

# The Need and Importance of Field Work Practice in Field Settings for Social Workers

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## Abstract

Students educate and progress when performing in social service organizations, and social works professors and field teachers must comprehend these procedures. By knowing the mechanisms by which learners grow and improve when functioning in social service organizations, instructors and field trainers can fully understand individuals' academic goals and determine the more efficient strategies to assist students during learning in practice. In that sense, the essay looks at field studying in social service training in terms of the two most common adult learning techniques, personal learning concepts and sociocultural training methods, and how they are utilized in the workplace in-field assignment contexts. Consequently, the paper highlights the diverse character of field learning while claiming that sociocultural methods vary by nation, depending on the demands and realistic goals of social work practice. In Pakistan, social work has to be recognized as a realistic strategy in private as well as public sector. Promoting a realistic study strategy for field situations has been a primary obligation of those connected with social practice. As a consequence, Pakistanis will begin to know their actual pedagogy earlier or later, which is similarly crucial for the advantage of corporate social work training. They connect with customers, colleagues, and mentors throughout their practical experiences, and these encounters help them build communication abilities.

**Keywords:** fieldwork, social work, field work setting, fieldwork placement

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## 1. Introduction

Social work is a practice-based career that requires educational and experimental education, per the World Federation of Social Services and the International Council of Social Services (2014). To become an expert social worker, pupils must analyse both kinds of study, which take place indoors and outdoors in the university classroom, as a component of their field learning expertise. Studying is important for learners in both the classrooms and the workplace because it helps them acquire, practice, and refine the beliefs, abilities, and data necessary for the occupation. Studying allows pupils to grow into proficient and moral professional social workers. It may be regarded as a developing procedure that starts when pupils start their academic programs and extends during their field employment with social work organisations following graduation. Training, as per this perspective, has an influence on the whole academic procedure and is thus viewed as a lengthy growth and crucial procedure; the goal of knowing skilled social workers in "Pakistan" is dependent on what way the government of Pakistan and private academic institutions are truthful in boosting expert social work in Pakistan, that must not be restricted to the regional stage but must also transform and modify the person and community (Dewey, 1997; Mezirow, 2000; Hager, 2005).

Although social work teachers and field trainers appreciate the importance of studying for pupils' future results, they too often fail to spend the time to focus on what way students educate and grow in the classrooms and even in the field. Teachers and trainers, particularly throughout the fieldwork practice, stress the practical and task-oriented character of studying instead of the learning process while simultaneously minimizing the role of analytical assessment in individual learning. Knowledge regarding how social work students study about various agendas to recognized themselves as in the professional world while practicing social work. And, as a result of their field experiences requires an understanding of how they achieve their learning objectives in field education. It is essential to initially momentarily discuss below the numerous forms of studying that occur during social work learning in general before taking into account the advantages, goals, and importance of studying for social work learners within and around fieldwork practice to understand and perceive the theories of studying described in this section.

## 2. Learning In Social Work Education: A National-Level Overview

A survey of the pertinent literature reveals that studying is a rather inclusive term that frequently encompasses a variety of formats and kinds of study. On either hand, it seems that the most commonly stated learning modes in the research on social work training are formally and informally learning. The difference between official and unofficial learning is helpful from a theoretical perspective because it provides a framework for comprehending the several forms of studying that individuals participate in as adult trainees across various disciplines. Although,

