# PROMOTING AN INDIANISATION MODEL OF RURAL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS OF SOCIAL WORK IN GUJARAT

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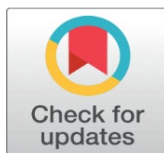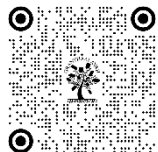
ABSTRACT

The famous saying of Fredrick Muller is always fascinating about India, that goes -"If I were to look over the whole world to find out the country most richly endowed with all the wealth, power, and beauty that nature can bestow – in some parts a very paradise on the earth- I should point to India...and if I were ask to myself from what literature we, here in Europe, who have been nurtured almost exclusively on the thoughts of Greeks and Romans, and of one Semitic race, the Jewish, may draw that corrective which is most wanted in order to make our inner life more perfect, more comprehensive, more universal, in fact more truly human, a life not for this life only, but transfigured and eternal life- again I should point to India."

1. INTRODUCTION

The famous saying of Fredrick Muller is always fascinating about India, that goes -"If I were to look over the whole world to find out the country most richly endowed with all the wealth, power, and beauty that nature can bestow – in some parts a very paradise on the earth- I should point to India...and if I were ask to myself from what literature we, here in Europe, who have been nurtured almost exclusively on the thoughts of Greeks and Romans, and of one Semitic race, the Jewish, may draw that corrective which is most wanted in order to make our inner life more perfect, more comprehensive, more universal, in fact more truly human, a life not for this life only, but transfigured and eternal life- again I should point to India."

Despite the great historical past, unluckily we had fallen into a cage that is dominated by western ideas and practices. More or less, Indian Academia is blindly following west, like a sheep herd, without critically evaluating the method of west and our societal circumstances and needs.

In my personal teaching and research experience profession of social work in our country has many internal and external barriers continuously impeded social work from becoming Indian-centered that's why it is discouraging. Even they are also more persistence today also. Second domination of western social work still considered superior.

In addition, for the case of our country, there is yet the lack of connection between the social work tradition of our civilization and social work education, that result the minds that are develop on the borrowed theory of western. In that situation our students often find themselves exposed to the highly frustrating situation where classroom teaching standards or expectations are hardly ever indigenous in our institution. This is major obstacles in our academia. Having said that, one must have to note that these problems are structurally related to colonial history and the development happened after independence in the education. Reflecting on our profession of social work Charu Sethi, argues that "social work profession is seen struggling at various fronts, for instance, to blends international perspectives on social work practices with the indigenous knowledge and to get a professional status."

To resolve the problem, we need to peep into the realm of the curriculum. Furthermore we need to give importance and need to look for the indigenous nature of the curriculum that was marginalized for large time, (Un) intentionally.

This research paper is one of the steps that I have taken to unshaken the hegemony of the western practices. Promoting an Indianisation Model of Rural Community Engagement in HEIs of Social Work in Gujarat through Focus Group Discussion is a journey that I have experienced, lived and discover in two year of project duration. These two year were exceptionally precious and entirely new for me. I have visited different institutions of Gujarat to explore the opinion and perception of social work educators to rationalize, categorize and objectify their opinion and expectation within the framework of the indigenousness. It has open a new horizon of social work perspective where more works need to be done. The participants discussed and learned the diversity of world-views. Before moving further let me reveal some interesting facest of the project.

This paper is result of discussion, dialogue and conscientization of experience people from different regions of Gujarat. Main considerable centre of the project was reflection on social work profession, its current practices and aftermath on the region of our study. We came together to experience a group process to deliberately discuss and challenged our understanding and thinking.

The first, why I have taken up Indianisation, because the discipline of social work has been primarily western-centric and missed to address societal needs and problems that tremendously impacting since decades. Though, there is growing realisation of limitations of the Western model in the Indian scholarship that calls for indigenous social work practice. Gray et al. (2008) rightly observed that "Indigenisation requires sensitivity to local cultures and contexts." Elaborating further, he calls "However, the time has come to extend the debate beyond 'indigenisation as making social work fit local contexts''.

