



Transforming the Field  
Education Landscape

# A SCAN ON THE STATE OF SOCIAL WORK FIELD EDUCATION IN AFRICA

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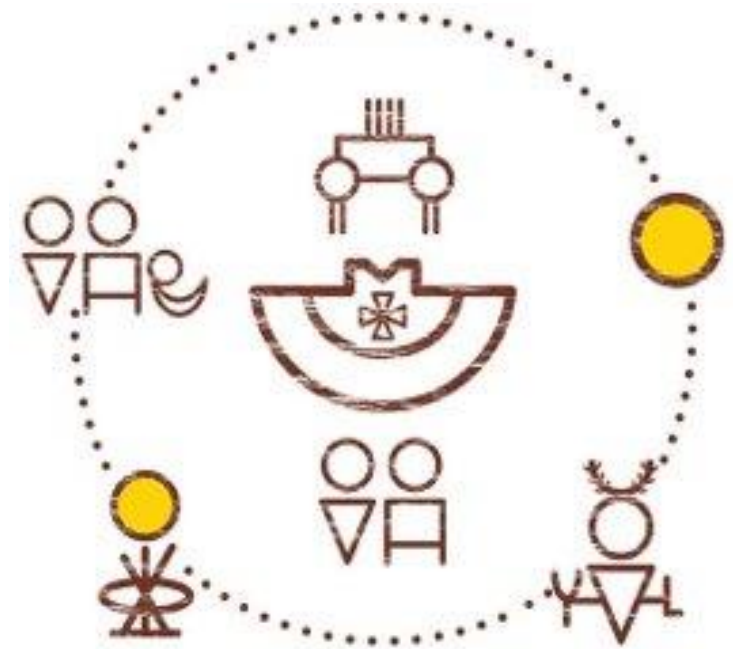
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CRSH  SSHRC

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# TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The University of Calgary respectfully acknowledges that we are located on Treaty 6 territory, a traditional gathering place for diverse Indigenous peoples including the Cree, Blackfoot, Metis, Nakota Sioux, Iroquois, Dene, Ojibway/Saulteaux/Anishinaabe, Inuit, and many others whose histories, languages, and cultures continue to influence our vibrant community.



ii' taa'poh'to'p

University of Calgary Office of Indigenous Engagement

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# MEMBERS OF TFEL SUB-COMMITTEE

We wish to acknowledge members of the State of Social Work Field Education in Africa

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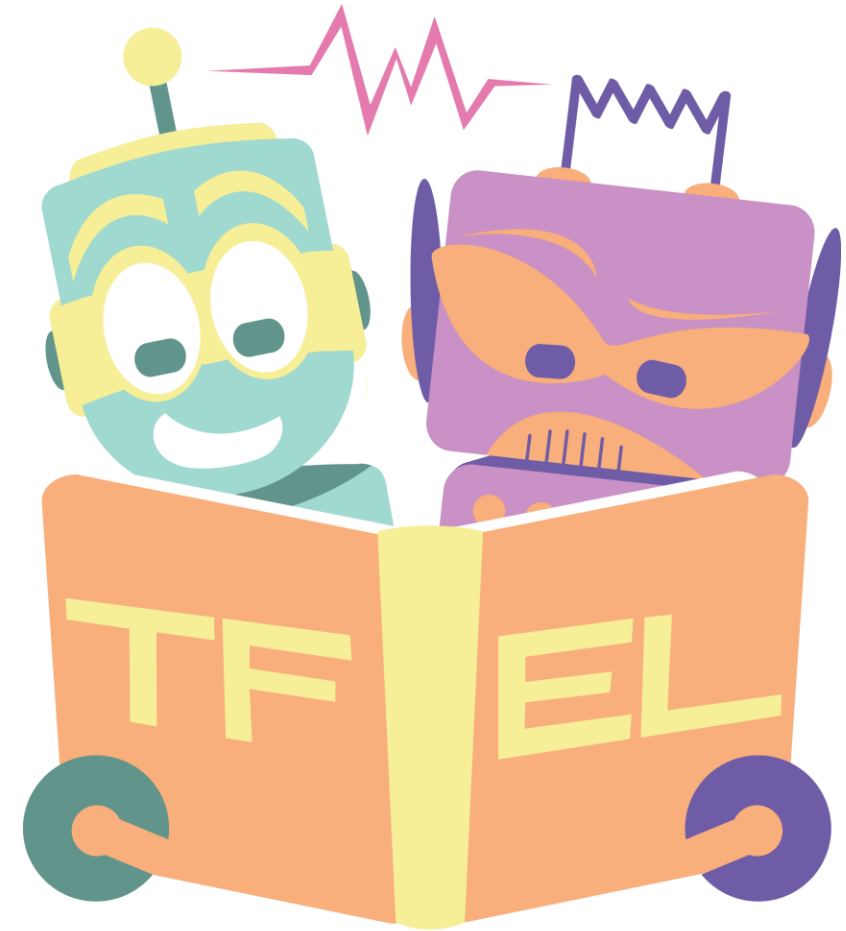
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# OUTLINE