the one should aware that it's not easy to draw such kind of differences. Whenever implemented in-field training that has the blending of classrooms and field learning opportunities among its aims, the line between formal and informal study does become less distinct. Types of formal learning methods commonly connected with institutionalized learning include academic, school environment, and experimental growth (Marsick & Watkins, 1990; Eraut, 1994; Marsick & Watkins, 2001). Formal education is quite structured and takes place apart from the social work practice environment. They take much time. Occasionally, formal education can be found in daily employment, including through on-the-job learning programs. Formal education is connected logically to comprehend information, which is information obtained via lectures, seminars, publications, etc. (Eraut, 1994). Contrarily, non-formal education is mostly done on the job or during field experiences, is tied to everyday tasks, is self-directed, and is often very unorganised and interactive. Studying outside of the classroom is referred to as informal studying (Eraut, 1994, 2000; Marsick & Watkins, 1990, 2001). Inside the formal organisational structure, informal and unscheduled learning might occur, for instance, among learners, learners and teachers, or learners and staff. Informal training is observational learning that enables pupils to gain the skills, attitudes, and information required for the field of social work through frequent exposure to the actual world of practice. It is a kind of education that is becoming increasingly popular. Learners will be more equipped to analytically and morally comment on their own or another's perspectives, expand on them, and implement what they have learned in different contexts as they study to recognise informal mechanisms of learning, especially those connected to professional social work principles and morals. Informal education is frequently impacted by the historical, political, social, and cultural environment in which it is being exhibiting and also by the personnel who are delivering it. Garrick (1998) points out that informal education is neither neutral nor uninterested and linked to situational morals. This subject has gotten minimal consideration from workplace academics.

On the opposite side, informal education is never impartial when he brilliantly describes it. Although education is never totally free of socialisation, an individual's social location at work or elsewhere will always impact their learning. The accessibility to and perception of educational activities are influenced by someone's social standing. It will influence someone's identity, resulting in a wide range of viewpoints on reality.'

Aside from being the first to explore the gestural aspect of human growth and learning, Polanyi (1976) is the first to differentiate between unconscious and conscious (or hidden) awareness. First, we'll talk about the tacit aspect of individual education and growth. He argued that human knowledge could never be fully explicit since it included personal and tacit parts and could never be completely explicit. Regarding professional practice, tacit, He maintained that because intellect includes implicit and personal components, it couldn't be entirely clear. Tacit information, tied to the observable course of formal schooling or organisational assertions, relates to professional conduct rather than explicit information connected with formal learning or organisational pronouncements (Coulehan & Williams, 2003; Hugman, 2005). As per American Psychological Association, the phrase "invisible curriculum" is used in organisational and social settings to describe ideas, attitudes, and unwritten norms that are explicitly transmitted and have influenced rising experts as they study in the field. As per Inlay, 2003, the tacit or invisible curriculum is an additional method of delivering education to the students of social work, although, as stated earlier there exist several ways of providing such education. Contextual learning is particularly significant in social work education since it enhances cognitive learning.

According to Aristotle, who is credited with being the inventor of experiential learning, whatever we must learn before we can perform it must be learned by practice. Although expertise is the key to achievement in every endeavour, according to the present father of the experiential learning theory, Kolb (1984), education is more valuable when completed via experience. Effective learning, according to Kolb (1984), is a procedure that links learning, employment, and personal growth. Whereas, according to Coulehan & Williams, 2003 and Hugman, 2005, formal education or organisational declarations are not linked with it because of the stated content of formal learning. As defined by the "American Psychological Association", "Hidden curricula" is a phrase used to describe the implicit communication of views, attitudes, and unwritten norms that impact the occupational development of new hires. An alternate approach to teaching concepts to social work students is to use the implicit curriculum, also called the invisible curriculum (Inlay, 2003). As previously said, how we learn is flexible and may take on many different forms. Although cognitive learning is insufficient in social work training, experiential learning is necessary. In Aristotle's view, all the items we must know before we can do them, understand by experiencing, and follow their pragmatic method are concrete realities. Expertise is the utmost significant ingredient in gaining achievement in any endeavor mentioned by the father of experiential learning, Kolb (1984). He defines "experiential learning" as a procedure that interconnected learning, employment, and self-growth in a unified whole.

Being socially situated implies that studying is an action carried out inside the boundaries of a particular learning community and society (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Social learning thinker Bandura (1978) formed mutual fatalism to clarify that studying as advancement is an outcome of the interplay among an individual and their surroundings; this indicates that the individual's behaviour (activities) and their surroundings engage in complicated manners such that the individual effects the environment. There's little doubt that individuals'

professional progress depends on their ability to study. As already said, students must study and grow in a workplace setting to construct a competent and honest professional self in real-world scenarios.