As we know that in the evolution of social work education, the teaching pedagogy has domination of western literature and predominately still prevalence within Indian academia; despite its hardly any relevance in the Indian context. Hence that created a gap in theory and practice, which immensely impact not only social wok pedagogy, but also the fieldwork education as well.

Now let me answer rationality of several questions. First, reason for selecting Higher Education Institutions, it is because, we are living in the era of global research and innovation, where one could not underestimate scale and important of the HIEs. To achieve goals of socio-economic development, HIEs can contribute effectively, by community engagement program.

In 2018, University Grant Commission also launched an ambitious Quality Mandate that emphasis on improving societal linkages of HEIs to enabling students to become socially productive. Furthermore, improvements in quality of both teaching and research in the Higher Institute would also improved by better understanding of issues confronting the society and bring in social responsibility and community in their vision and mission itself.

Similarly, it is important step to study indigenous knowledge. It was the pre-NEP time, when I have submitted the project. Though, the aims, context and structure was very much expected to all the academician. Later on it has come Indian Knowledge System that historically evolved in Indian continents throughout the centuries.

Third, by including to social work educators of various institutions project aims to look critically at social work structure and its curriculum. To add on large number and canvas of social work educators, project aims to achieve maximum perception, experience and suggestions on the paradigm, pedagogy and pattern in the field of social work.

Fourth, that dissemination of knowledge using actions and practical lives of the people involved in the research has high valued because it add onto what they are facing, experiencing and exploring. So this research study is based on Participatory Action Research. The PAR project is significant because it allowed the group to act and reflect on this knowledge in a continual cycle concerning issues surrounding their relationships with each other and their profession.

It allowed for the creative process of producing action through knowledge production that will affect the lives of the group and social work profession in Gujarat. In sum up this research project explores the processes of indigenization in Gujarat and its influence on curriculum through the critical PAR approach.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Objectives are main principal to guide, bound any research study. This study seeks to explore the concept of rural community engagement within higher education institutions, providing insights, best practices, and recommendations for promoting effective engagement initiatives based on Indianisation model which would be more culturally sensitive and oriented towards the community living in the region. By actively involving Higher Education Institute's faculty, and other stakeholders in collaborative partnerships with rural communities, research study aims to create positive change and build stronger, more resilient rural regions.

The primary objective of this study is to explore the concept of promoting an Indianisation Model of Rural Community Engagement within higher education institutions of Social Work in Gujarat through Focus Group Discussion, by examining its principles, strategies, challenges, and potential impact. Specifically, the study aims to explore following objectives-

- To examine and promote the indigenous models of rural community engagement in the social work institution of Gujarat.
- To develop a practice framework for culturally-rooted strengths-based social work with academicians and practitioners.
- To generate an Indian model of fieldwork curriculum concerning the new National Education Policy.
- Provide a comprehensive overview of rural community engagement in higher education, including its definitions, theoretical foundations, and institutional frameworks.
- Examine the various strategies and approaches employed by Higher Education Institutes to engage with rural communities, highlighting best practices, case studies, and lessons learned.
- Identify the challenges and barriers to effective rural community engagement in higher education and propose strategies for overcoming them.
- Assess the potential impact of rural community engagement initiatives on higher education institutions, rural communities, and broader society.
- Provide recommendations for policymakers, institutional leaders, faculty, students, and other stakeholders interested in promoting effective rural community engagement initiatives within higher education.

3. RURAL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND HIGHER EDUCATION INTUITIONS: AN OVERVIEW

Though, we have achieved remarkable economic growth, but still there many arena that have surfaced in the last few decades. In result despite wide growth, we are lower in but Human Development Indicators. For these contexts Higher education institutions are seen as having extreme importance because of their potential to offer remarkable solutions to such societal challenges.

Universities are both distant from society and a part of society. According to McIlrath (2016) they are distant in the sense that they provide a fundamentally important space, for grasping the world as it is, and more significantly, for re-imagining the world as it should be. Annette and McLaughlin (2005) further stated that "universities are part of society and, in both senses of the word, a critical part, which should be playing a major role in the wider objectives of creating a citizenship culture". It is futile, unless the accumulated knowledge, insight, and vision are placed at the service of the community. With the privilege to pursue knowledge, comes the civic responsibility to engage and put that knowledge to work in the service of humanity.

