

**Episode 65 - Marion Bogo: Doing, Thinking, Then Doing Again: Reflective Practice in Field Education**

[00:00:08] Welcome to living Proof a podcast series of the University at Buffalo School of Social Work at [www.socialwork.buffalo.edu](http://www.socialwork.buffalo.edu). We're glad you could join us today. The series Living Proof examines social work research and practice that makes a difference in people's lives. The University at Buffalo School of Social Work is making a difference every day through the generation and transmission of knowledge promotion of social justice and service to humanity. We offer MSW and Ph.D. programs continuing education programs and credits online courses. Licensor exam preparation professional seminars and certificates and much much more. To learn more about the UB School of Social Work please visit [www.socialwork.buffalo.edu](http://www.socialwork.buffalo.edu). Marion Bogo is a professor of social work at the Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work at the University of Toronto where she teaches direct clinical social work practice and the theory and practice of social work education. Professor Bogo's research and scholarship focuses on competency for professional practice including social work education and clinical social work supervision. In today's podcast Professor Bogo discusses field instruction as they seek to Pedagogy of the social work profession. Integrating theory knowledge skills and values. Zoe Koston Senior Field Coordinator at the University at Buffalo School of Social Work is our interviewer Hi this is Zoe Koston. I'm a senior field education coordinator at the University of Buffalo Graduate School of Social Work. And it is my great pleasure to introduce Professor Marion Bogo. She's a professor at the Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work at the University of Toronto.

[00:02:13] Professor Bogo thank you so much for joining me today. Let's say I just want to start with my first question is C.S. W.E. and ePASS 2008 has designated field education as the signature pedagogy of social work. What does this concept mean exactly. Thank you for inviting me to do this podcast. I'm extremely committed to field education and I think CSWE has made a major commitment to recognizing the fundamental purpose of professional education which is to prepare future social work practitioners to practice the profession. This is not to in any way diminish the importance of courses in theory in values in research and so forth but the designation of field as the signature pedagogy really highlights the importance of teaching students to think to behave and to act with integrity. Following our values in the practice of social work so it recognizes that in order to learn how to do and I emphasize do any practice one has to be prepared in a pedagogical method in a way of teaching and learning. That really helps the student and the novice practitioner. Bring together ideas theories research knowledge knowledge of policy values skills to bring it all together in what is in fact very complex practice behaviors. So to see field is simply learning skills or a direct application of knowledge to practice. It's really to not totally understand what professional practice is about because any professional practice involves a very nuanced and intricate integration of these various strands of knowledge and skillful behaviour but done through the unique characteristics and qualities of the professional practitioner. And this is true in all professional disciplines.

[00:04:55] So a number of years ago the president the then president of the Carnegie Foundation a brilliant educational scholar by the name of Lee Shulman came up with this term signature pedagogy to capture the essence of a profession's educational approach to helping students integrate this theory knowledge based value based and skill base and CSWE has chosen to use that terminology to defined field education. This is not to say that there aren't other signature pedagogies in social work. I think for example our use of the case method in teaching or our use of simulations are other pedagogies that can help students learn this kind of integration that's crucial for professional practice. However these other pedagogies are not universal in the way field education is. So that again the concept of signature pedagogy is that if I were to go to any school of social

work in the U.S. I would see the same teaching and learning going on in the interests of really socializing students to the profession. And that's the big challenge for those of us who are so committed to field education. The challenge is to ensure that field education in any setting across the country is in fact being offered in a similar way. And we know that for all kinds of organizational and structural issues we haven't quite come to that point yet in your most recent book achieving competence and social work through field education. You certainly talk about the signature pedagogy and you had said that you hoped that the 2008 ePASS would be successful in generating more attention on the field education. So I wondered if you thought that it actually has been successful in generating more positive education and research and feel that creation. I think it may be a bit early to say.

