Professional Development:
The International Journal of
Continuing Social Work Education

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Journal:	Professional Development: The International Journal of Continuing Social Work Education
Article Title:	*Focus Groups: A Qualitative Solution Model of Evaluating a Web-Enhanced MSW Course*
Author(s):	*Janaki Santhiveeran*
Volume and Issue Number:	*Vol. 5 No. 2*
Manuscript ID:	*52046*
Page Number:	*46*
Year:	*2002*

Professional Development: The International Journal of Continuing Social Work Education is published three times a year (Spring, Summer, and Winter) by the Center for Social Work Research at 1 University Station, D3500 Austin, TX 78712. Journal subscriptions are $110. Our website at www.profdevjournal.org contains additional information regarding submission of publications and subscriptions.

ISSN: 1097-4911

URL: www.profdevjournal.org **Email: www.profdevjournal.org/contact**

Focus Groups: A Qualitative Solution Model of Evaluating a Web-Enhanced MSW Course

Janaki Santhiveeran, PhD

An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Sixth Annual Technology Conference, Charleston, South Carolina, USA, August 10–13, 2002

Introduction

Course evaluations began in the 1920s (Canelos, 1984) to enhance teaching effectiveness (Wilson, 1986). Evaluation of web-based instruction is relatively new. During the past ten years, educators have begun to evaluate how teaching and learning have been impacted in web-based instructional environments. Educational experts (Kemp, Morrison, & Ross, 1998) have found compelling evidence that technological innovations enhance both teaching and learning processes.

Social work educators now have numerous opportunities to integrate technology into classroom instruction (Jennings, Siegel, & Conklin, 1994). Social work instructors have been using videotape, computer software, email, and the Internet to enhance teaching and learning processes (Knowles, 2000; Santhiveeran, 1998; Wernet, Olliges, & Delicath, 2000). User-friendly software programs have simplified the task of supplementing face-to-face traditional courses with web components. The gradual integration of web-enhancements into the social work curriculum has been met with both fascination and reservations. The field is only beginning to recognize that web-based enhancements are critical to preparing future generations of social workers (Freddolino, 1996). The Council on Social Work Education's revised Accreditation Standards requires social work programs to provide "curricula and teaching practices at the forefront of the new and changing knowledge base of social work and related disciplines"(CSWE, 2002, 1.2). Increased practitioner technological skills can improve the effectiveness and efficiency of performing multiple social work tasks, including advocacy, teaching, outreach, networking, research, documentation, and practice. While these reasons underscore the importance of developing the technological capacity of future social workers, some outstanding questions remain. Can web-enhancements increase student learning without increasing student workload? Will students be comfortable and familiar with the emerging Internet technologies?

Web-enhanced learning has been shown to have various benefits and limitations (Faux & Black-Hughes, 2000; Kreuger & Stretch, 2000; Patterson & Yaffe, 1993). Courses that employ web-enhancements can better meet the diverse learning needs of students. By posting course material on the web, students have unlimited access to important information when they need it. In addition, web-enhancements promote competency-based learning over seat-based learning. However, there are limitations. For example, asynchronous online communication increases social distance. For the past six years, the author has introduced web-enhancements in several social work courses both at the undergraduate and graduate levels. The author's personal experiences and student feedback obtained through focus group sessions provide a perspective and context for this article.

Literature Review

Formal evaluation of instructional technologies has gained impetus only in recent years. Evaluation of distance education courses using Interactive Television (ITV) technology is abundant in social work education (Freddolino & Sutherland, 2000; Haagenstad & Kraft, 1998; Haga & Heitkamp, 1995; Hollister & McGee, 1998; Ligon, Markward, & Yegidis, 1999; Petracchi & Patchner, 1998; Rooney, Hollister, Freddolino & Macy, 2000; Thyer, Artelt, Markward, & Dozier, 1998; Thyer, Polk, & Gaudin, 1997; Wilson, 1999). In addition

Janaki Santhiveeran, PhD, is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Social Work at California State University, Long Beach, CA.