There are three missions of universities, i.e. teaching, research, and the third mission, being community engagement. The focus of this study is specifically on community engagement that has gained momentum, as a "phenomenon seeking a two-way discourse between the communities and the universities", which is aimed at producing "socially relevant knowledge", which is inclusive and sustainable (Singh 2017). The expectation that higher education finds solutions to these challenges became more evident.

According to the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC 2004) community engagement refers to the "initiatives and processes through which the expertise of the institution in the areas of teaching and research are applied to address issues relevant to its community".

Community engagement can be conceptualized as, the collaboration between higher education institutions and the larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity (Schuetze 2010). It involves a link between the university knowledge and resources with the public, service, and private sectors. These partners work in accordance to enrich research, enhance teaching and learning as well as the university curriculum, strengthen the community, and build social responsibility (Bender 2008). In the opinion of Ahmed and Palermo (2010) "community engagement encompasses a variety of elements. These include community service, training, community based research, capacity building, technical assistance, economic development, and service learning"

Community engagement as a "collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity". It is also "a process that includes multiple techniques to promote the participation of residents in community life, especially those who are excluded and isolated, by engaging them in collective action to create a healthy community."

Community engagement is still in its early stages in our country. There are examples of community engagement found integrated into curriculum, but it has not been developed in a widespread manner.

The systematisation of community engagement as a principal function of higher education institutions can be considered a challenge to social work education. This is because it requires all disciplines to review how student social responsibility could be attained through the varied types of community engagement, if it is implemented into the various programmes at university level.

Now let me come to rural community. The rural development framework (1997) described rural communities as "sparsely populated areas, in which people farm or depend on natural resources, including villages and small towns that are dispersed through these areas." So, rural community engagement is a process of actively involving rural residents, organizations, and stakeholders in decision-making, planning, and implementation processes that affect their lives and communities, by encompassing a range of activities aimed at fostering dialogue, collaboration, and participation to address local needs, promote development, and enhance the well-being of rural populations.

Rural community engagement in higher education is a powerful means of leveraging the resources, expertise, and intellectual capital of colleges and universities to address local challenges, promote development, and enhance the well-being of rural communities. So, it is a multifaceted endeavor that intersects with various disciplines such as sociology, community development, and environmental studies.

4. METHODOLOGY

Now question is what type of research methodology appropriate for this kind of research. For the study, PAR is used because of its dialogical consensus approach that could be pivotal in generating knowledge, where all points of views are listened to and discussed, with reconciliation as part of the process. No majority rule is allowed; unanimity is achieved through talking

In the word of O'Leary (2004) research is "a process that demands planning, deliberation, commitment, and persistence. In fact, research is more of a journey than a task; and like any journey, it needs to be managed, navigated, and negotiated from early conception to final destination". In the process of a research there is variety of methodological approaches to collect the data. Methods can be qualitative, quantitative some recent fashion mixed approaches as well. First, we have searches to identify rural community engagement framework. The throughout literature review provided the core background to the study. Based on extensive review of wide research we have design two questionnaire for Focus Group Discussion.

5. PROCEDURE FOR DATA COLLECTION

As I mentioned earlier, that PAR was based on Focus Group Discussion. Project team introduced the project activities to university faculty of social work in every zone. Based on their interest, project team divided them in group and invited at meeting venue zone wise by discussions and information obtained through these interactions, the team selected divided the FGDs in two phases.

The participants that were selected were academics who were part of the Social Work Department. These participants were selected as they were constantly engaging with the community as part of their practical placements. They were informed of the study by the research team by aided in setting up of the focus group discussions at various universities. Group discussions were organized in different region covering all zones. In each zone we have conducted FGD twice for the same group. In first meeting, the agenda was to discussion social work curriculum within the context of rural community engagement (questionnaire attached as annexure 1). In second meeting group discusses the different model of rural community engagement within the context of local (questionnaire attached as annexure 2).

