

# **Best Practices in Social Work Field Education: From Global to Local**

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# Field is the Heart of Social Work Education



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# Signature Pedagogies

Elements of instruction and of **socialization** that teach future practitioners the fundamental dimensions of professional work in their discipline—**to think, to perform, and to act ethically and with integrity.**

(EPAS, 2015 – adapted from Shulman, 2005).

# Signature Pedagogy: Field Education

Field education is the signature pedagogy for social work...

The intent of field education is to **integrate** the theoretical and conceptual contribution of the classroom with the practical world of the practice setting. (EPAS, 2015).

# Need to Teach for Integration



Medicine/Health  
Professions



Social Work



Law



# Overview

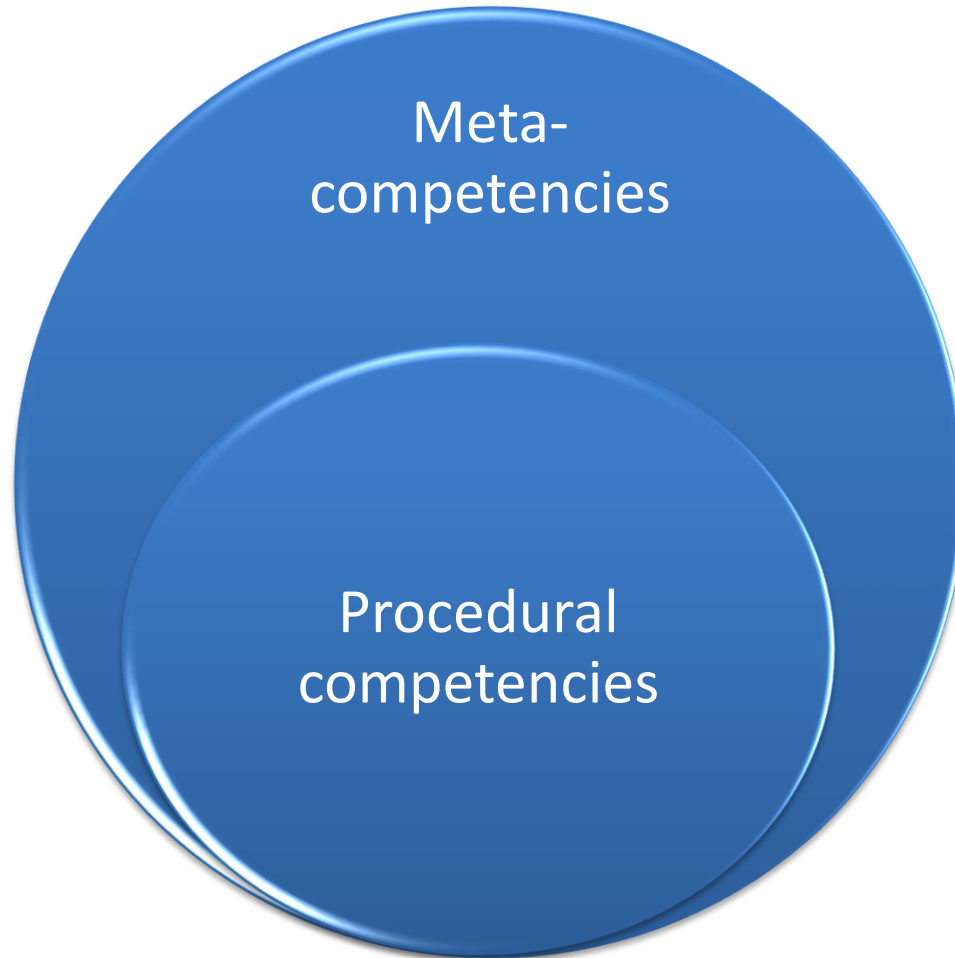
- Towards holistic competence
  - Content: WHAT should students learn
- Best practices
  - Process: HOW should I teach

# Indicators of Competence

Making the implicit explicit

- List five characteristics students must demonstrate

# Holistic Competence





# A Model of Holistic Competence in Social Work

ORGANIZATION AND COMMUNITY CONTEXT

**Skills**

**Self-regulation**

Emotions, reflection,  
self-awareness

**Complex Practice Behavior**

**Knowledge**

Generic and specialist  
Theoretical and empirical

**Judgment**

Assumptions, critical thinking,  
decision making

PROFESSIONAL CONTEXT – VALUES (Bogo et al., 2014)

