

Problems Encountered by BS8W IV Students LA Field Practicum

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Abstract

This study looked into the problems encountered by the fifty (50) field practicum students of the UNP ISWCD, first and second semester, SY 2003-2004 with the aim of gathering information, feedbacks and suggestions for curricular enrichment/revision and to improve the marketability of the Bachelor of Science in Social Work graduates.

The descriptive method of research was used. A questionnaire checklist was utilized to gather data from the respondents. Statistical tools used were frequency count, percentage, mean and chi-square.

The study found out that there were more female than male respondents. Most of them were single and regular student. The problems encountered by the field practicum students were the following: inadequate classrooms, inadequate social welfare agencies, many academic loads other than field practicum, insufficient time to complete the required number of training hours, limited number of faculty members to teach major subjects, insufficient orientation/supervision of the field instructor/social worker, high supervisor-student trainee ratio, inability of the student trainee to participate in the problem solving process, inability of the student trainee to prepare administrative records and other required documents, inability of the student trainee to identify problems and treatment plan, inadequate fee for supervision due to the social workers/supervisors' performance of other duties and functions, distance of the community/work place, insufficient personal allowance for going to the workplace/community, and the performance of family duties and responsibilities.

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn: The performance of the practicum students can be attributed to the supervision and orientation of the agency social worker and the field practicum instructor, and the quality of the curriculum, teaching staff and better physical facilities can lead to excellence among the practicum students.

The following recommendations were forwarded: provision of better physical facilities in order to provide a more

conducive learning environment both inside and outside the school; curriculum revision and enrichment so that social work graduates can move in the direction of relevance and excellence; amendments in RA 5175, the "Social Work Law" particularly Ar. 10I, Sec. 12 i.e. to reduce/decrease the required number of case hours; Summer classes to be offered to incoming practicum students in order to reduce their academic load giving them more time for field practicum; additional monetary incentives given to field instructors/agency social workers while supervising the students in their practicum in the different social welfare agencies.

Rationale

Social work as a profession requires formal knowledge base, theoretical concepts, specific functional skills, and essential social values which are used to implement society's mandate to provide safe, **effective, and** constructive social services. It provides humane and effective social services to individuals, families, groups and communities so that social functions may be enhanced.

Field instruction is an integral part of the Bachelor of Science in Social Work (BSSW) curriculum. It is the placement of social work students in the different social welfare agencies for actual application of the theories, skills, and methods they have learned during their first three years in college. It also provides the students not only opportunities to use their knowledge but also exposure to the different fields of social work practice. Students then are able to develop the ability to gather accurate, relevant, and adequate information through the use of different methods of data gathering. They also develop communication and community organizing skills.

Republic Act 4373 passed in June 1965 and later amended on August 1967 by Republic Act 5175 more popularly known as the Social Work Law, gave the official and legal recognition to Field Instruction. The law established professionalism in the degree Bachelor in Social Work as a minimum educational requirement for the practice of social work. Article III Sec. 12 of the said law states that the degree requires the graduate to complete a minimum period of one thousand (1,000) case hours of practical training in an established social work agency under the direct supervision of a fully trained and qualified social worker. This qualifies a graduate to take the government examination necessary for registration or licensing as a social worker.

The field instruction students of the University of Northern Philippines are assigned in accredited social welfare agencies of the different municipalities in Ilocos Sur. The students stay in one agency for two semesters for field

practicum. During the first semester, practice cases consist of situations that would develop in the students simple skills in matching the needs of clients and resources readily available in the agency. The succeeding semester work experience may already include more complex areas like creation of resources and implementation of specialized programs and services that require **advanced** skills. The objectives of field instruction are the following: 1) develop capacity to work with the agency structure and function; 2) to develop knowledge/skills on how to bring needs and resources together; 3) to gain knowledge/skills in documenting social work practice; and 4) to gain problem solving skills.

It was observed that some social welfare agencies do not provide adequate exposure to the student-trainees. The students are not given tasks like counseling and case loads; not allowed to organize groups/communities and not allowed to participate in problem solving processes involving clients of different circumstances. It was also observed that after finishing two semesters in field practicum, the students do not manifest competence in their work even after passing the board examination.