### **3. Learning Social Work in The Field**

Involvement in the programme will benefit students in the long run. Around the globe, social work schools emphasise the importance of hands-on experience, but this is particularly true in the U. S. When one looks back to social work education's past, the importance of learning in a real-world setting is evident. Field education has been at the core of social work college from its start. However, the methods used to teach students and criteria for assessing their learning and productivity have evolved throughout social work education's history (Doel & Shardlow, 2005 and Doel et al., 2011). A thorough understanding of how kids learn in social work can help students succeed in their careers across schools and nations (Bogo, 2010 and Reamer, 2012). When it comes to social work schooling, there is no substitute for hands-on field experience.

While completing their field fieldwork, working professionals begin their journey into the world of professional practice and the obstacles that come with learning by doing to bridge the gap between academic theory and real application, field study (Parker, 2007). To train students for their role as social workers, they mimic how actors rehearse their lines on stage. Social work learners, it seems, take part in a "prova generale" after their research before entering the sector. Field studying is a more rewarding experience for learners since it allows them an unequalled chance to increase their understanding of the practice of social working by actively participating in it. Suppose everything goes as to strategy. Students may interact with actual clients and network with social professionals and other professionals with relevant expertise. As Noble (2001) reminds out, pupils learn to make judgments in real-world circumstances by "knowing completing" throughout field learning.

With increasing involvement in professional practice comes the opportunity for students to learn about the judicial procedure in a more real-world context than they would otherwise be able to do in the curriculum. When it comes to "fieldwork practice," Schneck (1995) says that it is a "nexus of influence" that has its academic roots and its practical roots. Students may see this interim declaration as an extra advantage since it relieves them of their duties. As a result, students can dedicate more time to reflecting on their practice than professionals, who are often constrained by the enormous number of instances they must deal with and the legal processes that occur at work since they are in a position of transformation. Students may use the benefits of field learning without dealing with the stress and dangers of working life, thanks to the privileges of their position.

According to the above, social work learners' contacts with the actual world of their profession and its demands lead them along a new way of learning and activity regarding social realities and how it is mirrored in the workplace. Noble, 2001 and Lager & Cooke Robbins, 2004 suggested that the challenges for students include putting into practice what they learn in the classroom, learning new things, and socially developing the practical skills, they'll need to succeed in their careers after graduation. Regehr et al. (2002) gave the advantages of "field learning" by stating that it gives a "primary chance for students to integrate knowledge, values, and talents into their professional self-conceptions." For anybody in the care profession, practical or interpretive knowledge (commonly referred to as "know-how") is necessary. Field learning contributes considerably. For Eraut (1994, 2000), understanding in social work education may be considered a continuation of what students learn in school, which he categorises as "know what." Students' "professional knowledge" can only be developed, according to Eraut, via a mix of real-world experience and academically codified material.

For learners, the advantages of field education extend well beyond their career advancement to personal growth. Pupils' personal growth is influenced by a variety of variables, such as direct communication or connection with a vast scope of persons, organisations, and experts, and also persons with a broad scope of character qualities, ethnic heritages, and conceptual viewpoints, everybody of whom they are likely to face in their work careers. Learning on-the-job skills in various work environments may help students grow as people and citizens. The interplay between learner social employees and a true agency placing provides them with hands-on possibilities to explore new thoughts or numerous different methods of thinking regarding their own beliefs and perceptions toward everyone else, as well as how to control their thoughts and sentiments in the true policy. As practise teachers and managers, field tutors act as trainees' assets, relying on their conceptual and realistic understanding to help students regarding all the fundamental actions that would be helpful in their prospective dealings. This is important to the achievement of the programme. Additionally, field teachers serve as mentors and role models for their learners' professional conduct in the future (Doel, Shardlow, & Johnson, 2011). Fostering ethical ideas, skills, and information, as well as establishing ethical boldness by guiding students' conduct in the field, are other significant roles played by ethics teachers (Bogo, 2010 and Reamer, 2012).