[00:07:31] We certainly have seen at CSWE a number of presentations where people who are responsible for field education programs or who are interested in research on field education are turning their heads to unpacking the concept and figuring out what's most effective. I think the challenge for building the knowledge base of our signature pedagogy is related to the extent to which doctoral programs are encouraging and preparing the next generation of social work educators. By that I mean we do need to foster a respect for and a commitment for and of course resources for studies in educational approaches for social work that are effective. If we look at our colleagues in health professions such as medicine nursing the rehabilitation professions such as physiotherapy and occupational therapy I can see over the last 10-15 years that more and more faculty members have located their program of research in education for their specific profession. I don't think that's happening as much in social work but my hope is with the emphasis in ePASS on signature pedagogy that that will encourage new scholars to think about locating all or some of their programs of research in this broader field of education research but also of course in field education research. That's a wonderful hope and I think that is starting to move in that direction because it certainly is generating a lot of conversations as you say a lot more presentations at CSWE. It seems that and again you mentioned this in the book that something that's a great challenge is economics at this point that the challenges on field educators within their agencies and so trying to have the balance.

[00:09:54] What suggestions do you have possibly helping to deal with the balance of the challenges of the reality in the actual agency and then trying to always improve the quality of the educational experience. I think that schools of social work especially schools in research intensive universities or in schools with strong relationships with their communities because they are highly involved in community service. I think that schools of social work really have to take a very proactive position in developing true partnerships with agencies especially large agencies that have the capacity to take significant numbers of students. I think of the model of the university affiliated teaching hospital I think of large departments of child protection services that really would have a reason for being highly involved with schools of social work. The reason would be that a very good practicum experience leads to well trained well oriented workforce who could then be employed by the Child Protective Services. So I often think that the person who really should be negotiating the field practicum is the dean or director of the program that it really should begin with into institutional relationships that serve the needs of the university but also of the community agency or teaching hospital or practice setting. And from time to time there have been some interesting experiments described in the literature where schools have partnered with service agencies and these agencies have made a long term commitment to social work education and see that it is in their best interests to be highly involved in field education. I think the initiatives of the Hartford project for Gerontology have really been some of the best programs to get a more reasonable relationship between agencies in this case serving the elderly and Schools of Social Work.

[00:12:23] I think that the California Social Work Education Consortium and their efforts in producing an effective and highly competent child welfare workforce is another model to look at.

But clearly in my view the negotiation for practicum needs to start at the most senior level rather than rely on the good will and the voluntary contribution of frontline social workers and their relationships with their personal relationships often with the people who run the field programs. Yes you bring up very good points. I was excited again when I was reading your book that you had brought up the Hartford because at the School of Social Work as you probably know we do have a heart for program. And so it's very exciting for the field department involved in that having had to develop the rotation model with Debra Walter is the P.I. that so I agree with you I think that it really is good when there can be funding to try different models and to be doing the research and seeing which is most effective. Marion What do you think informs social works approach to field education. Well that's an interesting question because really we've been doing field education probably since the early days of the nineteen hundreds. So clearly we have built up a very rich experiential base or sort of a practice wisdom about what works in field education. And interestingly as I've looked at the various theoretical perspectives that inform field education and aside look at the empirical base about field education it often supports the practice wisdom that we've generated over. My goodness it's almost 100 years now of offering field education.

[00:14:24] So let me sort of first think about the theoretical base where we started field education using an apprenticeship model which is that you learn through watching and through doing under the tutelage of a more experienced expert practitioner. So there certainly remains this watching and doing dimension in thinking about field education. We then in the 80s social work became very interested in the contributions of adult learning theory and Malcolm Knowles wrote a paper that was published in The Journal of Social Work Education that had a tremendous impact on what we were doing in field education at the risk of being very reductionistic. One of the key ideas in adult learning theory is that as adults we engage in learning in this case learning how to practice social work we engage in learning with our own self and our self concept highly connected highly involved in all of our feelings about ourself are very prominent in that experience. And so the recognition was that adults involved engage in this very active and very motivated way in learning and field education and hence the implications for teaching was that we needed to move out of a hierarchical apprenticeship like a very traditional supervisor underling approach to something that was more collaborative that respected that our students were adult learners and that attempted to engage them in a very active way in setting learning goals and deciding how it was that they wanted to learn what methodologies worked best for them and in a lot of mutuality in evaluation sometimes in our early days of using adult learning theory I think field instructors backed away from some of their own expertise and their own authority and their own comfort with the evaluation or assessment role.