The findings of this study serve as baseline data for the enrichment of field instruction and for the improvement of the marketability of BSSW graduates by the schools offering Bachelor of Science in Social Work particularly the Institute of Social Work of the University of Northern Philippines.

Objectives

This study attempted to identify the problems encountered by BSSW IV students enrolled in field practicum.

Specifically, it aimed to determine the following:

1. profile of the BSSW IV Field Practicum students in terms of
 - a. sex
 - b. type
 - c. civil status
2. problems in field practicum
3. the relationship between the students' profile and the problems they encountered?

Methodology

This study which utilized **the descriptive method** looked into the problems encountered by BSSW IV students enrolled in field practicum. It involved 50 students enrolled in the first and second semesters of School Year 2003-2004.

The profile of the students was described in terms of sex, student type and civil status. The problems in Field Practicum were analyzed in terms of school-related factors which include facilities, curriculum and teacher-related factors; field-related factors experienced while staying in the different social service agencies; community-related factors encountered in the community or work place; and student-related factors or personal problems while undergoing practicum.

The instrument used to gather data was a questionnaire delivered personally to each respondent. The researcher consulted ten (10) experts to validate the contents of the questionnaire. The validation result was very high with a mean score of $\bar{x} = 4.44$.

Statistical tools used were frequency count, percentage, mean, and chi-square. To interpret the results, the researcher made use of the following scale:

Range of Scores	Description
4.21–5.0	Very Good
3.41–4.2	Grave
2.61–3.4	Moderate
1.81–2.6	Seldom
1.0–1.8	Low

Review of Related Literature

In social work education, community agencies and organizations, both government and non-government, participate in the educational process by providing field experience to the students. The application of classroom theories and learning continues in field practice. This makes the output of social work education the product of both the school and the social work agencies. The close coordination between the school field instructors and the agency field workers is of paramount importance. Their perspective in terms of establishing goals and preparing for practice must be compatible. The social welfare agencies must be viewed as laboratories, not as a venue for on-the-job training. Thus the trainees look up to the agency social workers as models who can influence their future practice.

Hesser (1991) states that field practicum should not be expected to just train social work students. It should perform the following: keep abreast of and analyze social development patterns; systematize the action of social workers in practice and conscience; develop theories, concepts, models, and methods that can improve the operation of social work agencies; develop and implement programs to improve social workers' expertise; and evaluate development in the field of social policy and develop alternatives for formulated policies.

Supervision is a unique combination of administrative, teaching, and helping functions. The emphasis given to the three functions varies according to the purpose and objectives of supervision.

Punzalan (1979) listed the following differences of the practice and use of supervision for the staff and those involving the students. First, the difference between the student and staff supervision is on the varying functions and responsibilities of students and staff. The student on the other hand is a full-time learner and part of his learning is being suited in the agency. Second, the supervisor's chief responsibility to the students is teaching the three elements of professional practice while the staff is focused on the specific job. Third, student learning focuses on the "what", "how", and "why" experiences to be able to generate reasons and areas of practice. Fourth, student supervision involves better equipped social workers unlike staff supervision in general. Fifth, the staff brings with her the competence to learn according to the prescribed areas and knowledge. And lastly, students of supervision are given temporary arrangement of 10 months at which time the nature of assignments and works to be done provides learning opportunities for students.

In a study conducted by Maraflon (1969) on the perception of direct service workers on the quality of methods and techniques used in supervision, she found out that the three functions - administrative, teaching, and enabling roles were provided "adequately" by the field agency supervisors. It is only in the performance of the administrative role which was perceived by the respondents to be inadequate.

In a study conducted by Octario (1973), he determined specific areas of curriculum (Field instruction, Human Behavior and Social Environment, Social Welfare Policy and Services, and Social Work Methods (SWM) and these were inadequate under Social Welfare Policies and Programs.

The finding of the study conducted by Rosal, et al. (1984) on student perceptions in Field Instruction Supervision is that the students had a high level perception of the administrative and educative objectives of field supervision.