Correspondence should be addressed to Janaki Santhiveeran, PhD, Assistant Professor, Department of Social Work, California State University, Long Beach, 1250 Bellflower Blvd., Long Beach, CA 90840.

Email: jsanthiv@csulb.edu

to distance education classrooms, some traditional face-to-face (F2F) classrooms now utilize computers and the Internet. Earlier studies specifically focused on the evaluation of computer-assisted instruction in social work education (Miller, 1986; Patterson & Yaffe, 1993). Still others have evaluated distance education courses using the Internet (Barnett-Queen & Zhu 1999; Kolbo & Washington, 1998; Schoech, 2000; Stocks & Freddolino, 2000).

Although recent studies have examined various aspects of web-enhancements (Falk, 1998; Finn, 1998; Finn & Smith, 1997; Galambos & Neal, 1998), relatively few have evaluated traditional web-enhanced social work courses (Barnett-Queen & Zhu, 1999; Faux & Black-Hughes, 2000; Lancaster, Stokes & Summary, 1998; Ouellette, 1998; Knowles, 2000; Wernet & Olliges, 1998; Wernet, Olliges & Dellicath, 2000; Wernet, Olliges, & Delicath, 2000). While some of these evaluations compared the effectiveness of courses using Internet versus traditional lecture formats to determine whether the Internet increased student learning (Faux & Black-Hughes, 2000), few have examined the effectiveness of online education for MSW students (Kolbo & Washington, 1998; Stocks & Freddolino, 2000). Schoech (2000) evaluated the effectiveness of an Internet-based course for Doctoral students and Stocks and Freddolino (2000) studied MSW students' experiences in a web-enhanced research methods course. Overall, the students rated their experiences with interactive on-line activities as a positive one. Knowles (2000) evaluated social work students' perception about online communication in a certificate course, where the web-enhanced portion of the course replaced a major research project and was equivalent to one third of the final course grade. Email was a major mode of communication with the instructor and among the students. Students reported positive experiences with online communication (email), asynchronous conferencing, and synchronous chat rooms. The students indicated that online communications facilitated increased interest in learning activities.

In a related study, Kolbo and Washington (1998), used both synchronous and asynchronous interactions in their courses to evaluate a non-graded course that was designed as a support service. Data gathered through focus group interviews showed that web-based links to course and program related websites and email communications with faculty members were the most useful web components. Similarly, Schoech (2000) found that communication tools such as email, threaded discussions, and list serves to be useful to student learners. Schoech (2000) and Faux and Black-Hughes (2000) utilized a combination of pre-post-test methodologies, standard course evaluations, course grades, and participant observation to determine the effectiveness of web-based enhancements. Both studies found positive learning outcomes related to web-enhanced courses.

The literature confirms that student satisfaction with distance education courses (Schoech, 2000) and web-enhanced courses (Knowles, 2000; Faux & Black-Hughes, 2000) is as high as in face-to-face traditional courses. The students offered mixed views on how Internet based courses could be implemented. Knowles found that students preferred a mix of web-based and face-to-face learning, while Schoech found that doctoral students perceived the Internet-based learning environment to be as good as a more traditional classroom environment. Schutte (1998) found that students appreciated web-based peer contact, and spent considerable time on class work in a web-enhanced course. Consequently, students developed a better understanding of the course content. Web supplements are particularly beneficial to adult learners coping with multiple life demands, because web-based learning guarantees a certain degree of flexibility (Knowles, 2000).

The literature has also addressed the inherent challenges associated with Internet courses. Knowles (2000) found that the challenges were related to time demands, Internet access, and computer ownership. Students also reported that certain technological

problems prevented them from completing assignments (Schoech, 2000). Despite these technical problems, there appears to be consensus in the literature that web enhancements do not compromise course quality. Evaluative studies offered several recommendations, including the need for student and instructor training with the use of computers, and software resources for improving web-based instruction (Kolbo & Washington, 1998; Schoech, 2000).

