Transforming the Field Education Landscape

Quebec Region Report on Promising, Innovative, and Wise Practices in Social Work Field Education

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Executive Summary

Transforming the Field Education Landscape (TFEL) is a partnership project that aims to better prepare the next generation of social workers in Canada by creating training and mentoring opportunities for students, developing, and mobilizing promising and wise field education practices, while aiming to improve the integration of research and practice in social work field education (TFEL, 2020). Promising, Innovative and Wise Practices in Field Education is a study designed to identify promising, innovative, and wise practices in social work field education in Canada. This report presents the findings from 11 semi-structured interviews completed in the province of Quebec. Participants included social work field coordinators, social work field educators, field instructors, supervisors, and representatives from social work field agency partners who generously shared their experiences in the realm of social work field education. Findings from the study are provided in the below sections of this report and have been categorized into promising practices, innovative practices, wise practices, barriers, and other practices. A total of 135 codes were generated from the interviews conducted in the Quebec region from which several key themes were identified.

Promising Practices

In this study, promising practices were defined as approaches, interventions, programs, services, or strategies that show potential for enhancing social work field education. These practices may address specific challenges experienced in social work field education. Some promising practices may be presently undergoing evaluation for their effectiveness and replicability in different social work field education contexts; however, many have demonstrated the ability to achieve their stated aims. Some of the promising practice themes identified in this study include:

- Ensuring quality communication between all stakeholders to prevent and deal with issues that may arise.
- The use of multiple supervisors to offset the necessary time and duration commitments required from field supervisors.
- Utilizing a partnership approach between universities and agencies to ensure stakeholder needs are being met and to encourage further field supervisor participation.
- The creation and maintenance of internship committees wherein designated individuals meet regularly to discuss current needs within social work field education.
- The need for a comprehensive orientation process for students to ensure student expectations are in line with the reality of their potential field placements.

Innovative Practices

In this study, innovative practices were defined as new practices that have the potential to enhance field education but have not yet been tested in some contexts of social work field education. They are cutting-edge practices that have the potential of enhancing social work field education while simultaneously addressing existing challenges. Some of the emerging innovative practices identified in this study are listed below:

- Offering additional training for new field instructors to ensure feelings of efficacy while supervising students.
- Including critical thinking education within both classroom and field education.
- Foreseeing a specific time is allotted for supervision to reduce feeling overwhelmed.
- Implementing additional mentorship for newer supervisors, ensuring they have access to adequate support.
- Decentralizing placements to allow more placement options that match student learning needs and demands as student numbers increase.

Wise Practices

In this study, wise practices were defined as indigenous-centered practices that are flexible, local, and culturally relevant, respecting all forms of understanding, including life experiences, traditions, beliefs, knowledge, as well as the use of stories. Literature holds that wise practices are relational in nature and encourage mutual respect, inclusiveness, and collectivism (Wesley-Esquimaux & Snowball, 2010). The few wise practices found in this study to be in use in Quebec field education included:

- Redefining the term "clinical" within social work practice to allow for additional placements in less traditional agencies and organizations.
- Actively collaborating with local communities to facilitate additional indigenous-centered placement options.

Barriers

For this study, barriers were defined as challenges relating to the adoption of promising, innovative, and wise practices within social work field education. The following barriers were identified by our Quebec participants:

- The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic and how its effect on social work field education on micro, mezzo, and macro levels.

- Supervisors are struggling to balance the additional time demands of adequate supervision with their regular duties.
- The centralized system in the Quebec health and social care system challenges individualized field placement planning.
- The added challenge of finding field placements for English-only speaking students in Quebec, often leading to limited options that may not align with student goals.

Other

Other key themes of importance were:

- The importance of collaboration between stakeholders, such as students and field instructors or agencies and universities, to ensure needs are being met and adequate support is being provided.
- The benefits students bring to agencies include ensuring field instructors have access to up-to-date information and the ability to have partially trained employee recruits once the student has graduated.
- Supporting student development contributes to the education of new social workers while also increasing job satisfaction of current employees.
- The importance of integrating theory into practice prior to field placements to support field instructors by ensuring a certain level of education is achieved by students.

This report provides an overview of key themes from across interviews and their associated excerpts and summaries of individual interviews, which provide a snapshot of themes emerging from each interview. This Quebec report aims to supplement data gathered in reports from other provinces and regions in the country with additional knowledge of promising, innovative, and wise practices across Canada. For example, the Ontario, Prairie, and Atlantic regional reports on promising and wise practices in field education are available on the TFEL project website.

Introduction

Internationally, field education is considered a signature pedagogy of social work training (CSWE, 2015) as it bridges the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application (McConnell et al., 2023; Wayne et al., 2010; Hewson et al., 2010). In Canada, field education has been reported to be in crisis due to numerous challenges ranging from availability of placements to administration challenges (Bogo, 2015; Ayala et al., 2018). These challenges undermine the delivery of quality field practice, compromising the competencies of graduating social work students, and threatening to reduce professional standards of practice (Ayala et al., 2018). The Transforming Field Education Landscape (TFEL) project is a unique national research initiative aimed at exploring ways of ameliorating the social work field education crisis in Canada (Drolet & Harriman, 2020). The project is housed in the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Calgary, with numerous partner universities including McGill University in Montreal, Quebec (TFEL, 2020).

Field education in Quebec provides students with the opportunity to acquire valuable work experience and build skills for their social work professional development (Legault, 2002) and as such field education remains an integral part of social work education. Current literature on social work field education advocates for the integration of indigenous intersectionality within social work field education with the goal of facilitating safety but also a culturally attuned learning environment for social work students (McConnell et al., 2023; Ayala et al., 2018). Field education helps students gain a deeper understanding of social dynamics and practice challenges in Quebec outside the classroom. It also provides a great opportunity for students to translate knowledge gained from their courses to contribute and make a positive impact in the transformation of communities and organizations. Quebec is a predominantly francophone society with distinct traditions of social and community interventions.