### **4. Various Methods of Learning in Field Situations**

Learners in the healthcare and behavioural care fields have traditionally relied on the job to provide them with real expertise while also studying. In the past Thirty years, learning scholars have argued about how individuals

learn and grow in the workplace, especially in higher schooling. At the heart of these discussions are worries about the site's capacity to facilitate education and information transfer. Here are 2 major concepts of professional learning, all having a specific collection of epistemological beliefs about information and interpretation, as per Hager (2005), who undertook a comprehensive analysis of workplace educational concepts. During work, Hager uses a comparable conception to Sfard (1998), who has had a big effect on western countries' philosophical thought about schooling in current years, while describing the 2 aspects: the acquisitions and involvement metaphors (cited in Hager, 2005).

Sfard's notion says that individual techniques of workplace education relate to studying as acquiring. However, social, regional, or contextual ways of learning belong to learning as involvement. Consequently, as previously said, some viewpoints on workplace learning prioritise studying from an individual point of view. In contrast, others emphasise studying from a social, organisational, and cultural standpoint. An overview of the differences between the acquisition model method and the participation model approach is provided by Paavola, Lipponen, and Hakkarainen (2004). All components of the acquisition metaphor's umbrella include persons, their thought processes, conceptual understanding, and simple logical rules. Adding innovativeness to these traits is possible, as shown by inquiry models that emphasise the significance of efforts in exploring across conceptual areas. It is common for approaches relying on the involvement metaphor to focus greatly on societies, social practices and actions, and the setting in which human consciousness and knowledge occur. This might be a gradual increase in actions or a slow increase in activities. There isn't enough space in this text to cover all the many learning methods, so here's a quick rundown of "Individual learning theory" and "sociocultural theory".

### **5. Adult Learning Theory is approached from a Personal Perspective**

An individualised method stresses education as acquisition while also concentrating on how students learn on their own as adults. Each person's capacity to become a great learner is examined in the basic version of a specific learning theory, and it typically varies from child to child based on their characteristics and learning processes. An assessment of the experimental research on field learning by Bogo (2006) reveals that demographic variables, knowledge level of concern about the practical, study habits, and mental impairment all impact knowledge acquisition in work placement situations. Despite their different learning methods, adult students in the social work field have several features which are pertinent for social work learners who also are mature students in practice settings and, as a consequence, are crucial for understanding how social work students approach their field practice. Bogo (2010) and Gitterman (2004) agree. To satisfy a learner's "have to know," they must actively participate in the educational process. To the best of social work history's knowledge, learners who actively participate in their learning are better equipped to get a thorough grasp of their subject's theoretical underpinnings as well as its practical applications (Bogo, 2010)

Learners' self-concept and maturity as matured students are linked to the student's autonomy, and independence as a young person in the academic setting. Social work students must be self-directed learners who can assume personal responsibility for themselves and their activities to be successful in their studies. Taking responsibility for one's conduct in this context allows students to distinguish between what is socially good and wrong and make ethical judgments that benefit customers, colleagues, other professionals, and the organisations in which they work. The third aspect to consider is that adult learners bring many information and life experiences to the journey of learning. The theory stated that the students had the ability to practice, link and apply their learning to the various situations and issues existing in real world. According to research in social work education, those who have past real word experiences are confident with great pace of learning and perform better in field education in comparison to those who have no previous life or work experience (Bogo, 2010). The eagerness to learn is the fourth attribute. Adults who want to learn how to do certain tasks or jobs are willing and able to learn. Because of their career aspirations and the time constraints of fieldwork, Gitterman (2004) claims that "social work students are eager to learn". Since field learning is a significant component of students' achievement in the placement, it will be considered throughout the admissions process. One's attitude toward learning is the sixth point. As adults, we prefer to learn by doing rather than reading. According to Bogo, (2010) and Doel, Shardlow, & Johnson, (2011), adult learners, such as social work students, have been shown to learn more effectively when their lessons focus on practical issues. Therefore, task-centered learning activities are essential in field education because students may learn about the profession in a real-world context while simultaneously acquiring all the required skills a social worker must possess to perform well in the field. At last, there's the desire to learn something new. In the case of adult learners, motivation to learn comes from intrinsic motivation. To fully engage in field education, students expect to be heard and given a platform to voice their thoughts and ideas. Students' eagerness to study might be stifled and even limited if educational programmes fail to take adult learners' assumptions or past educational practices into account (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005).