# EPAS 2015

EPAS recognizes a holistic view of competence; that is, the demonstration of competence is informed by **knowledge, values, skills, and cognitive and affective processes** that include the social worker's **critical thinking, affective reactions, and exercise of judgment** in regard to unique practice situations. Overall professional competence is multi-dimensional and composed of interrelated competencies. (CSWE, 2015, p.6)

# Best Practices in Field Education

# The Process of Field Education

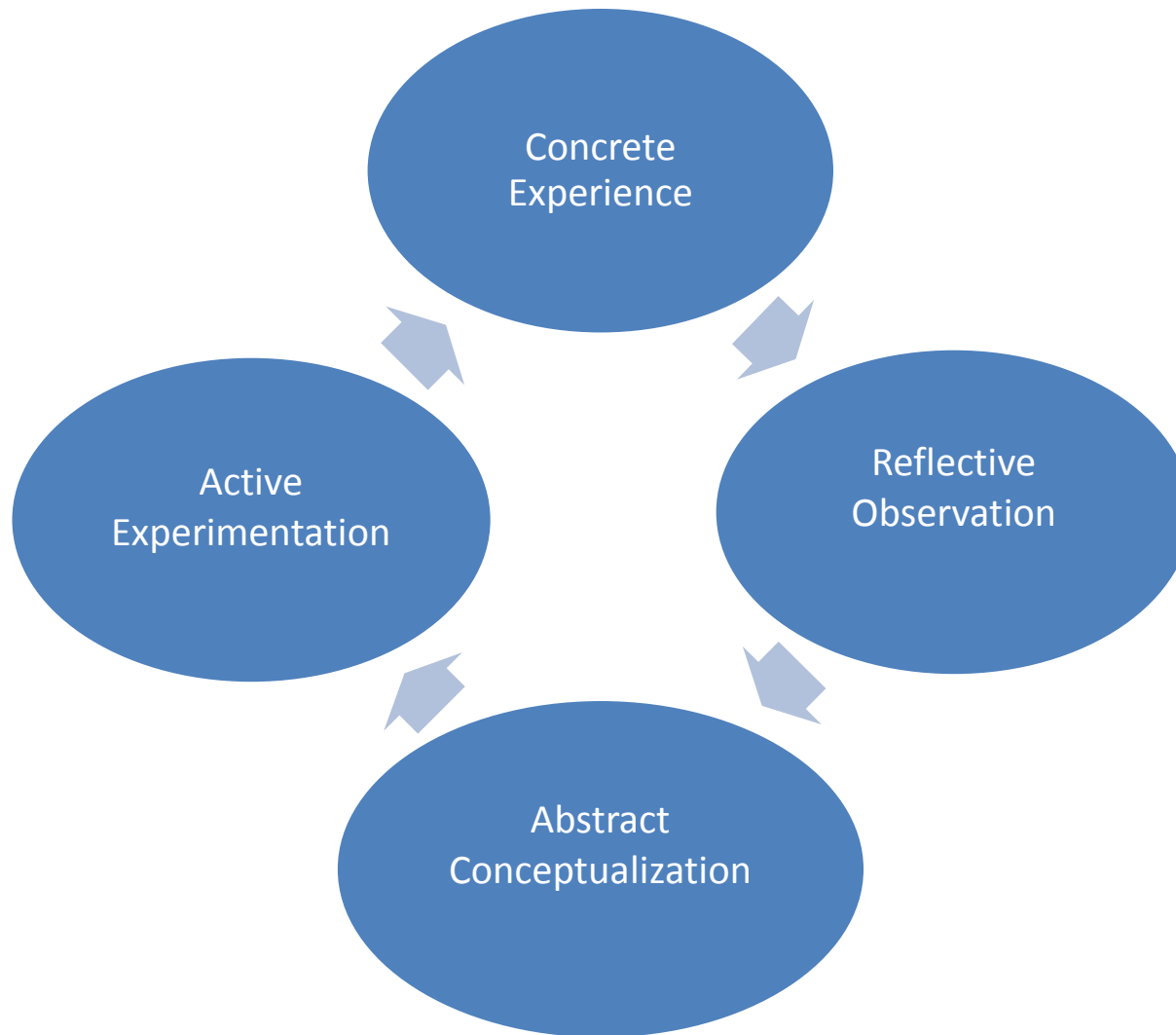
- How do students learn in field settings?
- What do field instructors do to promote that learning?
- What students do to promote their own learning?

