Chapter 2
Youth Work and Digital Technologies: Future Directions for Research, Practice, and Policy

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ABSTRACT

In today’s digital world, digital youth work is rapidly becoming a novel area of specialization. The digital environment in professional practice is an up-to-date dynamic force that places us at the forefront of the hi-tech revolution, inspiring youth work both as a scientific field and as a profession. First, this chapter provides a synopsis and a serious perspective on digital technologies in youth work practice. Researchers believe that the functions of digital technology have an impact on a wide range of youth service settings. Various nations have reacted in different ways in terms of policy and practice. Second, research concerns, as well as a new policy

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-2956-0.ch002
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INTRODUCTION

Youth work is one of the few occupations that enables a person to do real good in the world. Youth work is characterized by a special recurrence, with younger generations relying on certain key values and principles that require the development of voluntary links with younger generations, relations with societies and other associated organizations, and specialized guidance from professional practitioners (Sapin, 2013). Unfortunately, most communities face a desperate shortage of youth workers. As a result of the economic recession, the younger generations are struggling with social, emotional, behavioral and mental issues. Therefore, the need for caring and qualified youth workers continues to grow. Thankfully, digital technologies make it possible for many youth workers to perform their duties effectively despite the shortage. Generally, it has been found that youth workers benefit greatly from the adoption of technology in their practices (Harvey, 2016).

In addition, positive perspectives on technological advancement in youth work appear to be satisfactory and inspiring in the studies of community and youth work. For example, the use of digital technology in different contexts of youth services have been explored (Buckingham, 2008; Rafferty & Waldman, 2006; Székely & Nagy, 2011). Not only that, there are textbooks on how digital technology can be used in youth work practice (Hill & Shaw, 2011; Watling & Rogers, 2012).

Some studies have addressed the role of technology in the clinical practice of youth work (Erstad, 2012; Livingstone et al., 2014), while others have recognized the importance for experts and other adults in youth work to have supervision and opportunities to become capable, proficient, and up-to-date about the educational role and potential of digital technologies. These studies condone the use of digital technologies to reinforce many features of youth work practice and to enhance opportunities towards reinforcing connections between research, policy and practice (Bamber, 2014).

Empowered by the opportunity to share best practice, the Italian National Agency of Erasmus and the current European Union Youth Work Plan for 2016-2018 established a number of technological criteria and prepared courses to ensure that qualified youth workers were appropriately competent to serve a progressively tech-
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