110_D19_L60]; [Case2_A111_D19_L58].</td>
<td>• Orientation of supervisors [Case2_A19_D18_L142]</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• New to working environment [Case3_StSup3_D16_L93].</td>
<td>• Co-ordinated teaching and field instruction staff at university [Case3_LG_D45_P4].</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Inconsistent communication with lecturing staff [Case 3_St_D60_L52].</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• First exposure to traumatic social work cases [Case1_A15_D2_L123];[Case3_StSup3_D16_L91].</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Financial stress [Case2_A111_D19_L29]; [Case3_StSup3_D16_L90].</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 4:</strong> Field instruction systems are dynamic and change over time</td>
<td>Dynamic systems</td>
<td>• Typical of closed systems: Non-progressive supervisors [Case2_StSup1_D14_L69-75].</td>
<td>• Student self-care to cope with stress [Case1_St5_D17_L27];[Case1_LG_D31].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Typical of closed systems: Lack of university support when faced with changes [Case2_A12_D11_L97].</td>
<td>• Focus on achieving BSW objectives, say no to other work [Case1_St2_D10_L83]; [Case2_A113_D19_L73]; [Case3_St4_D60_L30]; [Case3_A15_D28_L38-40].</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• FIS ignores changes and self-organises?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 5:</strong> Field instruction systems rely on communication and feedback</td>
<td>Communicat ion in monitoring placements</td>
<td>• Practice educator functions limited to co-ordinatorship role; restricted foresight</td>
<td>• Professional development of supervisors [Case3_StSup4_D59_L34].</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Student is seen as the communication link between university, agency and supervisor [Case3_A15_D28_L86]; [Case1_A14_D2_L110].</td>
<td>• Willingness of supervisors to acquire and/or provide updated knowledge [Case1_StSup3_D6_L92].</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Poor, no, limited communication with agencies, supervisors</td>
<td>• Supervisors used in class teaching [Case1_PracEduc1_D3_L26].</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• University and agency-based supervisors do not communicate [Case1_StSup5_D4_L23], [Case3_St4_D60_L30].</td>
<td>• FIS able to self-organise (entropy)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Supervisors used in class teaching [Case1_StSup3_D6_L92].</td>
<td>• Supervisor workshops allow for exchange of ideas/problem sharing [Case3_StSup4_D59_L34].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Professional development of supervisors [Case3_StSup2_D56_L40].</td>
<td>• Coordinated multi-lecturer approach to teaching [Case1_PracEduc1_D3_L50].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assessment and feedback</td>
<td>• Policy on assessment not practised</td>
<td>• Practice educator has multiple roles</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Policy on assessment not aligned with BSW standards [Case2_LG_D61_P7].</td>
<td>• Open communication fosters student development [Case3_S2_D60_L29], [Case2_PracEduc2_13_D123], [Case3_StSup3_D16_L117].</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Students do not meet expectations [Case2_StSup2_D20_L40].</td>
<td>• Comprises formative and summative assessments Case3_FIP_D23]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 6:</strong> Field instruction systems are greater than the sum of their parts</td>
<td>Synergy and holism</td>
<td>• Knowledge received after field practice [Case2_A6f, 7, 8, 9, D18_L122-125]. [Case2_A11_D11_L147]. [Case1_St6_D90_L190].</td>
<td>• Clear demarcation of roles: University assesses student [Case2_A11_D11_L136].</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Placements too short [Case1_A11_D1_L50], [Case1_St2_D10_L116].</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Countrywide placements create more field placement opportunities [Case2_A6_D18_L139].</td>
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</table>
In Table 6.3 I attempted to provide an overview of the themes, to highlight important issues which I will be using as a basis for the recommendations in Chapter 7 of this thesis.
6.10. Conclusion

This Chapter used systems’ constructs to capture and analyse the narratives of participants on their experience of the field instruction programme. Data were coded and analysed according to themes that were first deducted within the theoretical framework of this study, and later adapted to this Chapter. In order to ensure transferability of the findings of this study, detailed and rich descriptions of the research context and the participants’ views and findings were presented in the form of direct quotes and excerpts from narrative interviews. These rich descriptions provided an opportunity to make a judgement of whether the findings can be applied to another context or with other participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). In this way, I was ever mindful in developing interpretations, meanings and a sense of order in constructing the voices and social realities of the participants.

Six themes were constructed based on the data and attributed to systems concepts. Theme 1 contextualised field instruction systems related to hierarchies and boundaries. Theme 2 viewed field instruction systems as sets of interrelated elements, paying tribute to key persons who contributed to student learning, and focusing on supervisor appointments and placement selection. In Theme 3 the focus was on the goal-directedness of field instruction systems and the system’s ability to adapt to changes. Theme 4 elaborated on the understanding of field instruction systems being dynamic and responsive to change. In Theme 5, the value of communication in field instruction systems was noted. This theme also alluded to student assessments and feedback. In the sixth and final theme, the concepts of holism and synergy of field instruction systems were explored, which highlighted the view that when elements of field instruction systems were combined, it resulted in a greater web of interconnectivity and continuity.

Throughout this Chapter, reference was made to factors within field instruction systems that supported or hindered student learning. In the next Chapter, I draw from factors in Chapters 5 and 6 to present a framework to support optimal field instruction practices.
Chapter 7. A system-informed framework for field instruction programmes

"Look beyond the Players to the Rules of the Game. You think that because you understand “one” that you must therefore understand “two” because one and one make two. But you forget that you must also understand the “and”.

- Sufi teaching story

7.1. Introduction

This penultimate Chapter brings together critical findings from the data and draws conclusions and recommendations based on these findings. The emphasis in this Chapter is on providing a systems-informed framework to strengthen field instruction in order to strengthen student learning. This Chapter also responds to Objective 4 of this thesis, which is to formulate and recommend a framework supporting the factors that can be built into field instruction systems.

Systems theory and a systems way of thinking of field instruction have been core to the analysis of the data. This has enabled findings on patterns of behaviour within field instruction systems as described in the findings in Chapters 5 and 6. Key findings in this Chapter related to issues of governance, educational partnerships and operational matters. Based on the key findings, the recommendations in this Chapter are categorised into three broad categories, namely a governance framework system, a framework to foster an educational support system, and an operational framework system. Each category is presented separately in this Chapter, with cross-referencing to the relevant section in the findings’ Chapters in order to avoid duplication.

7.2. Governance system framework

Governance is essential to the good functioning of any system. Governance involves the development and implementation of rules and processes that direct behaviour of systems. These rules and processes must ensure the long-term sustainability of the field instruction programme.

Field instruction systems require both long and short-term stability. As the duration of each placement is short-term, the focus appears to be on meeting short-term challenges. This results in short-term growth to ensure that the student moves through the placement as quickly as possible. Warren et al. (1998) argue that short-term growth results in non-linear growth and rapid change. The effects of non-linear growth and rapid change are short-term. Field instruction systems will face resource limitations that will “flatten the growth curve” of the programme (Warren et al., 1998, p. 360). Thus,
a plateau is reached in the field instruction system where further progress is stifled unless change occurs once again. These arguments form the basis of the key findings on governance. The key findings in this section reveal that field instruction systems are not aligned with statutory and academic obligations. There is little reference to a system of management of the field instruction programme, and mechanisms to enforce rules and procedures are scarce. The findings also reveal that little attention is given to students with special needs as well as issues relating to professional and personal conduct. These findings reveal system breakdown that will result in systems of chaos. As the field instruction system are complex systems, it has the ability to self-organise by learning from, and changing dysfunctional behaviour. However, self-organising systems often focus on short-term productivity and stability, thus further stifling the growth of the field instruction system.

7.2.1. The key findings

The key findings that gave rise to the problem statement above are:

7.2.1.1. Poor alignment with statutory and academic obligations.

The learning guides and policy document (where available) were not aligned with the latest qualification standards for the BSW (Sections 5.2.1; 5.3.1 & 5.4.1). Case 2 was aligned with non-South African policies and standards (Section 5.3.1) which is deemed detrimental to students’ learning. Case 2 also provided inaccurate information to students that South African social work education lacked a statutory body. Incorrect information was provided on accepting students into the fourth year based on a recognition of their prior learning (Section 5.3.2). This misinformation isolates this Case as abiding by structures that are not aligned with recognised South African policies. If denied entry into social work programmes on the basis of inaccurate information, it may have repercussions for the student’s professional registration upon completion.

Of the three cases, only Case 3 had a governing policy document documenting the structure of the BSW field instruction programme (Section 5.4.1), indicating an awareness of the need for an overall policy.

7.2.1.2. Paucity of systems of management

Another finding was that there was a paucity of systems of management in place. Systems of management included complying with rules and processes that should be uniformly applied in order to avoid being accused of prejudice and bias. Systems of management appear absent in relation to
reports of unethical and unprofessional behaviours of student supervisors as per below, as well as in relation to the management of the field instruction programme as a whole (Cases 1 & 2).

Various complaints were received from students and alumni on lack of placement selection, lack of verification of placements and little or no attention to monitoring of the placements (Sections 5.3.4 & 5.4.4). These narratives indicate a serious threat to the effective management and governance of the system.

In Case 2, students were allowed to commence field instruction at placement agencies without being registered for the academic year at the university despite the legal implications thereof (Section 5.3.2) and is viewed as a blatant disregard for academic and legal requirements.

Universities have policies on absenteeism and leave yet are faced with students who require long leave for pregnancy, confinement, medical, psychological and personal reasons (Section 6.4.1). Students who require extended periods of absence will not be able to meet the field instruction requirements in the academic timeframe.

Another finding was that despite supervision being a compulsory requirement of field instruction, some students regarded supervision as stifling and preferred not being supervised on their field instruction (Section 5.2.2.2). Students also could not understand the protocols that must be followed at organisations (Section 6.4.2).

7.2.1.3. Professional misbehaviour and ethics

The findings indicate that issues of ethics and professional misbehaviour and ethics were ignored, poorly documented, under-valued or unnoticed. Universities had recognised that professional behaviour must be ethical, however, professional misbehaviours were overlooked.

One of the findings was that students failed to report supervisors’ unethical behaviour or that they practiced without having a supervisor in place at the agency. Students were faced with supervisors who were frequently absent or absent for prolonged periods, leaving the student without a recognised supervisor (Sections 5.3.2.1, 5.3.3.1 & 5.4.3.1). Students were also supervised by persons who were not social workers, despite statutory regulations to the contrary (SACSSP, 2006).

Another finding was that students feared repercussions from the university if unethical behaviour, prolonged absence of the supervisor, or being supervised by a non-social worker were reported. However, these experiences went unchecked due to poor systems of management (Sections 5.3.3.1 & 5.4.3.2).
The research indicates that field instruction coordinators appeared to be aware of supervisors who presented with unethical behaviour. This was evident during the information sessions provided by the university to students. However, despite such awareness, field instruction coordinators continued to place students with the same supervisors and at the same agencies (Section 5.3.3.1).

Another finding was that students were allowed to interview service users in the presence of other social workers. Furthermore, it was reported that other social workers interjected during the interviews (Section 5.3.3.3). These examples indicate blatant disregard for professionalism and created anxiety for students during the interviews. In addition, professional values and principles that were learned at university could not be practiced.

A further finding in this section is that students who had presented with unethical or unprofessional behaviour at the agency were not reported to the university. It was argued that supervisors did not report student mishaviour in order to protect the students and for fear of jeopardising the students’ academic progression (Section 5.2.2.4). Universities were aware of supervisors’ tensions about reporting students with unprofessional behaviour and could have addressed the supervisors’ failure to report such behaviour.

7.2.1.4. Students with special needs

One of the key findings in relation to students with special needs is that field instruction programmes did not appear to cater for students who required specialised assistance and intervention due to their diverse needs. As an example, there was little attention given to the special needs of students with disabilities (Section 6.9.3). In addition, in two of the three cases in this research, there was no reference to students with special needs or how the universities would assist these students.

There was evidence in one of the three cases of a student with physical disability. This participant was reliant on the use of a motorised wheelchair and technological support. This student was also reliant on the use of appropriate public transport with wheelchair access to and from the university and the placement agency. Therefore this student required special arrangements for placement opportunities, for e.g. being placed in an agency with access for persons with physical disabilities. Another challenge this student faced was the unreliable public transport that affected issues of punctuality.

It not unlikely that the other two cases may have also had students who may have had similar or diverse needs, however, no provision appeared to have been made for students with special needs. It
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was only in Case 3 where evidence was located in the fourth-year learning guide of recognition of students with special needs.

In summary, in this section on key findings on systems of governance, it was found that there were field instruction programmes did not comply with academic and statutory requirements. This was as a result of limited systems of management. Issues of unprofessional behaviour, ethics and recognition of students with special needs were mostly ignored. Collectively, these findings imply that there are weaknesses in the governance of field instruction programmes, particularly in Cases 1 and 2.

It was also found that the patterns of behaviour of practice educators who had knowledge and awareness of unethical behaviour and who failed to act effectively on such knowledge, was improper. This failure to act made students vulnerable and placed them in systems of risk. This risk was further accentuated when placements were unmonitored, as indicated in Section 7.4.1.5.

7.2.2. Recommendations on the governance framework

The university bears the ultimate responsibility, authority and accountability for the implementation of field instruction systems. In the context of field instruction systems, this authority rests with the responsible department or faculty who in turn devolve responsibility to the field instruction coordinator. Universities should provide an oversight function which should demonstrate systems of responsibility, authority and accountability. Policies should be developed and enforced in order to ensure that the implementation of the field instruction programme is aligned with BSW policies and principles.

Governance policies should highlight systems of accountability in order to protect the integrity, honour and consistency of the programme. Field instruction systems display self-regulatory behaviour that is linked to rules and principles (Cooper, Dewe, & O'Driscoll, 2001). Hierarchical structures, rules and principles govern field instruction systems, and the absence of thereof will lead to chaos (Coetzee, 2012). Having studied the findings on the lack of accountability and issues of governance, I hereby offer recommendations on a governance framework system that will enhance field instruction systems. It is also recommended that a governance framework should be a compulsory and non-negotiable requirement across all field instruction systems.

7.2.2.1. Statutory obligations

It is imperative that all field instruction systems are in line with statutory obligations. South African field instruction systems should be aligned with the Qualifications Standards for the BSW (CHE,
2015). As a way forward, we await guidance from the task team of social work academics set up by ASASWEI to correlate the old ELOs and new BSW standards. This will guide social work academics on the implementation of the new BSW standards on field instruction.

Each university should have a well-developed BSW field instruction policy document that provides a comprehensive explanation of the BSW curriculum as well as a detailed description of the field instruction component.

Each year or cycle of field instruction should have a manual on implementation, applicable to the programme, students, student supervisors and agencies.

Students should commence field instruction only upon approval from the university. This includes after formal registration with the university for that academic year and the relevant module, together with approval from the practice educator or appointed authority. In this light the oversight role of the hierarchical structure within the social work department becomes crucial.

All students must work under the direct supervision of a registered social worker in line with statutory requirements (SACSSP, 2006). Students should be required to report the prolonged absence of supervisor or any contraventions to this requirement.

The university should develop a detailed governance policy on issues of improper conduct to ensure uniform understanding and implementation of the rules of field instruction programmes.

7.2.2.2. System of management

Issues relating to management are strongly embedded in systems of accountability (Brody & Nair, 2014). Systems of accountability will generate hierarchical systems interventions that provide system stability and resilience. Hierarchies evolve from the lowest level up, from individuals to teams and from actual programme implementation to management of implementation. However, hierarchies exist to serve the bottom layers, not the top (Wright, 2009). Hierarchies are essential in managing systems and will support system sustainability over the long term.

Systems of management will help systems and subsystems to meet their goals and perform more efficiently. If students are focused on maximising grades as opposed to practicing with integrity and professionalism, they may resort to unethical and improper behaviours. Similarly, the unprofessional behaviour of student supervisors may erode systems of learning. Failure to monitor and address such counterproductive behaviours will result in the malfunctioning of hierarchies. This will then result in the failure of the system to meet its goals. Therefore, systems of management should be located from
a centre of control. This centralised control will ensure coordination towards achieving the larger system goal and will bring balance to the welfare and responsibilities of the subsystems (Wright, 2009).

It is recommended that in order to foster strong systems of management of the programme, there should be well-developed contracts for the effective management of the university-agency-student supervisor partnership, and the university-student supervisor partnership. All contracts or memoranda of agreement should be in writing and notarised.

Students should also enter into a learning agreement with the university as this sets out the agreed expectations between the university and student (Royse et al., 2012). These agreements should contain a common set of values, attitudes and competencies that students are expected to develop and demonstrate during the course of their field instruction experience (Rogers et al., 2000). The learning agreement should also include aspects such as the programme requirements and how these requirements will be met, communication protocols, and issues of accountability that are related to hierarchies and structure.

7.2.2.3. Issues relating to conduct

Issues relating to ethics and professional conduct are critical. System malfunction occurs when issues of ethics and counterproductive behaviours surface. In this research, universities appeared to rely on students and student supervisors self-learning of the ethical guidelines of the SACSSP (DSD, 1993; SACSSP, 2006). However, universities should take the lead in teaching students the provisions of the rules governing codes of conduct. Students should be taught to recognise and understand the implication of unprofessional conduct from themselves, as well as from members of the educational team.

The responsibility to monitor the conduct of students and student supervisors should be with the university or the practice educator. When students, student supervisors or the placement agency itself manifest attitudes and behaviours that interfere with meeting BSW and professional standards, corrective action must be taken.

The university should take the initiative to formulate a performance plan for students that will clarify acceptable standards of behaviour. This plan should also identify actions needed to meet those standards and should state the consequences when acceptable standards are not met.

Universities must put in place reporting structures for unprofessional behaviour. Students, supervisors and agencies must know the lines of reporting and act immediately, without prejudice. Feedback
policies must contain feedback loops that alter and correct behaviour. Policies on feedback loops should be part of the system’s communication strategies between and within subsystems (Wright, 2009).

The university should have in place a complaint and redress process within the field instruction programme as this provides relief to student supervisors, agencies and students who may be aggrieved, distressed or generally concerned about any aspect of the implementation of the field instruction programme. A redress policy should protect the rights of complainants and will foster confidence that grievances will be heard timeously and professionally (Nel et al., 2010; Scott & Davis, 2007).

7.2.2.4. Services to students with special needs

Each field instruction programme should recognise students with special needs. However, this should not be limited to students with physical disabilities. The field instruction programme’s attention to students with special needs should be goal-directed and should recognise issues of vulnerability, prejudice, imbalance, challenges and system entropy. Furthermore, early communication strategies should be developed to identify and assist students with special needs.

In summary, governance of field instruction systems is imbedded in policies, systems of management and responses to systems’ behaviours. It is important that when developing a governance framework, that universities not fixate on maximising parts of the system while ignoring the whole (Boulding, 1956). Therefore, a further recommendation to oversee the system of governance is having an academic review committee. The aim of developing and enforcing a governance framework should be to enhance total system properties and promote growth, stability, diversity, resilience and sustainability of field instruction systems.

7.3. An educational partnership system framework

Systems of field instruction should strive for mutually beneficial outcomes (Pellegrino & Lee, 2018). This argument highlights that field instruction systems when seen as a whole, is greater than the sum of its constituent elements. In this section I argue that some of the constituent elements of field instruction systems will be easy to notice because they may be visible or tangible. This is illustrated in recognising that the practice educator, student supervisor, placement agency and the student are essential in a successful field instruction system. All of these are seen as tangible elements and have been described throughout this thesis. However, intangible elements are also part of the system (Wright, 2009).
One of the key intangibles is relationships and the interconnectedness of the constituent elements of field instruction systems. This interconnectedness is what holds the elements of the system together as it operates through a flow of information. The processing of that information is through systems of input, throughput and output. These intangible elements of interconnectedness exhibit adaptive, dynamic, goal-seeking or self-preserving behaviours. This interconnectedness of the elements of field instruction systems is viewed as the integrity or wholeness of the system (Wright, 2009).

