



MODERN PARADIGM SHIFT IN SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION THROUGH TECHNOLOGY - NEW DIMENSION IN SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

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Abstract:

Social Work Profession is under paradigm shift through Technology. Any profession to galore need to be technology friendly which help the stake holders to enjoy the utilities of the discipline. The inception of technology to profession is to be foreseen through the challenges it brings with it for delivery of service to the needy. Social workers should adopt set of skills and knowledge required to use technology in professional service. They need to follow the humanistic value framework to enhance ethical Social Work Practice with Technology. The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) and Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) have developed Standards for using Technology in the profession to ensure uniform adoptability. Social workers giving service through electronic means should follow the international standards and incorporate them into their practice. Appropriate Support Systems for using technology are to be culturally sound. Electronic communication facilitates easy access to Information, Referral, Advocacy, Counselling and Networking. Social Work Education should draw ideologies crossing curriculum boundaries through setting new curriculum design relevant to the present Practice. Global Social Work Challenges can be met by continuous improvement of specialized knowledge which is based on Constructive Traditional Ideologies and Values. This study introduces 'Technology Aided Social Work Profession (TASWP) Model' which introduce a new dimension of study to the Social Work Education in the world. Educating Social Work students without including present developments, changes and innovations in the professional practice will surely handicap the students when they enter the professional practice and employment hence, the authors through this paper recommend the higher education ministry and universities to include this new dimension of social work profession into to the curriculum of Social Work Higher Education.

Index Terms: Social Work, Profession, Technology, Standard & Curriculum

1. Introduction:

According to Friendlander (1995) Social work is a profession based upon scientific knowledge to maintain human relations to facilitate individuals or groups to exercise individual and societal independence and satisfaction. It started as a charity practice and moved towards creating insights upon social problems and helped the people to strengthen their ego to face any contingency of life constructively in reality. Hamilton Gordon (1947) It attempted to mobilize social forces to resolve the factors leading to ill health, mental suffering, frustration and bad social behavior. Poverty among Large agricultural workers, Slum dwellers & domestic rural population intensified the problem of adjustment due to chronic unemployment, low wages, untreated illness and poor public institutions. Kasius Cora (1954). A democratic society was compelled by its own instincts to find some solution or dilute the intensity of the miseries which it could not avoid. This lead to the development of Social work Profession in India. The past two decades have witnessed the use of information technology in social work practice which facilitated global approach creating difference

in individual practice. The social workers and clients can access web based sources for better interventions. Social Medias plays a vital role through creating support group for people who are at risk. Social Service Organizations have adopted electronic gadgets like photo copying machine, fax machines, Computers, Electronic generated reports for case management, automated billing, forecasted Budgeting, Planned service delivery, global level consultation through Tele-conference with the experts, Emerging geographic information systems to pinpoint community assets and needs. Automated Interventions in future may create more changes by reducing the direct involvement of the worker through wireless technologies in the service delivery. According to Merton (1960) the values placed upon systematic knowledge, technical skill and application of these two to render service is fused into the profession. These current and near-future technologies are changing the nature of professional social work practice in countless ways. As a result, the roles for social workers are changing and they may need to adjust to the new demands for practice in the information age. Social workers should acquire adequate skills to use technology appropriately, and adapt traditional practice protocols to ensure competency and ethical service delivery. The Higher Education Ministry and universities can reform social work education further by Introducing Theoretical and Practical Training Modules on "Technology Aided Social Work Profession Model" in the curriculum of Post Graduate courses for social work education which may expose the social work students to the changing professional dimensions there by equip well to the present professional need of the society.

2. Methodology:

This paper is descriptive by nature depending upon the secondary sources such as books, newspaper, journals, magazines, web links and research papers. The paper attempts to study the impact of technology in Social work profession. It review upon the International Standards for the use of Technology in social work Profession. A conceptual model by name "Technology Aided Social Work Model" including Social Work Education, Blogs, Social Movements, Social Networking, Service Delivery at Health Care, Human Resource Management in Industries, Online Interventions and Social Actions through technology is Introduced. The Technology Aided Social Work Profession Model (TASWP Model) is tested with SWOT (Strength, Weakness, Opportunities and Threat) analysis by referring to varied concepts of new dimension of professional practices in the established body of knowledge prevailing in social work profession in the 21st century. The paper recommends the inclusion of "Technology Aided Social Work Model" into the curriculum of Social Work Higher Education.