Project teams introduced and briefly explained the project activities to the respective administration in each zone and also share the details with educators and their institution over mail and telephone as well. Based on these discussions and information on the project aims and process obtained through these interactions, the team selected about 5 locations in the state, where educators from respective zone were invited for twice. SP research team conducted the FGDs Gujarat state. Four FGDs were conducted in Central zone, and in remaining two FGDs conducted in each zone.

The Table 1 shows the details of the FGDs. We have invited faculties of Social Work from each zone to discuss the rural community engagement. Equal representation from each zone is ensured.

Table 1: Sampling Frame of Zone wise FGDs

Division	Number of Samples of Educators	Number of FGD in each Zone
Central	13	4
North	6	2
South	5	2
Saurastra	8	2
Kutch	5	2

A total of 12 FGDs were conducted covering all zones of Gujarat state to develop a basic understanding and opinion of social work educators on Promoting an Indianisation Model of Rural Community Engagement in HEIs of Social Work. Their opinions and ideas were discussed.

A total of about 37 people were consulted through the FGDs at least for twice. Key stakeholders involved in the FGD included: i) Professor at Social Work Department, ii) Independent Social Work Researcher and iii) Professional Social Workers

6. DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

"Group member -I have been thinking about why we need to study about our curriculum and this project... we ourselves haven't even thought of it, I mean, I don't even know if anyone has done that here, but I haven't seen anybody ... nobody has come out with an alternative, except some educators in Delhi or some people in Tiss and we are still using the western parameter. So I have been thinking, is it that we don't have the resources or that nobody has thought of it. I have been thinking about it myself and I am trying to battle it out and find answers. Group member –let us trigger our mind to look at our system and see what necessary changes we could impact on our system" (introducing first FGD on 28th Feb. 2024)

Critically examining the historical conjunctures in Indian history and evolution of social work, in particular colonialism, modernization and globalization, has challenged the way I respond to people of cultures other than my own. It has also challenged my personal assumptions concerning western ways of knowing and thinking generally and, in particular, concerning social work education worldwide.

I found is quite surprising, when I started to teach social work at the University. Often, I struggled with the appropriateness of imparting social work knowledge to students who lived and thought in a different culture and had a world view other than what we teaching.

I always question and my interest in the issues concerning western social work knowledge and its hegemony in non-western countries grew and became an important part of my understanding of issues concerning social work education and practice worldwide.

This led to questioning of the teaching of western social work approaches here; similarly it also challenged my own assumptions and Euro-centric thinking concerning western knowledge. I began to question and read about historical forces at work that seemed to encourage the hegemony of western knowledge over indigenous knowledge. This was the motive that throughout the project encouraged me.

Objective, through a dialogical consensus process, by faculty, and social workers by reflecting on the historical factors of colonialism, modernization and globalization and its affected our own lives, society and the profession of social work, of the study was to provide creative methods to explore social work education and practice through the historical factors affecting the exportation of western social work knowledge.

For the same, there is need of Participatory Action Research that used as a research philosophy and methodology that enabled the group to produce new knowledge important to social work education and practice to better understanding of their own lives. Recommendations for changes to the curriculum as well as other action plans constituted the dissemination of knowledge produced to the relevant community of social work and our society. The research questions below were an initial guide to this project but the group was not limited by these questions.

7. RESEARCH QUESTIONS
PERCEPTION ON INDIANZIATION)
1. Do you think that the historical dominance of western knowledge and in particular western social work thinking very much prevalence in Indian Social work Practices?
2. What historical conjunctures and processes affected this indigenization process in India?
3. To what extent has western social work thinking been replaced by indigenized approaches in social work in non-Western countries like India?
   Have your department or University reviewed the curriculum, if yes answer the following
1. In your Department what changes have been made in curriculum through the indigenous process?
2. In your perspective what are the impacts on indigenization, in your institution?
   Indianizing the Social Work- A process
1. Is it possible to introduce new ways, which would reflect our lifestyle in our social work program interventions that would make it more receptive to people to our Gujarat?
   Session: Exploring Current Practices: Discussion based
1. Share your current experiences with rural community engagement.
2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of existing approaches?
3. What challenges do educators and students face in engaging with rural communities?
   Reflective Exercise
1 Identify a model of rural community engagement Based in Gujarat region
2 What are the potential benefits and drawbacks of implementing this model?
3 What aspects of the model resonate with you, and which need further clarification or adaptation?
4 How can the model be made more relevant to the needs of diverse rural communities in India?
5 What resources and support would educators need to implement this model successfully?