- Introduction
- Objective
- Project Overview
- Literature Review
- Methodology
- Survey Results
- Limitations of the study
- Conclusion and Recommendations
- Reflections
- Questions?



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## OBJECTIVE

- To learn and understand the current context of the state of social work field education in Africa, including placement models, logistics, and resources.
- To explore the perspectives, experiences and challenges from field education coordinators and directors of social work education programs across Africa.

# PROJECT OVERVIEW



Literature Review &  
Annotated  
Bibliography



Scan of BSW/MSW  
Field Programs/  
Websites



Survey Questionnaire



State of Social Work  
Field Education in  
Africa Report



Focus Group  
Discussions



Webinar and article  
to share findings of  
the study



# LITERATURE REVIEW





# LITERATURE REVIEW

## Background and Context

- Social work education involves a combination of classroom learning and field education (Hutchinson, 2013).
- In most African countries, social work field education is recognised as a significant component of social work education that bridges the gap between the classroom and employment as it provides students with experiential learning geared towards their social work professional and ethical development (Gray, 2017; Flynn et al., 2013).
- There is limited research on the integration of local context, culture, practices, and perspectives in field education, and previous research found it would be beneficial to examine field education training and models in the African context (Arkin, 1999).

# LITERATURE REVIEW

## Background and Context

- Studies conducted in specific regions of Africa including Lesotho, Southern and Eastern Africa highlight that many social work programs are currently experiencing challenges due to a lack of resources, difficulties in staff retention, and increased student enrollment (Gray et al., 2017; Tanga, 2013).
- In Southern Africa, most schools have a high number of students as compared to faculty staff resulting in an increased workload of academic supervisors (Ferguson & Smith, 2012).
- The literature above highlights that there are studies conducted in specific regions of Africa, but our project aimed to collect data from all schools of social work across Africa. This could be the very first study looking at social work field education in Africa.



# **METHODOLOGY**



# RESEARCH METHODS

- The survey was adapted with permission from the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), a partner in the Transforming the Field Education Landscape (TFEL) partnership, for the Canadian and African context.
- The survey was designed in English and reviewed by the TFEL team and their partners in Africa includes TFEL field committee (i.e., University of Gondor, Addis Ababa University, Babcock University, University of Eswatini).
- This study was approved by the McGill University Research Ethics Board (REB 20-07-037) and University of Calgary Ethics Board (REB 19-0901).
- Schools of Social Work were invited to complete the survey (1 response per school/institution)
- The survey with 19 open-ended questions, 47 closed-ended questions and 29 Likert scale questions was launched on Qualtrics in November 2021. The survey was open until June 2022 .
- Three Focus Group discussion sessions were conducted with FECD, field instructor, faculty members, administrators as well as registered social work students in May 2022 to foster discussion on field education models, supervision, and resources.

# SURVEY RESPONDENTS

- The study was advertised on the TFEL website, Association of Social Work Schools in Africa (ASWSA), regional and national association schools of social work, and sent via email to personal networks across Africa.
- Out of the 65 institutions contacted in total, there were 41 surveys completed by representatives of schools who offered either BSW or MSW programs, resulting in a response rate of (63%).
- Recruitment was a challenge due to the lack of publicly available contact information on the school websites.
- Survey respondents came from 14 African countries:
  - Burundi - 1**
  - Eswatini - 2**
  - Ghana - 2**
  - Lesotho - 2**
  - Nigeria - 8**
  - South Africa - 5**
  - Uganda - 2**
  - DRC - 1**
  - Ethiopia - 6**
  - Kenya - 3**
  - Malawi - 3**
  - Rwanda - 2**
  - Tanzania - 2**
  - Zimbabwe - 2**

# FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

- Three focus group sessions were held at the ASWEK conference in May 2022.
- A total of 28 participants were involved in the FGDS.
- Each session was recorded and transcribed for analysis.
- Student research assistants conducted a thematic analysis of the focus group transcripts.
- We wish to thank our survey respondents and focus group participants for contributing to the study.