[00:16:53] But I think that the fundamental idea of collaboration working together and recognizing the emotional involvement of the student that one's identity and sense of self are very much on the line lead us to thinking about relationship collaboration and the importance of balancing high support and expecting a lot of risk taking. So I think that adult education contributed in that way also in the 80s social work educators became very interested in the contribution of David Kolb and the learning style inventory and Kolb's whole emphasis on learning from experience provided I believe another legitimate base for field learning that could really identify that we learn from experience but we won't learn exclusively from experience. We need to be able to step back from that experience reflect on it conceptualize it in some way linked to some sort of knowledge base in order to then come up with an integrated approach to our practice. I think then more recently with contributions from our understanding of cultures social identity social location that we become much more sensitive to the fact that people have different learning styles that are not only based on their own psychology and development but that are also culturally constructed and learnt in their families and in other cultures that these social identities are present and active in field education and field education learning. More recently we are learning from neuroscience which again the contributions from new research on cognition and learning reinforces a lot of our old tried and true

principles especially that we actively engage in processing new learning. So when we think about learning or practice such as social work which is so complicated so nuanced and so un-predictable based on the contingencies of each particular situation. Neuroscience really shows us how we need to be actively engaged in learning.

[00:19:42] But we need numerous opportunities to practice and learn. Malcolm Gladwell has popularized interesting research which I believe he calls the 10000 hour rule. In other words one has to practice for close to 10000 hours in order to become truly expert at a performance such as a sports performance or a music performance. When I read that I thought to myself that's very interesting because in fact it often takes a good five to ten years before a professional feels they're proficient and I wonder then do your social work students have enough opportunity in their field practicum to actually practice to actually interview clients to work with groups to work with committees with community members to do it again and again and again much as a student in medicine is rushing around taking blood or taking a history from many many patients. Do our students have enough opportunity to keep practicing. So I think there's a lot of interesting theory is that affect the way in which we think and feel to education. It's interesting to hearing about history and I think that's always again helps us to know where we're going to learn and where we've been. I think that the pressures on field educators especially field educators with maybe only a few years of experience I find what often happens as a field educator in essence is trying to teach the students how to do their individual job and I think that it's very difficult to really think as an educator and then also to do one's job especially when the social worker has and the profession themselves possibly a few years.

[00:21:56] I wonder if you have any advice for field educators on how to put on the hat. Let's say an educator and really be able trying to expand and really teach this in a way that's meaningful. I've often written about the inappropriate use of the word supervisor to describe a field educator. In fact I've tried for many years to change the terminology and I think I've remained largely unsuccessful. The reason I get concerned about the terminology is for exactly the reason you're raising in your comment though when we think about ourselves as a supervisor we are really overseeing the work. The practice in an agency with a client with a specific role with a mandate with a purpose and we become very focused on that which is in front of us. I think if we think of ourselves as field educators or field instructors then we really do have to think much more broadly about helping the student develop as a social work practitioner. One of the ways I think of doing that comes out of the theoretical ideas for instance of code or even of the writings code Donald Chunn but the reflective practitioner and that idea is that yes you're in the experience of practice but you need to in some way to link that to the knowledge base of the profession. In my earlier book with Elaine Fada we developed this integration of theory and practice loop where we tried to capture the importance of the student and the field instructor working back and forth inductively and deductively from the practice situation that's presented to you and then making sense of it by looking at the knowledge base or some conceptual framework.

[00:24:10] Ricky fortune who is a professor at SUNY Albany has done one of the best programs of research and field education and she's looked at the various components that students perceive as affecting their learning. And she's developed or articulated this idea of the importance of linking practice to a conceptual framework that students really need that broader picture in order to understand the links between theory and practice. Now field instructors will often say the day went to school 10 years ago when the theory they learned to that time may be different from the theory that the student is learning today. I don't think that should necessarily be a stumbling block because we're not talking about a direct transfer of an idea into practice. Rather we're talking about discussions about practice through the lens of some concept. So it could be a concept taken from cognitive behavioral theory from systemic theory from an oppressive theory from psychodynamic theory. It doesn't really I don't think the stumbling block is that our theories don't match. I think it's

rather are we stepping back enough to reflect at one level up and a more abstract level using some concepts. First of all to understand and assess the situation in front of us and then to look at the potential interventions that one could use to address whatever situations are in front of you instead. I think we can fall into really in a more old fashioned apprenticeship model. What's the problem. Says the field instructor and then the field instructor and student brainstorm about what they should do without that intervening thinking about thinking conceptually about what is it that we're saying and this is where of course evidence based practice comes in.