3. Technological Standards for Social Work Profession:

Use of technology by Social workers has increased dramatically in recent years. Fortunately, the profession has begun to develop relevant ethical guidelines. The current NASW (National Association of Social Workers) Code of Ethics contains a number of new standards related to electronic communications, such as e-mail, fax machines, computers, and electronic records. The standards aims to maintain and improve the quality of technology, which serve as a guide, monitor and evaluate the ways of services, inform clients, government regulatory bodies, insurance carriers about the professional standards for the use of technology in the provision of social work services.

Standards: Social worker is responsible for proficiency to use technology with appropriate training. They shall abide by all regulation within the jurisdiction while providing service. Make efforts to verify client identity and contact information to eliminate misuse by unqualified usage to ensure client protection. Web sites should

provide links to all appropriate Certification Bodies and Licensing Boards for verification. Social workers need to provide their full Name, Credentials, office address, contact details. Each party should tackle technology failures by alternative methods. Social workers shall protect clients Privacy, Confidentiality, and Security of electronic records. Standard of care as per the NASW Code of Ethics, licensing laws, relevant criminal laws, need to be taken in the profession. Practice of fair trade through accurate Records should be maintained. Social workers focusing Advocacy and Social Actions shall use technology to create awareness about policies which empower the people. Community Social workers shall advocate for the adoption of e-mail groups, resource-rich Websites, databases, and geographic information systems that may enrich the well being of communities. Administrative social workers can introduce technology that will give quality operations for service and encourage investment and try to ensure access, security and privacy in information systems. Clinical Social workers shall strive to study the dynamics of online relationships, the advantages and drawbacks of non-face-to-face interactions. They should perceive continuing education relevant to technology through research after evaluating the research findings properly and adhere to the NASW Standards for Continuing Professional Education and follow applicable licensing laws via electronic means.

4. Technology Aided Social Work Profession Model (TASWP Model):

“Technology Aided Social Work Profession Model” (TASWP Model) will highlight the implications of interventions on Education, Social Networking, Professional Service, Social Movement and Social Actions based on Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). It is a system of using electronic technologies like Email, Blogs, Video chat, Video Conferencing, Online Learning Portals, Educational Consortia, Social medias, World Wide Web, Websites, Mobile Phone Applications etc for conveying, processing and storage of Information’s in the profession. Online transmission of information will expand the jurisdiction of service delivery through networking. This model explains how ICTs can be effectively used in social work profession to serve the needy. E-Social work is a new dimension that can be included in higher education to improve the skills of social work students. The following social work interventions can be delivered through Technology. (Figure No.1)

(a) Social Work Consortium: Professional education in social work can also be effectively delivered by online learning system. University at Albany has constituted New York State Social Work Education Consortium with the formal partnership between the New York State Association of Deans of Social Work Schools and the New York State Office of Children and Family Service (OCFS) for building and supporting professional workforce through training, education and research. The usage of distance learning in social work education assists students who are long distance commuters or students with disabilities. The service provider should focus for achieving Worker-Client relationship in education rather than just teacher-learner relationship. Hokenstad and Rigby (1977). The educator should be a facilitator of learning rather than merely a transmitter of knowledge. Percival and Ellington (1984) The Participation model of education is more appropriate for social work education. Self Learning experiences should be planned to facilitate reflection and comprehension. Evaluation of the new knowledge should be encouraged to relate it to the current knowledge. The synthesis of the two will lead to application. This type of online education will empower the social work professionals.

(b) Social Movements with Technology: Gore (1993) social movements have acted in gaining legitimacy for a new value system and seeking reordering of relationships in

one or more spheres of life in the light of the new values. The moment ends when they succeed in attaining their specific goals, become part of larger movement, or cease to be relevant in a changed social context. The need for social movement emerges with the social changes. Now public opinion on any social issue is sought through Short Message Services by using mobile technology. Now Internet has reached every individual through the smart phones. In the 21st Century, the Public opinion is highly influenced by the Mass media. Social networking sites like Face book, Twitter, Orkut, Linked in, WhatsApp, skype are helping to transfer, collaboration and demonstrate constructive ideas easily. Cell phone, Email and World Wide Web technologies are helping in building public opinion which leads to social movements.