The literature highlights recent efforts in the province to better support students in field placement with such innovations as yoga and outdoor education for better mental health (Bergeron-Leclerc & Cherblanc, 2019); the encouragement of reflexivity in relation to practice (Deschamps, 2020); and the development of a social work skills teaching clinic for students to gain experience before entering the field directly (Sasseville, N., & Juneau, 2021). Schools have also taken measures to try to adapt their field education programs to changing socio-ecological conditions such as the increasing demand for gerontological social workers (Rousseau-Tremblay & Couturier, 2012) and the challenge of developing a strong professional identity within a context where the social work profession is not always properly valued (Pullen Sansfaçon et al., 2014). Quebec social work educators have developed helpful guides designed to support field educators aiming to accompany social work interns in the acquisition of professional competencies and the management of personal and professional challenges (Genest Dufault et al., 2017). They have gathered in

communities of practice to deepen their ability to support students in the field (Lalande et al., 2021).

As in other parts of Canada, social work programs in Quebec have recently been contending with an inadequate number of placements in an overburdened health and social service sector. At the province's only English-speaking school of social work, McGill University, it is increasingly difficult to find field placements for unilingual anglophone students who come from out of province or internationally.

This report highlights promising, innovative, and wise practices in social work field education in the Quebec region of Canada. This report presents the findings of 11 semi-structured interviews conducted across the province of Quebec conducted with field instructors, field liaisons, field coordinators, and representatives of field agency partners between November 2020 and April 2021 aimed at informing social work field education models in the province of Quebec while supplementing data collected from other regions across Canada as a way to improve the quality of social work field education and overall social work profession

Methodology

Between November 2020 to April 2021, 11 semi-structured interviews were conducted with field instructors, field liaisons, field coordinators, and representatives of field agency partners across Quebec.

Recruitment Process

A purposive sampling approach was adopted to directly recruit participants from diverse social work-related workplace environments including universities, community organizations, non-profits, local charities, government agencies, and hospitals in Quebec. Study participants served a variety of client populations and were drawn from different geographical locations to capture the unique perspectives from across the Quebec region. The recruitment notice with study information was also published on the TFEL website, in the TFEL monthly newsletter, and advertised using TFEL-associated social media (Twitter/Facebook). Study information was also disseminated via email to members of the TFEL network including co-investigators, collaborators, and partners with a request that they promote the study further within their personal networks.

Study participants were contacted by email and invited to participate in semi-structured virtual interviews. Upon their acceptance by providing informed consent, the study participants were emailed the list of interview questions in advance to allow them to take additional time to reflect

on the questions posed before the actual interview. The interview questions were made available in both French and English, according to the preference of the respondent.

Data Collection

Interviews were conducted online via Zoom and Microsoft Teams platforms due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The interviews utilized a semi-structured interview guide composed of 20 open-ended questions categorized within three thematic areas (promising, innovative, and wise practices; scope and mandate of their field experience; other) (Appendix A). The guide also included potential follow-up questions and prompts for each open-ended question. Interviews were conducted by a trained TFEL research assistant who was fluent in both French and English. Ethics approval was granted by the University of Calgary's Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board and the McGill Research Ethics Board.

Data Analysis

Interviews were then transcribed verbatim by trained research assistants using Zoom and Teams platform software. Another trained research assistant listened to each of the audio recordings and read all the transcripts to ensure that the transcription was consistent with the interview. Once transcripts were completed, a codebook was developed with the method outlined by Fonteyn et al. (2008) and MacQueen and McLellan (1998), using TFEL's Prairie region report codebook for this study as a guide. A two-person team then began crafting the codebook by reviewing one randomly selected transcript. Once complete, this process was repeated once more before an independent coding process was used. Weekly meetings were held between the coding team to review new codes and themes and ensure consistency, culminating in a "master" codebook. This master codebook was then reviewed by the team to collapse duplicate codes and organize codes into relevant categories. Outlook was used for update sharing and consultation between team members. Finally, two documents were created and uploaded to Teams for each participant: a verbatim coded transcript, and a summary interview sheet. In Quebec, all transcripts were coded in their language of origin. At the final stage of reporting, codes and their selected French excerpts were translated by one member of the research team and verified for accuracy by a second.

Findings

The analysis of the 11 interviews conducted in this study revealed several common themes and key findings pertaining to promising, innovative, and wise practices in Quebec social work field education. This section presents the results of the 11 interviews conducted across the province of Quebec. Findings have been organized into the following categories: promising practices,

innovative practices, wise practices, barriers, and others. Below are the key themes from each category.

Promising Practices

Promising practices are defined as approaches, interventions, programs, services, or strategies that show potential for enhancing field education. Promising practices may address specific challenges experienced in social work field education and are currently being evaluated for effectiveness and replicability and have demonstrated the ability to achieve their stated aims. A total of 56 promising practices were generated from interviews. This study identified five themes of promising practices: communication, multiple supervisors, a partnership approach, internship committees, and the provision of a comprehensive orientation process.

Communication -- defined as the need for open lines of communication between all parties, including students, supervisors, liaisons, and universities. Participants spoke of the need for communication between field supervisors and faculty liaisons to facilitate successful practice. The following excerpt from one of the respondents exemplifies communication as one of the promising practices:

> "So, the internship teacher and the supervisor are two people who are important and it's two people who can at some point during the internship year, raise their hands to say there are challenges for this student, there are difficulties ahead. So, in principle, the supervisor tells the internship teacher, and the internship teacher comes back to us, and gives us the information."

Some of the participants also indicated the need for effective communication between students and field supervisors as a promising practice, as illustrated in the following quote.

> "Well, I think I'm someone who likes to work in a team. I think that the fact of exchanging with, in fact, I think that knowing a little more about the role and the responsibilities, the limits of each of my partners, allows me to be aware of what can give me, that they cannot give to the students. So, I think that again, it's communication, it's taking time. When I hear that there are difficult situations or problematic situations for our student interns in the field, well quickly, refer to that person, give him the information, and try to understand how it goes. His side, to have an attitude of openness. I'm used to teamwork, so to be collaborative, to see their limits respected, and I bring the information to my internship teachers who go get the information down to the trainees too."

Ultimately, many participants agreed that ensuring ongoing communication that was clear, concise, and timely benefited all stakeholders involved in the field education relationship.