Aguinog et. al. (1997) in a study entitled Correlates of Field Instruction Students Achievement found out that there was no significant relationship between the profile of the respondents and the extent of achievement of the goals of field instruction.

Discussion of Results

This portion presents the analysis and interpretation of data gathered in this study.

Profile of the Respondents

The personal profile of the respondents is presented in Table 1.

Sex. Majority (49 or 98%) of the respondents were female students while only one was male. The data implies that social work is a course or profession that is more attractive to females.

Civil status. Most (47 or 94%) of the respondents were single and only three (6%) were married. The data implies that single individuals tend to enter college because they have enough time for their studies. In the case of BSSW students, being single enables one to attend fully to field practicum activities because he/she is not tied down by marriage and has less responsibilities to think of.

Student type. A big number (44 or 88%) were regular students while six (12%) were irregular students. This findings could be due to the fact that majority of the respondents follow the course offerings strictly or regularly unlike the irregular students who deviate from the course offerings.

Table 1. Profile of the respondents.

Person Factors	F	%
Sex		
Male	1	2.00
Female	49	98.00
Total	50	100.00
Civil Status		
Married	3	6.00
Single	47	94.00
Total	50	100.00
Type of Student		
Regular	44	88.00
Irregular	6	12.00
Total	50	100.00

Problems Encountered by the BSSW Field Practicum Students

The practicum students were asked about the problems they encountered while on field practicum. These are presented in Table 2.

Table 2, Ma rating showing the extmt of the problems encountered by the 3389tld pretkzests Mng .hook-r»et@dCon.

ITEMS	X	DR
Facilities		
1. Inadequate classrooms	3.90	Grave
2. Inadequate reference book/materials	3.26	Moderate
3. Inadequate laboratory facilities	2.94	Moderate
4. Inadequate social welfare	4.16	Grave
Curriculum		
1. Many irrelevant topics other than field instruction	3.64	Grave
2. Inadequate time to complete the required number of credits	3.236	Grave
3. Irrelevance of some major subjects in the practice of social work	3.00	Moderate
4. Irrelevance of some general education subjects in the practice of social work	2.90	Moderate
5. Inadequacy of the required number of credit hours	3.52	Grave
6. Overcrowding	3.43	Grave
Teaching Methods		
1. Limited number of faculty members to teach major subjects	3.88	Grave
2. Lack of competence of some faculty members regarding students' welfare	3.08	Moderate
3. Unfair and impatient treatment of faculty members in class	2.94	Moderate
4. Inability of faculty members to give ideas in class	3.02	Moderate
5. Inability of faculty members to relate subject to actual situations	3.06	Moderate
6. Lack of competence of faculty members	2.33	Moderate
7. Inability of faculty members to use examples, illustrations, associations to clarify the lesson	2.9%	Moderate
8. Inadequate evaluation of students	2.34	Moderate
9. Favoritism in class	2.94	Moderate
10. Undesirable traits of faculty members	3.10	Moderate
11. Inadequate orientation/supervision of the field instructor/social worker	3.44	Grave
12. Inadequate time of supervision in the field service/field work	3.42	Grave
Overall	3.12	Moderate
General	3.34	Moderate

As shown in Table 2, the respondents commiserated some of the most serious grave problems. These were inadequate classrooms as evidenced by a mean of 3.50 and inadequate social welfare agencies with a mean of 4.16. The data implies that if the students had better classrooms, there should have been better teaching-learning environment for the field practicum students. The classroom is the only place of interaction between the school social worker and the field practicum student. The finding also implies that local social services agencies in both public and private sectors where field practicum students experience, apply and enhance theories they learned in school, where they develop skills and methods, and where they gain exposure in the different fields of social work practice.

Along curriculum, the field practicum students considered the following as grave problems: heavy load other than field instruction (M = 3.64); insufficient time to complete required number of training hours (M = 3.86); and inability to finish required number of training hours (M = 3.82). The data implies that as fourth year BSSW student should have no other academic load to enable him/her to focus on field practicum and other related activities. Their inability to complete the required number of training hours was due to the fact that they had to attend to other subjects and other problems while undergoing field practicum in the different social welfare agencies.