The underlying finding in this section was that the university failed to recognise the field instruction system as an inclusive and whole system. The university recognised student supervisors and agencies as mere resources to the field instruction programme. This section argues that when perceived as a resource, the agency is merely a placement for access to service users and the student supervisor is an instrument for supervision. This was evident in the noncommittal behaviour of student supervisors and agencies towards the field instruction programme.

7.3.1. The key findings

The key findings in this section are:

The practice educator. The university, represented by the practice educator, was accountable for the student’s learning within the field instruction programme. Some practice educators preferred using traditional modes of applying the field instruction mandates and these educators therefore neglected to see field instruction systems as dynamic and subject to constant situational changes (Sections 5.2.2 & 5.3.2).

Whilst some practice educators were well versed on their roles within the field instruction programme, others were vaguely aware of their own roles and responsibilities, and of the roles of student supervisors, agencies and students. It appeared that some practice educators received little formal induction into their roles and therefore their functions emanated from their own experience, and outdated programme information received from colleagues. It was also revealed that in some instances, there was little effort made by practice educators to update systems of knowledge, communication and placement opportunities (Sections 5.2.2 & 5.3.2).

Of note, however, was that in Case 3 a unique structure was practiced whereby the practice educator undertook teaching, supervisory and placement monitoring roles concurrently. Notably this placed strain on the functions of the practice educator, but also seemed to have a positive impact on the programme as it supported a hands-on approach to field instruction. The university, agency and agency-based supervisors experienced this as an all-encompassing function of the university.
**Authentic learning.** Field instruction programmes are the key to providing students with authentic learning opportunities. However, this study found that some field instruction programmes did not provide students with such opportunities. Furthermore, this study found that the field instruction opportunities leading up to the fourth-year experience was minimal and sometimes insignificant in order to have prepared students for their final year field instruction experience (Sections 5.2.2; 5.3.2 & 5.4.2).

**The student supervisor.** This study found that the student supervisor had a crucial role to play in developing students for practice. The experiences of students of their supervisors revealed that whilst some supervisors practiced the developmental function of supervision, some student supervisors were not committed to positive role modelling for the incoming graduate. The findings further indicated that some student supervisors devalued and threatened students (Sections 5.2.3.3 & 5.3.3.1). Furthermore, it was revealed that many student supervisors were reluctant to take on the supervision of students for reasons related to high workloads and lack of agency resources. This reluctance reflected that student supervisors were seen to having little interest in furthering the social work profession by developing well-experienced graduates. This scenario also reflected on the presence of systems characteristics such as systems entropy and chaos (Sections 5.2.3.3 & 5.3.3.1).

Another finding of this study was that some universities did not prepare student supervisors for supervision. This lack of preparation resulted in student supervisors being unaware of their duties and responsibilities towards students and to the university (Sections 5.2.3.3 & 5.3.3.1).

**Sourcing of placements.** This research found that the sourcing of placement agencies was poorly managed by some universities (Sections 5.2.4 & 5.3.4.2). The first finding in this regard was that the learning guide stipulated that universities would source placements for students, however, in practice this was not the case. The content of the learning guide is thus contradictory to practice and reflects poorly on the university (Section 5.2.4). The second finding was that students in Cases 1 and 2 were compelled to seek placements in their home town and little regard was taken for the student’s own circumstances (Section 5.2.4).

The third finding was that the availability of placements varied in different geographical areas. Urbanised environments appear to have greater availability and proximity of resources (Section 5.4). Semi-rural and rural areas appear to be under-resourced (Sections 5.2 & 5.3).

**Understanding the partnership.** The research found that in some instances there was little or no understanding of the true elements of the partnership in field instruction (Section 5.3.3.1). There did not appear to be any involvement of other members of the BSW team in the field instruction
curriculum. This finding was based on complaints of students of their workload in other concurrent modules, that theory for field instruction was received after completing particular block placement, and finally on the need to attend university during the block period for their research module (Section 6.9.2).

It was also found that each of the three cases had provision for two types of supervisors, namely a university-based and an agency-based supervisor. However, in Cases 1 and 2 this was poorly indicated in the learning guide. The practice of having a university-based supervisor appeared to have been misunderstood in Case 2 where this was incorporated as part of practice educator duties. The presence and practice of university-based supervisors was visibly evident in Case 3.

The findings of this research indicated that the difference in the roles and functions of university-based and agency-based supervisors was ill-defined across all cases. This resulted in role confusion as students could not distinguish between functions of these supervisors.

Another finding was that universities had allocated the monitoring of student placements to the university-based supervisor, thus indicating that universities supported the monitoring of placements. However, the execution of this monitoring task by the university-based supervisor was constrained by factors such as financial costs of travel to the agency, personal factors and by the distance of the student placement to the university (Sections 5.3.4.2 & 6.9.2).

In summary of the findings in this section on the educational partnership system framework, it can be seen that the traditional views of field instruction structures, roles and relationships in some instances did not support student learning. The traditional view of members of the educational team as merely members and resources to supplement student learning presented a great risk to the synergy of the field instruction programme. This fragmented idealism hinders systems’ arguments on the inter-related of all members of the system as contributing to the holistic development of the student’s field instruction experience.

7.3.2. Recommendations on an educational partnership system framework

Systems theorists have continuously emphasised the inter-relatedness of roles, subsystems and relationships that enable systems to function optimally (Reiter & Green, 2015; Valentinov, 2012). In this section I argue that it is important to look beyond the individual roles and responsibilities of practice educators, student supervisors, placement agencies and students. The practice educators, student supervisors and placement agencies should be seen as teaching partners and not mere resources in the field instruction programme. Thus, teaching partners must be seen collectively to
form the mesosystem or set of mesosystems that work cohesively to give effect to the student. This interconnectedness and collective responsibility are the intangibles of field instruction systems, as argued Section 7.3.

In light of the key findings in this section, as well as consideration of best and poor practices on field instruction systems, I offer a recommendation on the structure of the educational partnership. This is illustrated in Figure 7.1 below:

**Figure 7.1. The educational partnership system**

Figure 7.1 illustrates the partnership model of field instruction that is being proposed. It is based on the principle that field instruction system elements are goal-directed, have a common purpose and are inter-related and interconnected sets of elements. The following recommendations are based on a field instruction system that is a “planned interaction between the teacher and learner for the purpose of developing learner competence” (Levy, 1965, p. 447), developing students’ critical reflection skills (Lawson, 2018) and designing integrated learning experiences for students (Domakin, 2018).

The university should have a holistic perspective of each student’s field instruction progression across the four years of the BSW (Section 7.2.1). The university is central in field instruction programmes; however, the university is an abstract organisational system. It devolves its responsibility to practice educators. This recommendation on an educational partnership takes into consideration that field instruction is not a stand-alone programme. It is a series of micro and mesosystems within the
macrosystem of the university. As a macrosystem, the policies of the university affect the implementation of the field instruction system. However, one has little control of macro-level policies, but micro-level parts can be controlled.

The agency, university liaison and agency-based supervisor should be considered as partners and not resources in the student’s learning. This implies that supervisors must be committed to providing supervision as part of their day-to-day duties as a social worker.

As indicated in Figure 7.1, the practice educator should be responsible for developing an updated and effective learning guide that is responsive to the needs of the BSW, the university, and society. The practice educator should be the overall coordinator of the system and working in close collaboration with other members of the Department to develop a well-coordinated programme of field instruction (Sections 2.5.2 & 2.6.1).

It is imperative that the practice educator communicates the requirements of the module to the students and other partners (Royse et al., 2012). Academics within the BSW programme should strengthen communication strategies to overcome the challenges experienced by students. Communication is required with other academic staff within the BSW to ensure that the content of theory and field instruction modules are complementary.

As illustrated in Figure 7.1, the field instruction programme should have a university liaison to manage each student’s field instruction opportunities across the four years of the BSW (Section 2.5.2). There is evidence in all three cases of the value of having a university-based liaison person who would serve as a link between the university and the agency (Sections 5.2.3.1; 5.3.3.1 & 5.4.3.2). While the utilisation of the university liaison (seen as the university-based supervisor in each of the three cases) was sporadic in Cases 1 and 2; Case 3 appears to have made full utilisation of this model and may be seen as a best practice.

It is recommended that there should be clear role responsibilities and role differentiation for each team member (Section 2.5). The university liaison should seek placement opportunities, should communicate and network with agencies to accept students (Mathews et al., 2014), and should link and match each student with the agency or agencies (Section 5.3.4) (Royse et al., 2012). The Agency-based supervisor should manage the process of the student’s day-to-day supervision across the student’s placement agencies (Sections 2.5.4 & 2.4.5).

Another recommendation based on the findings in this research is that students may require more than one placement due to limited opportunities for all methods of social work provided by some agencies.
In such instances the agencies should be in close proximity of each other in order to facilitate ease of supervision (Section 2.5.2 & 2.5.3).

It is also recommended that the university liaison should communicate the university requirements to the agency and student supervisors. This is evident in the model followed in Case 3 which could serve as a best practice model (Section 5.4.2). The university liaison should also have regular and frequent communication with students, supervisors and agencies, communicate assessment procedures (Cleak et al., 2015; Rodriguez-Gomez & Ibarra-Saiz, 2015) and should communicate with all partners on placement termination (Austin & Isokuortti, 2016). In this way, there will be close monitoring of the placement and shortfalls in the placement would be attended to promptly.

The recommendations in this section are based on the failure of the university to recognise other members of the educational partnership as teaching partners. The agency should be a teaching partner and thus serves the function of an employer, teaching students about agency functioning and workplace rules, in addition to providing onsite opportunities to students to practice the integration of theory and practice.

Student supervisors should be seen as a teaching partner and be actively engaged with the university, the agency and the student in the field instruction process. Lynch and McClain-Meeder (2018) maintain that it is the student supervisor who helps the student to obtain professional competence in practice and who bridges the divide between practice and academic.

It is recommended that social workers undertaking student supervision should be committed to the development of the profession, competent in all skills and knowledge within their field, display professionalism and etiquette, and are professional and ethical (McSweeney & Williams, 2018; Perlman, 2018; Unguru & Sandu, 2018). It is, therefore, strongly suggested that student supervisors be subject to careful screening and monitoring. It is also recommended that universities maintain a database of poor supervision practice and that supervisors against whom students have reported adversely should be removed from the database. A further recommendation, as supported by Poggenpoel (2018), is that student supervisors receive recognition for their responsibilities as student supervisors with points for continuous professional development as part of their post-qualifying training. To support this, Poggenpoel (2018, p. ii) argues that the absence of this form of recognition “could be detrimental to the profession and could lead to stagnation in the field of social work and ultimately affect the standard of the profession”.

In summary, the support and working partnership of a team of professionals should be the complementary factor to meaningful field instruction placements. The importance of relationships is
evident in the system of communication and feedback between and among members (Kourgiantakis et al., 2018; Wright, 2009). Systems thinkers purport that positive feedback begets positive behaviour in systems; and alternatively, negative feedback places a constraint on the pattern and growth of student development (Reiter & Green, 2015). The communication and feedback between the university and student supervisor should inform the student’s progress. It should be that continuous system of input, throughput and feedback that informs on the student’s progress and challenges, and provides guidance on requirements and assessment processes.

7.4. **Operational framework system**

The purpose and function of field instruction systems may become explicitly known through the operation of the system. Wright (2009) suggests that the best way to deduce the system’s purpose is to observe the system to see how the system behaves. In this research, the experiences of the participants provided valuable insight into how the field instruction systems operated.

As field instruction systems display properties of dynamic systems, they are in constant change. Thus, field instruction systems may change in a linear or in a recursive manner. On the one hand, linear changes in field instruction systems may include simple cause and effect relationships, for example where change in placements cause a proportional change in outcomes. On the other hand, non-linear changes in field instruction systems will not follow a straight line. Field instruction relationships will involve feedback. It contains features of cause and effect that are non-linear. This recursive feature of feedback within field instruction systems are evident in system breakdown, and in breakdown of relationships. System breakdown will have a ripple effect that reverberates through the system in an unpredictable manner. This will bring about rapid change (Warren et al., 1998). Based on the findings of this research, it is evident that field instruction systems enter into systems of chaos as a result of poor operational systems and mismanaged processes. Entropy is likely to occur in field instruction systems that have little structure.

7.4.1. **Key findings**

The key findings relating to the operational system are:

7.4.1.1. **Inconsistencies in the learning guide**

Over and above the many discrepancies and contradictions already referred to in the learning guides (section 7.2.1.1), the following are further findings on the content of the document:
**Placement hours.** The number of placement hours across the cases varied. Case 1 required 80 days, 17 weeks or 640 hours in a block placement of which five days was to be spent in a volunteer placement in addition to the field instruction placement (Section 5.2.1). Case 2 required 19 weeks or 608 hours in a block placement plus four days of voluntary work (Section 5.3.4.1). Case 3 required 28 weeks of 16 hours per week, totalling 450 hours, in a concurrent placement.

**Practice methods requirements.** The findings indicate that the quantity and intensity of micro-level cases, and meso and macro level projects were either not specified, or were specified but not applied, or was left to the discretion of the practice educator or supervisor (Sections 5.2.2.1 & 5.3.2). Another finding was that in Case 2, students were required to have at least two practice settings in fourth-year (Section 5.3.4) without specifying how this would occur. The findings indicate also that there was poor reference to inclusion of praxis (Sections 5.2.2.1 & 5.2.2.3). In addition, it was found that Case 3 was the only one of the three cases that emphasised integrated sustainable projects (Section 5.4.2.1), a practice that is preferred in social work.

**Ethics and misconduct.** It was found that students were unable to link ethics in practice with professional requirements or with a theory on ethics. This was evident in Case 1 where the learning guide stressed knowledge of ethics as per the SACSSP but did not relate professional ethics to practice (Section 5.2.2.4). This may be the reason why students fail to report poor supervision practices (Section 5.3.2.1). It was also found that students became immersed into the organisation’s culture at the placement agency, inevitably either excluded from or drawn into office cliques and office politics; another finding was that student supervisors were found to blur professional and personal boundaries (Section 6.4.3).

One of the findings that were indicative of unprofessional behaviour was that students interviewed service users in the presence of other social workers, which was aggravated by social workers who interjected in the interview. It is noted that students who interviewed service users in the presence of others, and who faced interruption by other social workers, experienced feelings of anxiety (Section 5.3.3.3). Related to this is the finding that student supervisors supported such malpractice as they failed to provide proper interviewing space for students.

The findings also indicate that agencies experienced a lack of office space (Section 5.2.4), which was compounded by universities requesting placements for more than what was physically possible at the agency (Section 5.2.4). This implied a preference for massification of field instruction placements, and disregard for sufficiency of service users and agency resources.
**Block model.** Cases 1 and 2 had each a modified block model and not a block model as stipulated. This was evident in students being placed at the agency for four days a week and were required to spend the fifth day at the university to attend to research and supervision (Section 2.7.2; Case2_PSA_D25).

One of the key findings of this model was that the universities’ insistence that students were to be placed in their home town. This indicates the failure of the university to recognise the inconvenience, travel and transport costs on students who are placed away from the university.

Within the block model, students complained of receiving related theory after having returned from placements. Also in this model, students complete their academic courses either prior to immersing themselves in experiential learning or after the completion of the placement. In effect, the block model requires students to apply knowledge that they may have learnt some months prior to the placement or will learn only some months after the end of the placement (Anastas, 2010; Cleak & Smith, 2012).

7.4.1.2. **Training and orientation**

**Training and orientation of student supervisors and agencies.** One of the findings of this research was that there was a lack of attention paid to the orientation and training of supervisors and agencies. Supervisors had reported a lack of understanding of the learning guide or the module requirements (Sections 5.2.1; 5.3.1; 5.4.1 & 5.2.2.2). This could be the reason why supervisors were unfamiliar with their duties, and why agencies were noncommittal on long-term relationships with universities. Efforts to orientate supervisors on field instruction requirements were only evident in Case 3.

**Student induction at agency lacking.** Another finding was that students did not receive an induction to the placement agency (Section 5.2.3.2). This resulted in students being unaware of the mission and strategy of the agency, and in the resources linked to the agency.

**Roles and responsibilities unclear.** The findings indicate that the roles and responsibilities of members of the field instruction system were not indicated. This resulted in role confusion and role overlap. For example, university-based supervisors and agency-based supervisors were unaware of the parameter of each other’s roles. One of the consequences of unclear boundaries was that students crossed boundaries by aligning with management (Section 6.9.2).

Furthermore, it was found that there were no criteria in place used to appoint supervisors [Case2_A114D11_L101]. Universities were faced with a dearth of supervisors willing to supervise students. However, given the innumerable complaints against existing supervisors, universities appeared to continue to use the same supervisors without regard for their unprofessionalism.

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7.4.1.3. Progression of experience

The findings indicate that there was poor attention to the progression of learning experiences within a professional programme. In each of the cases, it was found that the extent of the social work exposure and practice prior to the fourth year was minimal. As suggested by the data in this study, the first two years failed to adequately prepare students for the latter years of field instruction as they were exposed to minimal, simplified non-therapeutic interviews, and child minding at afterschool centres were insufficient to prepare for the final year of study. Furthermore, it was found that there was minimal attention to progression of experiences, and this impacted on feelings of anxiety experienced at the fourth year when intensive cases were attended to (Sections 5.2.2.1 & 5.4.1). It was found that this practice resulted in students feeling ill-prepared and anxious (Section 5.2.3.4). It was found that many students revealed that the fourth-year experience was the first exposure to traumatic real-life situations (Section 5.2.3.3).

Another finding in this section was that some organisations were restrictive in their field of practice, resulting in students not being able to fulfil the university requirements of practising all methods of social work. In addition, the time limitations were placed on students to complete various tasks within the academic year and this resulted in poor planning and execution of projects (Sections 5.2.2; 5.3.2 & 5.4.2).

7.4.1.4. Monitoring of placements

A key finding was that in most cases there was a visible lack of monitoring of placements. The findings indicate that some students were placed in embarrassing situations when their university failed to keep appointments to visit the placements (Section 5.2.4 & 5.3.4). The narratives given by students and alumni indicate feelings of abandonment, neglect and disappointment with universities for failing to monitor placements and to keep appointments at the agencies.

Another finding was the lack of monitoring student supervisors. This research has listed many complaints about student supervisors who failed to provide supervision, failed to abide by ethical standards of the profession, created fear in students, lacked direction and faulted on workplace ethics (Sections 5.2.3.3; 5.3.2.1; 5.2.3.3 and 5.3.3.1). The research also revealed that universities failed to monitor such supervisors or address allegations of improper behaviour, despite being aware of such allegations. Another finding was that supervision sessions with university-based supervisors were held at the university itself; this implied that visits to placements were lacking and thus placements were unmonitored [Case2_PSA_D25 & Section 5.3.2].
It was also found that communication strategies to address complaints were in place in Case 3 only where used evaluation forms were used to address student concerns. This was not evident in the other two cases.

7.4.1.5. Sourcing, verification and monitoring of placement agencies.

A key finding across all three cases was that the learning guide specified that field instruction placements would be sourced by the university. By implication this meant that placements would also be verified by the university. However, it was found that Cases 1 and 2 did not abide by this statement (Section 5.2.4; 6.4.1; 5.3.4.2). In Cases 1 and 2, placements were relative to availability, particularly as both cases were situated in geographical locations where welfare agencies were limited. In Case 3 the selection of placements appeared to have more scope, possibly due to its locality within a well-developed database of urban and semi-urban resources. Universities expressed not having the financial or personal resources to monitor students (Section 5.2.4).