A Brief Overview of Applied Web Components

Web components offer unique learning opportunities, including both self-directed and self-paced learning (Kolbo & Washington, 1998). The author introduced web-enhancements for a traditional research methods course for MSW students. The course had both full-time and part-time students. Web components were introduced to store, manage, and provide vital knowledge and information. Student participation was voluntary to access web-based course materials.

The author utilized Blackboard software in designing and managing the course materials. Blackboard is a web-based e-education enterprise software program (Blackboard Inc., 2002). The author was primarily interested in two Blackboard components—online access to course documents and online communication between students and with the course instructor. Web-enhancement is a formal teaching methodology that incorporates Internet-based technology to supplement traditional face-to-face learning. Web-enhancements include posting course documents online, communicating with students through discussion boards and email, offering students access to their grades online, and utilizing a digital drop box to receive and send assignments.

A broad range of course related materials were posted online to facilitate increased student access and use. Class announcements were posted online to communicate with students in between class sessions. Course syllabus and curriculum materials, including weekly readings, objectives, and lecture outlines were posted prior to each class session. In addition, individual assignment and exam grades were readily available online, and students could engage a variety of individual and group exercises as well. Blackboard not only offers numerous course management strategies, but the software includes simple communication tools to facilitate online group discussions without hours of programming (Lake, 2001). Communication media was used to enhance collaborative learning opportunities, including synchronized chat rooms, bulletin boards with threaded discussions, digital file sharing or viewing, a digital drop box, group emailing, and a shared white board. A teacher's corner (bulletin board format) was also available, so that students could post questions at any time. Students were arranged in small learning groups and groups-of-groups to create opportunities for constructive interaction. Various communication media were used to facilitate continuous contact, and the online forums became the major mode of communication. The web components supported speed of information transmission, flexibility, and change. In short, the Internet enabled the instructor to recreate the classroom experience on the students' desktops.

Similar to the Kolbo and Washington (1998) study, the students in the current study did not receive course grades for online activities. While Blackboard's communication tools did not reduce the need for instructor assistance, they did improve the instructor's effectiveness in helping students construct new knowledge and reconstruct existing knowledge (Wilson & Marsh, 1995). The software has several limitations. Blackboard's software did not allow users to transfer messages from one forum to another, nor did it offer updates for the course documents or messages posted on the course website. Consequently, site management, including the management of online discussions, took an inordinate amount of time.

Focus Group Methodology

A focus group is a qualitative research method for collecting needs assessment or evaluative data

(Allen-Meares & Lane, 1990; Rubin & Babbie, 2001). Focus groups are guided discussions used to bring people together to discuss a specific topic or issue to be evaluated (Krueger, 1994; Morgan, 1988; Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). Focus groups are rarely used to evaluate web-enhanced social work courses. Social work educators primarily use survey methods or secondary data to evaluate the impact of web-enhanced courses and Internet courses (Barnett-Queen & Zhu, 1999; Faux & Black-Hughes, 2000; Knowles, 2000; Lancaster, Stokes, & Summary, 1998; Ouellette, 1998; Wernet & Olliges, 1998; Wernet, Olliges, & Dellicath, 2000). Only Kolbo and Washington (1998) used student focus groups to evaluate the effectiveness of web-enhancements.

For the purpose of this study, a focus group was used as the sole method to collect data on insights, perceptions, and experiences with the web-enhanced course offerings. As focus group dynamics can influence participant opinions (unlike data collected through a survey instrument), the participants might have felt pressured to verbalize observations that may not truly reflect their position or experience. Group pressure might have unduly impacted student views.

The qualitative solution model of evaluation focuses on serving the interests of a target population (Shadish, Cook, & Leviton, 1991). Advocates of this model propose the use of summative evaluations that employ flexible qualitative methods to test whether the program/technique really works, and whether it was an effective means for delivering needed services (Rubin & Babbie, 2001). It is within this context that web-enhancement were evaluated as a solution for enhancing student learning. The focus group model was used because this method generates detailed information for understanding student perceptions and experiences.

