ABSTRACT

Field education is an important aspect of social work education. Its role in shaping the nature of the discipline as contributing to social change and preparing practitioners is indisputable. The Council on Social Work Education’s (2008) recognition of field education as the profession’s signature pedagogy elevates its importance and status in social work education (Wayne, Raiskin and Bogo, 2010). Field work is a component of field education and it refers to the placement of students with various organisations working in specific fields. It allows for the students to engage with issues, interventions and make linkages with the theories being taught in the classroom.

One of the fields of practice in Social Work is Criminology. Criminology itself is a specialized focus area. Historically, about sixty years ago Criminology in Social Work in India emerged in an institute that pioneered Social Work Education in the country. However, in spite of so many decades of its existence, the field has not developed as much as it should have. The general disinterest and apathy by civil society towards people involved in crime, the formidable nature of the Criminal Justice System and inadequate resources could be some of the reasons why there are a limited number of organisations working in this sector.

One of the repercussions of this is that there is a dearth of published material in the subject of Social Work in Criminology and Justice. However, over the years there is available information, documentation, experiences and narratives in the form of student field work recordings which is a mandatory curriculum requirement. These documents contain in-depth experiences of having captured an individual student’s journey of field work. Typically these are only used for assessment purposes and have rarely been looked at as a source of information about the sector and its challenges or for learning about the emerging role of the social worker.

In some sectors, field work actually shoulders the responsibility of being both an exploration and demonstration of potential practice. Since there are limited social work practitioners in the field of Criminology to emulate and readings to refer to, it is especially important that student field work as examples of indigenous practice in a
sector that is still emerging, be studied to further enhance the field and theoretical understanding and to develop material for education.

Although field education is one of the core components of professional social work training programs worldwide a review of available literature appears to suggest that research and publications in field education are very few. Also the voice of the student is missing (Pawar, Hanne, & Sheridan 2004). As an integral part of field work, recordings are a valuable tool in social work education. Student learners use a variety of recording formats to describe, discuss and reflect upon their work. Supervisors, in turn, use these recordings to teach students the skills they will need.

The study lends itself to a qualitative approach and is exploratory in nature, as field work in a Centre for Criminology and Justice, within Social Work at a premier institution was studied. The primary focus was a content analysis of the field work recordings of second year student social workers placed in field work settings through the Centre over the last ten years (2000 to 2009). The secondary focus was interviews with key informants like faculty advisors, field work supervisors, academicians, agency personnel and students. An analysis of student field work recordings could help in answering key questions regarding the scope and challenges confronting the field of Social Work in Criminology and Justice. This field based examination could present a consolidated identity and futuristic vision for social work practice in this sector.

The dissertation report is divided into eight chapters, the first traces the history of Social Work Education in Criminology at the Institute and looks at the context of field work within it, the second is a review of literature about field education with a focus on field work, student recordings, social work and criminology as a profession and discipline, their evolution and interface. Chapter three discusses the research design and methodology in detail. Since the method of content analysis was used the categories,
themes, coding and process is discussed. Chapter four introduces the data, the profile of the respondents, explains the themes and gives a context to the study. Chapter five, six and seven look at the data that emerged from the content analysis and interviews within the sub-sectors of police, court, prison, institution, commission and rehabilitation and other themes. Chapter eight focuses on the experience of field work in the six sub-sectors, the nature of relationships, of supervision, writing of recordings, the pedagogy of learning and the role of the Centre and the curriculum.

The study has been able to highlight how field work has significantly impacted the development of certain sub-sectors and the invaluable role it plays. It has also been able to trace the different trajectories of each of the sub-sectors and the role of the social worker within them. Further, it has also been able to focus on the dynamics between the field and academics, and identify some aspects of gaps where attention needs to be now be paid. It emerges that a consolidation of all kinds of work, that is, field work, field practice, research, and a discussion with all stakeholders within the domain of Social Work in Criminology and Justice, be undertaken to set the pace of work for the future as this is what will add value to the discipline and the sector.

**Key Words:** Social work education, field work, criminology and justice, student recordings, content analysis.