# RESULTS



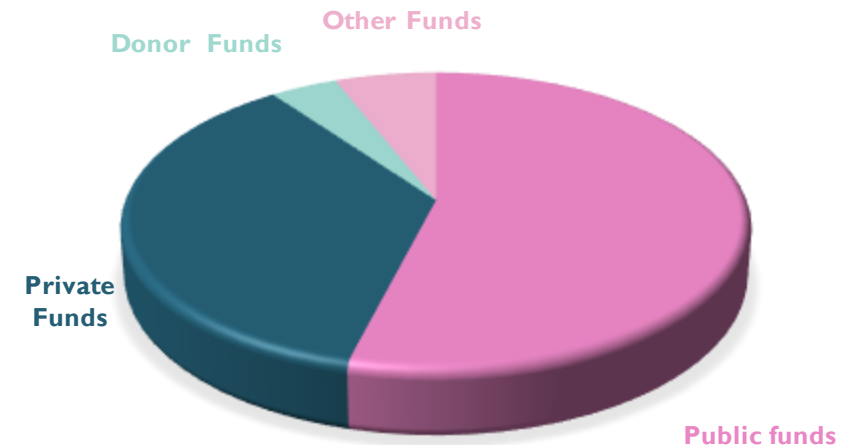
# FUNDING SOURCES FOR SOCIAL WORK SCHOOLS

Source of Funding for Social Work Schools	Number (%)
Public funds	54%
Private	36%
Donor	4%
Other	6%

Resources vary across different universities. Generally, there are limited funds allocated to field education.

*“I realize with our system is the allocation of funds for field education. Because sometimes a student has gotten a placement [for instance] in Mombasa, Mombasa is like 500 kilometres from here and the institution has not facilitated you to go. And if you go by your means probably you will not get a refund, so I only go if I am facilitated”.* (FGD 3 Participant 2)

SOURCES OF FUNDING FOR SOCIAL WORK SCHOOLS



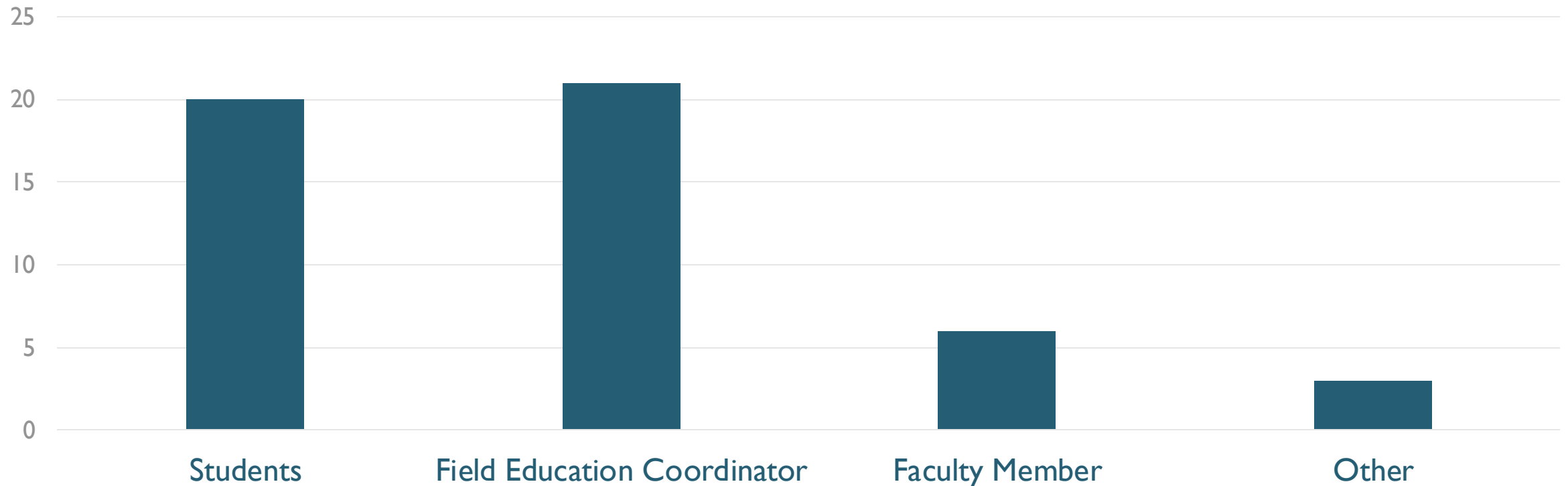
Survey Sample Size = 41



# RESPONSIBILITY TO FIND PLACEMENTS

Sample Size = 41

Responsibility to find placement for students



\*FGDs also revealed that many universities send students out to look for practicums.