(c) Social Action lead by Technology: Social action refers to an act which takes into account the actions and reactions of individuals. Secher (1962) According to Max Weber, "an Action is 'social' if the acting individual takes account of the behavior of others and is thereby oriented in its course". Digital technology is changing day by day we can use platforms like fixmystreet to report public realm issues, map emergencies using Ushahidi and gather together hundreds, thousands, sometimes millions of supporters to a cause through social media. Social action includes structured, practical and impactful volunteer contributions to help and support others by using the web. Examples include peers sharing information online, or volunteers signing up as online mentors and tutors to coach young people to improve academically. Web enabled social action can also be a powerful tool to mass mobilize volunteers in a crisis like a first aid emergency or the floods to find a solution or to encourage generosity amongst the people. Nesta is an innovative Charity with a mission to help people and organizations bring great ideas to life. Centre for Social Action Innovation Fund- Digital Social Action has allotted nearly 14 million funds to support the growth of innovation that mobilize people's energy and talent to help each other.

(d) Networking with Technology: Social Workers need up-to-date and relevant knowledge of community contacts beyond their own organization. This includes having current information about the range of services offered by other local and regional agencies, contract details, names of staff and information about how to access these services. Updating information about current community resources is an ongoing challenge for busy practitioners, yet it is essential in order to access the appropriate resources for clients. The students undertaking field placement will have the opportunity to explore local and regional service networks. Visiting these agencies, making contacts with other social activists and learning about resources will provide with a foundation of knowledge for practice. The worker should familiarize with updated and reliable internet service directories for further resources. Being able to use these tools and having access to a broad range of knowledge assists in developing relationships with clients. For example, a women requesting assistance about parenting may attend a local parenting group provided at the Community Health Service but she may also seek Parenting Literature. The agency may have relevant literature or may have access to internet, brochures or information pack. Many agencies will have their own website that clients can explore before deciding to approach a service. It is important therefore that agency websites are client friendly, easily accessed and informative.

(e) Professional Service in Health Care with Technology: With the advent of Internet communications has introduced Web-based Social Services. Social workers in healthcare settings like hospitals, rehabilitation, home healthcare programs, and nursing homes are working with technology in their profession. Clinical Services like

assessment of the client, guidelines and Psychotherapy are provided by Mental Health Professionals through internet facility were worker and client do not meet in person. In addition, social workers involved in organ transplantation programs at major medical centers participate in ethical decisions and debate concerning the allocation of scarce hearts, kidneys, and livers, as well as the selection of candidates for artificial organs through online mechanisms only. Oncology social workers, along with other social workers involved with terminally ill patients, participate in ethical decisions concerning the termination of life support, the limits of aggressive medical treatment, and other end-of-life decisions involving with technology. Adolescents are confronted by many life-threatening issues like AIDS and other Sexually Transmitted Diseases. They also face school violence, increasing competitive pressures in school for academic advancement, peer demands for involvement with drugs and sex. Non computer technologies also pose ethical challenges in the delivery of professional services. For example, many social workers employed as parole officers are attaching electronic bracelets to clients to monitor them in the community. Social workers employed in programs for clients with severe behavioral problems may use electronic technology to control clients' behavior e.g., helmets that provide aversive stimuli when clients engage in inappropriate behavior. Social workers in psychiatric facilities may use strategically placed cameras and one-way mirrors to monitor patients' movement, therapy, and recreational activities. They participate in programs that make extensive use of pharmacological technology i.e., neuroleptic and psychotropic medications to treat emotional and behavioral symptoms. Clearly, these and other forms of technology can be helpful and constructive; at the same time, their use forces us to think seriously about potential ethical trade-offs related primarily to privacy, exploitation, coercion, and civil liberties. Clients may feel some disadvantages like this method may not meet their mental health needs adequately, challenge about their consent, privacy and confidentiality risks, ambiguity in convenience, anonymity and limitations, ignorance of alternative methods like individual, family, couples, or group counseling, reasonability in encryption of communications and secured storage of electronic records which are highly confidential. The Child Counsellors need to understand the child's familiarity with IT and the potential discrepancy that may exist between the child's and parents' IT sophistication towards hate sites and sexually explicit sites. Research studies reveals that many psychiatric disorders like schizophrenia, mood disorders, depression, bipolar disorders, obsessive-compulsive disorders, panic disorders, autism and other pervasive developmental disorders have their beginnings during childhood and adolescence. A hospital adopts computer-based patient record systems. Medical aspects like Data collection, recording, storage, and communication have advanced It helps for improved management and access to medical records, automatic review of patient records, control costs, improved quality of care, and for the analysis of clinical and financial databases to guide health care practice and policies.