Current Study

This summative evaluation study intended to exemplify MSW students' perceptions of the relative effectiveness of a course using web-enhancements. The study sought to identify benefits and challenges associated with web-enhancements, the most and least useful components, and broader issues related to the website navigation. In addition, the study explored students' experiences with individual web components. Preserving student anonymity was a major concern in facilitating active participation. Therefore, students were not asked to complete survey instruments. Only collective (aggregate) views were gathered and reported. Individual student characteristics were not associated with student perceptions during data collection or data analysis.

Design: The author employed a posttest only research design for the summative evaluation of a web-enhanced traditional research methods course. The study was intended to be primarily descriptive in nature, utilizing qualitative focus group methods. Social workers increasingly use qualitative research methods in assessing overall effectiveness, including practice evaluations and evaluations of teaching techniques and methodologies. Focus group methodology presents a viable form of analysis for reporting on the inner workings of an innovative approach (this web-enhanced course is the first of its kind to be implemented in a MSW program in the Western part of America).

Sample: The author used a non-probability purposive sampling procedure and invited all 49 students, who were enrolled in the web-enhanced research methods class, to participate in the study in the study. The rationale for this approach was to give each student ample opportunity to participate in the study. A total of 44 students volunteered to participate in the focus group interviews. Members who had a vested interest in the program and had some interest in sharing their experiences with web-enhancements participated in the focus group interviews. Consequently, the sample may not be representative of all students who participated in the class. Implications of this voluntary participation are discussed below. Focus groups were conducted on two separate occasions to accommodate the schedules of both the full-time and weekend stu-

dents. Students were assigned to class-specific focus groups; thus, students from one course section (Friday class with full-time students) did not participate in open discussion with students from the other course section (weekend class with part-time students). Heterogeneity of the sample was achieved across groups. Each class had a few students who did not have access to computers from their home or work; several students used traditional dial-up access; and very few students had broadband access, either DSL or cable modem access.

Study Instrument: A study instrument was designed to provide the focus group sessions with structure. The following issues were explored in the focus group sessions: (1) Positive experiences and benefits; (2) Negative experiences and challenges; (3) Most useful web-based components; (4) Least useful web-based components; (5) General critique of course website, including ease of navigation, overall design, layout, organization, usefulness of information, etc.; 6) Recommendations for future implementation; and (7) Other issues.

Each set of questions had corresponding discussion probes (related to specific web-enhanced components) to help students clarify both positive and negative experiences with technology. This deliberately flexible design was intended to provide a broad understanding of student views and experiences with web-enhancements at the graduate level. See Appendix A for a checklist of items used in the focus group interviews. Appendix A lists only the items for which results are presented in this article.

Data Collection: One or two note takers accompanied the facilitator for both of the focus groups. The focus group interviews were conducted in actual classroom settings during the last day of the semester. Each session lasted between 40 and 60 minutes. The facilitator retained the focus group interview data until the author submitted final student grades. Each participant was given a checklist of interview questions to be used for reference purposes during the discussion. The questions focused on student experiences and perceptions, but the discussion was not limited to these questions—the participants were allowed to speak freely. It should be noted that a few students were reluctant to openly share their opinions regarding web-enhancements. In an explorative manner, the above qualitative methods allowed the researcher to obtain a rich view and understanding of issues in a natural environment (Allen-Meares & Lane, 1990; Schutt, 1977).

Data Analysis: The author's methods of data analysis are consistent with what Morgan (1988) called an ethnographic analysis. The author used examples and quotations from the group discussions to illustrate points of interest and to describe general patterns and consistent themes. Because these data were collected through group interview processes, the author felt that detailed quantitative analysis of coded texts was inappropriate.