Multiple Supervisors -- defined as the use of more than one supervisor per student to reduce workload, while simultaneously providing a wide range of training and experience. Participants spoke of the usefulness of this type of model to offset the time requirement involved with supervision. The participants often mentioned using a co-supervision model within field education that allows supervisors to utilize their own strengths with students, provide multiple perspectives, and reduce the time commitment of supervision indicating that supervisors are more likely to take a student when the workload can be shared. The following excerpt illustrates how multiple supervisors are conceptualized as one of the promising practices:

> "We started to have a lot of co-supervisor offers, so two social workers from the same team who either want to share the internship year in two, that is to say, that one offers internship supervision 1, and the other offer for internship 2, or both wish to co-supervise together throughout the year. We have these two possibilities. Of course, we offer training to our supervisors to really understand the role and expectations […] but also to make it clear to them: "What is a supervisor? What is supervision? What tools can be used to make it interesting, maximize supervision and share responsibility for the internship also with the student? What role does the student have? What role do supervisors have? ". And in this training, we talk a lot about co-supervision because, here I don't want to tell you just any number, but I would tell you that I have the impression that a quarter of our internship offers are co-supervision offers."

Although the participants spoke about the benefits of using a multiple supervisor model within field education, indicating that in some ways it provides students with a broader perspective and supervisors with reduced responsibility, other participants also highlighted the need for co-supervisors to work well together and maintain consistent communication throughout the process. They recommended working as a team in order to ensure the success of the practicum objectives.

> "There are others who appreciate doing it in co-supervision, it allows them to maintain their motivation from year to year to offer us internship offers. Where I saw a challenge, it was the first year that I saw it, but it seems that this internship offer has been there for years, it is a program for example, or you have two supervisors in the fall and two supervisors in the winter. At the end of the day, yeah, I got that this year, notice that the supervisors are used to working together, it seems, but there we did an "Oh ...", we ask the student to adapt to four people in one, who will evaluate it? That's a bit much, but hey, we'll see what happens there at the end of the year."

Overall, many participants felt that utilizing a multiple-supervisor model was a promising way to ensure adequate supervision for students while simultaneously keeping individual supervisor workloads manageable. It also allowed students to consider multiple ways of approaching the field situation and facilitated their learning while tapping into different supervisors' perspectives that were expressed as "learning by seeing".

Partnership Approach -- defined as a different way of approaching supervision involving working alongside other stakeholders. Participants felt that it was important that all voices were heard regarding challenges within a practice and that it is beneficial to all parties when groups work together to problem solve.

> "Because we need to understand the framework of intervention of our partners. You even know, even in the community we work with other organizations. You know, to be able to work with my partners, I must be aware of their mission, their services, or where it ends, their mandate there, so that we can see more of how our different mandates go. What makes that in a team being more multidisciplinary, well I imagine that indeed the nurse who would work with me or the therapist or the occupational therapist, for example, around a patient, the doctor, we have each of the mandates. We each have roles, do you know? What makes that as much as I must do mine, that I must be, I must know those of others to be able to call on them at the right time."

Other participants felt that their ability to maintain connections with community partners through open communication and relational connection improved the ability to retain both individual supervisors as well as partnerships with specific organizations in a long-term manner.

> "But in fact, what I find that works well is our link with our partners there, [partner name] and [partner name]. Community organizations are a link that is individual, that is done well, and that is easy. But to have a link with the person who is responsible for internships at the [partner name], at the [partner name], a privileged link with my partner that allows us, first of all, we've been working together for a few years, but the fact remains that if there is a situation that is difficult at the [partner name] in connection with our internships, she calls me. We are liaison officers; we are somewhat representative of our various establishments. We talk to each other regularly, we have created a bond of trust, we meet, we know each other, and we appreciate each other. So, when there are difficult situations, particularly related to COVID, student dissatisfaction, or supervisor dissatisfaction, well we talk to each other, then we are a bit the spokespersons for our institutions, then we can bring the information back to our different establishments. A practice that we do that I find that is frankly a winner,

is what I described to you briefly earlier and that I think had also spoken to you about the fact that we sit down two universities, so, university and us together to share the territory, so I have 45 students placed each year, the other university has 150-180 and even last year, I think that it was 200. I mean, we have every advantage in working together and serving our regions."

Ultimately, it was determined that the use of relationships between stakeholders and ongoing communication was one promising way of maintaining key partnerships with community organizations that offer practicum placements and instruction for social work students in the Quebec region. Securing field placements in Quebec is increasingly challenging since field coordinators are no longer allowed to communicate directly with field supervisors in the public health and social services network, thus, not only interfering with the development but maintenance of direct relationships with field supervisors as well.

Internship Committees -- defined as a designated group of individuals involved in field education that meet on a regular basis to discuss issues related to field placements. Participants mentioned that the benefits of an internship committee included having a space available for communication between stakeholders, a specific time set for discussion of challenges to avoid procrastination, as well as having a place where all parties could provide feedback on what is or is not working.

"Yes, that's because we at [University] have an internship committee. We have an internal internship committee, but we also have an extended committee made up of representatives of the health network and made up of the community. So, we have a large committee that works at that level. looks at what's going on in terms of practical training. And I do it on my own and often the circles will say to me "[participant] I find that your students in community organization, there are cases that the practice has changed, and they are not quite ready in relation to that. So, I'm going to adapt the information."

Another participant mentioned internship committees as a tool to help support field educators when there are student issues that they are unable to resolve individually.

"[…] If there are issues in relation to the student. If there are things that do not go well. If sometimes we can say to ourselves finally I have too much. Finally, with all my tasks and that, I can't do it, for example, so that's what we can rely on our colleagues, our committee and to see what we can do to redevelop certain things."

As evidenced above, the implementation of an internship committee has many benefits for all stakeholders involved in social work field education and is one unique promising practice implemented in the Quebec region.

Comprehensive Orientation -- defined as the need to provide students with an orientation to an agency or program prior to the commencement of their field placement. Participants felt providing students with such an orientation often created a space where student expectations reflected reality upon starting their practice.