(f) Human Resource Management through Technology: The importance of human potential for company increases proportionally with the speed of changes which appear in the business area because human capital represents a basic qualitative parameter of fruitfulness of any business. Human Resources Management (HRM) must aim at achieving the competitiveness of the company by means of constant educational and training programs for development of employees. Helfen and Kruger (2002) One of the supporting pillars to the fulfillment of the personal policy is the usage of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) like mobile communication, internet, new media and PCs which enables companies to improve their internal processes, core

competencies, organizational structures and market to be global. ICT is spreading throughout every sector of the economy and has implications for almost every enterprise. Armstrong (2002) Information systems in HR will provide better services to line managers, serving as pipeline which connects personal policy and personal processes. It helps to provide data for a strategic personal decision-making by fast acquirement and analysis of information and reduce cost. DeSanctis (1986). HR function used to employ IT professionals for administrative work like payroll processing, but a massive transformation emerged in HR Practices. One of the most important online supports within Human Resources is tracking the Human Resources Development Core Processes. The tool should provide all necessary information about individual succession planning of employee, next development measures or evaluation of overall performance and review of the potential. The HR IT tools can support hiring and retaining a high potential professional. It begins with launching the career website or Job Portals were, employer can present all necessary information related to job, careers or personal qualification of each applicants. The career website should focus not only on potential employees, but target group should also include the students, graduates or school pupils in order to have a possibility to "raise" new employees for the future. The cooperation with students can save the costs especially if company needs specialists for future business needs. One big advantage which companies should use via career website is to have opportunity to apply for a job online. Additionally, company can present information about corporate culture or environment. Further, it can be connected to the internal recruiting track system which can help to HR generalist in communication with candidates to organize the selection processes. Employees' Monthly contribution to Employee State Insurance Corporation and Provident Fund is done through online by web services of the concerned authorities. Recruitment uses IT tools like Telephone, Tele Interviews, off the job Training is done through online video conference method, Quality is managed through standardized machines and tools, communication system was aided by email, internet, fax, telex, software, mobile applications, Time office system is managed by Electronic devices etc.

(g) Social Work Blogs: Blog is a website containing information about social work profession. The site is full of advice for social workers, inspiring images, videos and even tips for excellence Blog posts range from reviews of books relating to the field, current events and their ties to many of the issues social workers encounter on the job and intensely relatable personal content. The best part is, despite the 'anti-social' claim in the title, the writer's style elicits the feel of a friendly coffee shop chat, making readers feel instantly comfortable and welcome. Blogs provides advice and encouraging quotes, but also gives readers an opportunity to submit content and ask questions. It emphasizes the power of community, upholding the notion that all can learn from others. Blogs will publish articles on social issues like General parenting tips, Health, Politics etc. Blogs are authentic encouragement topped with advice in dealing with the hardships in the field of social work so that the readers can dedicate their self more wholly to the job. There are many blogs for social work like the Political Social Worker blog provides posts on live report on the State. 'Speech' Developed by the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), focuses on hot ticket issues in social work, happening with the Department of Justice, important issues being upheld by the Supreme Court, common challenges faced by social workers, and how to cope with the deep emotions encountered while working in the field. Social Work Career Development Blog started as a depiction of one woman's journey through a career change into social work. It is a source of guidance for those who seek to build online

authority, mental disorders encountered on the job and even interview tips. Social Work Helper Blog covers issues of politics, technology, entertainment, education and nonprofits. This blog offers solutions to drug abuse, state licensing laws, and motivating stories of people who have overcome adversity. Social Work Technology site will coach those working in the field of social work to utilize technology to improve their professional lives. It explains effective strategies for researching, helpful apps, tips on self-care within the profession. The tools you will discover through this blog are designed to make your career as a social worker so much easier. Social Work World Blog will serve social workers, social work students and anyone interested in humanitarian issues. Posts often discuss important governmental issues, features on social work degree, scholarships and salary guides. They also provide advice on finding a job and tips for facing the interview. This list of social work blogs provides a wealth of information for current social workers and those looking to get into the field. Staying current on the ever-changing trends in the field will give leg up in those intimidating job or promotion interviews.