Results

This section provides results from a qualitative analysis of student comments. The students' experiential observations were coded along the following dimensions: (1) Positive experiences and benefits; (2) Negative experiences and challenges; (3) Most and least useful web components; (4) Critique of course website; (5) Recommendations; and (6) Other issues.

Positive experiences and benefits. Major themes included: opportunities to learn new skills; increased student-teacher interaction; availability of course materials; and unlimited access (communication) to the instructor. Smaller themes included: improved communication with the instructor; increased/unlimited access to class materials; ongoing progressive feedback; and the ability to save paper.

The majority of the student participants reported positive experiences with the web-enhancements. "It added a dimension by making boring material interesting. It helped to do research while learning research." Several "enjoyed it" as it offered flexibility. Overall, the web-enhancements enabled students to learn to do research efficiently, while learning Internet skills at the same time. The expe-

rience can be considered valuable as it met the dire need to acquire the technological skills needed to function effectively in multiple practice settings. One student noted that the web-enhancements were a "good experience. Social workers are overlooked because they do not have a technology background. Therefore, technology skills gained in this class are quite valuable." Web supplements enabled students to keep up with missed course work, and the web-based forums provided students with ongoing feedback on their work.

Negative experiences and challenges. Relatively few observations fell into this category, which were quite varied in terms of challenges and difficulties. The identified negative experiences and challenges were related to difficulty in performing tasks; difficulty in adjusting to the departure from more traditional modes of course delivery; technical failures and problems; access to the computer and Internet; and problems related to negative activity outcomes. Some felt obligated to use the web-enhancements, and were not used to going to a computer before each class session. The most common challenges were time demands and task difficulty. Task difficulty is broadly interpreted as not knowing how to use computers/Internet, or not having sufficient knowledge and skills to perform these tasks. "Figuring out how to work with technology was challenging. It took more time." Students were concerned about potential technical difficulties, such as breaking the computer system or causing problems because of access problems, and the complexity of information available on the course website. Some comments include, "It was overwhelming. Too much information was made available." Less serious concerns were associated with printing materials and gaining access from home. A student stated, "At the beginning it was challenging to get online from home. Now it is clear."

Barriers to Internet access and existing computer literacy levels were rarely reported. Students who were not familiar with computers, and those who had difficulty accessing the Internet from home, appeared to be most frustrated by the web-enhancements. Some complained of having to go to the nearest library or to drive to school to access the course website. Students felt challenged to learn the navigational system to participate in online forums. Some were negative about the entire experience, and felt they were losing valuable time. Still other students had difficulty adjusting their learning styles to complement web-based learning. Students were also confused about how to use discussion boards effectively.

An abundance of student messages made it difficult for both the instructor and students to keep up with postings. A total of 172 messages were posted at the teacher's corner alone. The majority of these messages were portions of assignments, which required thorough responses.

Most useful web components. The students' responses to most useful web-features highlighted lecture notes (course documents), the teacher's corner, and the digital dropbox. Lecture outlines were found to be "extremely helpful," and several students stated that the outlines relieved them from note taking responsibilities, allowing them to participate in class discussions. One of the students remarked, "I like the way documents are posted. ... You could get the handouts at any time." Access to lecture outlines prior to each class session aided in class preparation, as students knew which materials were going to be covered in each class session.

Teacher's corner (a discussion forum) increased student access to the instructor outside formal classroom hours. Teacher's corner enabled students to post questions at any time, night or day. The students also enjoyed reading other students' questions, assignments, and feedback, for it helped them conceptualize course content. One of the students felt "email was easier" than getting to teacher's corner, as the website required a user name and password.

The digital drop box was also considered to be valuable. The digital drop box allowed the students to submit assignments at their convenience. However, there were some negative feelings toward

the digital drop box. For example, a student expressed his/her frustration by stating that submitting assignments in the digital drop box is "like dropping it into a vacuum."