# About Student Learning

- Experiential learning
- Active learning
- Adult learning

# Model of experiential learning- Kolb's Learning Cycle

(1984, 2005)



# Adult Learning

- New learning affects self-concept, feelings about self
- Competence, incompetence
- Self -efficacy
  - Helpful guidance leads to feeling empowered – “I can learn this”

# Neuroscience, Emotions, and Optimal Anxiety

- Regulation/dysregulation: emotions drive attention and memory
  - Dysregulation – inhibits learning
- Relaxed attention – lessens stress & anxiety
- Positivity increases learning (Fredrickson, 2013).
- Learners need self-awareness and strategies to manage their reactions.

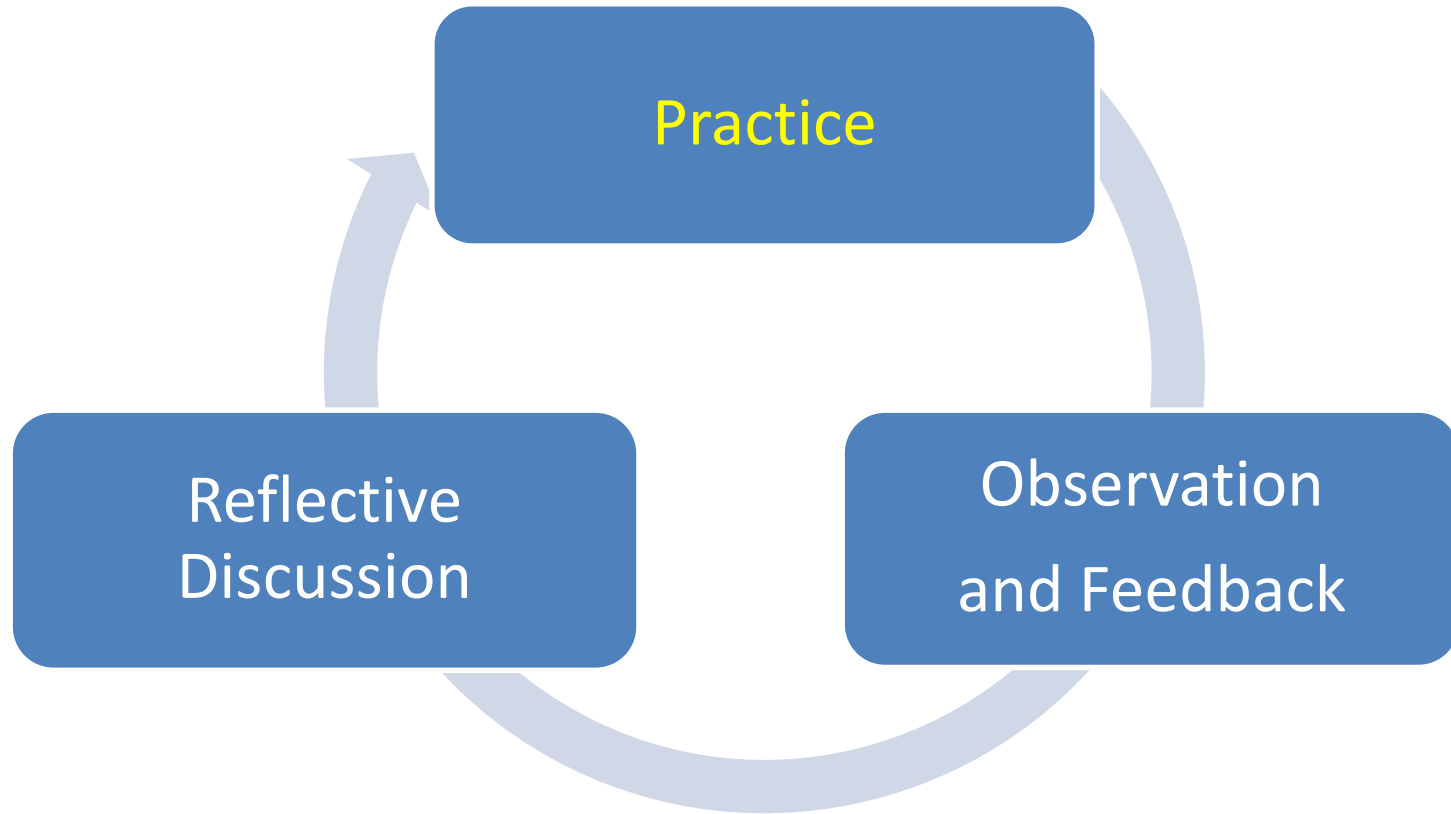


# Positive Learning Environment

- Context affects learning: Strong positive learning environments in organizations and teams
- Importance of the **Relationship** – supportive and calming...and challenging.

# Evidence-Based Supervisory Strategies

# Learning-Teaching/Supervisory Processes



# Neuro-science

- Action strengthens new and existing neural connections
- New knowledge needs to:
  - Make sense
  - Be relevant
  - Build on existing knowledge
- Learners needs to 'construct' new knowledge for self .

# MANY Opportunities to Practice

- “No substitute for engaging in an actual interview” (Katz et al., 2014; Lee & Fortune, 2013a).
- Supported by research on learning and simulation (Bogo et al., 2011, 2013, 2016).
- Experience and competence.