(h) Online Social Work Education: Continuing education represents learning opportunities beyond the entry-level degree to enable social workers to increase their skill, proficiency and level of knowledge. It is a self directed process in which social workers should assume responsibility for their own professional development. Examples of technology-based continuing education can include any courses, lectures, seminars, etc., mediated by technology, including computer-based training, online courses, Web-based or satellite televised workshops/seminars. In instructing continuing education programs via technology the access to internet is very important. There are many free, online classes for students who want to learn about social work. These classes do not typically award credit but, meant to provide students access to higher education. The social work classes are much like the standard classes offered at universities and allow students access to real course materials, such as assignments, essays, readings, videos and lectures. Since the classes do not award credit, students are not required to submit assignments or complete exams. All of the classes can be completed at the student's own pace, giving students the freedom to study how they want to study. The Open University offers Open Course, where courses related to social work as well as online study clubs that give students a chance to form groups and virtually study and converse with fellow classmates. Its introductory social work course, known as Social Work Learning Practice, is largely an audio unit. It teaches students how to understand others, connect with people of different backgrounds and understand social work. Interviewing with a Social Worker course for students who want to learn about what it takes to be in social work. An Introducing Social Work Practice course, which covers what social workers do and how to become one. Online students can learn about social processes and governance and how to deal with daily problems. Remaking the Relations of Work and Welfare is also an advanced class that covers students about the 'welfare-to-work' model and how these types of social work theories apply to people's daily lives. As an advanced level class, Becoming a Critical Social Work Practitioner covers how to become a critical thinker, so that students learn about addressing social welfare problems in society.

5. (SWOT Analysis) Strength, Weakness, Opportunities and Threat of 'Technology Aided Social Work Profession Model' (TASWP Model):

The Technology Aided Social Work Profession Model (TASWP Model) is analyzed by using Strength, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT Analysis) to verify the credibility of the new dimension of study and to see whether this new practical

interventions of social work profession can be recommended to the appropriate authority to include in the social work education curriculum meant for post graduate students.

(a) Strengths of the TASWP Model:

- ✓ Technology Aided Social Work Profession Model helps to convey, process, and store information effectively.
- ✓ The model enriches teacher-learner transactions with the help of online sources.
- ✓ Provides authentic encouragement topped with advice in dealing with the hardships in the field of social work through the use of different social service blogs.
- ✓ Social movements can be improved with the use of Cell phone, Email and World Wide Web technologies.