> "So, in September, we have a first information meeting with all the students who are going to go on internship. This meeting is moderated by myself and the professor responsible for the internships. So, we really provide information on the internship placement process, and how they will be supported in anticipation of the upcoming internship. So, there is the first information meeting in September. In October, November, and early December, I meet individually with these students to see who they are, they start from where, there are many, there are some who have techniques [college degrees] in social work, special education, and experience, others who have a DEC [college degree] in social sciences, so more or less experience, see a little who they are and what they want to experience during their internship."

Additionally, some participants suggested creating 'open house' days where students could observe, meet, or assess potential placements prior to application.

> "Or it could be done as a, you know, like if students are interested, for instance, in working with older adults, that there is a presentation to the students as to what that might mean so that they know what they're getting themselves into? So sometimes it was done through a one-on-one interview between the social worker and the potential student so I'm not sure if it's done. Again, just trying to think of how it could be done, maybe in a more group kind of setting so that it cuts down on the number of people that must do it individually and it could maybe be done by the setting, right? The setting might invite the students who are interested in working with a particular population and say, 'Hey, we're having an information session for students about what placement would be like here in our program. Why don't you come, you know, on Tuesday afternoon or whatever and that could be a way of introducing the setting. And maybe that is being done. I know that there used to be a student, I think [Name of University 1] used to do that. They used to do like, I don't know if we would call it an open house, but somewhere where the agencies would go and the students would talk to the different org, maybe it was more like a job type of thing, but I'm not sure if it was more related to student placement or was more related to job opportunities or work opportunities, but I think something like that could be interesting where you present to the students."

Throughout the interviews, participants felt that additional orientation assisted in bridging any gaps between student expectations and the reality of their field education experience, leading to less disappointment and increased satisfaction.

Innovative Practices

Innovative practices are defined as new practices that have the potential to enhance field education but have not yet been tested in some contexts of social work field education. Innovative practices in social work field education are not yet evidence-based but have the potential to enhance field education training while addressing existing challenges.

This study identified five themes of innovative practices in the Quebec region including field instructor training, providing critical thinking education, and increasing the time allotted for supervisors to engage with students. Additionally, supervisor mentorship and the decentralization of public sector field placements were two themes unique to the Quebec region.

New Field Instructor Training – defined as providing hands-on training for field instructors prior to being assigned their first student. Participants highlighted the need for additional training for field instructors, mentioning that many new supervisors feel lost when taking on a student and that additional guidance or mentorship from more experienced supervisors would be beneficial to all involved parties.

> "And so sometimes the social workers have a willingness to take on a student, but they just don't exactly know what it entails. What do they have to do? How would they, […] for instance, how many clients do they give them? How long do, into, all these different pragmatics and the logistical, but also the clinical transfer of knowledge? How do you do that? So, they may have-, they have the willingness to do it but they're not sure how. So that's probably, in certain situations, that's why I got involved. In other situations, it was with student supervisors that already had experience supervising but may have had a challenging student and wasn't quite sure how to proceed or, you know, strategizing or how to help that student the best that they could."

Participants further reported that providing training for potential field instructors helps to ensure a basic level of knowledge pertaining to supervision is achieved leading to fewer supervision issues overall.

> "Yes, the part of the training that we developed, that I developed, we found it interesting that people were trained, but more and more, we are starting to see the fallout. The spinoffs because people are better prepared to welcome interns.

People provide better support to interns and when they have interns who are in difficulty, it's not panic or even it does not end the internships immediately. They have tools to deal with the complexity of some students. These days, it's done by them on Zoom but usually, we meet them directly, in person […] they appreciate it a lot, that there is help, support, and training, that is truly personalized for their new supervisors. Training is attractive for supervisors because they don't have time to shape their world. It's not always their mandate and it makes everything easier […] in terms of retention."

Overall, participants recognized the need for adequate training for field supervisors, indicating that this type of training often mitigated typical supervision issues while simultaneously providing support for newer supervisors.

Critical Thinking Education – defined as the need to educate students on how to use critical thinking skills. Participants felt critical thinking skills were an important aspect of social work education and should be taught both in the field education and classroom setting.

"You know, simple strategies such as case formulation, how, something I said a little bit earlier, just how to breakdown a case, but what's your behaviors are concerned? What's your risk factors? But your perpetuating factors, just strength factors, and then you know how. So how would you then analyze that kind of information and develop orientation to get you going? It's one of those basic skill sets that most people don't have, and it's not necessarily something that's taught at an academic level. And yet it's a very simple yet fundamental tool to working in the field of social work."

Other participants felt that using a reflective model of supervision for field education was helpful in encouraging the use and development of critical thinking skills.

"So, with using the reflective supervision model, it kind of goes with like doing the thing, reviewing the thing, kind of like coming with some conclusions of what you might do differently, or how your life experiences are informing what you did in that experience and then trying again. So, a lot of learning by doing experimentation but with that safety net of having your supervisor close by being able to observe what you're doing and support you in reflecting back to you, this is what I observe, and you identify that too."

Overall, many participants agreed that adequate critical thinking skills are important to student success and should be encouraged and developed within field education.

Additional Time for Supervisors – defined as the need for additional time for field educators to do different aspects of their jobs. Participants mentioned that being granted additional time to supervise a student would not only increase feelings of value but also allow them to do more to mentor students.

> "I think from an institution's perspective we should be creating, I guess the supervisor role should be more valued in a sense that as you had mentioned, your caseload gets reduced when you get a student so that you can spend more time with the student and teaching them. You can have that dedicated time of supervision, [and] that has not been a reality in my experience for anyone to have that opportunity. But I think we should be promoting that in order to […] better prepare our students and to better be there for them."

Other participants felt that supervision was expected to be done, but time wasn't specifically allotted to facilitate field educators to accomplish different aspects of their job requirements.

> "Well, I mean in terms of resources, time, right? Yeah. Time must be allotted, supervision just can't be on the go, it can't be on the fly. You know it really does necessitate the time to be able to sit down to have case discussions to, […] for workers, for interns to have the time to learn about their approach is to then discuss what they've learned."

Throughout the interviews, participants spoke of the need for more time either to supervise students or to manage their caseloads.

Supervisor Mentorship– defined as providing newer supervisors with mentorship from more experienced supervisors. Participants noted that many new supervisors found it beneficial to have a mentor.

