



Social Work Education

The International Journal

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: <https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/cswe20>

Social work education and the grand challenges approaches to curricula and field education

edited by R. Paul Maiden and Eugenia L. Weiss, New York, Routledge, 2023, 459 pp., #13,654.00 (hardcover), ISBN 978-1-032-31075-6 (hbk); #3,660.00 (paperback), ISBN 978-1-032-31144-9 (pbk)

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To cite this article: Sam'un Mukramin, Rezky Juniarsih Nur, Nurhaliza & Akbar Aba (2023): Social work education and the grand challenges approaches to curricula and field education, Social Work Education, DOI: [10.1080/02615479.2023.2239048](https://doi.org/10.1080/02615479.2023.2239048)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02615479.2023.2239048>



Published online: 27 Jul 2023.



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BOOK REVIEW

Social work education and the grand challenges approaches to curricula and field education, edited by R. Paul Maiden and Eugenia L. Weiss, New York, Routledge, 2023, 459 pp., ₹13,654.00 (hardcover), ISBN 978-1-032-31075-6 (hbk); ₹3,660.00 (paperback), ISBN 978-1-032-31144-9 (pbk)

This book presents a comprehensive overview of how social work education can address the grand challenges faced by society today. The book provides practical guidance and inspiration for social work education institutions in developing curricula that are relevant, challenging, and responsive to the needs of society. Paul Maiden and Eugenia Weiss, Members of the American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare (AASWSW), propose the grand challenge of solving some of the most vexing and wicked social problems facing the world.

The key to integrating these grand challenges into social work is to pay attention to social interactions between students and teachers, between social work practitioners and their clients, and between students and social work practitioners as well as students and other professionals dedicated to a common cause. In addition, there is a need to update the curriculum and field education of social workers to deal with the social, political, and economic changes taking place in society. Therefore, the authors of the book present various approaches and strategies that can be adopted by social work education institutions to prepare students to address complex challenges such as poverty, inequality, social justice, mental health disorders, violence, and other social problems. This book will be of interest to teachers teaching at undergraduate and postgraduate levels as it shows how to stimulate class discussion, manage difficult issues, and address diversity, equity, and inclusion as part of teaching the topic. The book is organized around 13 grand challenges including the challenge of eliminating racism which was recently integrated by the AASWSW.

Each chapter is designed to present a grand challenge and situate it within a foundation year curricular topic such as Human Behaviour and the Social Environment (HBSE), Social Work Policy and/or Practice courses. The book also emphasizes the importance of collaboration between academics, practitioners, and communities in developing relevant and effective curricula. The authors underline the need for the integration of theory and practice in social work education, as well as the importance of reflective and critical learning for students. In addition, the book highlights the role of information and communication technology (ICT) in social worker education. The authors discuss how ICT can be used as a tool to widen accessibility, increase student engagement, and strengthen social workers' digital competencies.


Overall, the book presents a comprehensive overview of how social work education can address the grand challenges faced by society today. It provides practical guidance and inspiration for social work education institutions in developing curricula that are relevant, challenging and responsive to the needs of society. Maiden and Weiss tried to discuss the role of field education in the preparation of social work students. This can include effective field education strategies, collaboration with field partners, and an understanding of the role of social practitioners in addressing complex social challenges. The book updates the curriculum to include a deeper understanding of contemporary social challenges by involving the introduction of topics such as social inequality, the vulnerability of certain populations, violence, environmental change, and mental health issues that are a major focus in social work today.

Chapter Six explores social isolation and suggests ways of incorporating it into social work courses to raise awareness of the condition as another grand challenge. The grand challenge to create social responses to environmental change which was also declared by AASWSW is also being covered. The authors call for strengthening the role of social workers in addressing harmful environmental challenges that disproportionately impact disadvantaged groups. Chapter 9 will assist social work educators in establishing content and pedagogy around technology in our classrooms, as well as offer information on best practices and examine related regulations and technology efforts implemented in the classroom and field. This book also highlights the role of information and communication technology (ICT) in social work education and practice. It discusses how ICT can be used as a tool to increase the engagement, accessibility, and effectiveness of social workers in addressing social challenges. Technology can be used to improve the accessibility, efficiency, and effectiveness of social worker education, as well as to address social challenges through digital initiatives.


This book encourages reflection and discussion on the role of social workers in addressing complex social challenges. It motivates readers to question, critique and develop their own thinking about social work practice and education in this field. To develop social worker education that is effective and responsive to social change, this book provides readers with guidance, food for thought, and inspiration to understand and address the social challenges faced by society today. In addition, it also proposes a stronger integration of theory and practice in the social worker education curriculum. This could include an emphasis on the practical application of theory in social work contexts, as well as the use of reflection and critical analysis in connecting theory with practical experience.

Acknowledgments

Thank you to all the professional editors who have helped write this Book Review article, especially to colleagues from the Muhammadiyah University of Makassar and the Indonesia University of Education. Writing this book review is a collaborative writing from 2 different campuses.

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<https://doi.org/10.1080/02615479.2023.2239048>