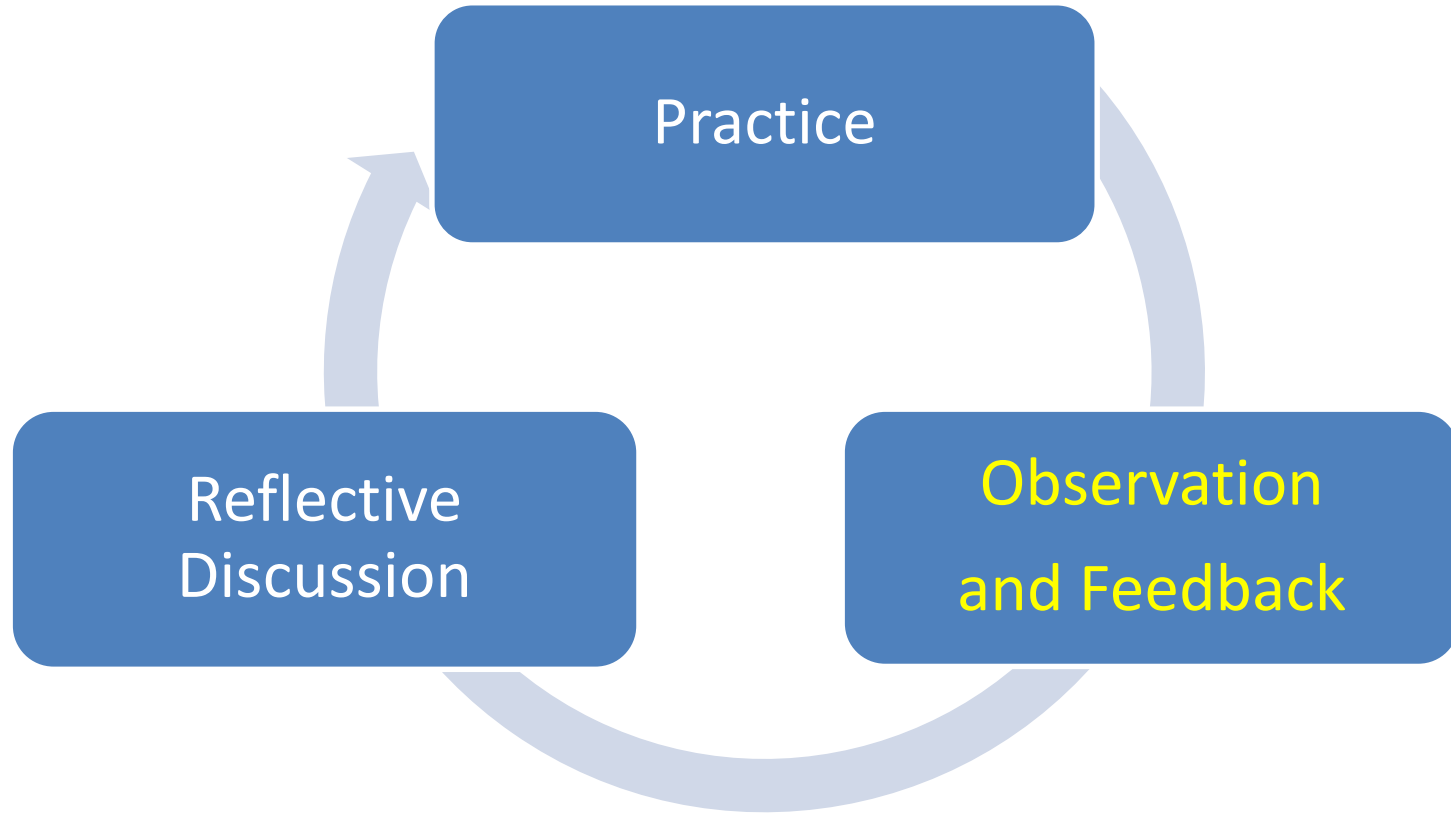
# Opportunities to Practice

- Practice
  - Independent work with clients
  - Repetition of tasks
  - Variation in tasks
- 10,000 hours of practice\*\* to assimilate what needs to be known, to gain mastery

# Deliberate Practice

- Identify areas needing development
- Focus attention
- Rehearsal
- Practice again

# Learning-Teaching/Supervisory Processes





# Observe, Debrief/Feedback

- How can you have a reflective dialogue about something you have not seen?
- How can you give feedback on skills if you have not seen the skills in action?