2nd March 2024: For Kutch region, we have scheduled the FGDs at Kutch University. Of 6 social work educators, 3 were female and 3 were men. In terms of the religion 4 were Hindus, one each Christian and Muslim. While talking about the teaching language, 3 were using in Gujarati while 3 were using English as a medium of instruction. The age group was from 27 to 57, whom some were affiliated with social work profession since 2000 and few have joined recently, the latest was 2018.

13th March 2024: Due to huge number of participants we received from central zone, we have scheduled one more parallel PAR as well in the Anand Institute of Social Work. Of 8 social work educators, 3 were female and 5 were men. In terms of the religion 3 were Christian and remaining Hindus. While talking about the teaching language, 3 were using in Gujarati while 9 were using English as a medium of instruction. The age group was pretty variant from 22 to 54, whom some were affiliated with social work profession since 2001 and few have joined recently, the latest was 2020 (four year back).

16-03-2024: Faculties of Universities from Saurastra region has been invited to Shri Matrumandir College of Rajkot University. Of 17 social work educators, 10 were female and 7 were men. In terms of the religion 7 were Christian and remaining Hindus. While talking about the teaching language, 8 were using in Gujarati while 9 were using English as a

medium of instruction. The age group was pretty variant from 27 to 55, whom some were affiliated with social work profession since 1997 and few have joined recently, the latest was 2020 (four year back).

23rd March, 2024: For northern region, we have selected Ganpat University as host and we meet there to discuss the project aims. Of 9 social work educators, 6 were female and 3 were men. In terms of the religion 3 were Christian and remaining Hindus. While talking about the teaching language, 3 were using in Gujarati while 8 were using English as a medium of instruction. The age group was pretty variant from 29 to 51, whom some were affiliated with social work profession since 2003 and few have joined recently, the latest was 2018.

March 26, 2024: For southern zone, educators invited to Veer Narmad South Gujarat University of Surat. Of 8 social work educators, 3 were female and 5 were men. In terms of the religion 1 was Christian and remaining Hindus. While talking about the teaching language, 4 were using in Gujarati while 4 were using English as a medium of instruction. The age group was pretty variant from 27 to 64, whom some were affiliated with social work profession since 1983 and few have joined recently, the latest was 2020.

At the beginning of the process, several group members were uncertain as to how this research would evolve and I felt they sensed my own uncertainty about its evolution. Learning to be comfortable with this evolutionary process can be difficult at times and yet can be liberating once this freedom and empowerment is felt. Several people told me before I started this project that my most important and difficult task as a facilitator would be to establish trust within the group. Will people volunteer for the project? Without trust, the group would not grow. This insight was helpful to me as I tried to create an environment where trust was established between group members.

One of the speakers spoke about the nature society-

"If there are creative people performing then they bring about change, positive change in the society and that is progress, that is development.. .Creativity is nurtured by exposing individuals to challenges that have no answers necessarily ...we must create creative situations that will challenge people's minds. And it is out of these challenges that people begin to think." (PAR at Anand)

Another member state-

"Continually think about how your culture is affected by, how you feel about your culture and how that is affected by other people. I am amazed at how traditional culture is still seen as wrong. Just be aware of who you are listening to and how that affects your view of you as an Indian". (PAR at Anand)

Reflecting on culture, a lady expresses her view- "Culture is something that is not static but dynamic. When we are talking of culture we are talking about so many different things coming together ... you also discover that there are some of us who are beginning to be more in tune with the western way of looking at things than the traditional way of looking at things." (PAR at AISW)