This research has constantly argued that the placement agency was the grounding for student learning (Section 6.5.1.4). However, the findings indicate that students were only informed at the eleventh hour of which placement agency they were going to and went to placement agencies that were not verified by their university (Section 5.2.3.2). In addition, it was found that agencies rarely screened or interviewed students prior to the placements (Section 5.3.4.2).

From the above findings, it has been found that there were many operational factors within field instruction systems that hampered student learning. While some of these factors were related to the context of the field instruction system, many of the factors are critical and require urgent attention to avoid poor field experiences and system entropy. There were innumerable complaints on the unavailability of placements, the proximity of placements, unverified placements and lack of monitoring of placements. In addition, students, particularly in the block placements, complained of being abandoned by the university during field instruction. Based on the interrelatedness of the elements concerning placements, it can be further concluded that should system entropy had set in.

7.4.2. Recommendations on an operational framework system

The operational structure of field instruction systems is located in its purpose or function. However, Wright (2009, p. 16) argues that the function and purpose of systems are the least obvious parts of the system and is often the “most crucial determinant of the system’s behaviour”. A change in purpose or function of the field instruction system changes the behaviour of that system, even if the elements
mentioned in Section 7.3 remain the same. Each element of the system will have its own role and contribution to the function and purpose of the field instruction system.

The purpose and function of field instruction systems may be affected by factors external to the system. Field instruction systems are not immune to macro level changes such as changes at the agency and changes to policies and procedures. Contextual and geographical issues are also crucial to any operational framework in field instruction systems.

Based on the key findings related to the structural elements of field instruction system, the following recommendations are made for an operational framework system for field instruction.

7.4.2.1. Comprehensive learning guide

One of the foremost systems of operations is the learning guide. Key findings in this research reveal that the scant, inaccurate and poor dissemination of information resulted in students and student supervisors lacking an understanding of the programme requirements. This evidence of system breakdown is typical in systems of chaos and will result in system failure. The learning guide should be all inclusive of the requirements for the fourth year, as well as provide clear and concise expectations and guidance to students, agencies and student supervisors as indicated in Section 7.4.1 and other parts of this thesis. A developmental social welfare paradigm should be supported and implemented (Section 5.4.2).

7.4.2.2. Training and orientation

Information holds systems together. Delayed, biased, scattered or missing information will make feedback loops malfunction (Wright, 2009). Students and student supervisors cannot respond to information that they don’t have. They cannot respond to information that is inaccurate or incomplete. Practice educators are responsible for disseminating information on field instruction requirements, structure, governance and operational matters to other members of the educational partnership. However, the key findings reveal that practice educators filtered information rather than provided full information. Field instruction programmes should be explained in detail to students, as well as to members of the educational partnership.

Orientation workshops must be conducted for students prior to entering the fourth-year. This should be part of the four phases of field instruction programmes as indicated in Section 2.7.1. These four phases, which include preparation for the placement, commencement of the placement, the middle phase and final phase, should be strictly enforced.
Orientation workshops should also be implemented with the agency and student supervisors prior to any agreement to supervise. It is essential that all teaching partners are aware of the requisites of field instruction. Roles and responsibilities must be indicated.

Continuous workshops with supervisors and agencies should be planned and implemented. This was only observed in Case 3 where the university had good communication strategies in place with supervisors and agencies. It is recommended that supervisors are recognised for their attendance and participation at workshops with points for continuing professional development.

Case 3 allocated university-based supervisors to agencies that fell within their area of expertise to ensure a good understanding of the work required at that placement (Section 5.4.4). This is a best practice and should be considered.

Based on the findings that students in block placements felt abandoned and could not reach out to the University for assistance, it is recommended that regular and decentralised workshops should be in place. Similarly, video-based teaching, online discussion fora and simulated learning opportunities are recommended. These strategies will help students clarify difficulties and challenges experienced in their field placements as well as ensure continuity of contact between the university and the student during their placement.

7.4.2.3. Progression of experiences

Learning professional practice to the early stages of the curriculum will develop students’ skills in professional requirements, critical thinking, problem-solving and building constructive communication (Pellegrino & Lee, 2018). This will likely result in professionally accepted behaviours once they reach the fourth-year level. Therefore, there should be a restructuring of the progressive tasks allocated to students as the tasks go beyond workplace learning to include the acquisition of professional competence. The type of field instruction experience expected of students across the years should be assessed. This is as students are required to acquire more than mere workplace experience, but to enter a professional practice where they may be allocated management functions.

7.4.2.4. Monitoring of placements

This research has recommended that university-liaison persons should be appointed in place of university-based supervisors (Figure 7.1). The responsibility of sourcing placements, monitoring students and monitoring placements should be the responsibility of the university liaison.
It is also recommended that there should be a database of eligible student supervisors who have gone through thorough training and screening. Supervisors against whom complaints were alleged should be excluded from the database.

Another recommendation is that every effort should be made to match agencies and supervisors to students and student needs, all in relation to the field instruction programme (Section 5.4.4).

7.4.2.5. Field instruction cycles

The key findings in this research indicate that students lacked time to complete the field instruction programme within the given academic year given that they faced challenges of delayed access to communities, delayed access to supervisors, and some required extended periods of leave. Based on these findings, and on an interview with a participant in this study as well as discussions with peers, I propose a restructured implementation of the four-year field instruction milestones over two successive cycles.

By illustration, the four-year BSW field instruction component should be divided into two sets of cycles. The first two years of the BSW field instruction would be known as Cycle 1. The latter two years of the BSW field instruction would be known as Cycle 2 (Figure 7.2). The envisaged benefits of the new structure include a reasonably greater time allocated for the completion of milestones that respond to long-term micro-cases, therapeutic meso and macro projects, research and networking macro interventions, and the implementation and evaluation of sustainable community projects.

To further illustrate the diagrammatic presentation in Figure 7.2, I recommend that the principles of project management be applied to the management of the field instruction programme (Lessing, Bredenkamp, & Scheepers, 2004). Each two-year cycle should be viewed as a project with a fixed beginning and end (i.e. Cycle 1 commences in year 1 and ends in year 2 of the BSW). Consequently, the BSW field instruction programme is viewed as a whole programme, across the four years of the student’s study, where the successful completion of milestones at each level leads to progression to the next set of tasks, all within two major successive cycles. Each cycle has two sequences, and allows for a progressive system of learning while recognising the completion of successive tasks (Davern et al., 2017).
Figure 7.2. A proposed field instruction structure

As indicated in Figure 7.2, a progressive building block approach is supported. Tasks would be increasingly complex, professional and intricate. In the first-year sequence, students have just entered the BSW programme and may not undertake any therapeutic intervention. The emphasis is on understanding their community and identifying, as well as identifying and describing human service organisations and other resources. A good starting point in the first year of Cycle 1 would be the compilation of a community profile and knowledge about the professional neighbourhood (Henderson & Thomas, 2000). This debuts students’ skills development into community work and leads progressively into their second year of study, which is also their second sequence of Cycle 1.

It is envisaged that this structure would enable students to understand service user involvement, have continuity of projects, allows in-depth study and knowledge and awareness of community needs, allows students to commence networking with community members over a more extended period, can focus on social development projects, and facilitates long-term sustainable projects.

7.4.2.6. Placements

One of the key findings in this research was the shortage of agency placements. In order to address the shortage of placements, it is recommended that alternative and non-traditional placement opportunities be considered. (Delavega, Neely-Barnes, & Elswick, 2018; Hek, 2012; McLaughlin, Scholar, McCaughan, & Coleman, 2015; Nurius, Coffey, Fong, Korr, & McRoy, 2017; Ostrander et
al., 2018; Pearson et al., 2018; Scholar, McCaughan, McLaughlin, & Coleman, 2012; Suresh & Indira, 2018).

It is also recommended that students should be allowed to have access to more than one agency in instances where the agency restricted practice methods. This is also discussed in Section 7.3.2.

In summary of the above recommendations, it is suggested that universities have a comprehensive learning guide, and empower students, student supervisors and agencies with training on the field instruction system of the university. It is also recommended that universities are aware of the progression of student experiences in line with professional requirements. Universities should also monitor field placements closely to prevent or identify system entropy. Finally, a recommendation on having a two-cycle mode of implementation of the BSW field instruction programme which will address various findings in this report.

7.5. Conclusion

The findings in this Chapter emanated from the narratives, and the recommendations are reactive to this data. This study has reiterated that each field instruction programme is a system. Each field instruction systems is goal-directed, and the behaviour of one element affects other elements of the field instruction system (Reiter & Green, 2015). The behaviour and reactions of the university, student, agency and student supervisors are interlinked and responsive to the system’s organisation.

Field instruction developers must be aware of system dynamics and incorporate system constructs into the BSW programmes. The matter of context, particularly the context of the environment, is broad and nested in successive levels of microsystems, mesosystems, macrosystems and exosystems, amongst others (Sections 3.2.4 & 6.4).

Key recommendations from this Chapter include (a) a clear system of governance that specifies key issues relating to rules and procedures; (b) an educational partnership framework system that emphasises a teaching partnership model; (c) the restructuring of the four year BSW field instruction programme across two two-sequence cycles; and (d) allowing students to practice in more than one placement agency in a cycle in order to fulfil all social work methods.

In the final Chapter, I present critical reflections on various aspects of this research and suggest areas that would require further research.
Chapter 8. Reflections, limitations & recommendations

_Students make us come alive, and they hold us accountable._

_It is prestigious to be a field instructor..._

_Students give us a different perspective, they say something different..._

_They keep us fresh and client-focused._

(Homonoff, 2008, p. 163)

8.1. Introduction

The preceding Chapters of this thesis progressively unfolded arguments into field instruction systems that enabled this research to strive towards its intended outcome. A comprehensive Chapter was provided on research and literature on field instruction, followed by an overview of constructs from systems theories upon which this thesis is founded. The thesis contained two Chapters of systems-based analyses of the findings which lay the foundation for the development of a systems-informed framework for field instruction for social work education in Chapter 7.

Chapter 8 now brings the thesis to a close by recapitulating the problem statement and the theoretical lens and reflecting on the research methodology, the trustworthiness of the study, study limitations, achievement of the aim and objectives and the original contributions of this study. Finally, this Chapter provides recommendations for further research on matters emanating from this study.

8.2. The problem statement and theoretical framework

Social work education’s focus on work-integrated learning is embedded in the South African Higher Education Act (RSA, 1997b), the Education White Paper 3 (Education, 1997) and the Qualifications Standard for the Bachelor of Social Work (CHE, 2015). This research contextualised the place of field instruction against the background of South African higher education qualifications. In line with higher education standards, as well as discipline-specific requirements, the BSW supports a contextualised social work field instruction trajectory to achieve understanding and implementation of knowledge, values, skills and praxis (CHE, 2011).

Research into field instruction programmes had lacked a theoretically-informed understanding of the elements and processes of field instruction. The inclusion of a theoretically-informed analysis of field instruction is essential to advancing the training of social work students. Therefore, this gap in the literature has provided an opportunity for this research to establish the need for and develop a theoretically informed framework for field instruction in social work education. In determining a suitable theoretical framework to enhance current understanding of field instruction, I examined the
characteristics of systems theories as applied across the social sciences. General systems theory provided insight into field instruction systems’ behaviours, the inter-relatedness of components within the system and their combined effect on interactions (Von Bertalanffy, 1972). I also considered arguments on how concepts from complex systems theory (Brown, 2006) and chaos theory (Hudson, 2008) could be used to explain system changes. Cybernetic theory (Bateson, 1967) and second-order cybernetics (Mead, 1968) provided an understanding of field instruction as a system of non-linear communication with the presence of input and output strategies and the subsequent feedback and feedback loops emanating from transactions within and external to the field instruction system. I also located relevant constructs within ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1995) which provided an understanding of field instruction as a microsystem of interactions, and as a mesosystem of relationships and communication patterns.

Ecological systems theory further contextualised the influence of the macrosystem’s policies, ideologies and resources, or the lack thereof. The characteristics of organisation systems theories (Scott & Davis, 2007) was particularly useful in understanding the influence of power, hierarchies and the pursuit of a common purpose within field instruction systems. Finally, I explored a host of family systems theories to understand how patterns of behaviour influenced and could be manipulated to sway the functioning of the field instruction system (Haley & Richeport-Haley, 2007; Minuchin, Nichols, & Lee, 2007; Reiter & Green, 2015).

Key constructs from each of these theoretical frameworks were adopted and pragmatically threaded together to support the design of an integrated framework for analysing field instruction systems. This provided a means of analysing roles, relationships and the inter-relatedness of properties, the influence of the environment, hierarchies, boundaries and its purposeful, goal-directed behaviour, and communication patterns and behaviours, reactions and adaptability to changes in situations. In this way, I was able to identify various risk factors that affected the synergy of field instruction systems.

The above factors provided a paradigm shift in my thinking of field instruction from one that was merely an application of the requirements of the BSW, to a series of strategic and influential interactions and relationships, a single-mindedness in the pursuance of its goals at all levels of functioning, and flexibility in its responses to changes and external influences.

8.3. Reflections on the research methodology

Chapter 4 describes the processes in selecting the research approach and design, identifying the population, sample, data collection and analysis processes, and ethical considerations for the study.
The research aim and objectives realised the appropriateness of a qualitative approach in order to identify factors within the field instruction system that supported student learning. This entailed obtaining narratives and descriptions based on knowledge, policies and the lived experiences and actions of the participants (Bless et al., 2013; Levitt et al., 2018), thus the process of examining inter-related actions within the continuum of field instruction.

The case study design was selected to provide a holistic view of individual field instruction systems (Rule & John, 2011; Yin, 2003). The multi-case design was selected as this supported comparative studies and provided for more in-depth and broader levels of investigation (Rule & John, 2011; Stake, 2006). Multi-case design also supported arguments for maintaining a quintain (Stake, 2006, p. 1) implying a singleness of focus on the theoretical constructs, particularly during the analysis stage of the research.

The population in this research was narrowed to 14 universities within the South African social work educational landscape, having excluded the single distance learning institution offering the BSW, and a university that I was professionally associated with. A volunteer sample of 9 universities formed the first stage of the sampling process (Monette et al., 2011). As some of the individual campuses respond separately, this provided a sampling frame of 12 possible field instruction systems. A process of purposive sampling followed (Maxwell, 2013), using a paradigmatic case sampling method (Flyvbjerg, 2011), to obtain a sample of three field instruction systems that were most characteristic of and represented the heterogeneity of the BSW population.

The final three cases selected for the research reflected diversity in the model of placement, and more importantly, a mixture of geographical locations. The varied geographical locations highlighted the South African landscape pre and post 1994. Case 1 showcased the scarcity of resources within a semi-urban yet developed geographical region, Case 2 presented a poorly resourced rural community, and Case 3 represented an urbanised and well-resourced constituency. Other factors in the sampling strategy included the distribution of the staffing component within the field instruction programme, access to participants and documents for the research, and the programmes’ CHE accreditation in the 2013 BSW National Review process (CHE, 2018).

The unit of analysis in this research was the field instruction system within the BSW. Therefore, the population of people comprised practice educators, student supervisors, representatives from the placement agency, students and recent alumni from the field instruction programme. While a sampling of service users would have contributed to the richness of the data, this was not ethically conducive and therefore excluded from the population of people. The study of field instruction
policies and procedures that mapped the trajectory of the programme supported the factor of triangulation of data (Tetnowski, 2015).

As is typically aligned with qualitative methodology, the data collection method included single-person interviews, group interviews and collection of documents. The use of mapping and visual representations to aid participant explanations was a supportive data collection tool. Detailed and multiple interview schedules were developed through a process of pilot interviews across all participant groups (Mouton, 1996). The questions had to be specific to the role and context of the participants, yet aligned with the theoretical stance or else would serve little benefit to the research.

8.4. Reflections on trustworthiness

As a qualitative study, this thesis had to demonstrate that the factor of trustworthiness was constantly evident. The model for ensuring rigour and trustworthiness provided by Lincoln and Guba (1985) was adopted, and the dimensions of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability were integrated into the research.

In order to demonstrate confirmability, I examined issues of internal validity that would provide a true picture of field instruction within social work education, particularly in South Africa. Familiarity with the context was, therefore, important (Shenton, 2004). As an educator and through my previous engagements and visits to the 16 member universities of the population, I was acquainted with the geographical locations and background of the field instruction sites. The participant sampling appendices that formed part of the volunteer sampling process provided information on the field instruction practice, supervision procedures, and student and placement population. However, it was not until personal visits to the three sites that changes in practice and lack of access to participants was evident. Although this research intended to use just one pilot site, it was realised early in the data collection process to the first two sites of the sample that these sites were unsuitable, and were then taken as part of two additional pilot sites. Three sites were thus disregarded during the data collection process as it would not justify a true understanding of their field instruction practices.

Credibility was supported through the use of multiple interview schedules. Each group of the population had unique experiences that would have been overlooked had a fixed interview schedule been used. Iterative revision of the interview schedules occurred during the piloting of the questions. The choice of using the multi-case study as the research design provided a comparative understanding of the three final sites that were studied. The use of multiple data collection strategies like individual and group interviews and study of documents, and the sampling of four distinct groups of population
of people, were useful in the triangulation of the data. Retrospectively, I realise that my constant reflections of the thick descriptions of the data from each site and my journaling were part of “researcher’s reflective commentary” (Shenton, 2004, p. 6). Although this countered and delayed the initial sampling time frame for this project, it contributed to proving credibility of the study.

Maintaining objectivity and being mindful of researcher positionality was imperative to ensure confirmability. My knowledge and practice of field instruction in social work education was ever-present, but could not cloud my judgement of the data. I was mindful that the results should be shaped by the narratives of the participants and from the analysis of the documents in the research. Researcher bias had to be avoided at all costs. Admittedly, my resolve was tested during an interview in Case 2 when I encountered a student supervisor who had little faith in both the profession and in supervision. I felt professionally duty-bound to intervene and therefore deleted this interview from the data. As a social work professional, I felt compelled to offer support to a colleague who may have been overworked or possibly ignorant of the requirements of supervision. This meant that I was conflicted as a researcher and therefore resolved not to include this interview as part of the findings.

It was also crucial to have a systematic filing system, both for written and electronic communication, data and documents. Labelling conventions, including line-by-line numbering in the transcripts, were essential for easy retrieval of information and to maintain an audit trail.

The choice of case study as the design and the use of appropriate multiple interview schedules for this study were some of the techniques used to demonstrate dependability. In Chapter 4 of the thesis, I set out an elaborate, step by step explanation of the research process. At the time, the attention to methodological rigour was time-consuming. However in hindsight this process was essential to ensure “methodological replication” and reliability of the study (Rule & John, 2011, p. 21); if this research was to be repeated in the same context using multi-case study design then the results should not be vastly dissimilar (Shenton, 2004; Stake, 2006).

Finally, it was essential to ensure that the findings of this study could be applied to other situations (Merriam, 1988). This research selected three of more than 19 field instruction sites nationally, through a systematic sampling process. Although each case was unique, it was anticipated that the findings from the three sites in which the case studies were embedded could apply to the broader population of field instruction sites in South Africa. In Chapter 5 of this thesis, I describe contextual factors and the findings of each Case in depth. This detail and attention to detail support the dimension of transferability as readers are provided with the opportunity to determine the extent to which each
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8.5. Limitations of the study

In considering the limitations of the study I was mindful of possible limitations that could have changed or influenced the research process or the outcome of this study. It was not possible to study the entire population of universities or all of their field instruction sites. Thus, a volunteer sample was sought from all of the 14 universities that had social work field instruction units. Responses, all of which were positive, were received from nine of the universities. This is seen as a potential limitation as it resulted in a smaller sampling frame. The possibility exists that any of the remaining five universities could have met the sampling criteria and could have provided data that could have changed the findings of the study.