Among teacher-related factors, the students considered the following problems as grave; limited number of faculty members to teach major subjects (M = 3.88); field instructor/social workers' insufficient orientation on supervision (M = 3.44) and supervisors' inadequate time for field supervision/field work (M = 3.4). Since the Jesmer is the center of the curriculum and the quality/kind of graduate depends on the kind of teaching staff, the findings imply that a greater number of qualified faculty members should be tapped to teach major subjects so that more knowledge and skills will be gained by the students. The data also implies that the performance of the field practicum student depends on the kind of orientation and supervision given by the field instructor and the agency social worker. Thus, the field instructor should know his/her role as a model and trainer while the practicum student should also understand his/her role as a trainee.

In general, the extent of the problems encountered by the BSSW field practicum students along school-related factors was described as moderate as evidenced by the mean of 3.34.

The practicum students were asked about the problems they encountered in the field. These are presented in Table 3.

Table 3, Me rating along the extent of the problems reported by the BSS field practicum students longfield-related factor.

ITEMS	X	DR
1. Sufficient orientation and supervision of the field instructor/social worker	3.64	Grave
2. Undesirable environment	3.08	Moderate
3. Undesirable traits of the supervisor and other employees.	3.16	Moderate
4. Difficulty in adjustment of both the supervisor and student trains	3.08	Moderate
5. Confusion	3.30	Moderate
6. Lack of motivation on the part of the supervisor	3.28	Moderate
7. High supervisor/student trainee ratio	3.70	Grave
8. Inability of the student trainee to handle case loads	3.80	Grave
9. Inability of the student trainee to participate in the problem solving process	3.60	Grave
10. Inability of the student trainee to prepare administrative records and other documents	3.60	Grave
11. Inability of the student trainee to identify problems and formulate treatment plan	3.66	Grave
12. Lack of time for supervision due to the performance of other duties and functions of the social worker/supervisor	3.60	Grave
OVERALL	3.46	Grave

The table shows that the respondents considered as a **grave problem** the field instructor/social worker's insufficient orientation and supervision (3,64). The data implies that the performance of the practicum students depends on the kind and the amount of time of orientation and supervision provided by the agency social worker as well as the field practicum instructors.

Another grave problem identified was the high supervisor-student trainee ratio (3,70). This finding means that the number of trainees in one social services agency was high. This could be due to the fact that there are very few social services agencies particularly in the private sector where the students can go for practicum.

The inability of the student trainees to handle case loads (x = 3,80) was also identified as a grave problem. The data indicates that the student trainees failed to develop skills and expertise in extending social services to individuals, families and communities. This finding tends to support the observation that

practical learning experience and theory which the students learn in the classroom and in the field differ.

Other problems identified by the respondents as grave were the inability of the student trainees to participate in the problem solving process ($x = 3.60$); the inability of the student trainees to prepare administrative records and other pertinent documents ($x = 3.60$); and the inability of the student trainees to identify problems and formulate treatment plans ($x = 3.66$).

The last problem considered as grave was the social worker/supervisor's lack of time for supervision due to the performance of other functions and duties ($x = 3.60$). The data implies that supervision is a vital tool for the intellectual, emotional growth and skills development of the students. Field supervisors should see to it that the student is a full-time learner. The functions of social work which combine administrative, teaching and helping functions learned in the classroom must be suited to the conditions in the social work agencies.

As a whole, the extent of the problems encountered by the BSSW field practicum students along field-related factors was described as grave as evidenced by the mean of 3.46.

The problems encountered in the community are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Mean ratings showing the extent of the problems encountered by the BSSW practicum students along community-related factors.