Least useful web components. In general, students found the small group pages to be the least useful. The students felt that research methods courses were too difficult for small group discussion. Thus, group pages were considered to be "not helpful." One possible explanation was reflected in the following comment: "I did not feel I had a lot to offer. That is why I did not use it." Some did not participate in small group online discussions because they had conflicting time demands and other constraints. However, it is important to note that several students posted hundreds of messages on their group pages throughout the semester.

About the course website. Overall, the group of students found the course website to be helpful. However, participants had relatively few comments about the course website. This omission may be in part an artifact of the data collection methods. For example, individuals who had serious problems accessing the website might have declined to participate in the focus group. Some students complained that off-campus computer access was too slow to access web-based chat rooms. The course website appears to have been effective in serving the multiple needs of the students. The majority felt that the course website was impressive, while others indicated that the site was overwhelming as a result of its many features.

Recommendations. Seventy-five percent of the participants expressed that they would recommend the course to a friend. Some recommended that similar courses include a computer literacy pre-requisite due to the numerous online components. Students also recommended that the university include more detailed descriptions of web-enhanced courses so that students can make more informed decisions prior to enrollment. Online directions for navigating the course website were recommended as well. Most of the recommendations pertained to the need for supplementing online courses with face-to-face contact with the instructor. Several students indicated that they would not enroll in Internet-based distance learning courses in the future.

Other issues. Some stated that their anxiety level was high in the beginning of the semester. There were some unintended consequences as well. For example, a few stated that the web-enhanced course forced them to buy a personal computer. Some did not agree with the idea that accessing the materials was a supplement to the class. For example, "online materials were proposed as a supplement. But it became necessary [to download these materials] just to keep up with the class." Even though the web components were introduced as a pilot project in the department, and the students were not graded for using web supplements, some perceived that accessing and printing lecture notes was coercion towards "having to" participate in the technology in order to stay up with the class.

Discussion

In general, group data are more powerful than a sum of independent interviews. In discussing limitations of this design, it is important to note that students who participated in the focus groups were self-selected and interested in sharing their experiences with others. Furthermore, group dynamics such as peer pressure, group enthusiasm, and composition, might have affected the process and outcome.

Prior research studies have found that web-enhancement is a viable method for allowing students to access cyber classrooms at their convenience. Students enjoyed doing their incremental assignments and receiving performance feedback on an ongoing basis. Many students commented on the high learning value of reading and responding to others' work online (Knowles, 2000). In accord with Knowles, the students in the present study expressed that the online components made the boring course content interesting. Similar to prior research (Knowles, 2000; Schoech, 2000), the cur-

rent study reported several challenges to implementing web-enhanced courses, including computer and Internet access, technological problems, computer ownership, and existing time demands. Also similar to Knowles (2000), students in the present study recommended having a mix of web-based instruction and face-to-face learning. Unlike prior studies, students in the current study found course documents as the most useful component, followed by the teacher's corner (bulletin boards). Similar to prior studies, the current study found that students had a positive experience with interactivity (Knowles, 2000; Stocks & Freddolino, 2000).

Although focus group findings are limited in both scope and generalization, insights can be derived from this undertaking (Krueger, 1994). Focus groups served as effective data collection points in evaluating web-enhancements within specific evaluation criteria. Focus groups generated immediate results and offered flexibility for probing. In addition to presenting overarching student experiences and views, the focus group probing offered suggestions on how to improve web-enhancements in the future. Focus groups generated large numbers of interesting issues due to probing and the influence of participant comments. The fact that students felt free to share both pleasant and difficult experiences spurred active discussions during focus group interviews.

The focus group methodology proposed in this study might benefit faculty members and practitioners who are struggling to conceptualize evaluation strategies and criteria for evaluating both traditional and continuing education course offerings. Due to the program-specific sampling procedure and the qualitative nature of the study, the study results have limited transferability (generalization) for instructors as well as practitioners who need to make informed decisions about technological integration at the undergraduate, graduate, and continuing education level. Despite the inherent risks associated with the transferability of data collected through focus groups, the interviews have provided the author with valuable data for implementing similar web-enhancement courses in the future.