A second limitation was that the sampling of students was restricted to students in their fourth-year of study. The field instruction experience commences in a student’s second year of study. The focus of this study was on the fourth-year experience; thus there was limited questioning on the students’ second and third-year field instruction experiences. Perhaps a deeper understanding of the student experience gained prior to the fourth-year field instruction programme could have altered the trajectory of the research and changed the findings of the study.

A third limitation related to the selection of participants for the study. In some of the cases, the contact details of participants were solely at the discretion of the practice educator. This could be attributed to the availability of participants, such as the alumni and agency representatives. It could also be seen that practice educators as gatekeepers selected only their most capable students, supervisors and agencies in order to appear favourable in the research. It is therefore acknowledged that wider access to participants may have produced different results.

A fourth limitation was the period of data collection. The collection of data occurred over two consecutive semesters, with the interview dates linked to the model of placement of the three cases, as well as to allow students within the programme to sufficiently understand and practice the requirements of the field instruction programme. At the time of the interviews, students in Case 1 had almost completed the required placement hours of their block placements. Students in Case 2 had completed over a third but less than half of the hours required of their block placement at the time of being interviewed. Moreover, students in Case 3 had reached the midpoint of their concurrent field instruction placements. Thus, there was a mixture of time that students spent at their placements.
whether the time that this student cohort spent at their placements was sufficient to have warranted a complete understanding of their respective field instruction programme. This limitation was considered a possibility early on in the study. I attempted to overcome it by including a sampling of alumni of the same programme whose narratives ably supplemented the data with holistic, detailed and reflective narratives of their field instruction experiences. The latter supported arguments by Royse et al. (2012) and Sheafor and Jenkins (1984) that social work field instruction experiences remained foremost in many graduates’ reflections on social work education.

A fifth consideration was that of researcher positionality. At the outset, I knew my position as a lecturer in the field instruction component at a university in South Africa may be perceived as researcher bias, as well be as an impediment to communication, or restrict the narratives of participants. In order to overcome any perceived subjectivity, it was essential to clarify and reiterate my position up front with gatekeepers of the respective field instruction programmes, as well as with each participant on an individual basis. This was also reflected in writing on the participant consent form. Furthermore, I attempted to distance myself from my university for the period of the research by taking a research sabbatical during the data collection phases. Thus, I handed over the reins of the field instruction module that I had both taught and coordinated previously. All of this was done in a concerted attempt to support the factor of transparency and to give credibility to the factor of researcher positionality during the research process.

8.6. Reflections on the aim and objectives

The research aim and the four resultant objectives emanated from the problem statement, which identified a need to have a system’s analysis of field instruction in social work education. The empirical findings from this study were presented as responses to the individual objectives of this research. The achievement of the objectives is set out below.

8.6.1. Reflections on Objective 1

In this first objective, I examined the elements and processes that comprise the fourth-year field instruction system. This objective comprised two components, namely the identification of the elements and the processes, and secondly a description thereof.

Research based on available literature on the elements and processes is fully described in Chapter 2. This was supplemented with empirical data which revealed the elements as broader than key persons in the form of practice educators, student supervisors and agency placements. The data revealed issues of personality traits and behaviours, descriptions and understanding roles and responsibilities,
strategies of planning, implementation and evaluation of field instruction programmes, supervision of students, monitoring student placements and supervision practices, module content, responding to community needs, student and supervisor – knowledge, skills and values, as well as teaching and learning strategies were key elements of the field instruction programme. Similarly, the data also revealed field instruction processes as including procedures, course developments, issues of governance and ethics, partnerships, relationships and role functioning, as well as day to day operational matters within field instruction programmes.

Social work students are required to apply theory, knowledge and skills within a structured field instruction strategy. Supervisors are required to provide developmental, supportive and educational supervision to students. Supervisors and practice educators uphold the highest moral values and behaviours demonstrated during the field instruction programme. Practice educators provide a well-coordinated professional field instruction programme ensuring that each student is provided with suitable opportunities to demonstrate praxis.

Integral to the field instruction strategy was understanding and responding to the components of work-integrated learning, student learning styles, issues of student throughput and selection debates, and importantly the factor of student supervision. These elements and procedures are articulated from both the research and data and are presented in Chapters 5, 6 and 7. Thus, Objective 1 and Research sub-question 1 pertaining to identifying and describing the elements and processes that comprise field instruction systems, was achieved.

8.6.2. Reflections on Objective 2

The focus of Objective 2 was to analyse the field instruction system as a social system. Research on field instruction systems as a social system appears to be absent in the literature. This study, therefore, was pioneers a new perspective to field instruction.

In order to achieve this objective, it was important first to understand the characteristics of systems, and in particular social systems. This was attained through an in-depth study of systems within the social sciences. The literature on characteristics, properties and elements of social systems was scarce and not easily attained. Through a consultative process, I was directed to examine the literature on general systems theory, complex systems theory, chaos theory, cybernetic theories, ecological systems and person in environment theories, organisational systems theory, as well as family systems theories. These are presented in summary in Chapter 3.
I simultaneously followed a process of extracting key constructs from these theories and validating whether these were relevant to understanding field instruction systems as social systems. A total of 18 constructs were discovered, and these were categorised with six broad categories for ease of reference. These constructs are presented in the latter half Chapter 3 of this thesis, and were used as a basis to respond to Research sub-question 2 which was how does the field instruction programme operate as a system?

This research also concluded that field instruction programmes must contend with issues and activities related to context, processes, transitions and interactions. This research concluded that power structures and struggles were applicable within and across many of the roles and relationships. The authority of the student supervisor was evident across all three cases. While many students valued the supervisors’ roles, some students felt that supervisors were overbearing and threatening.

The application of boundaries during interactions implied delineating parameters and limitations with the student as the learner, and the student supervisor as the mentor and guide. Boundaries are determined by its purpose. Professional boundaries between students and supervisors purposively protect the integrity of the supervisory relationship. The findings indicated that some supervisors crossed professional boundaries, while some students manipulated boundaries for their own growth. However, findings of the research also indicate the hierarchical constraints of the supervisor-student relationship, particularly when the quality of supervision and the unprofessional role-modelling demonstrated by student supervisor threatened the learning process.

This research identified the behaviour of field instruction systems as being goal-seeking, yet responding to changes by displaying adaptive and resilient behaviours as a means of self-organising and maintaining the homeostasis commonly found in such systems. This was evident in placements where student supervisors were unavailable or absent, and the student sought supervision and guidance from other non-social work staff within the same agency. Supervision is a compulsory element of field instruction, and the impact of the absence of the social work supervisor in these instances is grossly underestimated. Yet, in their efforts to complete the requirements of the field instruction programme, students persevered without professional supervision. This is a severe hindrance to student learning, and such practice cannot be condoned.

Constructs from cybernetics and second-order cybernetics were used to reveal how communication patterns typical of systems were applied to field instruction systems. Input through the teaching of theoretical knowledge, guidance from the practice educator, and mentoring and transference of knowledge from the supervisor are all examples of input. The throughput is evidenced in the
application or the praxis. Interactions during the throughput phase of field instruction were non-linear, thus supporting cyclical feedback and feedback loops during communication. Nonlinearities confound our ontology about the relationship between action and response. Nonlinearities can also change the relative strengths of feedback loops. The cause and effect feature of field instruction systems extend beyond single cause and effect to multiple inputs producing multiple outputs. In this research I realised that the non-linear processes of input, throughput, feedback, feedback loops and output as required of this theoretical construct, was not adequately demonstrated in the findings. Had the scope of this research included assessment and assessment processes, the observation of these communication constructions would have been stronger.

Finally, in examining field instruction systems as social systems, the findings concluded that individual and combined elements and processes of field instruction contributed to the eventual outcome of the student achieving a well-grounded field instruction experience. This was supported in understanding the functioning of microsystems and sub-systems within the broader field instruction system. Students formed a peer sub-system, while other sub-systems included the field instruction unit at the university, the practice educator-supervisor partnership, the practice educator-supervisor-student partnership, and the supervision subsystem of the supervisor and the student. Individually each of these subsystems had their own roles, rules, boundaries and hierarchies. Collectively, these subsystems gravitated towards the same goal with the combined system output being a well-trained graduate. This confirmed the philosophical viewpoint that field instruction systems were greater than the sum of individual components and processes.

These processes as mentioned above and constructs extracted from theories on social systems, when applied to the findings and presented in Chapter 6 of this thesis, indicate that Objective 2 was achieved.

8.6.3. Reflections on Objective 3

Objective 3 required identification of critical factors in the field instruction system that optimised or hindered student learning. In this context, the term critical was seen to imply important or significant factors. Critical factors were located in the literature which was presented in Chapter 2 and included an understanding of the place of field instruction in the South African higher education landscape, the significance of praxis, understanding cultural and indigenous practices in South African communities, student learning styles, field instruction partnerships and relationships, field instruction models, phases and processes. Critical factors emanating from the documents studied at each of the three cases revealed the importance of a well-balanced field instruction learning guide or manual that
guided students in their everyday practice, and an overall governance policy that detailed the management, statutory and academic obligations and mandates, the alignment of the programme with BSW requirements, services to students with special needs, and policies relating to conduct and misconduct matters. Critical factors were also located in the narratives from the participants. Practice educators viewed placement availability, supervision and issues of student conduct as important.

On the other hand, student supervisors were of the view that the ability to integrate theory and practice was critical. Representatives from the placement agencies identified the student’s ability to fit into the culture of the organisation as critical. Perhaps the most significant contributions to meet this objective were derived from students and alumni participants. They indicated that their field placement experience was shaped by the personality traits and behaviours of their supervisors, the supervisors’ commitment to supervision, the sourcing of placements, monitoring of placements and contact between the university, supervisor and agency.

In addition, the findings indicated that critical to the field instruction placement was relationships and communication, particularly the triadic relationship between the practice educator, student supervisor and placement agency was also considered a critical factor. It was important for the university to prepare the agency and student supervisor on what was required or else it became a hindrance factor. The university undertakes the lead in providing strategic guidance and support to the partnership.

Students appeared to enter the fourth-year field instruction programme unprepared. The build-up to the fourth-year lies in the field instruction experience within the second- and third-years in particular. A critical factor was also preparing the students by means of structured and detailed orientation programmes where students are properly and meaningfully introduced to the programme, agency and supervision requirements.

The issue of ethical conduct is critical to the profession and the field instruction programme and requires detailed and frequent reiteration, particularly relating to its application and repercussions.

Students’ access to communities via gatekeepers like traditional authorities and tribal leaders is a critical factor in the field instruction programme. Delays in obtaining such permission resulted in students having insufficient time to meet the field instruction requirements, or they simply rushed through their work.

Other critical factors included the commitment of students to learning and applying their knowledge and skills effectively, uniformity in structuring the requirements of field instruction programmes, and
the frequency of communication and interactions between and among all members of the field instruction programme.

These critical factors in this Objective were largely interpretive and evaluative, respond to Research sub-questions 1 and 3, and are reflected in the findings in Chapters 5 and 6 of the thesis. The achievement of Objective 3 was realised.

8.6.4. Reflections on Objective 4

Objective 4 was to formulate and recommend a framework supporting the factors that can be built into field instruction systems. The attainment of Objective 4 was dependent on the achievement of the preceding three objectives. In order to formulate and recommend a framework of factors that could be built into field instruction systems, it was important to identify and describe the elements and processes in Objective 1, to analyse the field instruction system as a social system as per Objective 2, and, based on the literature and findings, to determine the critical factors that influenced field instruction systems, as indicated in Objective 3. Objective 4 was aligned with Research sub-question 4 which was what factors should be built into field instruction systems in order to optimise student learning?

Essential to Objective 4 was to develop a systems-informed framework for field instruction programmes. Constructs from systems theories formed the theoretical lens and basis for the analysis of the data. Thus, realisation of Objective 4 was the research and literature in Chapter 2, the systems’ constructs emanating from the study of theories on systems in Chapter 3, and the findings in Chapters 5 and 6.

The research identified three broad categories of factors that could be built into field instruction systems. These factors were governance, processes and structure, and an educational support system. The first recommendation was a governance framework system, setting out statutory mandates of the BSW and the professional body of the SACSSP. This recommendation was based on the conclusion that each field instruction programmes has a governance framework to provide a common understanding of and guide on the implementation of policies and field instruction requirements. The focus of a governance framework was on management, fairness and regulatory issues.

The second recommendation under Objective 4 related to issues of structure and operation of the field instruction programme. This recommendation responded to the many procedural and operational challenges experienced mostly, but not exclusively, by students. These challenges included the anguish experienced by students and alumni when faced with intense casework matters for the first
time in the fourth-year, as well as the students’ inability to complete field instruction requirements within the specified time due to factors of access, understanding the community, and communication protocols. This research, therefore, recommends that to overcome some of these issues, the field instruction component be viewed holistically across the four years of the BSW. Responding to issues of time, and the need for prolonged service-user and community engagements, this recommendation proposes a two-sequence-cycle model for field placements where the four-year BSW field instruction programme be structured as two sets of two-year cycles. This proposal is elaborated on in Section 7.3 of this thesis.

Another factor was raised by students within the block model of placement was the lack of support they felt from their university during the placement period, particularly when they were unsure of how to apply theory and knowledge. In order to overcome this, this research suggests that universities arrange to have decentralised field placement discussion groups or workshops clustered closer to groups of student placements. Alternately the university could host online meeting platforms with students as a means of support and ongoing training.

The third recommendation within Objective 4 is a coordinated and responsive educational support framework. This recommendation is based on systems’ ideology relating to the inter-relatedness of the roles and responsibilities particularly members of the educational team, who, according to data emanating from this research, function in a disjointed and uncoordinated manner. This recommendation also responds to complaints against universities who fail to verify and monitor student placements as was evident in two of the three cases in this study. Thus, strategies to map out the nexus of the roles and responsibilities of the practice educator, student supervisor and agency are presented. The recommendation also includes the implementation of the role of a university-based liaison which supports circular interactions and communication amongst these members. These non-linear interactions and communications would address the complaint of verification and monitoring in student placements.

The systems-informed framework for field instruction systems is detailed in Chapter 7 of this thesis. Thus Objective 4 was achieved.

8.6.5. Reflection on the research aim

I reflect on the aim of the research at the end of this section as the achievement of the aim was dependent on the achievement of the four objectives. The aim was to analyse field instruction systems in social work education, using systems theory. Implicit in this aim was the development of a uniform framework for field instruction that could optimise the process of students’ learning.
The research aim was specially conceptualised to respond to the problem statement. Thus, the pervading thread of this thesis was a systems analysis, and of applying systems constructs to understanding field instruction relationships and interactions so that a common framework for field instruction programmes was considered across all BSW field instruction programmes.

This attainment of each of the four objectives as reflected in Sections 8.6.1, 8.6.2, 8.6.3 and 8.6.4 of this Chapter were realised. Recommendations for the development of a uniform framework for field instruction that could optimise the process of students’ learning was provided in the preceding Chapter. Thus, the research aim was achieved.

Based on the achievement of all four objectives as well as the research aim, this study was able to respond to the main research question which was: how can the social work final year field instruction system optimise students’ learning? In summary, this thesis was able to identify and describe the elements and processes that comprise field instruction systems, analyse field instruction systems as social systems, identify critical factors in field instruction systems that could hinder or optimise students’ learning, and make systems-informed recommendations of factors that should be built into field instruction programmes that would optimise student learning. Thus, the aim of this research study was achieved.

In the next section, I provide reasons why this study makes an original contribution to the field of social work education.

8.7. **Original contribution of the study**

Research into field instruction in social work education in South Africa and indeed Africa appears to be an emerging field of study. The focus thus far has been on the challenges experienced by students (Dimo, 2013; Shokane et al., 2016), sourcing of placement opportunities for students (Schmidt & Rautenbach, 2016), a comparative study between field instruction in South Africa and Japan (Sakaguchi & Sewpaul, 2011) and challenges relating to external partnerships in a specific field instruction programme (Raniga et al., 2014). Each of these studies examined single field instruction sites or single provinces within South Africa. There has not been any research in South Africa that has examined multiple field instruction sites across provinces in a single study. Thus, this research makes a unique contribution to South African literature due to its study across different provinces and three uniquely different Cases. This research may be considered particularly valuable when considering the geographical landscape and colonial legacy of South Africa as well as the legacy of previously disadvantaged institutions of higher learning in this country. Furthermore, this research on
field instruction systems in South Africa will ultimately contribute to the literature on social work education in Africa, and more especially in the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

Internationally, the focus of research has been on performance assessments of students (Royse et al., 2012), assessment of students’ levels of satisfaction with the field experience on the whole (Knight, 2001), appraisals of the graduates’ experience in the BSW and MSW programmes (Fortune, McCarthy, & Abramson, 2001), and measurement of students’ learning (Cavazos, 1996). There does not appear to be any research so far on field instruction systems, nor on what factors are necessary for the field instruction systems to optimise students’ learning. Furthermore, there appears to have been a single cross-study in Africa that has had a field instruction focus, namely that by Dhemma (2012). Dhemma investigated challenges in Eastern and Southern Africa but had excluded reference to challenges experienced at South African universities.

Literature and research on field instruction have thus far lacked any reference to or contribution by theory, nor has such research been founded on any theoretical structure. In particular, there have been no known studies that analyse field instruction according to a rigorous application of systems theory, even though the literature periodically does recognise field instruction as a system. Aligned with this argument was the noticeable absence of literature on characteristics, properties and elements of social systems. Therefore, this study was innovative in compiling a list of key constructs of systems characteristics based on theories across a spread of social systems. A further contribution of this study is that it served to construct a theoretical formulation of the operation of field instruction programmes which went beyond the current managerial and pedagogic formulations.

For the scholarship of teaching and learning, this research will inform social work educators, field supervisors, agencies and students on the value of solid and robust networking and partnerships. The findings revealed evidence of a “bounded rationality” where decisions were based on limited facts instead of searching beyond the face-value of such information (Wright, 2009, p. 117). Therefore, the recommendations of this research will to assist universities to look beyond presenting evidence in developing and managing more effective field instruction systems that would enhance student learning and graduate competence.

This research makes valuable and innovative recommendations on how to restructure the four-year programme into two sequential cycles, emphasises the need to consider resources as teaching partners, and encourage placements across more than a single agency to fulfil the BSW field instruction requisites.
This research will contribute to South African literature on local and indigenous knowledge relating to the requirements on field instruction. As indicated, the hegemony of western knowledge had subjugated the need to understand relevant and indigenous practices and therefore make social work services appropriate to the communities that served. This research highlights the need to understand and work methodically within the practices of some indigenous communities.

Finally, the choice of case study as the research design, opens up further research in terms of replication of the study amongst other universities, programmes or countries and enables extension studies for new areas for research. Understanding field instruction system behaviours may not have been possible other than through a case study design (Rule & John, 2011, p. 137).

8.8. **Recommendations for future research**

This research set out to analyse field instruction systems using systems theory. A theoretically informed basis for research has been noticeably absent from previous studies into field instruction. The findings in this research therefore bring to light new complexities that were beyond the scope of this research, prompting recommendations for further research on field instruction systems:

This study focused on one component of the BSW, namely the field instruction system. However, the field instruction module does not function independent of the degree, is neither a standalone offering of the degree nor functions in a vacuum. This research has raised questions as to whether universities take a coordinated stance to streamline social work theory with field instruction modules, thus opening up a new area for research.

This research was aimed at analysing field instruction as a social system. During the literature review of systems for Objective 3, it was realised that the component of assessments within field instruction had been limited. Future research on applying systems theory constructs to assessment processes should be considered.