## 6. Sociocultural Approaches to Problem Solving

Rather than focusing on the self-interest of the learner, social and situational education emphasises the interdependence of all members of society. Social, relational, and situational characteristics are crucial to sociocultural methods since they are supported by research. Famous social philosophers and educators such as John Dewey and Leon Vygotsky have enormously impacted social and cultural viewpoints throughout history by contributing to the dualist conflict between the people and community (Hager, 2005). Whereas, Lave & Wenger, (1991) and Wenger, (1999) suggested that John Dewey and Leon Vygo, broke significant ground in our awareness of social elements of learning by asserting that learning in a real-world situation involves social interaction and cooperation. Dewey and Vygotsky's concepts have been supplemented by more current theories about how people learn in the real world, such as the conceptions of contextual learning and groups of practice. Concepts such as these are commonly acknowledged in the English-language literature on social work. With this paradigm, you may better grasp "how the learning and development process works in practice". In this context, researchers Lave and Wenger (1991) based their study on surveys of many workplace societies. They found that by getting people involved, "agent, activity, and the environment mutually produce one another" (p. 31). While social work education is mostly based on interactions with colleagues and supervisors, it is also possible that students learn via interactions with more mature or established members of a profession. Jarvis refers to this kind of knowledge as "secondary experience" (1999).

To further enhance their learning, students participate in genuine workplace operations, which serve as a community of practice. Moreover, relevant situational knowledge and understandings aid students in identifying with their selected profession (Wenger, 1999). According to Lave and Wenger (1991), a "culture of practice" is defined as "a system of interactions among individuals, activities, and the larger environment, through time and about other tangential and overlapping communities of practice" (p. 98). Our identities as people and our understanding of what we do are influenced by participation in a community of practice, according to Wenger (1999). Suppose we believe Eraut and Hirsh (2007) and Jarvis (1999). In that case, we may infer that employers value "learning from main experiences," which Jarvis (1999) calls "training from basic experience." According to Lave and Wenger's argument, newcomers may go from the novice level to the expertise level by actively engaging in the community of specialists they find themselves in. Situated learning is based on the idea that an apprentice may gain knowledge by seeing and participating in a group of peers with the same interest or skill. In this approach, as they advance through the programme, students learn about the society's culture and what it means to be a part of it by watching from the perimeter or by "legitimate peripheral interaction" (Lave & Wenger, 1991). According to this perspective, learners learn on the job by watching their field teachers, classmates, or other people who are important to them. Another method students might learn is seeing how the company operates and the cultural standards.

Observing others' behaviours, beliefs, and perspectives in the workplace may have a long-term impact on the beliefs and actions of students, as per Lave and Wenger (1991). Positive or terrible social experiences directly affect the ethical conduct and practice of the students. According to Bandura's social education theory (Bandura, 1977) and several empirical studies, kids can only imitate what they see. However, they can also learn via classroom teaching and watching. In schooling, this is especially true. ZPD is a term established by Vygotsky (1978) to explain "how individuals learn via social interaction and with help from more experienced individuals". People may learn from people who are more competent than themselves, as well as via socially engaged directed involvement in culturally valued actions, according to Rogoff (1990).