> "The other thing I can say that is advantageous on the other hand, and I saw it a lot 2 years ago, well a few times, is new supervisors who stick to experienced supervisors […]. This first experience of supervision, then afterward, but that gives us 2 internship offers so I think it can be a winner anyway. I see it among others when we started to have our former students supervise then many times when they want to stick to a colleague for example to start in this new experience of supervision. That is a winner, that is true that it is a winner."

Other participants felt that it was helpful when universities provided field supervisors with ongoing formal training and an avenue for peer support.

"I think if you ask anyone this question, […] the common response is going to be like, there needs to be more collaboration between the university and the field instructors, which I agree with. I think what was my first year of supervising, [university] had courses for new field instructors and we went to these courses like once a month and we were able to like talk amongst the new supervisors about issues that we were experiencing, and we had an instructor there that was able to guide us through. That was super helpful. I don't think I'm the only person that found it super helpful and I think it would be cool if we could continue that process. Like doesn't matter if you've 20 years of supervising students, if we could have a better connection with the university, better connection with our peers that are supervising other students. So, like more support […] more training and more contact, because sometimes you do feel alone, you feel like you're sent this student from [university] and then that's it. Like you hear from [university] at the end of the semester to submit your final field evaluation, but that's it."

Ultimately, participants felt that the provision of mentorship was a way of ensuring that newer supervisors had the support they needed.

Decentralizing Placements – defined as looking outside the immediate location for student placement options. Participants felt that it was often difficult to locate enough field placements for students due to strict practice requirements.

"When I arrived in 2016, they were rigid enough that the internships were only in [our specific] region. I said it reached 150-160 there, I said I can no longer offer the number of quality internships, 160 students in social work only in this region. I have the CEGEP students who already have a social work technical diploma, [....] These [students] want to go and do internships in the communities, in the various community organizations. I said, I cannot offer 160 internship environments of quality and of baccalaureate level, there. If we don't just decompartmentalize the region, well […] You must allow me to decompartmentalize."

Other participants felt that partnering with other provinces may provide a solution to the inadequacy of practicum placements not only for English-speaking students in Quebec but the region where the schools are located.

"I think it is important that any student that decides to come to, I think that that's the thing. I think before even coming to the School of Social Work at [University], that should be a clear disclaimer that, yeah, I think a lot of them, they come, and they're surprised. I think that's the experience. They're shocked

or surprised that there's really nothing up here. I don't know, maybe a stronger partnership with, I mean, there's a lot of logistical problems there, but just like with [Name of Province 2] maybe as a province and allowing [University] students to do internships there."

Overall, participants acknowledged the difficulty of locating enough placements within the local area that also fit the guidelines given to them, leading to the necessity of considering placements in other places.

Wise Practices

Wise practices are defined as Indigenous-centered practices that are flexible, locally, and culturally relevant, and that respect all forms of understanding including lived experience, traditional knowledge, and the use of story. Wise practices are relational in nature and encourage mutual respect, inclusivity, and collectivity. Only 2 wise practice themes were generated through the interviews.

Redefining Clinical Social Work Practice -- defined as the need to provide a broader definition of what clinical means as well as a broader range of opportunities that qualify as adequate field placements. One participant spoke of other regions already using a model that incorporates less traditional ways of doing social work.

> "When I did my internship at this hospital five years ago, the supervisor had a very similar approach, that really gave me a different lens, like the way that I interact with people and the way that I go about doing social work. I find it a little bit more compassionate than some of my colleagues who have maybe been there a long time, and I think that kind of highlights the evolution of social work supervision in general, I feel like maybe it used to be more clinically oriented and now it seems like it's more management-oriented of just knowing like, 'OK, your cases or this? These are the numbers. Your stats are up to date,' that sort of being a supervisory role, so I think it's kind of bringing it back to what it might have used to be based on what I hear other people say, where it's more clinical support of you as a clinician and you as a person rather than just administrative support."

Another participant narrated that:

> "My interpretation is that it's kind of hard to formulate what your impression is when you're so unsure of your role and you're so unsure of your professional opinion. I really want to try to do anything possible to build the student's

confidence because I think if the student comes into a new hospital environment, they are unsure of their role, and I think having that lack of confidence can really halt their progression in their clinical field placement. So, I have a case that needs to be seen and everyone's[is] busy, I'm just going to give this to the student. I trust that they're going to be able to take on a new challenge because they're here to learn, and I want them to trust in me that I'm going to give them cases that are going to expand their knowledge."

Collaboration with Indigenous Communities -- defined as the need to collaborate with Indigenous communities to create more Indigenous-centered placement options. One participant felt it was partially up to management to allow field coordinators to pursue these types of opportunities and felt supported by their own management in that manner.

"I have internships every year, like this winter, I have four, or two students who go there to James Bay with the Aboriginal communities. That's it, […] my management giving me free rein to develop these partnerships. So that's what I like, this is very interesting, I like to do development and my management puts no constraints on me. It's very nice."

Another participant mentioned that:

"So, I have a dual role, I am a field supervisor, so I do take students and supervise them through their practicum, but I'm also the field Coordinator at my site at the hospital so what that means is that I collaborate with schools and collaborate with academic affairs to set the stashers. Dual role like actual supervisor and coordinator of stashes."

Regrettably, wise practices were not a common topic within the Quebec region interviews, leading to a lack of data for this section. Ultimately, additional time and attention may be necessary to get a more comprehensive picture of current wise practice techniques in the region.

Barriers

Barriers are defined as challenges that prevent moving forward with promising practices in field education. A total of 25 codes were generated on the barriers to social work field education. This study identifies four themes on barriers to field education in the Quebec region including centralization and bureaucracy barriers, the COVID-19 pandemic, supervisor workload, and challenges in finding placements for English-speaking students.

Centralization and bureaucracy barriers – defined as a process of field matching wherein one internal educational coordinator within a health care network is charged with communicating with

field supervisors, encouraging them to take on students, and communicating with the schools' coordinators. Participants mentioned that this process does not allow for direct communication between the school coordinator and potential supervisors.