The following benefits and challenges that emerged from the study findings offer insights on how to improve web-enhancements course offerings.

- The students found the web to be an effective and useful media for dissemination of lecture handouts.
- Instructors should consider supplementing traditional BSW/MSW courses with web-based materials. Instructors are encouraged to post syllabi, assignment guidelines, and lecture outlines on the web.
- Technology integration will offer opportunities for students to learn new skills.
- Message boards can enhance interaction between the students and instructors. Therefore, instructors who have utilized web supplements to disseminate handouts should consider using online communication tools such as bulletin boards and forums to promote communication in between the class sessions.
- The students experienced difficulties associated with time demands and task difficulty. Often students needed to be taught the concrete steps necessary for each online task. Optimizing the number and amount of online activities could address problems associated with time demands.
- The students expressed that group pages were the least useful activities despite the fact that there were several hundred postings from the students. Therefore, offering simple, short-term, guided group discussions could improve the perceived usefulness of small group discussions.
- One critical challenge to consider is increased faculty and student workloads associated with web-enhanced courses. Web-enhancements are relatively new and have not been embraced with great enthusiasm. Often, the integration of technology is approached with caution. Non-tenured faculty members primarily utilize state of the art technology in their classrooms due to their training and exposure to new

media. However, schools may not offer faculty release time for technological integration due to the lack of awareness of the definite workload associated with web-enhancements.

- Another critical challenge to consider is technical capacity and Internet access. Students and instructors may require extensive training on the use of technology for teaching and learning. Technological barriers and the inability to troubleshoot may cause unnecessary frustration. Lack of access to computers and the Internet hinders continuity and enthusiasm.
- Instructors need to consider several equity issues before implementing a web-enhanced course to better assist students and to improve the integration of technology. First, instructors need to understand the technological skills of students. Second, they need to identify students' access to the Internet outside the classroom. Since both Blackboard and Web CT work effectively with high speed Internet access, the instructors need to understand the types of Internet access available to the students as well. Third, instructors need to inform the students about the plans for technological integration and the time demands in the beginning of the semester to avoid frustration and confusion. Fourth, instructors need to introduce technology incrementally. Fifth, the instructors must be adequately trained with the use of the software they intend to use, a key factor for the successful integration of web enhancements. Finally, instructors need to introduce technology as a supplemental learning option for students. Because of equity issues related to technological access, instructors should avoid attaching grade points to web-enhanced components. This will allow students to experiment and learn the skills at their own pace.

Although the focus group interviews have generated detailed and explorative data useful for understanding a web-enhanced course, social work evaluators have used focus groups minimally. This author offers the following recommendations to improve the use of focus groups to evaluate courses.

- Offer opportunities for all course consumers to evaluate the course objectively.
- An outside facilitator should be contacted to conduct focus group interviews in order to enable students to share their true views.
- Consider using some participant note-takers to get an insider perspective and to enable the facilitator to focus on guided discussions.
- Construct a clearly defined interview checklist to collect necessary information.
- Consider keeping the size of the focus groups small, with no more than 10 participants each.

Summary

Focus groups can be used to generate timely results and offer opportunities for probing. Despite the inherent risks of generalizing data obtained from focus groups, the guided discussions offered valuable perspectives on student experiences. The non-probability sampling and self-selection of study participants is the basis for caution in generalizing study findings beyond this study sample. The findings discussed in this article are more properly interpreted as student perceptions and experiences. The methodology offered information about student experiences with Internet technology and new ideas for improvement. Several of the challenges were addressed and recommendations were implemented in subsequent semesters. The findings revealed that teaching strategies using technology could encourage meaningful learning opportunities (Janssen, 1995). Understanding different methods is important to make necessary changes and to improve the quality of web-based course delivery. The study findings suggested areas for improvement and possible inequities in computer skills and access to technology. Therefore, social work programs should consider offering support and needed training. Equally important is a built-in feedback mechanism to make ongoing changes.

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