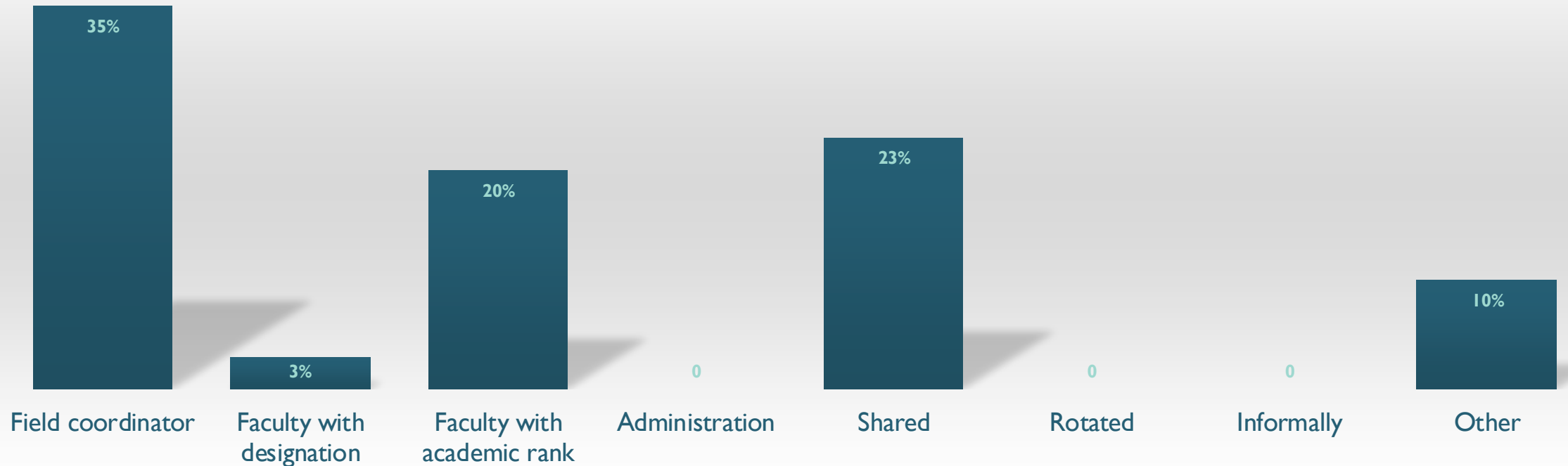
# POSITION FIELD ORIENTATION/TRAINING

Position of field education coordinator best described as (n=41)

Faculty with academic rank	34%
Administrative/Professional (no faculty designation)	17%
Shared among all faculty as a clear responsibility	14%
Other	11%
Rotated between faculty on a regular basis	9%
This work is done informally	9%
Faculty (with clinical, practice or field designation)	6%

# PROVISION OF FIELD ORIENTATION/TRAINING

Responsible for Providing Field Education Preparatory Orientation or Training for Students



# GAPS IN SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISION IN THE FIELD

- The majority of the participants also mentioned that most of the work in organizations and agencies that offer fieldwork education to social work students is done by para-social workers – people are not necessarily trained in social work but end up supervising social work students.

*“Now you find that in Kenya, many organizations that offer social services, let us say social work-related services, a large number is done by para-social workers. People who are not necessarily trained as social workers end up being the people who will be supervisors for social workers. So, there was a survey that I did among students and one of the needs from their requests was to be helped in the job description because the persons in the organizations are para-social workers they do not understand clearly what the roles of social workers are. So, you find that students end up doing what they are told by the supervisors which are not necessarily the roles that they are supposed to do.” (FGD 3 Participant 6)*

# ACTIVITIES PERFORMED BY FECD

Type of Activity (most frequent FECD activities)	Number of Responses (%)
Placing students with agencies	76%
Relationship building with agencies	76%
Student orientation	76%
Outreach to agencies	71%
Advising students on field education-related matters	68%
Developing new placements	63%
Teaching social work courses other than field education	59%
Orientation and training for agency field instructors	59%
Evaluation of field education programs and activities	59%