> "I guess it depends, I don't know a whole lot but what I understand from our members is that in many cases there's a lot of rigidity there. And in the hospital as well. […] So, I guess it depends on how supportive the management team is, as well, and when you have overworked people who are also tasked with supervising students on top of other duties, you know, it can be harder to have the flexibility when you're already kind of tapped out. Um, so, we're speaking to bigger systemic issues, I guess."

Another participant narrated that:

> "Because we need to understand the framework of intervention of our partners. You even know, even in the community we work with other organizations. You know, to be able to work with my partners, I have to be aware of their mission, their services, or where ends, you know, their mandate actually so that we can see more how our different mandates go. What makes that difficult in a team is being more multidisciplinary, well I imagine that indeed, we have each of the mandates. We each have roles, do you know? What makes that as much as I must know those of others to be able to call on them at the right time."

Additionally, participants reported that usually the health care network coordinator who matches students with supervisors does so through a standardized process with little knowledge of or contact with the students.

> "Easily reproduced, I don't know, eh. Because I think there's a particular context in the community that leaves, the space and the opportunity but could it help? probably. It is that I have a limited knowledge of what the internships have to offer students. The area of field is in a more, uh, more conventional, more rigid environment. Example, uh, like health networks there. But it is the comments that I sometimes get from colleagues or things like that, you know if we also go home, well, we make flares, rivals. You know, we do the same thing all the time. Oh, are there ways to let students develop a group or develop something next to their [interests] it, you know, so that they can, make a consultation? I think we underestimate the impact of the bureaucracy in consultations."

Overall, it often came up that field coordinators manage to secure placement spots, but they are required to pass through a centralized coordinator for placements in the health and social care

network, limiting their ability to build direct relationships with supervisors and encourage the creation of new field placements.

COVID-19 – defined as the detrimental effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on social work field education. Participants mentioned that the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the field education system in many ways, often requiring a work-from-home strategy that required additional flexibility from both students and supervisors.

> "This year, we have a lot of discussions related to COVID obviously, all the adaptation that the supervisors, the students, must have had. If we have students who have had to take screening tests, also we have sick students (we don't have any, we're lucky, we didn't have any this fall). In short, we are a little there to pool challenge situations or situations that students may experience. Even this year, there have been a lot of supervisors who are telecommuting, so what do the students do while the supervisor is telecommuting 2 days a week? Do they have access to all the IT tools to be able to continue doing their internship? You know, we are very much in the data of concrete information on how it goes in an internship. So that's mostly what the practical training committee is for."

Additionally, participants felt that the COVID-19 pandemic led to reduced access to the resources necessary to ensure successful student practice.

> "In this COVID period, access to computer hardware, access to laptops for our interns, access to tokens to gain access to the network, to the bandwidth. This fall semester, employees had to adapt, then even wait to have access to these computer accesses, to these tools, so it is very clear that it is not considering our trainees, but we will always start by giving the material to social workers, to employees before giving it to the trainee. So, there was frustration on the ground for the trainees."

Overall, the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted systems and created the need for increased adaptation and flexibility within the field education system.

Supervisor Workload --– defined as the workload being a barrier to finding field education supervisors. Participants felt that their workload was a barrier to time spent with the students they were supervising.

> "In order to have these discussions with your student, you need to have the time and the motivation to do so. And when we're working in a fast-paced environment, like supervision, [that's] often the first thing that goes right? So, it trickles down to people being overworked. Too few social workers are available.

So, you're covering other people's caseloads, vacation coverage, leave of absence coverage, all that sort of stuff. So, in a perfect world where we all had manageable caseloads and we all had time to dedicate to our students."

Additionally, participants spoke about workload reduction when accepting a supervision role, mentioning that this was not a guarantee.

"What's happened is that there's a lot of pressure and a lot of social workers that are overwhelmed with the amount of work that they have to do, and then when they feel that they have to take on a student, they feel extremely overwhelmed by that. And so sometimes they've created, you know, they've come up with creative ways of trying to ensure that they are fulfilling that mandate of taking students, but perhaps trying to do it in a way that makes it easier workload-wise. Because there are some workplaces where if you take on a student, they don't adjust your workload, your caseload to that. So, you have to have the same amount of, you know, caseload clients, but you now have to also devote two hours a week or three hours a week to a student. So, it's a lot to juggle."

Ultimately, participants noted how it was easy to become overwhelmed while supervising a student, and that one way of offsetting this was to ensure that workloads could be reduced to accommodate the additional time needed for student supervision.

Challenges with Finding Placements for English Speaking Students – defined as a lack of adequate placement options for English-speaking students. Participants mentioned that as Quebec is predominantly a French-speaking province, it is a major challenge to find fieldwork placements for English-speaking social work students.

"…one thing that I found interesting, I think it's important to note that, one of the big challenges specifically for stages for English-speaking students in the Quebec province is that such options are very limited. So, especially in this province, sometimes the placements you know to be offered are very limited and very far from the student's area of interest. And yeah, so how do we navigate that is a big question that is very specific to [...] this province and the fact that it's a French-speaking province. the students can't just magically learn enough conversational French to be able to intervene but at the same time, I don't know, it's a question that I'm just inviting a lot of us to think about and see what solutions come out. Because I know, currently, having spoken to the students I've supervised or even myself when I was a student, a lot of my classmates were struggling with that."

Overall, participants recognized the lack of English-speaking practice options and how this affects a subset of the student population.

Other

These themes were not categorized within the scope of this study but recurred throughout the interviews. A total of 21 "other" codes were generated from the Quebec interviews. The study identified four additional themes: collaboration, benefits of students to field education, supporting student development, and social work education integration. Each theme is briefly discussed below.

Collaboration -- defined as the need for collaboration between students, field supervisors, liaisons, and field coordinators. Participants felt that collaboration on a micro-level created trust and led to better relationships between students and supervisors within a practice.