There is a need for countrywide research across higher education institutions that offer field instruction in order to obtain best practices and to identify strengths and weaknesses of field instruction systems across South Africa.

This study used a qualitative approach to analyse field instruction at three HEIs in SA. Future research could consider a quantitative or mixed methods approach across all 16 HEIs in SA in relation to analysing field instruction systems.
This research focused on the field instruction system within the fourth-year of study. There is a need for a comprehensive study across the four years of the field instruction experience, particularly in relation to arguments on the lack of progressive and intensive learning opportunities across the four years.

One of the findings of this research was the poor quality of interactions amongst field instruction systems. This could pave the way forward for separate evaluative studies of relationships between the university and supervisors, or the university and the placement agency.

Another finding of this research was that praxis should take into consideration indigenous practice. Thus a recommendation for future research is on indigenous field instruction practices.

One of the recommendations in Chapter 7 of this research was on the two-cycle approach to the BSW four year field instruction programme. Should this recommendation be implemented, this could serve as the basis for research on its suitability and practicality.

Emanating from the data is a recommendation on online support for students who are placed away from the university site and have no contact with the university. An area for future research would be the availability and practicality of operationalising online submissions and communication (Gorse et al., 2019). Researching of current practices across all universities would strengthen knowledge on how to use this method to enhance communication and support to distance students.

The final recommendation in this section is for research into the needs of social work students with special needs and whether field instruction programmes be adapted or remodelled to assist these students.

8.9. Conclusion

This thesis has responded to a need for an investigation into field instruction systems intending to provide recommendations for a uniform framework that would optimise students’ learning. As a compulsory component of BSW, field instruction programmes should provide an authentic learning experience for students who yearn to graduate with a comprehensive set of academic knowledge, skills, values and field instruction experience. This research, using multi-case study design, ventured into and provided a systems analysis of field instruction in social work education at three field instruction sites across South Africa.

The findings of the study are uniquely informed by a strong influence of key constructs and characteristics of systems theories in the social sciences. The findings indicate that field instruction
systems are typically complex systems, illustrated by examples of integrated, interconnected and self-maintaining complexity. The dynamic nature of field instruction calls for practice educators to rethink how to respond proactively to restore imbalance in systems (Rodolfo, 2000), address risks to the synergy (Davern et al., 2017; Oak, 2016), and foster thinking on parts of systems contributing to the greater whole (Valentinov, 2012) within field instruction systems. Elements within field instruction systems change and become more complex over time (Westaby, 2012).

This study has demonstrated that the elements and processes of the field instruction system are usually the easiest to notice as these elements are tangible and noticeable. The members of the educational team are tangible, so are the field instruction requirements. However, the functioning of field instruction systems is beyond the tangible. Issues of interconnectedness, relationships, communication and functionality are integral to understanding how and why field instruction systems function in the way they do, and how the behaviour and change in one part of the system influence other parts. This findings of this research indicate that field instruction is the signature pedagogy of social work education (Boitel & Fromm, 2014; Larrison & Korr, 2013).

The suggested recommendations hope to overcome system entropy and surfacing dysfunctional patterns of behaviour in field instruction systems (Brody & Nair, 2014), strengthen patterns of communication in field instruction governance (Skolnik et al., 1999), and rearrange points of intervention and planning to shift the system into focus.

This research has consistently emphasised that when social work educators venture beyond traditional pedagogical practices to gain a wider perspective of information-flows, obscured behavioural patterns and system realities, then improvements and positive system changes become inevitable. Through this research, a core set of system constructs and paradigms, which include system boundaries, open and closed systems, feedback, reciprocal or circular causality, equifinality, multifinality, self-organisation, system entropy and other concepts derived from systems theories, have now found a home in social work field instruction.
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A Systems Analysis of Field Instruction in Social Work Education


Appendixes

Appendix 1. UJ Research ethics committee approval

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ETHICAL CLEARANCE NUMBER</th>
<th>REC-01-059-2017</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>APPLICANT</td>
<td>V Nadesan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TITLE OF RESEARCH PROJECT</td>
<td>A Systems Analysis of Field Instruction in Social Work Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEPARTMENT</td>
<td>Social Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUPERVISOR/S</td>
<td>Prof A van Breda</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

27 July 2017

Dear Mrs. Nadesan,

The Faculty Research Ethics Committee has scrutinised your research proposal and confirm that it complies with the approved ethical standards of the Faculty of Humanities; University of Johannesburg.

The REC would like to extend their best wishes to you with your postgraduate studies.

Yours sincerely,

Tharina Guse

Prof Tharina Guse
Chair: Faculty of Humanities REC
Tel: 011 559 3248
email: tguse@uj.ac.za

A Systems Analysis of Field Instruction in Social Work Education
Appendix 2. Letter to universities

University of Johannesburg
C Ring 620
PO Box 524
Kingsway Campus
Auckland Park
2006
9 August 2016

The Head of Department
Department of Social Service Professions
XXX University

Dear Sir/Madam

REQUEST FOR INPUT ON FOURTH YEAR FIELD INSTRUCTION PROGRAMME IN SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

I am a lecturer at the University of Johannesburg. I am currently conducting research for my PhD into field instruction programmes in the BSW at all South African universities. The aim of the study is to analyse fourth year field instruction programmes using systems theory.

There are two parts to the data collection: At the outset I wish to compile a list of all fourth year field instruction programmes in South Africa. To this end I have developed a table (you will find this at the end of this letter) with requests for brief information about your internship programme from second to fourth year. This information pertains to the model you use (e.g. block, current, mixed), type of programme you have (e.g. supervised at agency or university level), and the agencies at which you place the students. If you have more than one campus, could you please specify this for each of your campuses, as this will provide me with information on geographical outlay? This data will be allow for a desktop analysis whereby sampling criteria like the diverse models used (e.g. block vs concurrent placement), and the setting (urban vs rural) will be taken into account.

Thereafter I will select 3 field instruction programmes to enable me to conduct a case study research using a qualitative design. I hope to do this by conducting personal, semi-structured interviews with key role players in the programme (i.e. field practice lecturers, field supervisors, 2-3 fourth year students, the agency/ies where students are placed and possibly 2-3 service users). This should take place between October 2016 and March 2017 and I will then request your permission once again to contact the key roleplayers.
At the outset may I assure you that whilst I am on the academic staff of the University of Johannesburg (UJ), I will not use your data within the context of my teaching work at UJ. I am bound by the ethics in conducting research. Your information will not be divulged beyond the bounds of this research study. Furthermore, I have undertaken not to use UJ as a case study except for reflexivity purposes.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary, with no repercussions whatsoever should you wish to not participate or exit the study at any stage. However, I believe that this study will contribute to the overall strengthening of social work field instruction in South Africa, and thus will be grateful for your participation.

The promoter for my study is Professor Adrian van Breda, who can be conducted on avanbreda@uj.ac.za or 083 792 5152. My contact details are cell: 084 452 1862 or email vnadesan@uj.ac.za.

May I humbly ask if you can kindly complete the templates below, and email to vnadesan@uj.ac.za or fax to 011 559 5800 by 30 August 2016.

Yours sincerely

Varoshini

Mrs Varoshini Nadesan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consent to participate in research study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I, (name)________________________________________________________.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>as (designation) ________________________________ __________________________.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at (name of University) ____________________________ __________________________.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hereby grant consent for participation in the research study as alluded to above.</td>
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<td>Signature: ___________________________________________ Date: ___________________________</td>
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</table>
## PHASE 1 OF DATA COLLECTION:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Identifying details:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Name of University</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Details of other campuses at your university where social work is offered</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>As a background, can you tell me about the field instruction or internship programme offered at 2nd year level: e.g. how many hours do students work? What form of supervision is offered? Where are students placed? What model of placement is followed at 2nd year?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Can you tell me about the field instruction or internship programme offered at 3rd year level: e.g. how many hours do students work? What form of supervision is offered? Where are students placed? What model of placement is followed at 3rd year?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>For fourth year programmes only:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How many students are registered in the 2016 at 4th year level in the internship programme?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How many hours/days do the students spend at the agency?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Are students required to also attend internship classes at university? Can you explain briefly?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How do you manage the placements at the agencies?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What model do you use and why? (e.g. block placements, concurrent, mixed, etc.)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What supervision opportunities are offered to students? How do you manage the supervision process?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Can you tell me about the demographics and geographical areas in which students are placed (i.e. population, areas, risks etc).</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Any other information you wish to provide?</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Many thanks in advance for your participation in this phase of my research. Could you please email the completed form back to me at varosh4research@gmail.com; or fax to 011 559 5800. I look forward to hearing from you.*
## Appendix 3. Purposive sampling annexure

### PURPOSIVE SAMPLING-3 CASES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line no</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>CASE 1</th>
<th>CASE 2</th>
<th>CASE 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Details of field instruction programme at 2(^{nd}) year</td>
<td>As part of a theory module, students at 2(^{nd}) year level are required to conduct five (5) interview sessions with an elderly person and write a report of each session. Students are not placed; they choose any older person from 60yrs of age and above at an old age home or in the neighbourhood. Supervision is provided by the theory module supervisor.</td>
<td>At 2(^{nd}) year level, in the first semester, as part of the personal growth and development module facilitated by the [practice educator] students attend 2 hours weekly over 18 weeks in order to prepare for fieldwork. In the second semester, students are placed in concurrent practice over 18 weeks in a community based placement to apply community development and group work. Weekly group supervision is provided with formative assessments and one direct observation. University supervision and summative assessment done by fieldwork coordinator. Students implement stage one of community development and a six week groupwork programme.</td>
<td>At 2(^{nd}) year level we have 61 students. Students are not ‘placed’ for their fieldwork in their second year. They are campus based with their practice lecturers taking on the responsibility for their supervision. Students co-facilitate (two students) ‘life-skills’ groupwork (not therapeutic but growth oriented) aimed at first year students adapting to university. Community work takes place in pre-determined communities (not on campus) and is supervised by the [practice educators]. 6 individual interviews are held with a service user selected from their groupwork. At 2(^{nd}) year they follow the concurrent model. There is close alignment between theory and practice to allow optimal integration of classroom teaching and field instruction. At this level they do 400 notional hours, spending about 30 hours in direct work with service users. Weekly group supervision sessions of 2 hours as well as 2 hours class discussions are held.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Details of field instruction programme at 3(^{rd}) year</td>
<td>At 3(^{rd}) year level, students are placed at an institution for two weeks under the supervision of a resident social worker. Students will present a POE with two completed reports of two cases handled at the institution/agency</td>
<td>At 3(^{rd}) year level students are placed in a concurrent placement, from Feb – September, February used for orientation at university (16 hours), initial contracting and initial visits to agencies. Placements start in March. 30 days = 240 hours. Mostly non-traditional agencies like NGO’s, schools or CBO’s are used. If there is no social worker on site, then the agency may have offsite social work supervisors. Weekly group supervision is provided with offsite or onsite agency supervisor. Each student also allocated a university supervisor who does a site visit for initial contracting and one visit for the mid-point review. The university supervisor is also responsible for summative assessment.</td>
<td>At 3(^{rd}) year level, there are 72 students. Students are placed mainly at 2 NGO’s in the community, and one school for children with special needs. The [practice educator] takes on the responsibility for supervision. Groupwork, community work and casework are done at the placement. Community work is done in small groups. At 3(^{rd}) year level a concurrent model is followed. Close alignment between theory and practice to allow optimal integration of classroom teaching and field instruction. 600 notional hours. They spend about 75 hours in direct work with service users. Weekly internship classes (2 hours per week) and group supervision sessions as well as weekly individual supervision sessions are held with students.</td>
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A Systems Analysis of Field Instruction in Social Work Education

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<tr>
<th>Line no</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>CASE 1</th>
<th>CASE 2</th>
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<td></td>
<td>assessments throughout placement, meets with students formally 3 times during placement but depending on the needs of individual students more support and meetings can be given.</td>
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</table>

Details of field instruction at 4th year

3 Average number of students at 4th year
   - At 4th year there is an average of 100 students
   - At 4th year there is an average of 70 students
   - At 4th year there is an average of 65 students

4 Period 4th year students spend at placement agency:
   - Regarding the period 4th year students spend at placement agency: 17 weeks i.e. from end June–mid October
   - Regarding the period 4th year students spend at placement agency: 4 days a week Mon–Thurs, over 19 weeks = 608 hours.
   - Regarding the period 4th year students spend at placement agency: 600 hours at the agency. All other activities are additional to the 600 notional hours.

5 What model do you use at 4th year and why? (e.g. block placements, concurrent, mixed, etc.)
   - This is a block placement. Students do their practicals at their home town and this helps on their accommodation and personal costs.
   - We use a (modified) block placement as students are also required to attend supervision, fieldwork meetings and complete research during this time.
   - At fourth year we follow a concurrent model to allow students to integrate theory and practice as soon as it is taught. Students attend theory classes one day per week and spend 20 hours per week at their placements. Research is done additionally to the internship programme as it does not link with the placement.
   - On 4th year level, however much of the theory is already taught on previous year levels such as community work and groupwork theory.

6 Explanatory details of model used at 4th year
   - Internship classes are offered in the 1st semester and are placed at agencies in the second semester
   - Explanatory details of model used at 4th year: They [students] have supervision with university supervisors, with submission dates for written formative assessments throughout the placement. Regular email and telephonic contact also encouraged throughout the placement. [Practice educator] meets with students mostly monthly, for example when preparing for mid-point and final evaluations. On a Friday students also attend research supervision at the university.
   - Explanatory details of model used at 4th year: 2 hours per week, facilitated by [practice educators] in the form of class discussions, workshops and group supervision as necessary.
   - Internship classes follow a pre-determined programme which aims at integration of theory in ethical social work practice. Workshops are presented once per month on topics such as academic poster design, specialised fields of service delivery, report writing, work with the child client.
   - One month is dedicated to the statutory process according to the Children’s Act. Guest lecturers are invited and workshops are organised.

7 How are placements managed at the agencies at 4th year?
   - Regarding the management of agency placements at 4th year: Fieldwork coordinator finds placements, matches students to agencies, draws up service level agreements, and visits new sites for screening. Each
   - Regarding the management of agency placements at 4th year: We have an orientation session in January and meetings with all supervisors and [practice educators] at least 3 times per year. Student supervisors from the agencies
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<tr>
<th>Line no</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>CASE 1</th>
<th>CASE 2</th>
<th>CASE 3</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>university conducts two visits to the placement agency during the internship period.</td>
<td>student has an onsite social work agency supervisor (very few have offsite social work agency supervisors at level four) who supervises their agency work and administration. Each student has a university supervisor who is responsible for initiating contracting with agencies, monitoring and evaluating the placement and the student’s academic work relating to the placement.</td>
<td>participate in the student’s mid-year oral exam and are also invited to the student’s poster presentation and feedback session at the end of the placement.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>How is the supervision process managed at 4th year? Two types of supervision are provided, namely with agency supervisors and with university (lecturers’) supervisor. Students communicate with their university supervisor through the university communication system.</td>
<td>How is the supervision process managed at 4th year? Weekly supervision is provided by the agency. University supervision throughout placement. Formal meetings are held 3 times throughout the placement but depends on supervisor and the student.</td>
<td>How is the supervision process managed at 4th year? Field supervisors at the agency are required to provide weekly supervision to students regarding the work done during the 20 hours at the placement weekly. This concerns primarily day-to-day issues. No work is assessed by field supervisors. This is for formative purposes only. Students are required to receive supervision on a continuous basis from university lecturers regarding the work to be assessed—ie one individual case, one group work series and one community work project. It entails that there must be feedback before students can commence with the specific intervention. Students keep a ‘supervision diary’ which includes a checklist indicating EVERY supervision appointment, signed by the student as well as supervision notes for EACH supervision session with field supervisors and practice lecturers, signed by the student and the supervisor/lecturer.</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Description of demographics and geographical areas of placements at 4th year? As students are placed at agencies nearer to their homes, some are placed in rural areas whilst others are urban.</td>
<td>Description of demographics and geographical areas of placements at 4th year? Work through agencies mainly in disadvantaged areas and communities. Risk includes very poor infrastructure, high crime rates, izinyoka’s (illegal electrical connections). These are common place during home visits. Agencies lack resources—no transport, office space, administrative facilities and supervision for own staff.</td>
<td>Description of demographics and geographical areas of placements at 4th year? Students are placed at agencies, hospitals and schools in different geographical areas, both urban and semi-urban. The demographics differ according to the different areas.</td>
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Appendix 4. Multiple interview schedules

Interview questions (cumulated)

Research objectives:
1. Identify and describe the elements that comprise the FIS
2. Analyse, using systems theory, the FIS as a social system
3. Determine the critical factors in the FIS that optimise or hinder the process of learning
4. Formulate/recommend a framework of supporting factors that could be built into FISs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewer’s focus on systems concepts and applications</th>
<th>Objective alignment</th>
<th>Questions to practice educators</th>
<th>Questions to student supervisors</th>
<th>Questions to students</th>
<th>Questions to agency reps</th>
<th>Questions to alumni/Graduates</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Opening questions</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Can you tell me about the field instruction programme that you follow at this FIS?</td>
<td>Can you tell me about your supervisory background and experience?</td>
<td>Can you tell me about the type of field instruction placements you experienced prior to the fourth year?</td>
<td>Can you tell me about your agency? Have you taken on students before?</td>
<td>Can you tell me about the type of field instruction placements you experienced prior to the fourth year?</td>
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<td><strong>Descriptions of programme</strong></td>
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<td>What model of FI is followed at this FIS?</td>
<td>As the student supervisor aligned with this university can you tell me about the programme itself?</td>
<td>As a student, what you tell me about the FI programme, eg, What model of FI is followed? What period of time does a student spend in internship? What are the expectations of the student?</td>
<td>From the perspective of the agency, about the FI programme at () university, eg, What model of FI is followed? What period of time does a student spend in internship? What are the expectations of the student?</td>
<td>What can you tell me about the fourth year programme, eg What model of FI was followed? What period of time did you spend in internship? What were the expectations of you?</td>
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<td><strong>ROLES AND FUNCTIONS</strong></td>
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<td>As an educator, what can you tell me about the roles of the student?</td>
<td>As a student, what you tell me about the role of the university (perhaps also placement officer if applicable) in this process?</td>
<td>As a student, who do you see as the roles of the student? How do you see the different roles? What are the expectations of the student?</td>
<td>From the perspective of the agency, how did you see yourselves fitting in to the FI programme? Can you tell me about the roles of the student in this system?</td>
<td>Looking back as a student, what can you tell me about the roles of the student? How did you see the How did you see the different roles? What were the expectations of the student? How did you see the role of the student? How did you see the role of the agency? Did the client have a role in this system?</td>
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<td><strong>RELATIONSHIPS</strong></td>
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<td>How do you see the role of the university?</td>
<td>What are the expectations of the student?</td>
<td>How do you see the role of the supervi</td>
<td>How do you see the different roles? What are the expectations of the student?</td>
<td>From the perspective of the agency, how did you see yourselves fitting in to the FI programme? Can you tell me about the roles of the student in this system?</td>
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<td><strong>Possibly use diagram</strong></td>
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<td>How do you see the role of the agency?</td>
<td>Does the client have a role in this system?</td>
<td>How do you see the role of the supervi</td>
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<th>Questions to alumni/Graduates</th>
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<td>As an educator, what kind of challenges are experienced in the programme? Eg. From the University? Should a student stop coping? Supervision? What can you tell me would happen?</td>
<td>What kind of challenges have you experienced as a student supervisor? What are the mechanisms you would you to overcome such challenges?</td>
<td>What kind of challenges have you experienced as a student in your field instruction programme? How would you overcome such challenges?</td>
<td>What kind of challenges have you as the placement agency experienced in the programme? What are the mechanisms do you as the agency use to address such challenges?</td>
<td>Looking back, what kind of challenges have you experienced as a student in your field instruction programme? How did you overcome such challenges?</td>
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**Recommendations**