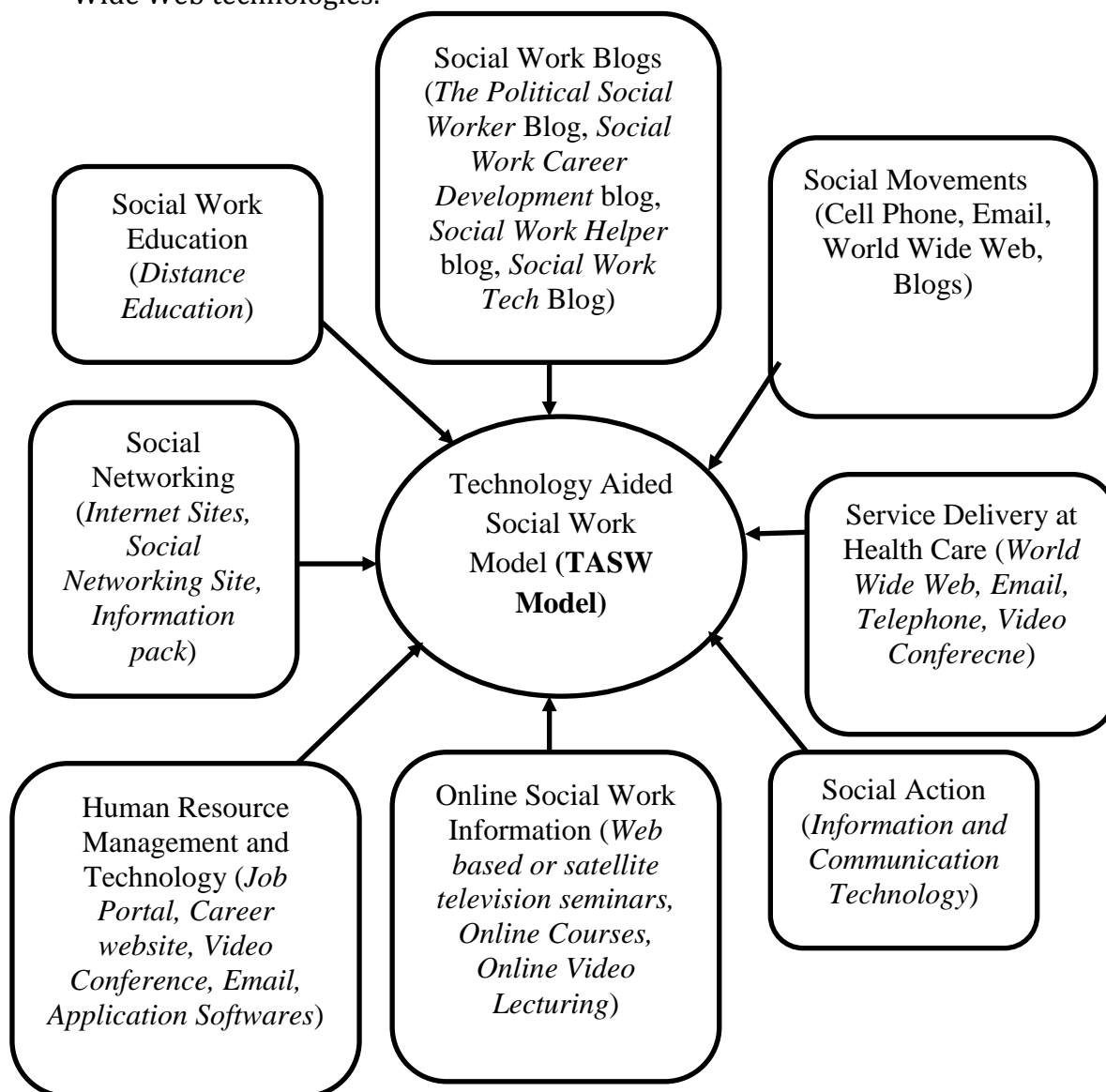


Figure 1: Technology Aided Social Work Model

- ✓ Use technology tools like Internet, Website and Social Media for accessing a broad range of knowledge
- ✓ Technology builds rapport with the clients.
- ✓ Social workers employed in Retardation programs for clients who suffer from behavioral problems may use electronic technology to control them.

- ✓ Technology in Health Care helps in maintaining medical records, automatic review of patient records to provide critical decision, support to control costs, improved quality of care, and the analysis of clinical and financial databases to guide health care practice and policies.
- ✓ Human Resources Development Core Processes with the technology support in providing all necessary information about individual succession planning of employee, next development measures or evaluation of overall performance and review of the potential workmen.
- ✓ Online Social work class are much like the standard classes offered at universities and allow students access to real course materials, such as assignments, essays, readings, videos lectures.
- ✓ Online students learns about Social problems and its intervention
- ✓ Social Actions with group discussion and case studies can be affectively improved with the aid of communication and technology

(b) Weakness of the TASWP Model:

- ✓ Social workers use fax machines routinely in their communication with clients and other professionals there is a chance of leakage of crucial information.
- ✓ All Web sites providing information are not reliable; service providers can easily misrepresent themselves and their credentials online.
- ✓ Usage of Telephone conversation with clients pose unique threats to clients privacy and confidentiality
- ✓ Breaches can occur with wireless telephones by the hackers.
- ✓ Use of electronic mail also has some risk. There is a problem with e-mail also When the social worker scrolled through their electronic address book to find e-mail address, if inadvertently clicked on, another address so message was sent to address that was adjacent to the clients mail id due to bad cursor aim disclosing intimate details concerning her client's life to someone else