- Practice gets lost in the telling. Instruction ‘in the dark’.

# But....

- Students are often not observed.
  - Human tendency to distort
  - “Talk the talk and walk the walk”
  - Unskilled and unaware.
- Field instruction is administratively focused.
- Student anxiety
  - Private and public practice
  - Role induction
  - Strategies – e.g., breathing, mindfulness, etc.

# Observe, Debrief/Feedback about Practice in Action

Observe role models – social learning theory

Being observed and deliberate practice

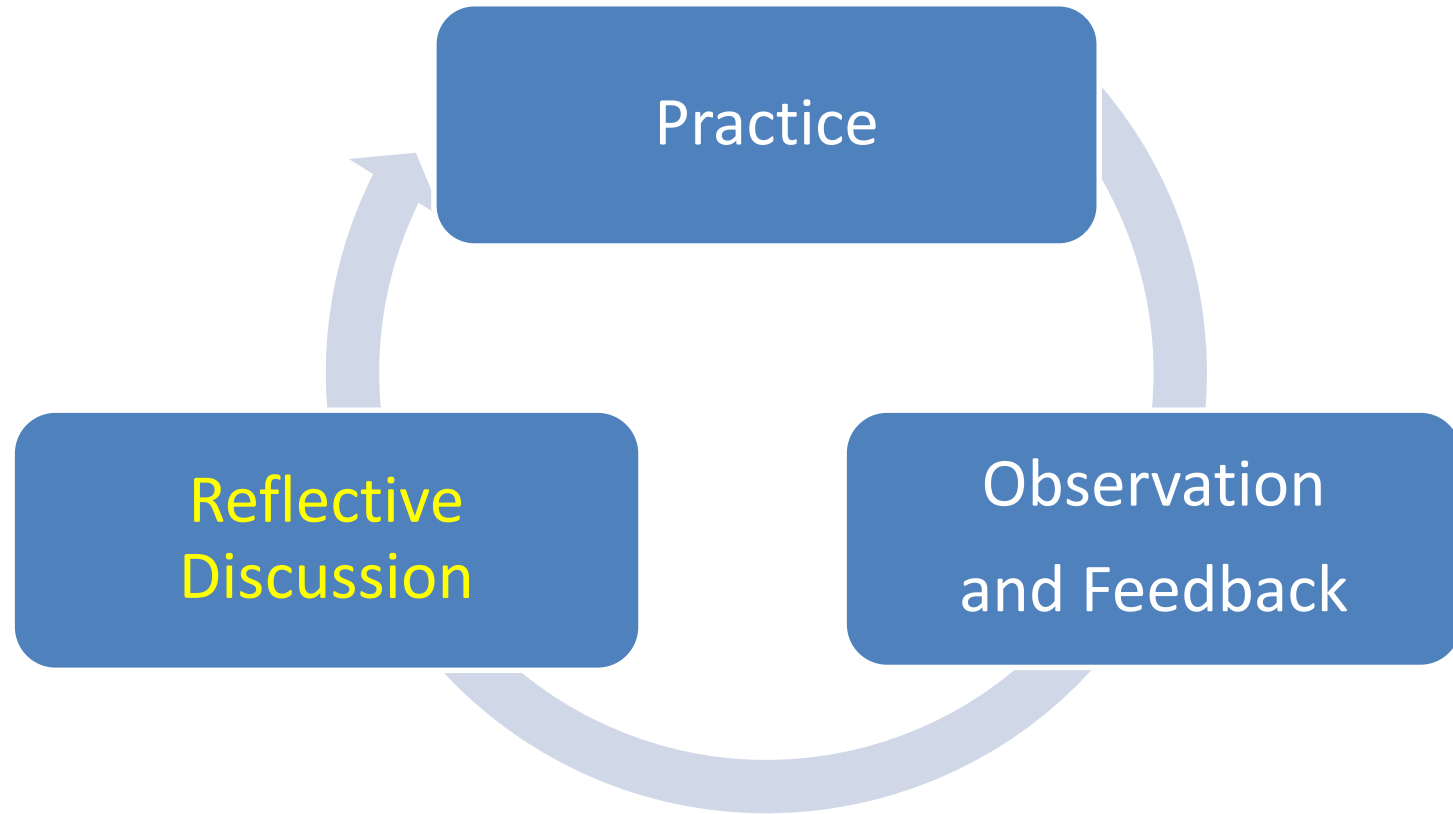
- Observed
- De-brief and feedback
- Coaching and rehearsal
- Opportunity to practice again