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<th>As an educator, do you have any recommendations for the FI programme?</th>
<th>As a supervisor, do you have any recommendations for the FI programme?</th>
<th>As a student, do you have any recommendations for the FI programme?</th>
<th>From the agency perspective, do you have any recommendations for the FI programme?</th>
<th>Looking back as a student, what suggestions or recommendations do you have for the FI programme?</th>
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A Systems Analysis of Field Instruction in Social Work Education
### Appendix 5. List of participants, documents, transcriptions and coding process

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| Practice teaching committee | | | Yeargroup committee |
### Appendix 7. Axial code list

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<th>2. <strong>STUDENT EXPERIENCES</strong></th>
<th>3. <strong>FI REQUIREMENTS/PURPOSE</strong></th>
<th>4. <strong>PLACEMENTS</strong></th>
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A Systems Analysis of Field Instruction in Social Work Education
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<p>| Third year vs fourth year placements    |
| Time period 90 days                     |
| Traditional leaders                     |
| Transport challenges-home visits        |
| transport costs                         |
| Transport to placement agency           |
| University preparation of agency        |
| University preparation of supervisor- how will this be done/implemented when far-away and out of province placements are supported? |
| Varied placements                       |
| Visits Prior to Beginning of Fieldwork Placement |</p>
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8. SUPERVISORS
- Negative qualities of student supervisors
- Passionate about social work
- Qualities required of student supervisors
- Supervisor cum Practice Educator
- Supervisor development
- Supervisor experience
- Supervisor experience prior
- Supervisor motivation to supervise students
- Supervisor poor role models
- Supervisor reflection
- Supervisor responsibilities
- Supervisor workshops
- Supervisor's qualities
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<th>11. AGENCY</th>
<th>12. ETHICS/PROFESSIONALISM</th>
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### Appendix 8. Selective code list

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| 1. Policy documents on field instruction | - | 1. FI Requirements/Purpose  
2. University matters  
3. Assessments  
4. Management of FI  
5. General matters  
6. Ethics and professional behaviour  
7. Models of FI |
| 2. Participants’ views of the field instruction programme | 1. Describing the field instruction requirements  
2. Supervision as a requirement of field instruction  
3. Integration of theory into practice  
4. Professional behaviour as a requirement | 8. Student experiences  
9. Supervision  
10. Finance & family support |
| 3. Participants’ views of the educational team | 5. The practice educator  
6. The placement agency  
7. The student supervisor  
8. The student  
9. The alumni  
10. The service user | 11. Roleplayers  
12. Supervisors  
13. Alumni  
14. Agency |
| 4. Participants’ perspectives of the placement relationship | 11. Obtaining placements for students  
12. Verification and monitoring of student placements | 15. Placements  
16. Partnerships |
Appendix 9. Research information sheet and consent form

INFORMATION LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS

Good day

I am undertake research on social work internships as part of my study for a doctorate in social work. I am a social worker by profession, and am employed at the University of Johannesburg (UJ) as a lecturer. One of the modules that I teach at UJ is the fourth year social work internship, hence I am particularly interested in this topic.

As to my research, I wish to explore in particular your understanding of the field instruction programme; what are the critical factors that enhance or hinder the process of learning.

I therefore wish to invite you to participate in this research project about field instruction in social work education. In simple terms, this refers to the internship or practicals that student social workers at fourth year level are doing at their agencies and within their communities. The purpose of this research is to understand your viewpoint on how the field instruction system works at this university. This research has no assessment or evaluative component, hence it will not serve to any form of assessment or evaluation of either the programme itself, or the student or other roleplayers.

I will be interviewing university lecturers, field placement officers, supervisors of students, students, persons from the agency, and past graduates of the programme at three universities in South Africa.

I must state at the outset that whilst I may be employed at UJ, I will not be using UJ as part of my study, nor will I any comparisons of your programme with UJ. This research study is independent from my lecturing role at UJ. The findings however will be published in my thesis, but I will not identify any information from your university by name. Information that you provide will be encoded and you will not be identified either.

I have obtained a clearance from the Ethics Committee at UJ (Ref number: REC-01-059-2017). I have also applied to the Research Office at this university for institutional permission to come here to conduct this research.

Please take note of the following important information about this study:

1. Your participation is voluntary. That means that you do not have to participate. You can even stop before the project is finished without any penalty.
2. If you agree to participate, the interview will take approximately 60-90 minutes and will be recorded. The recordings will be stored in digitally on my computer which is password-protected. Only my supervisor (Professor van Breda from the University of Johannesburg) and I will have access to the recordings.
3. The information that you provide to me will not be identifiable with your name. In fact, I will ask you to allocate a pseudonym for yourself which I can use in my report.
4. If you participate in a group interview, however, people other than me will hear what you have to say. In such group interviews, all participants will sign a similar consent form not to disclose anything that they have heard discussed in the session.
5. I undertake not to hide anything from you concerning your participation and the potential harm, discomfort, stress it may cause.
6. I will not share the content of this discussion with this university, the student, the supervisor or the agency.
7. The consent form will be kept separate from all other documentation and will be in a locked cupboard to which only my supervisor and I have access.
8. Any publications resulting from this research will not mention your name or any identifying information about you.

Should you have any questions about your participation in this study, please discuss these with me before signing the form to consent to participate in the research.

Kind regards

Researcher: Mrs Varoshini Nadesan, cell: 084 452 1862, email: varosh4research@gmail.com
Supervisor: Professor Adrian van Breda, email: avanbreda@uj.ac.za
Date: 20 January 2018

If you accept to participate in this research, please could you complete the consent form below:
CONSENT FORM

My name is ________________________________________________________________
and I agree to participate in the research project conducted by Mrs Varosh Nadesan.

1. I have read and understood the information given to me about this project.
2. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have received all the information I need.
3. I understand that I will not receive payment for participating.
4. I also understand that I may withdraw at any time without any penalties.
5. Should I participate in a group interview, I agree that I will not disclose individual member’s contributions in the discussions.

*Please mark all applicable boxes below

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes*</th>
<th>No*</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I agree to be interviewed individually</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I agree to be interviewed in a group</td>
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<tr>
<td>I agree for the interview to be recorded</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I choose to have the following pseudo name:</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

6. I understand that I can ask for help if the research project causes me any distress.

My telephone number is: __________________________________________________

Email if you have: ________________________________________________________

Signature: ________________________________________________________________

Signed at ___________________________ on _________________________________

Witnessed by:

Signature: ________________________________________________________________
Appendix 10. Example of a coded group interview

Transcript of a group interview with alumni. Document # 18. Date: 13 March 2018
Key: L# + Line #: Int= Interviewer; Alumnus = Al #