[00:26:38] What does the literature say about what might potentially be useful in this situation. I agree I think that's a great concept because again developmentally when the student is learning all new skills it's difficult for them to be able to see the bigger picture because they're trying to just get through the day to day understanding. And as you say social work is very complicated. Each situation is different. And we really need to assess it in its uniqueness as we approach it. So I agree I think to be able to have a larger framework to come back to helps to get the bigger picture helps to understand not reinventing the wheel so to speak and that's important. And so then the challenge for the field instructor and interestingly I have actually done some studies on supervision of workers both in children's child welfare and in addiction and mental health. And we find the same thing that frontline workers want their supervisors to engage them in this reflective conceptual discussion.

[00:27:52] And so the challenge for supervisors of staff and field instructors of students is to find some protected time that one hour a week that's quiet the phone is turned off you're not on the computer you're not playing with your Blackberry and you're focusing very carefully and closely on this kind of practice and linkage of practice to something that's bigger and broader and more conceptual and I think the challenge for some field educators is they may not have had or aren't having regular supervision and I think that it's very challenging to provide good supervision if someone isn't having it regularly and I think that there's a lot of pressure in many agencies for billing reasons economic reasons that supervision isn't happening as often as is a profession that we would like to see. Yes that's been documented really across the board. So I love the way you're framing it is a good reminder of what can be discussed and supervision. I think again sometimes people think oh well I've answered the questions on a day to day basis which I I nicknamed Triad's supervision and then to be able to explain to someone well what should you be talking about during that one on one supervision the weekly supervision. And again to be bringing véry into it to be breaking the bigger picture is really important. Yes yes. The other thing that is key in this idea of what works in field education is helping the students. And again this comes both from our theory from adult education or theories from the reflective practitioner but to as well as from the research really to help the students figure out what all of this means for them and to be able to manage themselves and their own reactions. So I guess if you were trained in a certain era this would be what psychodynamic theorists would call transference countertransference professional use of self. What we're seeing now in the modern era is a lot of talk in part stimulated by our understanding again from Cognitive Neuroscience about reactivity versus response. So put another way we know that we are hardwired to react to situations that engender anxiety fear confusion in us.

[00:30:41] So our challenge as Social Work educators is to help students using what ever theoretical framework we want to help students understand how they need to use themselves in a professional way that includes their ability to be calm to be grounded to be centred in their practice so that they can respond in an intentional manner to their clients rather than react out of their own anxiety their own confusion or reacting to their own psychological or social position that will just break any empathy or joining with the client. And so there's been a lot of recent interesting attention to the contribution of mindfulness and meditative approaches to helping us be more centred more grounded in interviews regardless of what way that field instructor goes at it. Using ideas about transference using ideas about use of self using ideas about mindfulness I think the point is that field instructors always have to help students learn how to manage them self in their professional

role and they have to be cognisant of the boundary so that it remains an educationally focused activity and doesn't slip into a quasi therapeutic relationship and that's where historically we've gone back and forth from in the early days being very focused on the personal self of the student to going all the other way to not touching anything that might be personal about the student. To now I think not so much in our writings but certainly in our conversations trying to find creative useful effective ways for students to be able to be authentically present but not so overwhelmed so flooded with anxieties that we end up with burnout and people feeling overly stressed by their work. One thing that I know we've been focusing on as we go through re accreditation is having a large self care component for students which certainly we know is something that doesn't happen enough for social workers and students. And so that's something that we've been focusing on.