Type of Activity (least frequent FECD activities)	Number of Responses (%)
Preparation of field education manual	5%
Administration of field education awards	12%
Participation in student admission processes	15%
Recruitment of field education liaisons	20%
Participating in student retention processes	22%
Addressing student health, wellness, or mental health issues	27%
Planning field education recognition events	29%
Creating and editing school documents	32%
Planning continuing education events for field instructors, field liaisons and the social work profession	32%

# ACTIVITIES PERFORMED BY OTHER FACULTY MEMBERS

Type of Activity (most frequent activities for other faculty members)	Number of Responses (%)
Relationship building with agencies	59%
Evaluation of field education programs and activities	56%
Outreach to agencies	51%
Teaching social work courses other than field education	49%
Placing students with agencies	46%
Developing new placements	44%
Advising students on field education-related matters	44%
Submitting practicum grades	44%
Orientation and training of agency field instructors	39%

Type of Activity (least frequent activities for other faculty members)	Number of Responses (%)
Recruitment of field liaisons	7%
Participation in admissions processes	7%
Administration of field education awards	17%
Participation in student retention processes	17%
Planning field recognition event	20%
Creating and editing school documents	20%
Addressing student health, wellness, or mental health issues	22%
Serving as a field liaison	22%
Planning continuing education events for field instructors, field liaisons, and/or social work professionals	22%

# CHALLENGES FINDING FIELD PLACEMENTS FOR STUDENTS

- Focus group discussion participants mentioned that it is increasingly difficult to find field placements for students particularly due to the increasing number of students admitted to the social work program.

*“We have a large number of students and sometimes we find most of the time we find that when third-year students are going for the practicum, the fourth-year students are also going for the practicum. So, we have a list of 100 and something students, social work students who are training. So, you as a social worker start going to all those organizations looking for placements, it becomes very difficult, yet they are supposed to be lecturing at the same time and doing other administrative work. So that is why it is very difficult to place our students. And then the second thing is we also have other programs from which students are also going for attachment, you find sociologists, and psychologists also going for attachment. So right now, at our department, we have around 300 students going for attachment.” (FGD 3 Participant 3)*

# PERCEPTIONS OF FIELD EDUCATION

	Disagree	Agree	No response
Field education receives adequate resources overall.	59%	26%	15%
Field education staffing levels in my school are adequate.	46%	39%	15%
It is an ongoing challenge to have appropriate placements for students.	17%	68%	15%
Increased student enrollments have affected the field education processes.	15%	70%	15%
We placed students in settings that we would otherwise not choose to use due to large numbers of students.	24%	59%	17%
Students are placed in areas that have adequate placement opportunities.	36%	49%	15%
Field education depends upon the willingness of agencies and their social workers to provide field instruction on a voluntary basis.	0%	85%	15%



# PERCEPTIONS OF FIELD EDUCATION

	Disagree	Agree	No response
The number of students admitted in our program is considered in relation to the number of field education opportunities.	65%	20%	15%
Field placements are disrupted by changes in agency staffing and funding.	24%	56%	20%
The school develops partnerships with community agencies to enhance collaboration in field education every year.	5%	78%	17%
The school enjoys strong field education support from community agencies.	17%	68%	15%
Most field placements have the necessary resources to support student learning.	63%	22%	15%
Students have opportunities to effectively apply social work theory learned in class.	7%	78%	15%
My school provides a clear and well-detailed fieldwork manual to our students.	10%	73%	17%

# ONLINE/DISTANCE OR BLENDED DELIVERY

Type of Delivery Method	Responses (%)			
	BSW	MSW	BSW & MSW	No
Online/distance or blended	17%	3%	36%	44%

Response	Online/distance or blended field education staff separate and distinct from the field education staff for on-site program to support students (%)	Field office that provides field support for online/distance or blended for BSW or MSW students (%)
Yes	33%	32%
No	67%	68%

The school has a field office that supports BSW/MSW students	Number of Response (%)
Yes	44%
No	56%

# LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- This study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic period and many schools and agencies modified their work plan to align with COVID-19 safety protocols, therefore, the findings of the study should be understood in the context of the pandemic.
- The study was designed in the English language only, and this could have limited the participation of individuals who could not comprehend the English language for example from French-speaking African countries.
- The survey was accessed through an online platform as such it may be possible that some participants did not manage to respond to it due to internet challenges.
- The schools that had internet problems perhaps could have a different perspective helpful to social work field education in Africa which was missed in incomplete surveys that were not considered for analysis.

# CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Overall, the survey results show that there is a general lack of resources and support for field education coordinators, directors and students who are engaging in field education.
- Field education coordinators and directors are engaged in multiple and varied activities.
- Increased student enrollments are affecting the provision of field education placements and supervision of social work students in field.
- Online and distance programs are a limited mode of social work field education delivery methods in Africa.
- There is a need to maintain the stability of field education placements in Africa.
- There is a need of developing a memorandum of understanding between schools and field placement institutions/agencies to ease the stress of finding a placement.

# REFLECTIONS

- We believe that the challenges identified in the study provide an opportunity to contemplate and to develop more sustainable models in the future.
- The challenges identified in Africa are similar to the challenges identified in Canada.
- There is a need for international commitment to address the challenges facing social work field education at the program, national and international levels.
- Field education will continue to play a central role in social work education, and greater attention is needed to develop quality placements and learning opportunities for students.

# DISCUSSION

- Clement Dlamini, Director of Community Services and Social Work Instructor at the University of Eswatini, is invited to provide a commentary on the study and the findings.

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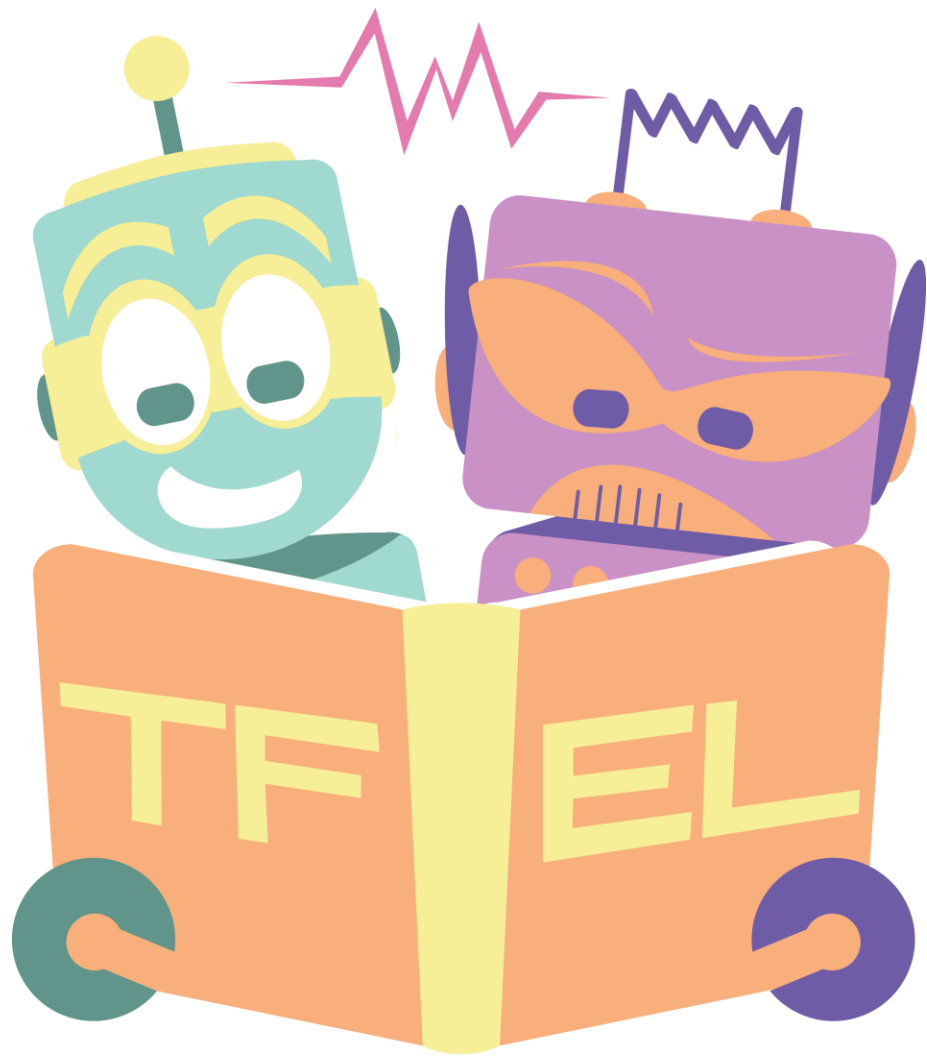
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QUESTIONS?



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