> "When I have a supervisor who will tell me, who will tell the internship teacher, who will tell the person responsible for internships at the [agency] and [agency], "it's difficult with this student there for such and such a reason", but you know, we have a consultation work. We all sit down together; we talk to each other. When the time comes to replace the internship, we try to be as transparent as possible with the student's agreement. I have a student who has generalized anxiety in life, but that doesn't mean that she won't be able to do an internship, with the medication, she had therapy blah blah blah, she's functional, she did her university studies, it works. Well, I'm going to ask the student, "do you allow me, when the time comes for the internship placement, to contact the supervisor to tell her we have a student with such a challenge, or", we try to be as open as possible, as transparent as possible, with the student's agreement, which means that we do a personalized pairing. The students who have had challenges or who have had an internship stoppage and that we replace next year, well again, the supervisor who made the internship offer with whom I will pair him, will know before meeting my student because, again with the permission of the students, because we want [to] have full knowledge of the facts, to agree to accompany a student."

Additionally, some participants spoke of the need for greater collaboration between the university and agencies, citing the need for more support as well as a consistent place to provide feedback on challenges.

> "I think if you ask anyone this question, […] the common response is going to be like, 'there needs to be more collaboration between the University and the

field instructors, which I agree with. I think what was my first year of supervising, [university] had courses for new field instructors and we went to these courses like once a month and we were able to like talk amongst the new supervisors about issues that we were experiencing, and we had an instructor there that was able to guide us through. That was super helpful. I don't think I'm the only person that found it super helpful and I think it would be cool if we could continue that process. […] If we could have a better connection with the university, better connection with our peers that are supervising other students. So, like more support, […] more training and more contact, cause sometimes you do feel alone, you feel like you're sent this student from [university] and then that's it. Like you hear from [university] at the end of the semester in order to submit your final field evaluation, but that's it."

Ultimately, many participants felt that there was not enough collaboration between stakeholders and that finding innovative ways of increasing collaboration would lead to enhanced trust and improved working relationships.

Benefits of Students -- defined as the many ways agencies provide supervision for students is a benefit to the agency itself. Participants spoke of using student internships to recruit students after graduation.

"I mean, speaking to professionals that are overworked but we take on students because we value education and honestly, I get a lot out of it. It helps me question my practice and review what I'm doing and stay on my toes and current."

Moreover, some participants felt that the addition of students in their agencies provided a way for supervisors and other employees to stay current with social issues and education requirements.

"Ten years ago, I would have spoken to you differently. I would have told you, well, we're doing an internship, or just doing an internship. Today, we have no choice but to look toward hiring. So, the more you are in an environment that you will get to know during an internship, the easier it will be for you after remaining as a student, then you know I want to say you spend almost a year on an internship, we trained you for free, I mean, we didn't pay you, we hire you. It is very, it pays off at all levels, there. Not just monetarily but it's I think there's something winning for everyone about having an intern who's going to get back on their feet a lot faster."

Overall, participants felt that there were many benefits to agencies taking students such as generating future staff members as well as enhancing supervisors' own continuous learning.

Supporting Student Development – defined as finding job satisfaction through supervision. Participants mentioned that about the benefit of supervising students indicating that there are often reciprocal rewards between student and supervisor professional development.

> "It's rewarding. It always pushes us further. It seems like it avoids stagnating. I really like it. It's really a continuous exchange and then we live all kinds of business and then it's always refreshing when, you know, they are full of ideas, are full of novelties, freshness, you know? Then at the same time, they have so much to learn what makes it that, you know, we are able to surprise them. Then they can push us, to take us out of our comfort zone. What makes it like one, is it's a beautiful dynamic."

Another participant mentioned the challenges surrounding locating and retaining supervisors to support student development.

> "So, there are always, sometimes, it is, often it is the same managers who will raise their hands, who will make offers. So, I think, when I talk to them, I realize that he believes in it a lot. Then there are other managers, I think who believe in it a little less and who force a little less, for the internships. Which makes it interesting. You know, it's not all on the shoulders of our management, but when you have a motivated and interested manager, well, that's for sure that helps us a lot."

While many participants spoke of the necessity of student supervision as well as the desire to do so, some field coordinators found that the ability to locate supervisors often hinged on whether management within agencies felt it was a worthwhile endeavor.

Social Work Education Integration – defined as the importance of integrating academic learning into practical ways of merging theory into practice. Participants felt that there is a large difference between academic and frontline social work and that this gap is often evident when students arrive at their practicum.

> "I think it's intimidating to put yourself in the framework of being like an academic versus being a professional, like the academia world in the professional world. Just if you compare how we write our papers for classes versus how we write our assessments, we're talking about two different languages, so I think it's intimidating to like step into the feeling of academia, and that's kind of why I like to start at where the students add, gauge what their interests are, gauge what they relate to, and build off of that. I think that's very helpful."

Additionally, they felt it was important for academic education to provide additional education regarding the integration of theory and practice prior to the field placement.

> "Yeah, I think that on the academic side, and it seems to have always been that it almost seems exclusively on theory. Maybe not as much today as years ago when I was doing it, type of thing, but I can remember my experiences where I think there was one class I could remember where it was more practice and role-playing and that kind of stuff. But again, practice in role-playing, but without an actual approach or theory to put into practice. So, it was more about you, you sort of jump into a role play and you're then getting feedback from your peers or the professor, but it's not really related to relational approach or motivational interviewing like these are approaches that I learn. […] Or maybe I might have heard of them before, but they were nothing that I had learned or put into practice or had the good fortune of being mentored in. Like I have been in the last few years type of thing, and I see the profound difference in having it. So, from an academic standpoint, you know it tends to go into a lot of different subjects, a lot of different areas of social work. But again, where is the approach? Where is the practicum to operationalize something into working with those types of clients or those types of fields?"

Ultimately, a gap between theory and practice was seen by supervisors as students entered their field placements, which could hinder the capacity for work the student was ready to do, indicating the need for additional ways of merging knowledge with practice.

Conclusion

This report presents the findings of 11 interviews conducted in Quebec with the aim of identifying promising, innovative, and wise practices that can be used to inform the transformation of social work field education in Canada. As expected, many participants spoke specifically about the current state of social work field education in Quebec, illuminating the unique context of the region.

When looked at individually, Quebec participants suggested several promising practices similar to other regions of the country, including the importance of maintaining communication between stakeholders, the use of a multi-supervisor approach, and the implementation of a comprehensive orientation for students' pre-practice. Conversely, some promising practices unique to the area included the implementation of internship committees, the use of persistence to engage agency partners and ensure placements for students, the use of a strategic matching system when placing students, and processes for evaluating field instruction as well as field placement environments.