Links theory and practice and focus on what student needs to practice to improve performance. **Integration.**

# Feedback, Coaching, Rehearsal

- During an observation: prompting, suggestions, coaching
- After an observation: Based on practice data observed
  - Immediacy, close in time
  - Clear and specific, in behavioral terms
  - Balance positive and negative – constructive
  - Collaborative – student or worker self-assessment
- Credibility
- Objectionable styles: Demeaning or harsh

# Learning-Teaching/Supervisory Processes



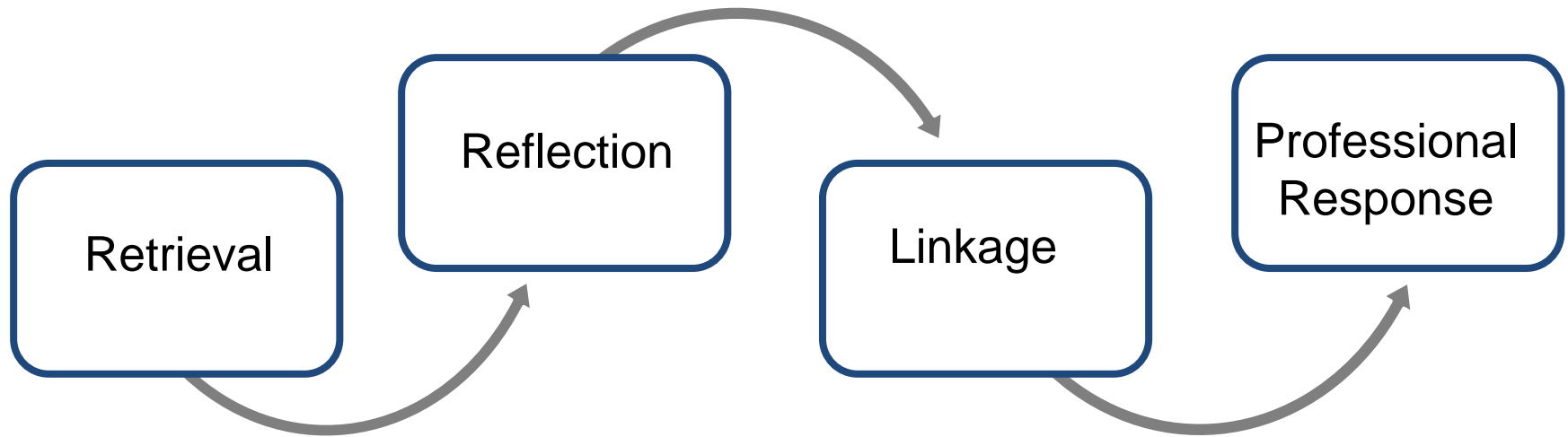
# Reflective Discussion

- Theory and research
  - Experiential
  - Neuroscience
  - Deliberate practice
  - Reflective practitioner
- Social work field education research
  - The importance of conceptual frameworks (Lee & Fortune, 2013).

