

Technology in Social Work Education and Curriculum: The High Tech, High Touch Social Work Educator

by Richard L. Beaulaurier and Martha Haffey
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Reviewed by Romeo C. Quieta

This is the first time that I have come across a book that has adequately discussed the use of technology and its value to social work education. This book is certainly a remarkable increment to the social work literature. The supporting literature and the citations made by the writers are very extensive. The depth and breadth of the articles are very informative and helpful to social work educators who are adept in conventional teaching and may wish to reinforce this with the infusion of the latest technological advances in electronic learning. Similarly, the articles may also be of practical value to social workers that have the proclivity to make use of technology to assist them in the helping process. The caveat, though, is that the citations to support the claim on the use of high technology may unnecessarily overindulge the reader. Overall, the different articles effectively demonstrate the use of computer and electronic media to enhance and facilitate the learning and performance of social work students and social work practitioners.

The book covers a variety of cases related to social work education and curriculum. The cases presented provide interesting illustrations on the mechanics and assessment on the use of technology while covering a wide spectrum of well-researched and evidence-based articles.

However, it is not clear on how the articles are subdivided into three parts. The smooth flow and transition of the articles could have been better achieved if the articles were organized based on thematic presentations: first, articles about the framework or general discussion on the use of the technology; second, articles on tested and documented application of the technology; and third, articles that discuss its integration and implications to social work and education and curriculum. Otherwise, the partition into three parts may not be necessary.

The authors are familiar with the subject matter; they are certain and unequivocal with their values. They understand the framework of social work curriculum and how technology can be applied and integrated into social work education.

The authors also hold a clear position on their basic social work values and principles. I strongly agree with the authors that high touch should be a primary consideration and high technology should only be supportive. They argue that technology is useful only as far as it is able to assist and facilitate the training, education, and practice of social work as a helping profession. Technology should not dictate social work practice nor should it be a primary

consideration in the capacity building of students and practitioners.

The book is highly recommended to social work educators and practitioners. It is a must reading for the simple reason that social work is a practice profession and as such, it should be able to muster all the resources and the tools readily available to effectively and efficiently perform its mandate to promote social change and problem solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people.

More importantly, social work cannot be left behind at a time when the power of information dictates the tempo of planned change and the problem solving process. Computerized case management programs and online information can be easily accessed and professionally utilized to facilitate the learning process and eventually to assist people.

While technology has a meteoric rise in the well-endowed countries, this may be a handicap to schools of social work in the 2/3 part of the globe where resources and the access to computers and electronic learning media may be limited or non-existent. It is in this context that it would be instructive to know the student per computer ratio. The next book should be able to provide this data.

The book has given me an added lift to my knowledge base and career. It has made a positive impact on me as a social work educator who has started the journey of using electronic media in the education and training of social workers and other social development workers.

I have been carefully using high technology for the last three years as a social work educator supervising my graduate field work students and as a faculty in-charge using the interactive virtual learning environment for my remote and distance students in social work administration and development. As such, this book has enriched me professionally and fortified my attitude towards the importance of technology in facilitating learning.

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