(c) Opportunities of the TASWP Model:

- ✓ Adults, Dropout children, Women's, Slow learners can be focused for Non formal Education System through Technology.
- ✓ Awareness on Social evils like child marriage, Corruption, Black Magic, Superstitious Beliefs, issues can be done by Social Work Blogs.
- ✓ Social Movements can be conducted against social problems like Corruption, Legal Education, Environment Protection, Poverty, Employment Generation, Illiteracy, Population Control, Substance Abuse etc.
- ✓ Stress among the people in employment, Family Problems, Misunderstanding, Mental illnesses, Psychological Disorders can be easily counseled through technology in the Hospital Settings.
- ✓ Social Actions can be guided on certain crucial grounds like Awareness to People about Parliamentary or Legislative Elections, Against Policies affecting the welfare, Price Rise in Oil Prices, Scarcity in Essential Commodities, and Corruption by Power etc.
- ✓ Social Work Websites can give publicity of workshops, seminars, symposiums, lectures, research publications for the general public.
- ✓ Recruitment, Selection, Salary Administration, Performance Appraisal, Management Information System, Human Resource Accounting, Promotion, Disciplinary Procedure, Dispute Resolution and Social Security can mainly focus on online mode.

- ✓ Social Medias work for building relationships, unity and integrity, exposure to culture, customs, styles, norms and matrimonial ties, it also recognizes talent, awards, and achievements.
- ✓ Certificate courses on Nutrition, Yoga, Meditation, Personality Development, Community Development, Counselling and Psychotherapy, Child Mental Health, Sexuality, Behavioural Sciences, Social Movements, Family Law aspects through online module which is very flexible.

(d) Threats/Challenges of the TASWP Model:

- ✓ Consistency, Hard work, Discipline, Character of the Social worker is very important for the success of this module.
- ✓ Social workers require the continuous development of specialized knowledge and understanding of the history, traditions, values, family systems, and artistic expressions of major client groups served through technology.
- ✓ Social work is interdisciplinary in nature hence; the worker should have exposure to Psychology, Anthropology, Ecology, Forestry, Public Administration, HR & Industrial Relation, Counselling fields.
- ✓ Social Movement will depend highly on the social commitment of the people. As people are from different religion, educational background, Caste, Custom and culture it is not easy to organize the people together.
- ✓ Due to low self esteem in many cases counseling and psychotherapy will not help in resolving their problems.
- ✓ Bueracrats may use the power to suppress the social action by misusing the power.
- ✓ Human Resource is human capital for an organization hence, training persons to be efficient which involves heavy cost.
- ✓ The real hard work won't be recognized and there is a fear of misrepresentation of benefit by powerful elites for personal gains.

7. Conclusion

Advancement of technology has gifted powerful and speedy computing devices by creating dynamic virtual network programmed with different purpose. It allows people all over the world to communicate and share information. Social work professionals can use different services empowered with technology like Email, Blogs, Video chat, Video Conferencing, Online Education, Social media, World Wide Web, Mobile phone and Websites in order to provide true support, improved quality of care to the needy. Technology should be used and enjoyed according to law. Issues of Jurisdiction, liability and malpractice will blur the service. Issues like crossing of national boundary electronically, injecting dangerous and malicious digital virus to the servers to destroy the stored information are good examples for breaking the laws. E-Social work is a new trend which encourages more social work interventions to enables social workers to facilitate a social change in the delivery of service for social well being. Social Workers require the continuous development of specialized knowledge and understanding of the history, traditions, values, family systems, and artistic expressions of major client groups served through technology. They should follow International Standards while using Technology in the Profession. "Technology Aided Social Work (TASW) Model" gives more insights to the Social Work Professionals for the delivery of service effectively through technology to the needy. After considering the Strength and Opportunities of the TASW Model, it requires to be taught to the social work students. This paper here with recommends the universities to include "Technology Aided Social

Work Profession Model (TASWP Model) into the curriculum of higher education to enrich the body of knowledge further.

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