# Cognitive Processes

- Tacit knowledge underlies performance of complex tasks
- Importance of experts making this explicit
  - Provides a rationale and promotes intentional practice
- Leads to focusing further observation and debriefing

# Integration of Theory & Practice Loop (ITP)





# Reflective Discussion >> Holistic Competence

When reflective discussions are **grounded in observation** students gain more complex understanding of **rationale** for field instructor's suggestions (intentional practice)

- From abstractions in concepts to actual practice
- Students can internalize theoretical premises through coaching and feedback with reflection-on-action
- Examine students' emotions/cognitions and self-regulation

# Challenge

Balance service and education

- Review client goals and progress
  - Conceptualization of situation
  - Collaborative brainstorming alternatives and next intervention.
- Educational purpose: Link theory, values, research, skills and self.
  - Relate to learning contract and evaluation.

# Socio-emotional Context: Relationship

- **Collaborative supportive** relationships between students and field instructors
- Field instructor balances:
  - high support
  - high expectations
  - **productive struggle**: encourage risk in learning – “mistakes” provide learning opportunities

# Challenges

- Fostering self-awareness in students
- Giving constructive feedback
- Providing 'space' for discussion
- Keeping an educational focus

# Vignette

- Did the field instructor provide an educational focus to the client's situation and the student's reaction?
- Did she normalize and validate when appropriate?
- Did she support the student's development of an empathic stance to the client?
- What would you have done differently?
- How did your own experiences influence what you thought the student was dealing with?

# Best Practices

- Supportive relationship
- Practice opportunities
- Observation and feedback
- Reflective discussion linking concepts to practice

# My Field Instruction

- I am best at....
- I could do better at...
- Things I would do differently next time

# What Students Can Do

- Examine practice through lens of concepts taught at school
- Read and discuss “best readings” from field instructor
  - Develop critical thinking.
- Develop awareness of own emotional state, triggers, and ways of self-regulation
- Develop reflective capacity – mindful, respond rather than react.



# Books on Field Education

- Bogo, M. (2010). *Achieving Competence in Social Work through Field Education*. Toronto, ON. University of Toronto Press.
- Bogo, M. & Vayda, E. (1998). *The Practice of Field Instruction in Social Work: Theory and Process*. 2nd Edition. Co-publication of Columbia University Press and University of Toronto Press.

# Resources

- Fact sheets on aspects of field education

<http://research.socialwork.utoronto.ca/hubpage/fact-sheets>

- Podcast on field education

<http://www.insocialwork.org/episode.asp?ep=65>

- Website on Competence in Social Work

<http://research.socialwork.utoronto.ca/hubhomepage/building-professional-competence>

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- Katz, E., Tufford, L., Bogo, M., & Regehr, C. (2014). Illuminating students' pre-practicum conceptual and emotional states: Implications for field education. *Journal of Teaching in Social Work 34*, 96-108.
- Lee, M., & Fortune, A. E. (2013a). Do we need more "doing" activities or "thinking" activities in the field practicum? *Journal of Social Work Education, 49*(4), 646-660.
- Lee, M., & Fortune, A. E. (2013b). Patterns of field learning activities and their relation to learning outcome. *Journal of Social Work Education, 49*, 420-438.

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- Regehr, C., Bogo, M., Donovan, K., Anstice, S. & Kim, A. (2012). Identifying student competencies in macro practice: Articulating the practice wisdom of field instructors. *Journal of Social Work Education(48)2*: 307-319.
- Wayne, J., Bogo, M., & Raskin, M. (2006). Field notes-The need for radical change in field education. *Journal of Social Work Education, 42(1)*, 161-169.
- Wayne, J., Bogo, M., & Raskin, M. (2010). Field education as the signature pedagogy of social work education: Congruence and disparity. *Journal of Social Work Education, 46(3)*, 327-339.

# Conference

- International Interdisciplinary Conference on Clinical Supervision. June 2017

<http://socialwork.adelphi.edu/news-events/events/international-interdisciplinary-conference-on-clinical-supervision/>