Additionally, several innovative practices were found, including the need for additional training provided to field instructors, as well as the use of atypical field placement options. Alternatively, some unique innovative practices were also explored, including the decentralization of placements to provide additional opportunities for students and the provision of mentorship for field supervisors.

Moreover, while many of the challenges faced by field educators were similar to barriers found in other regions of Canada, such as the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic and supervisor workload, the Quebec region faced some challenges exclusive to the area such as the centralized system for placements in health and social service networks and the difficulty in locating adequate placement options for English-speaking students. Finally, there was a lack of data surrounding wise practices within the Quebec region, potentially due to the small sample size used. As such, all findings from the interviews pertaining to wise practices have been reported.

As evidenced in the findings, our participants express both a desire and a need to innovate and transform social work field education within Quebec. While many innovative practices have already been implemented across the province, more effort is needed to offset the current challenges faced by field educators in order to ensure the provision of quality field opportunities, while simultaneously taking into account the needs and capabilities of field educators across the province.

Limitations

It is important to note that the findings in this report may not be transferable to the greater Canadian context and due to a limited sample (11 interviews) may only partially represent the innovations and challenges related to practice in Quebec. Furthermore, seven of the 11 interviews were conducted in French, transcribed, and then translated to English prior to the preparation of this report and as such, should be viewed through a lens that takes such translation into account.

Recommendations for future research

Recommendations for future research include a more in-depth look at wise practices within Quebec with a specific focus on connecting with Indigenous social work practitioners to ensure the Indigenous perspective is included in the research. Finally, a cross-analysis with other regions of the country would provide a more well-rounded look at promising, innovative, and wise practices across Canada.

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APPENDIX A – SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

Guiding Interview Questions (Virtual)

This study has been approved by the University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board (REB19-0901)
*For each interview, record: Name of Organization and Position of Individual Participant

The researcher will identify the following information before starting the interview:

Date and Time:

Location (Agency, City):

Name of Organization:

Professional Role of Interviewee:

Provide a letter of initial contact and collect signed consent form prior to commencing the interview.

Send $20 e-gift card to interview participant.

Interview preamble:
- Session will last approximately 30-60 minutes.
- The interview will be audio recorded to facilitate transcription and notes will be written and transcribed.
- All responses will be kept confidential, and privacy will be maintained throughout the process.

Questions	Probes
1. Promising, Innovative, and Wise Practices	

Questions	Probes
The Interviewer should begin by reading this definition: In this study a promising practice is defined as an approach, intervention, initiative, program, service, or strategy that shows potential for enhancing social work field education. A promising practice may address a specific challenge experienced in social work field education. Promising practices are often in the earlier stages of being demonstrated as absolutely effective yet are considered effective in achieving their stated aims with potential for replication. A wise practice is flexible, locally relevant to diverse Indigenous groups, and respect all forms of knowledge including lived experience, traditional knowledge, and stories. Wise practices are typically relational in nature, involve respect for others, and working together.	
We are interested in learning about promising and wise practices in social work field education. Can you tell us about your promising and wise practice in social work field education?	Please describe the promising and wise practice. What have you found works well? Is it an: • Approach • Intervention • Initiative • Program • Service • Strategy How does it enhance social work field education? What challenge/issue does it address? Do you think this practice could be used in other settings or agencies? Explain.
What are some of the major successes to date with your promising and wise practice? For practicum students? For you? For your unit or organization? Other?	What makes this a successful experience? (Ask to gather all information related to the practice: Who? What? Where? When? How?) What has worked well? What contributed to this practice? What did you learn about this initiative?
What resources, practices or process contribute to this effective promising and wise practice?	Explain how it is a promising or wise practice. What need, challenge or issue does it help to address in field education? How does it meet that need, challenge, or issue?

What innovative practice would you like to see piloted or implemented?	What would make field placements the best they could be: For students, for field instructors, for units/organizations, for the profession of social work, for society?
2. Scope of Work and Mandate Related to Social Work Field Education	
Can you tell us about your current role with respect to social work field education?	How would you describe your current role? • Field coordinator or director • Faculty liaison • Field instructor • Social worker How did you get involved in social work field education?
Can you tell me about the scope and mandate of your organization/program/service/policies related to social work field education?	Can you tell us what guides your work? How would you describe your work with respect to social work field education? What prompts your organization to engage in social work field education?
What are the major activities of your organization/programs/services/policies with respect to social work field education and supporting students?	How would you describe your main activities? Which activities do you consider most important? Which activities are least important? What elements of field education are most gratifying for your organization/unit?
What is your motivation for being engaged in social work field education?	How did you become involved in this work? What was your experience?
What type of field placement occur in your organization? When do they take place and for how long?	List type of placement, time of year, length/duration
What is it like to be a social worker in the current context of social work field education? Have you noticed any changes in recent years?	Did you feel ready for supporting this? Did you have adequate training/education? Please explain. What works well? What is needed to make the experience the best it can be?

3. Additional Comments/Feedback	
Do you have any other comments/additional feedback you would like to provide in relation to social work field education both now and in the future?	What would you like to see improved? What would you like for the future of social work education? Please share any priorities, suggestions, or recommendations.

Demographic Information (to be noted and recorded):

Nature of Social Worker's organization/sector (e.g., child welfare, health, immigrant/refugee/settlement, community development, post-secondary institution, etc.):

_____

Total # of Social Work FTEs (FTE equivalent) in organization:

Social Worker's total # of years in Social Work/Helping Profession (including practice and volunteer roles):

Social Worker's total # of years in Social Work/Helping Profession (including only paid positions) (if different from above):

Social Worker's highest level of education/degree: _____

   -Year graduated with highest level of education: _____

   - Other Degrees: _____

Social Worker's # of years in current organization:

Social Worker's total # of years of being a Field Instructor/Field Coordinator/Director/Faculty Liaison (if appropriate):

Estimated total # of Social Work Students supervised by Social Worker (if appropriate):

Level of Social Worker Students supervised (e.g., BSW, MSW, etc.) (identify all levels that have been supervised):

***Thank-you for your participation.