Both the individual and the social methods have their detractors. Meanwhile, individuals and cultural ways of learning do not lack their detractors in higher education, notwithstanding their efficacy in field education. Adult learning theories like Knowles' have been criticised for ignoring the social environment of learning and growth in favour of a singular concentration on the individual learner. Regardless of their social or professional contexts, students are seen as autonomous agents engaged in the process of learning (Merriam, 2004; Hager, 2005). Considering the lack of research into Knowles' learning theory's core theoretical implications, there has been considerable debate as to whether it is a theory or merely a collection of principles that guide practice (Merriam, 2004). However, despite the critiques, the six interpretations of adult learning developed by Knowles and published over three decades remain a foundational method in adult education programmes today (Merriam, 2004; Bogo, 2010). The sociocultural methods of learning created by Lave and Wenger's overall view of education and their overall picture of education have been questioned by many academics and researchers. Researchers who dispute whether or not the act of learning is the outcome of a field participatory process in a community of social experts are some examples (Hay, 1993; Hager, 2005). Furthermore, Hay (1993) stated that the integration of new students and the younger generation is not always a simple process, as it requires hard work and dedication because there may be instances where the community of practice is weak or characterised by power connections that severely limit access to and participation in the community of practice. Similarly, Guile and Griffiths (2001) suggest that a hosting company must give students learning opportunities to watch members of the workplace community and participate in practice-based discussions with them for learners to be

fully engaged in a risky community of practice.

As Engeström (1999, 2001) has demonstrated, learning may occur due to the contradictions and tensions within the workplace as a dynamic system. Furthermore, not all social organisations are stable and well-defined settings. Hager (2005) claims that involvement does not always provide learning because of the constant changing. According to Hager, change is fueled by the ability to adapt. Consequently, engagement as a method of learning is no longer sufficient. For him, there is a third way to look at the conventional duality of learning as acquisition or participation, namely as building or reconstruction, which encompasses "constructing the learning, oneself, as well as one's surroundings (world) that includes one's self.

## 7. Consequences and Prospects for Future Research

Accordingly, some define the development of a competent, ethical social worker as a multidimensional phenomenon because of its dynamic and complicated nature. Social work education is also an ongoing, ever-evolving procedure that students engage in for the rest of their lives. Many people have made the case that first-time fieldworkers need different amounts of supervision and guidance than more seasoned workers because of their different learning styles and capacities. Despite these differences, adult learners in social work often study either alone or in groups, or a mix of both. Individual theories of adult learning and sociocultural methodological concepts are good places to start when understanding how people learn and grow in the real world. In schools of social work that offer training programs, it's important to focus on sociocultural strategies and their associated learning concepts because field-based education is a social procedure marked by strong relationships. Sociocultural approaches emphasise student involvement and assistance in practice societies and the crucial function of social context. In the future, sociocultural research on students' training in field organisations will be more intriguing since it is still in its youth in human services. The study can evaluate how field agents presently give "communities of practice" and how they choose and organise learning options and experiences for students to help them construct their roles as case services among these societies, primarily the nation's obligation. Field faculty should incorporate material on the two prominent learning theories to enable field teachers to truly comprehend how learners know the field.

Focusing on sociocultural strategies and their associated learning concepts is important because field-based education is a social procedure marked by strong relationships. Sociocultural approaches emphasise student involvement and assistance in practice societies and the crucial function of social context. In the future, sociocultural research on students' training in field organisations will be more intriguing since it is still in its youth in human services. The study can be utilised to evaluate how field agents presently give "communities of practice" and how field agents choose and organise learning options and experiences for students, to help them construct their roles as case services among these societies, primarily the nation's obligation.

## 8. Conclusion

The field study has long been an important aspect of the social work program because of the profession's emphasis on hands-on experience. According to research, well-prepared teachers will be better equipped than those who are less prepared and educated about how learning occurs in field experiences to understand better how students' educational requirements may be met independently and as a group. Faculty relations, University professors and, Field educators should be well-versed in two important learning theories, with a special focus on sociocultural learning methods, to successfully promote field learning. Students are more likely to be engaged and eager to learn when they feel protected and respected and have the chance to put their knowledge, skills, and beliefs into practice and actively participate in the educational process. This is the case in multiple researches.

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