[00:33:26] Hopefully assistance with trying to become centered as much as they possibly can. You're absolutely right Zoe I think schools of social work have been paying much more attention to self care recognizing that the field of social work and especially the field practicum can stir up a lot of anxiety a lot of strong emotions that students may have not yet learned how to handle just because of where they are in their own development. So I think schools of social work can do a lot of training teaching workshops and yet it's the field instructor who will really see the effect of students understanding or not understanding what's going on with themselves because the greatest anxiety as well as the greatest excitement often occurs for students in the field situation. So we need to support field instructors as they work with students in these really rather intense dyads of field instructors student relationship Ferring and you've mentioned some findings of the research or some other findings that you feel would be useful for field education and field educators. Well one of the findings that has just endured across studies again and again and again we find the same principle and that is that the relational context of field education is crucial. In other words the nature of the relationship between the student and the field instructor is the context for learning. It also can be if it's not a positive experience for both. It can become of a very negative factor and affect the degree to which the student can learn. And it certainly affects field instructors when field instructors experience that they're in a relationship that's tense and difficult. They often will report in studies that they've decided to take a break from doing field education.

[00:35:46] However I must point out that all the studies on field education almost 85 to 90 percent of students report a really terrific learning experience. So obviously we are doing something right in field education and students are learning and thriving and then are anxious to become field instructors themselves a little bit down the road. So the key features about the relationship that come out from the research is that the field instructor meets with a student regularly that the meeting is long enough that substantial issues can be covered and that it's un-interrupted the student really has the total attention of the field instructor for that precious one hour time. Students talk a lot about the importance of field instructors who are available and supportive that theme of support just comes out again and again across the studies. On the other hand again developmentally as these students feel they've got a supportive secure strong base they are then able to move out to become more autonomous and to come back when they feel they need some refueling. Suzanne Bennett and Kathy Deal have done some very interesting writing using attachment theory formulations and applying it to the field instructor student relationship. The other thing that students talk a lot about is the importance of a collaborative relationship that this serves as a role model. As you mentioned earlier Zoey we are role model around self care. Our role model for all kinds of activities that a student would engage in. So a collaborative relationship that is respectful of boundaries and often we see in the studies that students will experience in a parallel way.

[00:38:10] The social worker client relationship through being given a very collaborative very professional student field instructor relationship. So I think the relationship is enormously powerful and has the opportunity to teach both explicitly and implicitly what social work is about. Connected to that is the principle of giving feedback. Now the field instructors can often be very nice in the

way in which they give feedback but it's clear not only from what students say but from research in a wide range of ways of learning or performance. That feedback really needs to be based on observing what students actually do. I'm sometimes perplexed as to why being social workers have held onto the primacy of the process recording despite so much research in the cognitive sciences about the human tendency to distort not necessarily consciously but to distort what we actually have done. We've done some recent research where we use the object of structured clinical examination the Boski to observe students performance with a standardized client over a 15 20 minute segment and we then have the students engaged in a very structured reflective dialogue or a reflective written exercise. When I say we we are the raters who rate the performance and then rate this reflection along a number of dimensions and it's always interesting to me that a good 15 to 20 percent of students when they reflect on a performance that I've observed they talk about doing things in that performance that I saw they did not do. So while process recording is interesting in terms of helping us understand how students perceive in the sense they make of certain situations.

[00:40:44] If we're really interested in educating students to be effective practitioners we really need samples of observation of their actual practice and so the teaching methods that we use need to involve us in some way in seeing students. In practice this can be through working together where your both co-leading leading an interview a group a committee meeting what have you. It can be done very well with audio recordings or video recordings now in audio and video recordings. Given the pressure on time it would be unrealistic to expect field instructors to watch or listen to an entire interview. But given our interest in developing active learners and in helping students develop ability to self assess a field instructor could easily ask the student to review the entire interview and select segments that demonstrate where they're stuck or that demonstrate their best work and then the field instruction would be highly focused around a piece of practice linking it to some conceptual framework reflecting on the experience for the student. Putting that altogether into OK how could you have handled this differently. What could you do next. And then moving into almost coaching for a more skillful practice. So that kind of observation feedback then having the students practice again takes us very close to this learning loop of doing reflecting thinking doing or practicing again. And if students can do this again and again and again. Theoretically they should be able to learn how to improve their level of practice. When field instructors give feedback the research again shows that it needs to be collaborative it needs to be balance both positive and negative. It should encourage students to be self-critical and then we have a number of studies that clearly points out that when feedback is demeaning or harsh that students shut down and they don't learn.