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line #</th>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Discussion</th>
<th>Open &amp; In vivo codes</th>
<th>Axial codes</th>
<th>Selective codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L 1</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Good afternoon and welcome. I am at the university in Case 2. I am privileged to have 5 alumni in our group this afternoon, who have all finished the undergraduate BSW at this university. Can you tell us about yourselves, for e.g. when you completed your studies and what you are doing this year?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 2</td>
<td>Al# 9</td>
<td>My name is Al# 9. I finished my undergrad in 2017, so this year I am doing level 1 Masters in Social Work.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Postgraduate studies</td>
<td>General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 3</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>And what is your field of interest in your studies?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 4</td>
<td>Al# 9</td>
<td>Preferably it is going to be counselling. I want to venture into the counselling because I am focusing on marriages versus bisexuality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 5</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>And where did you do your 3rd year and 4th year?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 6</td>
<td>Al# 9</td>
<td>3rd year internship was community development at Old Age Centres. In my 4th year I was at the state department in a nearby city three hours from the university.</td>
<td></td>
<td>3rd &amp; 4th year placement agency</td>
<td>Student experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 7</td>
<td>Al# 6</td>
<td>I am doing my final year Masters in Social Work on the Stigma of HIV and AIDS - that is what I am focusing on. I finished my undergrad in 2015.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Postgraduate studies</td>
<td>General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 8</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>And where did you do your 3rd and 4th year field instruction?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 9</td>
<td>Al# 6</td>
<td>I did my 3rd year in (a rural school) where we did community work. It was gardening and doing educational programmes at the school. Then I did my 4th year Internship at the state department in a rural town nearby.</td>
<td></td>
<td>3rd &amp; 4th year placement agency</td>
<td>Student experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 10</td>
<td>Al# 7</td>
<td>I finished my undergrad studies at this university in 2017. I am doing my 1st year in Masters, studying children. I am studying child-headed households.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Postgraduate studies</td>
<td>General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 11</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Is that a prominent issue in this town? Do you have a lot of child-headed households here?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 12</td>
<td>Al# 7</td>
<td>There are a few child-headed households here in this town near the university, but it is more prominent in my hometown a few hours from here.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Background to community Placements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 13</td>
<td>Al# 7</td>
<td>I did my 3rd year Internship at a home for disabilities and my 4th year at a child welfare society.</td>
<td></td>
<td>3rd &amp; 4th year placement agency</td>
<td>Student experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 14</td>
<td>Al# 8</td>
<td>My name is Al# 8. I finished my undergrad studies here in 2016. I am in my second year of masters looking at psychosocial challenges faced by secondary victims like the guardians as nothing is said about what they are going through while their children are going through. The guardian must provide support but can you imagine what the guardian is going through? So my interest is in secondary victims.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Postgraduate studies</td>
<td>General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line #</td>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>Open &amp; In vivo codes</td>
<td>Axial codes</td>
<td>Selective codes</td>
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<tr>
<td>L 15</td>
<td>A1# 8</td>
<td>I attended a conference last year. I saw you at the conference. I presented a paper on adoption in social work practice and a paper on secondary victims. I did my 3rd year internship at an ngo and my 4th year at an ngo for the elderly</td>
<td>3rd &amp; 4th year placement agency</td>
<td>Student experiences</td>
<td>Participants’ views of the field instruction programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 16</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>That’s lovely. Well done on your paper presentations. I hope that you enjoyed the conference.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 17</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>So I want to start by asking you about your own experiences in field instruction in your 3rd year and 4th year- just in summary. What kind of experiences did you have?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 18</td>
<td>A1# 8</td>
<td>I was placed at an Old Age Centre. It was a group of elderly people that started a group from nowhere. and they are not funded but the spirit that they have to come together on a daily basis to discuss their issues at home, to empower one another, so we joined that group of people and we added to that team spirit and we brought our skills, as well as student social workers. So one of the happy moments was seeing the garden because they used to struggle with resources to make their garden a success. You know in terms of tractors, the seeds- so we put in a lot of work.</td>
<td>FI experience</td>
<td>Student experiences</td>
<td>Participants’ views of the field instruction programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 19</td>
<td>A1# 8</td>
<td>We didn’t get funding. We fundraised from the students. We went to the businesses in the town to raise funds. Sometimes we put in our own little money. We made raffles for them to give to committee members and their children. So the garden project came to a big success. They also didn’t have fencing – they did have material but no manpower. So we helped with fencing as well. This was their happiest moments.</td>
<td>FI experience</td>
<td>Student experiences</td>
<td>Participants’ views of the field instruction programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 20</td>
<td>A1# 8</td>
<td>My happiest moment in the project was when we made an event for them whereby we wanted to bring the whole community together. So we gathered some funds and then we made a big event where there were DJ’s, there were speakers from respective Departments, community leaders, church leaders. Our lecturers were there so it was a very big event, very successful event so youth also joined in with the elderly people so it was a very big successful event, and we got a distinction for that event as well.</td>
<td>FI experience</td>
<td>Student experiences</td>
<td>Participants’ views of the field instruction programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 21</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>What stands out for you in terms of the internship in your 3rd year and 4th year? So you’ve got the events that you have done, but as a student what kind of experience did you take in terms of integrating your theory into your work out there?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>L 22</td>
<td>A1# 8</td>
<td>It is the ability to come in and make a difference and actually making the client realise that they are able to do these things for themselves. It’s just that they needed that guidance of the social worker so we are able to showcase our skills as facilitators, as guiders, as teachers to them so that was a great moment for us.</td>
<td>Skills and knowledge</td>
<td>Student experiences</td>
<td>Participants’ views of the field instruction programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 23</td>
<td>A1# 9</td>
<td>I was at a primary school- what we did there was gardening, we also educated them. For me I can say the experience was heart-breaking, because what I found out is that the classes only end at grade 8, so after grade 8 the learners don’t go further with their studies because there is no high school in that community. They have to go to a town far away. It is a coloured community, they speak Afrikaans most of the time. So it was a heart breaking</td>
<td>FI experience</td>
<td>Student experiences</td>
<td>Participants’ views of the field instruction programme</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A Systems Analysis of Field Instruction in Social Work Education
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line #</th>
<th>Participant</th>
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<th>Axial codes</th>
<th>Selective codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L 24</td>
<td>A1# 6</td>
<td>My happiest moment at the home for persons with disabilities as we went to that community we went there and we found out about their challenges, although we did not have to help them in all the challenges that they had. So we were able to achieve one of their challenges, which was they did not have playground. The children did not have a playground so we did some fundraising. So we went to local business in the town and we wrote letters to ask for equipment for playground.</td>
<td>FI experience</td>
<td>Student experiences</td>
<td>Participants’ views of the field instruction programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 25</td>
<td>A1# 5</td>
<td>When we got to our placements at the old age centre, we found they do have sewing machines but they were not being utilised. There was someone who is actually being paid to train them but we found out there was no such person to come in and teach them how to sew. And the other thing we also noticed is the elderly people that are in that centre do not speak same languages. They speak different languages. That saddens me, however, it was a challenge for me to unite them.</td>
<td>Community assessment</td>
<td>Student experiences</td>
<td>Participants’ views of the field instruction programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 26</td>
<td>A1# 5</td>
<td>Thirdly they knew nothing about their funds – where do they go because apparently the person who coordinates, the coordinator, was not working in unison with them so that was saddening a lot. Another thing that was saddening - they come there for food. They sit there the whole day doing nothing – that saddened us, however, that gave us an opportunity to kind of correct that. We managed to find another teacher for them to assist with sewing and we came up with games, because we also found out in their budget because they are funded by the state department. There are funds that are allocated for games and other things so we managed to see those funds were utilised then in a right way.</td>
<td>Using skills and knowledge</td>
<td>Student experiences</td>
<td>Participants’ views of the field instruction programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 27</td>
<td>A1# 5</td>
<td>Also they had such passion. They had a garden but the garden was far from where the Centre is. They would also complain about how they would plough but somebody would just come and steal. So what made me happy was to see we brought happiness to them where we donated clothes, our own clothes, clothes that we collect from other people. We managed to fundraise. We bought them slippers, and then we brought in different stakeholders to address them.</td>
<td>Community action</td>
<td>Student experiences</td>
<td>Participants’ views of the field instruction programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 28</td>
<td>A1# 5</td>
<td>And also the social worker who was designated in that area was not doing her job. We eventually managed to see to it that he visits them and he attends to their challenges</td>
<td>Community action</td>
<td>Student experiences</td>
<td>Participants’ views of the field instruction programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line #</td>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>L 29</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>How did you do those home visits?</td>
<td>Home visits</td>
<td>instruction programme</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 30</td>
<td>Al# 5</td>
<td>We would walk there and when we get there we would find out the house is not clean. We would clean it and we would pray- remember community development is not about the resources only. It is about developing the inner resources so we could not leave out the spirituality so we would pray. That made us happy.</td>
<td>Skills and knowledge?</td>
<td>Student experiences</td>
<td>Participants’ views of the field instruction programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 31</td>
<td>Al# 5</td>
<td>The challenges that we came across is that there was no communication between the university supervisor and the NGO supervisor, so we had a problem because there will be times where we will want clarity, and the university supervisor by then didn’t make any visits and that caused a problem. It was like maltreatment of students by NGO’s.</td>
<td>Challenges with university. Contact between university and agency</td>
<td>Partner ships</td>
<td>Participants’ views of the educational team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 32</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Maltreatment? What do you mean? Can you explain?</td>
<td>FI experience at agency</td>
<td>Student experiences. Supervision</td>
<td>Participants’ views of the educational team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 33</td>
<td>Al# 5</td>
<td>Maltreatment. For eg in my NGO there was a cleaner who would come each any every week. They said the cleaner must not come- I would come early and clean. Even if the manager wants tea- “Student, would you please make me tea.”</td>
<td>Exploitation of students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 34</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Could you respond to it? What did you do?</td>
<td>Exploitation of students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 35</td>
<td>Al# 5</td>
<td>You have to do it. If I am trying to say No- “No you are a student, you have to do it”. The other day they said I must go to a shop in town- I still remember there was a special on biscuits. I came and told them about the ‘special’. They said I must go back. They said- “you are a student, you have to go”.</td>
<td>Exploitation of students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 36</td>
<td>Al# 8</td>
<td>The other challenge that I came across was a big challenge for me. I was asked to play a role of a manager of the NGO because apparently there was a new management. Because I was practising to a chair at an NGO and also at a CYCC. At the CYCC there was mismanagement of funds and what I noticed that there was the people that were employed there were related to the director. As a result that made it difficult to report whatever is wrong. Now I had to come in and sort that out.</td>
<td>Student given management roles</td>
<td>Student experiences.</td>
<td>Participants’ views of the educational team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 37</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Who asked you to do that?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 38</td>
<td>Al# 8</td>
<td>The new Director of the NGO. That was a challenge. They saw a potential that I am able to do this. I was the only male there and I am a mature student</td>
<td>Student attributes recognised</td>
<td>Student experiences.</td>
<td>Participants’ views of the field instruction programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 39</td>
<td>Al# 8</td>
<td>So I had to deal with that and it stressed me but I took it as a challenge because fortunately I had a management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line #</td>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>Open &amp; In vivo codes</td>
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<tr>
<td>L 40</td>
<td>Al# 5</td>
<td>What about the laziness of the supervisor? I was allocated a supervisor. She was lazy. She would have an appointment and on that date she won’t come. She would call me and say “you have to cover for me. I am not coming. I am sick. You have to do this and this and that”. Even the other day, she had a backlog. SASSA would call, she has to submit this file. She will say I must look for this file. Now we are looking all over the office for this file as she doesn’t know where she put it. So she was lazy, my supervisor.</td>
<td>Poor qualities of supervisor</td>
<td>Supervisory conduct</td>
<td>Participants’ views of the educational team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 41</td>
<td>Al# 8</td>
<td>The other challenge was driving around. As I said earlier I was the only male there. So I had to be a student social worker, I had to drive and do buying of food. I had to drive so that was a challenge. It’s not like I was driving the whole day. Every day I would have to drive. It was a challenge because I was not expecting to drive around and all that stuff.</td>
<td>Exploitation</td>
<td>Student experiences</td>
<td>Participants’ views of the field instruction programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 42</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>So when did you have time to do your University requirements?</td>
<td>Coping with workload</td>
<td>Student experiences</td>
<td>Participants’ views of the field instruction programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 43</td>
<td>Al# 8</td>
<td>I had to do time management. I would do my university work when I get back home or sometimes I would stay up till late at night to do my work.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 44</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>But your work was more than just reports. You had to do case work, group work, community work. So when did you do those?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 45</td>
<td>Al# 6</td>
<td>Exploitation.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 46</td>
<td>Al# 6</td>
<td>It was exploitation. Not that they used me as the student. They exploited me as a student. They used my age. They said “You are the youngest, you have to do this”.</td>
<td>Student felt exploited</td>
<td>Student experiences</td>
<td>Participants’ views of the field instruction programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 47</td>
<td>Al# 6</td>
<td>Regarding the allocation of a supervisor, it took a while. I started at the agency in January but I only got a supervisor in April. I had to ask everyone at the agency to check my work until then. The supervisor knew I was coming to the agency but she took leave. Then she didn’t come back. Then the manager said that I was going to be reallocated.</td>
<td>Late allocation of supervisor</td>
<td>Supervision</td>
<td>Participants’ views of the field instruction programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 48</td>
<td>Al# 6</td>
<td>And my supervisor then was asking me to do her work. She would say “Can you please help me with that?”</td>
<td>Diary</td>
<td>Unethical conduct</td>
<td>Participants’ views of the field instruction programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 49</td>
<td>Al# 6</td>
<td>I kept a diary when I was allocated a supervisor. She had to go back and sign.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ethics</td>
<td>Participants’ views of the field instruction programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 50</td>
<td>INT</td>
<td>Where there other social workers there?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 51</td>
<td>Al# 6</td>
<td>There were 4 social workers at the agency, even though my supervisor had left. The manager, senior social worker and junior social workers. So the senior social worker said that she didn’t want a student. There was another student working there so the other social worker supervised her.</td>
<td>Resistance to supervision</td>
<td>Supervision</td>
<td>Participants’ views of the educational team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 52</td>
<td>Al# 6</td>
<td>The other challenge was that we had to look for placements ourselves. It is not a good thing in the sense</td>
<td>Sourcing of</td>
<td>Placements</td>
<td>Participants’ perspectives</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>L.53</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>If you found a place and informed your university, doesn’t your university contact the placement and verify the placement?</td>
<td>Placements</td>
<td>Placements</td>
<td>of the placement relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L.54</td>
<td>AI# 5</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L.55</td>
<td>AI# 6</td>
<td>No, I was just called and asked where are you doing your placement? That was it. The university did not ask for the telephone number or if it was really there.</td>
<td>Sourcing of placements</td>
<td>Placements</td>
<td>Participants’ perspectives of the placement relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L.56</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>And how did you then get allocated a supervisor? What did you expect the university to do?</td>
<td>Verifi cation of placements</td>
<td>Placements</td>
<td>Participants’ perspectives of the placement relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L.57</td>
<td>AI# 6</td>
<td>We expected the university to inform that particular NGO what we are expecting of you as an NGO and what we are expecting of the student. This was not done.</td>
<td>Supervisors does not understand learning guide (LG)</td>
<td>Placements</td>
<td>Participants’ perspectives of the placement relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L.58</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Does the NGO have a manual of a learning guide that they have to go through? Do they come to a workshop at the university? Your learning guide? Do you give a copy to the supervisor?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L.59</td>
<td>AI# 6</td>
<td>When we went out we were given manuals. My supervisor said “I don’t understand this manual”</td>
<td>Limited orientation to FI requirements</td>
<td>FI requirements</td>
<td>Policy documents on field instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L.60</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Did you understand the manual?</td>
<td>Student did not understand LG</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L.61</td>
<td>AI# 6</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L.61</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Do the university take you through the manual?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L.62</td>
<td>AI# 6</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>L.63</td>
<td>AI# 7</td>
<td>From my side we were taken through the manual, but having taken through the manual it was not explained extensively. I would be lying to say we were not taken. We were, but only certain parts in that manual we were told about. Imagine if you brief us only for 15 minutes- not even for 15 minutes, for 10 minutes. So we were not able to understand it clearly. As a result, with my supervisor, the NGO supervisor, we had to every time he did not understand something, I had to use my own phone to phone the university supervisor for clarity on whatever is not clear in that manual. So that was another challenge- the manual was not user friendly. It</td>
<td>Limited orientation to FI program me</td>
<td>FI requirements</td>
<td>Policy documents on field instruction</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Clarify with</td>
<td>FI requirements</td>
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<tr>
<td>L 64</td>
<td>A1# 8</td>
<td>And the other challenge was that there was no sick leave, no study leave. If you come to the university for registration, you have to ‘pay’ back that day.</td>
<td>Leave</td>
<td>Univers ity matters</td>
<td>Policy documents on field instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 65</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>As a point of clarity, what was the date for registration for 4th year?</td>
<td>Placement without student registering</td>
<td>Univers ity matters</td>
<td>Policy documents on field instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 66</td>
<td>A1# 8</td>
<td>Late February.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 67</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>But you start at the agency in January? Where you registered at the university as a student at the time of starting at the agency in January?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 68</td>
<td>A1# 8</td>
<td>No we are not registered. You have to ask that particular NGO that on such a day, you are going down to the university to register so they will give you a sick leave depending on that particular agency.</td>
<td>Placement without student registering</td>
<td>Univers ity matters</td>
<td>Policy documents on field instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 69</td>
<td>A1# 5</td>
<td>I had to pay the days I had to come here and register.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 70</td>
<td>A1# 5</td>
<td>Another challenge was that there were delays with funding for meals and books. If you got a state bursary, if you don’t register [on time] then everything of yours is delayed. So we had to come personally to the university to register.</td>
<td>Financial challenges</td>
<td>Finance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 71</td>
<td>A1# 5</td>
<td>The other thing is that we were not introduced to other service providers that are working with the organisation. We have to go there, like to SASSA and no one knows you there. The other lady in SASSA, she would say I’m skipping the queue and I have to explain myself that I am the social worker</td>
<td>Orientati on to the communi ty</td>
<td>Agency matters</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 72</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Did you have a name badge or a letter from the organisation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 73</td>
<td>A1# 5</td>
<td>I had a tag that said ‘student’.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 74</td>
<td>A1# 5</td>
<td>From my side one of the challenges, firstly was I started late because the manager said University is not in contact with us. All other universities came before you to discuss all the problems for the 6 months. So this university did not – so I had to start later and the supervisor lacked knowledge. She didn’t know what to do with me. We sat for I think 2 months with no work. We would just come to the office and sit and then when the client comes was the only time we did work.</td>
<td>Verificati on of placemen t?</td>
<td>Placem ent.</td>
<td>Participants’ perspectives of the placement relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 75</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Who was ‘sitting’? You or the supervisor?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 76</td>
<td>A1# 5</td>
<td>Both of us. We were sharing an office.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>L 77</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>So was the supervisor doing her own work?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 78</td>
<td>A1# 5</td>
<td>Only when the client came.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>L 79</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>So if there was no client?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 80</td>
<td>A1# 5</td>
<td>Because there is an appointment book, there was a roster, so today is who and who.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 81</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>So if there is no client is there no work? No recording or backlogs to deal with?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 82</td>
<td>A1# 5</td>
<td>No. We will sit and then I did say to her ‘look I can’t do this, I am not here to sit’. She said ‘no, relax man, you are still a student and there is lots of time’. I said ‘no’. Until I</td>
<td>Poor supervisi</td>
<td>Supervi sion</td>
<td>Participants’ views of the</td>
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<td>L 83</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>And her own files? Did she not have files?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>L 84</td>
<td>A# 5</td>
<td>She did have her own files but you know she would look, pick up the phone and say ‘there is no airtime’, put the phone back. Then when it is time for a home visit – she would say ‘no, there is no car. We don’t go’. We went to court maybe once or twice because the dates are always not okay so that was a challenge at the beginning. Thereafter there was this backlog business. A meeting was set eventually for the whole office and then we were given files. You would find that in the files there is still no information. They don’t know how to record. They don’t know how to write reports. You will find the file is rotated between so many social workers but there is nothing. You can’t trace what happened with this client. There is nothing. You just find the ID and the death certificate of the parents. School report that was done 4 years ago. Or then there is nothing. As a student, you have to start afresh and phone the client and do home visits and check the house. That was a challenge. A vehicle is also a challenge. And then the strike after that. A few months in the placement there was a big strike so we had to sit at home and after that my supervisor was sick.</td>
<td>Poor role modelling</td>
<td>Supervision</td>
<td>Participants’ views of the educational team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 85</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>So how did you make up the time for the strike?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 86</td>
<td>A# 5</td>
<td>I had to put in an effort when I came back. I had to work without a supervisor. From what she taught me, I just had to go forward and ask others for guidance.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>L 87</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Were your supervisors involved in the strike?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>L 88</td>
<td>A# 5</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 89</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>What did you observe?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>L 90</td>
<td>A# 8</td>
<td>The strike was radical.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>L 91</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>What do you mean?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 92</td>
<td>A# 8</td>
<td>They used to beat people up</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>L 93</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Who is they? Was it your supervisor doing that?</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 94</td>
<td>A# 8</td>
<td>My supervisor is also a member (of the union). They were singing at the gate. The gate was closed. They prevented anyone from coming into the building.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>L 95</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Please do not reveal your supervisor’s name, but can you tell us how this affected you as a student? If you as a student was coming in, would you be allowed in?</td>
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<tr>
<td>L 96</td>
<td>A# 8</td>
<td>I was told not to come because it was going to be dangerous for me to come in. They burnt cars.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>L 97</td>
<td>A# 8</td>
<td>At first my supervisor was not part of the strike, but she was taken out of the office so she was traumatised. She went to the psychologist. She was given another 2 months leave. So hence I was left without a supervisor.</td>
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<tr>
<td>L 98</td>
<td>A1# 8</td>
<td>The social workers themselves, they are the ones that were burning the state department’s cars. All the tyres were slashed, so cars would not move. So no one would be allowed to enter. So you enter at your own risk.</td>
<td>Role modelling. Unprofessional conduct</td>
<td>Ethics</td>
<td>Participants’ views of the field instruction programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 99</td>
<td>A1# 8</td>
<td>On top of the lack of resources, they damaged the cars.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 100</td>
<td>A1# 8</td>
<td>So that was a challenge for me. Group work was also a challenge because nobody, since my supervisor was not at work, nobody wanted to supervise. They would say “I don’t have a student, I am busy”. So me and my partner, we were 2 students, we decided to conduct on our own. We just informed the manager. She said we must look for schools and we did our group work at a school. Luckily they had a programme for us to do, so we did that programme with the schools ourselves. The community work was the most enjoyable.</td>
<td>Lack of supervision. Agency SW resistance to supervise. Groupwork</td>
<td></td>
<td>Participants’ views of the field instruction programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 101</td>
<td>A1# 8</td>
<td>My challenge at the state department was that the focus is foster care. You have to call the clients to come and review. On my first day I had to call about 230 clients. After my first day at work, sjo, I was so tired from phoning 230 clients, I went home and just slept, I did not eat.</td>
<td>Foster care workload at state department.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Participants’ views of the field instruction programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 102</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Why did you call 230 clients?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 103</td>
<td>A1# 8</td>
<td>To come and review the foster care.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 104</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>So who asked you to call them?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>L 105</td>
<td>A1# 8</td>
<td>My supervisor.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>L 106</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>You had to do this over one day?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>L 107</td>
<td>A1# 8</td>
<td>Yes I was on the phone all day, calling people who were rude to me. Telling me “Who are you? I don’t know you?” I had to explain that I am a student social worker at the state department. I am calling you about this. I was in a rural town. It has a growing population. Foster care is high. One social worker has his own (municipal) ward with a large population.</td>
<td>Student FI experience</td>
<td></td>
<td>Participants’ views of the field instruction programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 108</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Out of interest, how many cases were there per social worker in the rural town that you were at?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 109</td>
<td>A1# 8</td>
<td>In a day you would have 4 or 5 case work clients, then there is foster care. It was just too much- it was a traumatic experience for me. My supervisor would sell “Home Choice” and I would have to do her job.</td>
<td>Supervising or moonlighting. Exploited student.</td>
<td>Ethics. Student experiences</td>
<td>Participants’ views of the field instruction programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 110</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>What is “Home Choice”?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>L 111</td>
<td>A1# 8</td>
<td>It is this company, selling blankets and duvets. She would go around offices selling it during work hours.</td>
<td>Supervising or moonlighting.</td>
<td>Ethics</td>
<td>Participants’ views of the field instruction programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 112</td>
<td>A1# 8</td>
<td>She would go around offices. She would walk to Town and show the catalogue. We would have to sit in the office.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Participants’ views of the field instruction programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>L 113</td>
<td>A# 8</td>
<td>The co-workers always assisted me how to do the case work, how to conduct a case, how to write a report. Her co-workers taught me how to do those things. She did not have time for me. I was like an assistant to rescue her out of her workload. Sometimes I would escape and hide in the boardroom. Sometimes I would do my reports. If I said I couldn’t help her, she would say “you have to do it”. It was too much.</td>
<td>Supervised by other staff</td>
<td>Supervision.</td>
<td>field instruction programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 114</td>
<td>A# 8</td>
<td>I don’t know. Like a day there would come 4 to 5 cases. There is too much backlog. Cases are not attended to. Sometimes there would be no transport to attend to a rape case. Or sometimes a car is gone to the district office for the whole day. There are no home visits. I only went for home visits once in the 6 months.</td>
<td>Agency challenges</td>
<td>Student experiences</td>
<td>Participants’ views of the field instruction programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 115</td>
<td>A# 8</td>
<td>The offices were crowded, we were 5 in one office. There were 4 social workers and the 5th one was a student. We had to sit with my supervisor and interview with other people there.</td>
<td>Agency challenges. No confidentiality in interviewing</td>
<td>Student experiences. Ethics,</td>
<td>Participants’ views of the field instruction programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 116</td>
<td>A# 9</td>
<td>We had to share offices. Me and my supervisor and another social worker. So during her time, she would come with her client and we are sitting with our client. It was only when a manager came through and said it was wrong – we cannot all be here. But most of the time we do things together. At the same time.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>L 117</td>
<td>A# 6</td>
<td>The thing is in the rural town, most of the clients are not knowledgeable, they are not educated. So if the client who has the information says “I would like some confidentiality, I would like some privacy, I would like to be with my social worker” then we leave. But if it is just someone like an old woman, we all sit in. Even the social worker who is not concerned in this situation would sit and listen.</td>
<td>No confidentiality in interviewing</td>
<td>Ethics.</td>
<td>Participants’ views of the field instruction programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 118</td>
<td>A# 6</td>
<td>So they will also contribute to the interview. So in other words, the principles and values of social work are overlooked, not observed.</td>
<td>No confidentiality in interviewing</td>
<td>Ethics.</td>
<td>Participants’ views of the field instruction programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 119</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>This is not a therapeutic session. I would have loved to ask you, how did that make you feel? But I think we all understand that. Let us get back to the research questions. Who were the role players that you saw in your internship?</td>
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<tr>
<td>L 120</td>
<td>A# 6</td>
<td>My supervisors, co-workers, the people she was sharing her office- they were all the ones who were playing a big role in my internship, who showed me the ropes – what to do.</td>
<td>Roleplayers Supervisors, agency</td>
<td>Roleplayers</td>
<td>Participants’ views of the field instruction programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 121</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>You were all in a block placement where you worked for a full 5-6 months then you came back to the university. So semester 1 was 5-6 months straight block. Semester 2 was your theory. Another campus may have semester 1 theory and then semester 2 may be the block placement. What do you think of the 2 time periods? Which would be better for</td>
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<tr>
<td>L 122</td>
<td>A1#7</td>
<td>It would be better to have 1st semester for theory and then second semester for block. When you go to the agency, the other students, their knowledge of what is being done in the agency, and you don’t have anything. You learn about all those forms after you have come.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 123</td>
<td>A1# 5</td>
<td>One thing that would be of greater advantage of going there in the 2nd semester, we talk about EAP, we talk about reflecting and Inter-related social work like child welfare work. It would be very nice to go to a place having been taught those modules, which here in this institution we are only taught when we come back.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 124</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Does it not make sense when you come back?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 125</td>
<td>A1# 6</td>
<td>It doesn’t really make sense. Only reflections that makes sense.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 126</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>So I want to put another scenario to you: So you have the block placement which we discussed right now. Then you have something called concurrent placement. So I will give you an example- At another university one has only concurrent, so the 4th year student is at the agency from February to September, is at university from February to September. So Monday, Wednesday, Friday they are at the agency and Tuesday and Thursday they are doing their theory modules, every week. What do you think of that kind of model?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 127</td>
<td>A1# 7</td>
<td>I read about that and I was even surprised that there is such a concurrent thing. To me when I looked at it, when I read it, initially I said it won’t work for me. I will be at the agency for 3 days and at the university. Then I analysed and reflected on this block session. This concurrent thing will only work for me only if the University that I am organises placements for each students. And also looking at our institutions, they are rural. There aren’t agencies around. However they can come up with other strategies, but for us I don’t really think so right now. It is a good thing though for universities that are in the larger cities but we are in a smaller town and I don’t think it would work. It is a good thing though but I don’t think for me it will work here.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 128</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>So during this Interview we talked about working in rural areas. I grew up in the city and now I have come to what is known as a rural area. Can you enlighten me on what differences there are, and what would you like the university to do differently to enable you to work properly in rural areas?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 129</td>
<td>A1# 8</td>
<td>Firstly we struggle with things like transport because villages are far so we have to make sure that we are all congested in town to institutions that are near to university [for easy access]. Some of us cross rivers to get to our institutions. Sometimes we wouldn’t go because the river is full because it has rained. Because transport is not there.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line #</td>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 130</td>
<td>Al# 9</td>
<td>If we had to get the necessary support then I think it would be much better.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 131</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Let’s go back to the internship – looking back, what would you do differently?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 132</td>
<td>Al# 5</td>
<td>I think first of all the head of department must have a relationship with the lecturers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 133</td>
<td>Al# 5</td>
<td>The head must get involved with the lecturers. I must know their needs, the student needs and the other decision I will take will not be personal. I will make sure there is communication. I will make sure that I have meetings, quarterly meetings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 134</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Now let’s focus on the internship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 135</td>
<td>Al# 7</td>
<td>So I will involve myself as the head or the Dean and make sure that students are happier.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 136</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>But then you are losing that independence of social work that you are talking about, because points to mapping exercise the Dean sits here and oversees all these people here. So on the one hand you are saying social work should be on its own on the other hand you are saying that the Dean must get involved. Let us just say that the Social Work Department is one of the Departments and let’s just say the HOD is in charge of it but you are the fieldwork coordinator – what would you do differently?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 137</td>
<td>Al# 6</td>
<td>As a field coordinator, firstly I would make sure that everything that is done in the Department is uniform. Change the block placement to be in the 2nd semester so that we acquire the knowledge first then we go to our placements with confidence knowing what not do and what not to do. It would be beneficial for the student.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 138</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Are there enough resources in the area for that? Some organisations are unable to take more than one student?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 139</td>
<td>Al# 7</td>
<td>The advantage there is that we do our placements countrywide. Others can do in Cape Town. Others in Joburg. We are not restricted to being in the same province so it could work. It is a matter of negotiating with agencies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 140</td>
<td>Al# 9</td>
<td>I think the supervisor must have a relationship with the NGO’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 141</td>
<td>Al# 7</td>
<td>Yes, having to communicate. And also the other thing I can say is that the supervisor must promote the placement to be done in NGO’s. The Department of Social</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A Systems Analysis of Field Instruction in Social Work Education
Development is not an area of specialisation. Put the students in NGO’s. I will encourage that. As I am sitting here I benefitted a lot from the NGO end. Aside from challenges but I have benefitted a lot. They never treated me as a student. I even sat in one of their Interviews and I even short listed. I learnt about short listing. I learnt about organising events. I learnt about fund raising. And managing meetings. I have learnt a lot about that. I am not saying that Social Development does not matter but the NGO carried a lot of weight. They empower.

You know what students need as a placement supervisor, you know what students you want, what product you want to be. So as a supervisor you need to know what are your objectives, what is it that you want to get out of these students. Your final product. And you must have passion – you shouldn’t leave out passion.

And as a fieldwork co-ordinator I would visit the students at the placements, to know their needs when they are there like what are they experiencing and try to communicate with agencies.