ITEMS	X	DR
1. Undesirable traits of the people in the community	3.32	Moderate
2. Distance of the community/workplace	3.51	Grave
3. Unwillingness of the people in the community to cooperate with the student trainee	3.32	Moderate
4. Unwillingness of the community leaders to cooperate with the student trainee	3.28	Moderate
5. Inability of the student trainees to organize groups, communities, and identify leaders	3.16	Moderate
6. Unwillingness of the community/community leaders to accept and use community resources	3.18	Moderate
7. Inability of the student trainees to identify, mobilize and use community resources	3.20	Moderate
8. Inability of the student trainees to transfer knowledge and skills to clients/groups	3.32	Moderate
OVERALL	3.27	Moderate

As reflected in the table, the only grave problem encountered by the respondents in the community was the distance they had to travel from their homes to the assigned workplace ($x = 3.51$). The findings show that the practicum students had the ability to deal with the people in the community and were able to develop friendly, personal and professional working relationships with them although these communities were located in very remote areas in the province. This problem required from the students a great deal of effort, patience and considerable cost. The overall mean of 3.27 indicates moderate problems in the community.

Table 5 presents the student-related problems which were perceived by the respondents to have affected their field practicum.

Table 5. Mean rating showing the extent of the problems encountered by the FSSW practicum students along student-related factors.

ITEMS	X	DR
1. Many academic subjects other than field instruction	3.74	Grave
2. Insufficient time to complete the required number of training hours	3.90	Grave
3. Distance of the work place	3.54	Grave
4. Insufficient personal allowance in going to the work place/community	3.54	Grave
5. Lack of time management	3.12	Moderate
6. Undesirable traits of fellow student trainee	3.04	Moderate
7. Confusing tasks	3.06	Moderate
8. Lack of skills	3.08	Moderate
9. Personal problems	3.08	Moderate
10. Performance of family duties and responsibilities	3.46	Grave
11. Unfavorable working relationship between the field supervisor and student trainee	3.14	Moderate
OVERALL	3.32	Moderate

The major problems of the practicum students along student-related factors are heavy academic load other than field practicum ($x = 3.74$); insufficient time to complete the required number of training hours ($x = 3.90$); distance of workplace ($x = 3.54$); insufficient allowance while having practicum ($x = 3.54$); and performance of family duties and responsibilities ($x = 3.46$). This implies that aside from being loaded academically during the two semesters of field practice, the students were **also bothered** financially and personally. The students found it very expensive to commute from their homes to their assigned communities especially so that transportation **expenses were high**. **Moreover**, the performance of their duties and responsibilities in their homes also affected their field work. However, as a whole the student-related factors were perceived as moderate.

Correlation among the Variables

Table 6 presents the data on the correlation among selected variables of the study.

Table 6. Correlation coefficient between students' personal profile and the problems encountered in their practicum.

PROBLEMS	SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS		
	Sex	Civil Status	Type of Student
School-Related Factors	.119	-.029	-.113
Facilities	.189	.133	-.033
Curriculum	.051	-.277	-.288°
Teacher-Related	.028	.103	.037
Field-Related Factors	.261	-.095	-.053
Community-Related Factors	.037	.064	.053
Student-Related Factors	.105	.019	-.082
OVERALL	.157	-.009	-.058

- Significant at 0.5

The correlation coefficient between the problems encountered and personal factors showed no significant relationship. Only curriculum (-.288 at .05 probability level) showed a significant relationship between the variables. The data indicates that a relevant and effective curriculum determines the kind/quality of graduates,

Conclusions

Based on the result of the study, the following conclusions were drawn.

1. The performance of the practicum students can be attributed to the supervision, orientation and job practices of the agency social worker and the field practicum instructor.
2. Relevant curriculum, effective teaching staff and quality physical facilities contribute much in the pursuit of excellence among the practicum students.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are forwarded:

1. Functional and quality physical facilities should be provided in order to create a more conducive learning environment both inside and outside the school.
2. There should be curriculum revision and enrichment so that social work graduates can move in the direction of relevance and excellence.
3. RA SI75 known as the Social Work Law particularly Art. 101, Sec. 12 should be amended so as to by reduce or decrease the required number of case hours.
4. Summer classes should be offered for incoming practicum students in order to reduce their academic load so that they will have enough time to attend to their field practicum.
5. Field instructors/agency social workers should be given additional monetary incentives while the students undergo practicum in their respective social welfare agencies.

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