[00:43:41] But I think most social workers are very well able from their own practice experience to give feedback that is both supportive but it's also fairly direct in terms of showing how things can be done differently. So I guess in summary I would say that from the research and supported by our theoretical ideas the main principles in field instruction is one that we work to develop a very strong student field instructor relationship one that's very professional as well as collaborative two that we provide students with lots of opportunities to practice to practice doing social work that we provide them with lots of opportunities to observe others social workers but also to be observed. For that we have the opportunity for this kind of reflective discussion and review of their practice a discussion that is linked to a conceptual framework but that also returns to giving them very concrete and specific feedback about how they can proceed in their work with their clients or committees or groups. What are the current challenges to offering field education. Well I think that through the theorizing the practice wisdom and the research I think we really have learnt a lot about what leads to high quality effective field education. I think now the next step is to figure these entire institutional models that provide the training for new field instructors so that they they learn about these ingredients and they learn how to practice as a field instructor.

[00:45:51] So they in turn need opportunities to talk about their challenges and field instruction to

link their field instruction practice with some conceptual theoretical framework with some of the ideas that we've talked about today and to integrate all of that within their own personal use of self. In order for field instructors to have that kind of professional development the organizations they work for have to be prepared to give them time for that activity. The activity of professional development and the activity of working with students. So it seems to me that we keep coming back to the importance of organizational context. Schools of Social Work valuing field education enough to they will put resources towards supporting field education professional development for field instructors and working in collaboration with organizations in their communities so that in some way these organizations will put resources towards the education of students. It's very interesting that in North America we have developed a model that rests on the voluntary contribution of organizations and fielded educators. But let me tell you there are many countries around the world that do not operate field education in that way. For example in the United Kingdom the government is concerned enough about the quality of services to the public. That money is given through government ministries which would be departments in the U.S.. That money is given to organizations to provide field education for social work students. This is seen in the interest of developing a competent workforce that will serve the needs of the population. And so field instructors in the UK they're referred to as practice teachers. But it's the same role field instructors receive part of their workload for especially targeted for field education. And the organization receives government money targeted to education. This is also the case in Israel again where their national government provides funding through their ministry of education to universities to provide a budget for organizations and for field education.

[00:49:10] Why we in North America have gone with a voluntary model is I guess a fact of history. And so when people say to me we don't have enough resources for field education. My response is Well we have to look at the kind of decisions we make about resource allocation and could we be thinking differently and more creatively about the way in which we access funds and the way in which we allocate funds so that we might be able to have different arrangements with organizations for field education. I think you bring up excellent points and it's difficult to have this conversation during the current fiscal crisis that many areas are in. But if we look at other disciplines education does provide stipends for there. What we would call field educators from preceptors many other disciplines do the same thing. And yet there and also in our state system as far as our university system. So I agree with you. It may be historically that we've never received that or asked for it but it is something that does make the current fiscal issue moral crisis for social work because social workers are being asked to do more with less and oftentimes taking students which is such a critical professional development for them for the agency and for the profession. It has it's a huge issue and we're always faced with the structural problem and social work that some in social work education that unlike our colleagues in the health professions who did not do force theory and practice but rather locate much of their preparation for professional practice in the teaching hospitals in social work.

[00:51:20] We went the route more typical of law schools of divorcing the or separating the teaching of social work from the practice of social work. And so we have this structural problem and we who are interested in field education are always trying to find creative ways to bridge this divide between the theory of social work the practice of social work. And so we are left with this historical anomaly which our colleagues in other human service professions are not faced with. Well on that note looking towards the future for solving those challenges we appreciate so much your willingness to do this podcast with us. It's just been a great pleasure having this conversation. Thank you Marion Bogo for joining us this morning. Thank you. It's been a pleasure. You've been listening to Professor Marion Bogo discuss field construction as a signature Pedagogy of the social work profession. Thanks for listening and join us again next time for more lectures and conversations on social work practice and research. Hi I'm Nancy Smith professor and dean at the University at Buffalo School of Social Work. Thanks for listening to our podcast. For more



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