That will also assist in knowing what you are there for because you will ask the student, what were you there for? I know that we are going to the agency to Integrate theory Into practise. Other students don’t even know that. Then by the fieldwork co-ordinator going there and visiting, they will be able to ask clarity on certain things that are not clear.

And some sort of accountability will be ensured because there is no accountability.

What do you mean by no accountability?

If our lecturer or co-ordinator doesn’t even go there so the social worker doesn’t even feel the need to help you as much as she they should but as they are getting points for PMDS.

One other aspect I needed to raise that by encouraging students to go to NGO’s - NGO’s send students to workshops, they spend their money on training and you get CPD points for that. For instance I’ve been to a number of workshops while I was doing my placement and I got CPD points and I’ve got certificates. So this is one other aspect that needs to be considered. For instance I can go to the NGO that I was doing my Internship- they need me as I am
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line #</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L 152</td>
<td>AI# 5</td>
<td>My relationship with my supervisor was very very very good in the sense that she said I brought hope to her. I brought her passion back because she was dull, doing what everybody else was doing. She was there for over 10 years.</td>
<td>Good relationship with supervisor</td>
<td>Supervision</td>
<td>Participants’ perspectives of the placement relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 153</td>
<td>AI# 6</td>
<td>My supervisor was a challenge. She didn’t have a backbone. I said to her A is A, B is B. She also commended me. She said since you were here, now I want to come to work. I am interested again in work. That was nice of her.</td>
<td>Poor qualities of supervisor</td>
<td>Supervisor</td>
<td>Participants’ perspectives of the placement relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 154</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Thank you all.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix 11. Example of a coded one-on-one interview

**Transcript of one-on-one interview with student. Document # 17. Date: 17 September 2017.**

Key: L# = Line#; Int= Interviewer; St5 = Student # 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line #</th>
<th>Participant</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L 1</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Good afternoon. I am at a non-governmental organisation situated a short distance from university in Case 1. I have the pleasure of interviewing St5 who is completing the fourth year field instruction programme at this organisation and is currently on a block placement. Welcome.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 2</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Can you tell me about your previous field instruction experience, e.g. your third year placement?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 3</td>
<td>St5</td>
<td>In my 3rd year I was placed at a government service centre in this town. We went there for two weeks and then I managed to do casework, then group work. And community work was outside of the two weeks.</td>
<td>3rd year placement</td>
<td>Student experiences</td>
<td>Participant’s views of the field instruction programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 4</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Was your casework and group work done in the two weeks at the agency?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 5</td>
<td>St5</td>
<td>No, the casework I did at the agency, then the group work we did there in schools. At different schools, to sort of like, do group work with learners.</td>
<td>Different organisations</td>
<td>Student experiences</td>
<td>Participant’s views of the field instruction programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 6</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Can you tell me what kind of supervision you had in third year?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 7</td>
<td>St5</td>
<td>We were assigned a supervisor, like different lecturers supervised different people, but no, no I think that’s not correct- It was only one lecturer who was supervising. The one was teaching the group work module.</td>
<td>University-based supervision</td>
<td>Supervision</td>
<td>Participant’s views of the educational team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 8</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Can you tell me about your fourth year programme? Was it different or same as your third year internship?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 9</td>
<td>St5</td>
<td>There is a difference with the introduction of research</td>
<td>Research module</td>
<td>Student experiences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 10</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Is the research module added to you have to do in internship?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 11</td>
<td>St5</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 12</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Is your research related to your internship?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 13</td>
<td>St5</td>
<td>It’s not related. It’s a stand-alone type of thing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 14</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>If we had to look at just your internship, how do you see the different role players in your internship? Who are the different role players?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 15</td>
<td>St5</td>
<td>I don’t quite understand</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 16</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Who would you identify as part of the internship programme? Would it be the university, or perhaps the agency where you are at this year, or others...?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 17</td>
<td>St5</td>
<td>The role players ...? Aah, making the whole thing happen? The role players are the university off course, and then this organisation itself. I think the schools to some degree, the high schools, the community itself, because when we are doing our community work, we have to have entry, we have to negotiate for entry</td>
<td>Roleplayers</td>
<td>Roleplayers</td>
<td>Participant’s views of the educational team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 18</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Can you explain ‘to negotiate for entry’?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L 19</td>
<td>St5</td>
<td>If you are to do community work you have to have permission to, you have to be sanctioned to work within the community.</td>
<td>Community protocols</td>
<td>Student experiences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 20</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>By?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 21</td>
<td>St5</td>
<td>By the authority. Might be the municipality, if it’s the location or township. So in the villages we have to negotiate with the chief, the tribal office. You find that there. And then the other role players, because you have to do statistics (it) is Statistics SA. They always make available their statistics so that you can do your profiling. Basically the community, Stats SA and this organisation, the university and the schools.</td>
<td>Community protocols</td>
<td>Student experiences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 22</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>If we look at how you have drawn on this paper, can I ask if you see yourself as part of this?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 23</td>
<td>St5</td>
<td>I do. I do. Because I’ve been in schools... I think if this was a circle then I would be somewhere in the middle, going in all these different directions. But well I have to represent this organisation off course because I am based in this agency and whatever that I do has to sort of like carry out this organisation’s mandate, so whatever it is that I do has to represent this organisation. But then again once I’m working with these entities, I always take their interests into account so that I don’t feel like the base of everything currently it’s here at this organisation.</td>
<td>Student centrredness</td>
<td>Student experiences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 24</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Thank you. Let us look at the circle that you have drawn. What can you tell me about the role of the university?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 25</td>
<td>St5</td>
<td>Can you explain?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 26</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Perhaps we can start with broadly speaking, who would be the people or the components or the entities at the university that have contributed to your growth and development in the internship programme.</td>
<td>University role in FI</td>
<td>Roleplayers</td>
<td>Participant’s views of the educationa l team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 27</td>
<td>St5</td>
<td>(silence)…..Ok, at first year I was sort of like extremely shy- like I was very isolated, withdrawn, didn’t participate in class and all that so I met with the psychologist. So the psychologist, at least after she helped me out, I could sort of like be calm, and then you have the lecturers as well.</td>
<td>Student qualities</td>
<td>Psycholo gical support</td>
<td>Student experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 28</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Thank you. Can you tell me about the lecturers? Where they from theory or internship?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 29</td>
<td>St5</td>
<td>In most cases its theory (lecturers). Like in class, during lectures you know, and when you consult at their offices, they always sort of like went the extra mile as far as being approachable and being very personable. So it makes things easy for you to progress to the next stage. So in that aspect, I would say the people who are responsible for me coming up is the lecturers, the psychologist, and also my mates, you know my colleagues, my peers. It’s sort of like having those friendships you know when we study together when we create resources, or exchange resources so it makes things a little bit easier.</td>
<td>Quality of university superviso r</td>
<td>Superviso r</td>
<td>Participant’s views of the educationa l team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 30</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Is it important to have peer support in internship? I ask this as you are at the agency, you are at this organisation, you’ve got your own supervisor. How does the peer support come in?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 31</td>
<td>St5</td>
<td>Peer support important because it’s sort of like a motivational thing. It’s very important and they are the ones who know you and whatever it is it’s more relevant when you talk to them</td>
<td>Peer support</td>
<td>Peer support</td>
<td>Participant’s views of the educationa l team</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L.32</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Can you tell me about how you used supervision this year?</td>
<td>Supervision</td>
<td>Supportive supervision</td>
<td>Participant s' views of the field instruction programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L.33</td>
<td>St5</td>
<td>Supervision - if there’s one thing about supervision, it’s you get- when you sort of like do case work because it gets too much sometimes. That’s how I feel like. Even after every session, I feel like I’m drained. That’s how it works. Because most sessions take, they last longer at this organisation. So those debriefing sessions you know sort of like to refuel you, sort of. It helps you out as far as you concerned and then supervision sort of like- its educational because you get to learn in different case, different cases. You know which interviewing skill is, and then they can make you aware of the patterns of like if you are doing marriage counselling or if you are working within this organisation you get certain types of cases. Relationships you know pre-marital, marriage divorce, stuff like that so they always give you those heads up. Okay in this situation you can do that, in this situation that is acceptable and you get to learn everything there, like even the code of ethics.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L.34</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Thank you. What are the qualities that you would like to see in a supervisor?</td>
<td>Supervision</td>
<td>Supervision</td>
<td>Participant s’ views of the field instruction programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L.35</td>
<td>St5</td>
<td>The qualities that I would like to see in a supervisor is to give one more freedom.</td>
<td>Supervisor to give student freedom</td>
<td>Supportive supervision</td>
<td>Participant s’ views of the field instruction programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L.36</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Can you explain?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L.37</td>
<td>St5</td>
<td>Freedom to…. sometimes if they if they are too, okay if they are too involved or like they think okay supervision is all about being on his case and what not, then you don’t feel a part of things, you don’t feel like you are going to grow cos let’s say for instance if you have a client then since you are a student they say you have to have a supervisor at all times. Sometimes it’s not ideal, it’s not ideal because they may take over an interview sometimes.</td>
<td>Supervision</td>
<td>Supervision</td>
<td>Participant s’ views of the field instruction programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L.38</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Have you experienced this?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L.39</td>
<td>St5</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L.40</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>How did you deal with that?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L.41</td>
<td>St5</td>
<td>You just have to. You just take it in stride and hopefully negotiate after that session to say, but can we do this this way because if we do it that way then it’s not working out.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L.42</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>So if you were a supervisor, what would you like? What would your ideal supervisor be? What kind of qualities would they need?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L.43</td>
<td>St5</td>
<td>First thing first I would love them to just to give you more freedom and to trust in you, to let you be autonomous to some degree within the bounds but because sometimes when you are from university you are very creative and eager, so you want to try out different things. But sometimes you may be confined or like constrained by the supervisor.</td>
<td>Qualities of supervisor</td>
<td>Supervisor</td>
<td>Participant s’ views of the educationa l team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L.44</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Is there anything at the agency that constrains you?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L.45</td>
<td>St5</td>
<td>Yes. Transport, transport.</td>
<td>Transport constraint s</td>
<td>Transport/ Finance</td>
<td>Participant s’ views of the field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line #</td>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>Open &amp; in vivo codes</td>
<td>Axial codes</td>
<td>Selective codes</td>
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<td>---------------------------------------------------------------- Eve</td>
<td>instruction programme</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 46</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>How do you manage to overcome or deal with that?</td>
<td>Transport constraint s</td>
<td>Transport/ Finance</td>
<td>Participant s’ views of the field instruction programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 47</td>
<td>St5</td>
<td>I walk</td>
<td>Role of university</td>
<td>Roleplaye rs</td>
<td>Participant s’ views of the educationa l team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 48</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Is it far?</td>
<td>Role of university</td>
<td>Roleplaye rs</td>
<td>Participant s’ views of the field instruction programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 49</td>
<td>St5</td>
<td>It’s not that far. It’s sometimes it’s a 30 minute walk but now I’m currently doing community work where it is sort of like 25 or 30 kms.</td>
<td>Role of university</td>
<td>Roleplaye rs</td>
<td>Participant s’ views of the field instruction programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 50</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>And do you walk there?</td>
<td>Role of university</td>
<td>Roleplaye rs</td>
<td>Participant s’ views of the field instruction programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 51</td>
<td>St5</td>
<td>No I can’t walk over there. I make other arrangements.</td>
<td>Role of university</td>
<td>Roleplaye rs</td>
<td>Participant s’ views of the field instruction programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 52</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Okay – Is your agency open to that? Making other arrangements?</td>
<td>Role of university</td>
<td>Roleplaye rs</td>
<td>Participant s’ views of the field instruction programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 53</td>
<td>St5</td>
<td>They are. However the thing is there has to be a supervisor so sometimes it’s challenging for them to, to sort of like adapt to that. (silence)</td>
<td>Role of university</td>
<td>Roleplaye rs</td>
<td>Participant s’ views of the field instruction programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 54</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Okay – how would you like to see the university fitting into the student’s growth and development? What should the University do differently?</td>
<td>Role of university</td>
<td>Roleplaye rs</td>
<td>Participant s’ views of the field instruction programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 55</td>
<td>St5</td>
<td>I think at the university, I think there is too much theory. What I would love to see for them is to make practical’s more often, like even in first year.</td>
<td>Role of university</td>
<td>Roleplaye rs</td>
<td>Participant s’ views of the field instruction programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 56</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>You are in a block placement now?</td>
<td>Role of university</td>
<td>Roleplaye rs</td>
<td>Participant s’ views of the field instruction programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 57</td>
<td>St5</td>
<td>Yes mam</td>
<td>Role of university</td>
<td>Roleplaye rs</td>
<td>Participant s’ views of the field instruction programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 58</td>
<td>INT</td>
<td>Some universities have a concurrent placement, meaning that their students might go two days a week to University for the whole year, and then perhaps 2-3 days every day for the whole year to the agency.</td>
<td>Role of university</td>
<td>Roleplaye rs</td>
<td>Participant s’ views of the field instruction programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>In your instance you have all the information first and then you go to the agency, and this is referred to as a block placement.</td>
<td>Role of university</td>
<td>Roleplaye rs</td>
<td>Participant s’ views of the field instruction programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Have you ever considered your placement model and the alternative?</td>
<td>Role of university</td>
<td>Roleplaye rs</td>
<td>Participant s’ views of the field instruction programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 59</td>
<td>St5</td>
<td>I think I think that’s a great way like the concurrent one that you are saying.</td>
<td>Role of university</td>
<td>Roleplaye rs</td>
<td>Participant s’ views of the field instruction programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 60</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Why would you say that?</td>
<td>Role of university</td>
<td>Roleplaye rs</td>
<td>Participant s’ views of the field instruction programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 61</td>
<td>St5</td>
<td>Exposure mam. You may even get to, it may even help you decided if you want this or not</td>
<td>Concurre nt model</td>
<td>Models of placement</td>
<td>Participant s’ views of the field instruction programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 61</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>With the concurrent placement you are at the same agency for the whole year.</td>
<td>Concurre nt model</td>
<td>Models of placement</td>
<td>Participant s’ views of the field instruction programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 62</td>
<td>St5</td>
<td>I don’t think the same agency will be alright because in your fourth year you do social work in specialised settings, like medical.</td>
<td>Concurre nt model</td>
<td>Models of placement</td>
<td>Participant s’ views of the field instruction programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 63</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>So we were talking about the concurrent and the block, but you were saying that in the concurrent model the student at fourth year level should go to different placements</td>
<td>Concurre nt model</td>
<td>Models of placement</td>
<td>Participant s’ views of the field instruction programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 64</td>
<td>St5</td>
<td>Yes mam</td>
<td>Concurre nt model</td>
<td>Models of placement</td>
<td>Participant s’ views of the field instruction programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 65</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Can you explain why you would suggest that?</td>
<td>Concurre nt model</td>
<td>Models of placement</td>
<td>Participant s’ views of the field instruction programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 66</td>
<td>St5</td>
<td>Just to get the feel of different environments because it’s different settings and they offer different experiences.</td>
<td>Concurre nt model</td>
<td>Models of placement</td>
<td>Participant s’ views of the field instruction programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>Line #</td>
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<tr>
<td>L.67</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Interesting. How would you then do your other requirements like casework, group and community work? How would this be implemented if you were going to different organisations?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>L.68</td>
<td>St5</td>
<td>I don’t think the concurrent one should be only in fourth year. It would be nice if it was maybe from second to fourth or either first to fourth so you know that maybe there’s two different settings maybe you can work perhaps in forensic social work – I know those are scarce but then you can work.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>L.69</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Can you clarify what you refer to as forensic social worker?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>L.70</td>
<td>St5</td>
<td>Forensic social worker – they work to sort of like Probation Officer – so basically what they do is they work hand in hand with the court and the police. So if a Minor or a child of someone under 18 years is in conflict with the law then it’s up to the forensic social worker to write those sentencing reports, like for diversion.</td>
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<tr>
<td>L.71</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Would you prefer to have some experience there as well</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>L.72</td>
<td>St5</td>
<td>I would love that.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>L.73</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Thank you. So if you had a bird’s eye view of your internship, and was asked to make suggestions or recommendations to change, add or amend, what would you like to recommend?</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>L.74</td>
<td>St5</td>
<td>Yes I would love it if we were to present more like from early like to be more involved in class because we find that a lot of my colleagues and even I to some degree, we have this stage fright or like we are shy. So we need to have presentation skills.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>L.75</td>
<td>St5</td>
<td>You have to do presentations. One skill that any person should have in life it’s that self-confidence. So if you are not being exposed to the public speaking within the classroom or the lecture room and its then, then it won’t help. And then another thing we need to is to be more involved in terms of programmes that we run as social workers maybe in the school, university and in our communities. So there’s, there’s not much of that and then maybe we should have debates. It might be once a month when maybe the first years debate with the second or whatever the case may be, so I think that brings more excitement in life to what you are doing</td>
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<tr>
<td>L.76</td>
<td>St5</td>
<td>And then, sorry mam, another thing. Social work assessment is very very strenuous. When you go to psychology, you do far much better in psychology than in social work cos at least in psychology there is a mixture of questions. But in social work it’s strenuous.</td>
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<tr>
<td>L.77</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Are you referring to theory being difficult strenuous or your internship being strenuous?</td>
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<tr>
<td>L.78</td>
<td>St5</td>
<td>No, not the internship. What is strenuous is like when you write your tests and your exams.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L.79</td>
<td>St5</td>
<td>You are always expected to write four essays and so either two hours or three hours and you know in an essay it’s like an open</td>
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<tr>
<td>L 80</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Has your fourth year been smooth sailing</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>L 81</td>
<td>St5</td>
<td>No, It hasn’t</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 82</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Would you like to share with me?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 83</td>
<td>St5</td>
<td>Yes mam. Research</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 84</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Can you explain what you mean?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>L 85</td>
<td>St5</td>
<td>It’s a monster.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 86</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>A monster?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 87</td>
<td>St5</td>
<td>Yes it’s a monster.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 88</td>
<td>St5</td>
<td>Even the internship itself. I think orientation towards it, what to expect. It was it was not sort of like proper.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>L 89</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>And how would you have liked the orientation to the internship to be?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 90</td>
<td>St5</td>
<td>Only the orientation part?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>L 91</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>What would you have liked to have seen?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 92</td>
<td>St5</td>
<td>Exactly what to expect. What do they expect from us</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 93</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Who is “they”?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 94</td>
<td>St5</td>
<td>The Department of social work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 95</td>
<td>St5</td>
<td>Yes, at the university. Because I did advanced group work last year, I did advanced case work, I did advanced community work – but then when you have a guideline and your guideline they just give it to you maybe a day before, so maybe a day or maybe five days before then they run through it, they run through it but then it’s not enough because now you are used to doing group work this type of way then now the guidelines say do it this way. And then it’s a confusion. Who is going to mark what because you know that’s like this lecturer prefers to do group work a certain way, then these are the ones that say no this one is going to mark this year or he doesn’t want all of that, you can do 123 so that thing as far as exactly what to do when you get to a place, it’s very disadvantageous.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 96</td>
<td>St5</td>
<td>I also think research would be better if it was done in you know as a build-up thing and not as a bunch of things because you are doing research, this other module- you write all these other modules. Okay it can apply to fourth year, you write all these other modules. Maybe six seven of them before June and then after that you go to your placement and then you are focussed and when you look at the internship basically it’s like three modules into one. If you are clever enough to see that to say this is group work, this is case work, and this is community work all into one. So you are left with three more and then this other one the research. So I think research would be far much better if it was introduced early so that you get a hang of it because if you</td>
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A Systems Analysis of Field Instruction in Social Work Education
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L 97</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>do it in one year with all these stressors you have to be placed. It affects your internship.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>L 98</td>
<td>S15</td>
<td>Is there anything else you would like to add?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>L 99</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Thank you very much.</td>
<td></td>
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