One group member expresses her though- "Is there any such thing as Indian culture? And if so, what is it? What is Indian culture?" -

Facilitator note- "The hegemony of western knowledge seemed a reality. This hegemony continues and is reflected in all stages of education. Most Gujarati adults, during childhood, learn more about the western world than about their own country." (PAR at AISW)

Another member told –

"It is historical fact that, there is intangible influenced of westernization and its emphasis on our family structure as well. In west, the nuclear family system is prevalence, in contrast to the indigenous Indian family where the extended family and rules concerning property. The different beliefs and knowledge bases are important to identify in social work education so that the development of practice acknowledges these differences. "(PAR at AISW)

A lady participant told on the same at Rajkot:

"Is there a negative side to traditional knowledge? Is some if it harmful? What about the village mentality? I don't see these as necessarily negative. We are supposed to feel bad because the western world defines them as diverse, primitive but not progressive (about villagers). if there was more pride and not so much emphasis on how the west views us, maybe we would rise up and do something." (PAR at Rajkot)

My own questions about our different society on western knowledge and beliefs and indigenous practices are very much similar to these expression-"Many see the positives and negatives of colonialism. Many want to move on, learn from the past and look to the future...".

In the every FGD I have asked member opinion on colonialism, and how it affected understanding about evolution of social work in broader way. This exercise also exposed the group to how western knowledge through colonialism shaped the way we all look at the world.

At AISW, scholar share his though-

"While the negative aspect of colonialism is there but at some point positive aspects are also emerged. "

At Surat, a lady explains-

"Though many group members are not so positive about colonialism, but generally, I sensed that people had been challenged and used this as their different places that affect their understanding about how colonialism has affected our continent."

Later on in every PAR, I emphasis on looking at the curriculum, and western impact-

For me, "One aspects of social work in India were intertwined with the issue of the curriculum. Though the group members were passionate about social work and felt deeply about the reputation and effectiveness of social work in society. Of concern to most members was that social work was on the periphery." (PI expressed at AISW).

It appears that progressed of research shaped, everyone's minds was in certain direction "How do we do it if we want to make it very Indianised?' Is there a balance between both worlds in regards to social work education and practice? Can we disregard the western influences? "(PAR at Kutch)

One of our speakers said-

"We have written a lot of things about Indianisation and culture, we can't get them published for us ... our problem is the lack of funds and lack of connections to get people to do things for us." (PAR at Mahesana)

Moderator highlights that-

"Most of you agreed that very little course time was spent on Indian social work and philosophy and that the majority of teaching centered on U.S. and British social work history. Although it is important to teach Western history, more time should be spent on the history of social work in India as well." (PAR Anand)

One participant states- " In social work, when you are organizing a program of training in social work, you have to rely on local materials, literature that reflects what is happening in society ." (PAR at Anand)

At Mahesana one scholar noted-

"Despite the rich history and its influence, our profession remains on the periphery. It is due to lack of interest of public and diminished nature of government as well. "

 One participant expresses her view- "The introduction of the English language has had an impact on us, particularly those interested in gaining a western education." (PAR at Surat)

We can see both traditional languages and English are used quite often. One group member shared her ideas concerning language. This issue of dependency on western knowledge, resources and development was talked about during the FGDs.

8. RECOMMENDATION FOR PROMOTING INDIANISED MODEL OF RURAL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Throughout this research process, the group reflects on many arenas and following has been emerged-

- It is has learned culture and the evolution of the social work profession are intertwined.
- Group member agreed about the negative and positive influences of colonialism and its effect on the society.
- The continual influence of western society on Indian culture and practice is evident. Both the western and traditional approaches needed to solve social issues.
- Participants acknowledge that culture is dynamic, constantly changing and sometimes intangible. It encompasses the past, present and future. This is reflected in continual changes in social issues and these changes need to be addressed in social work training. Regular evaluations of the courses should be part of the Department of Social Work's continuing assessment of its program.
- PAR, provides scholars a medium to discuss and making consensus in decision-making, expressing emotions externally, importance of community, saving face and hospitality are principles identified as important in Indian culture.
- The importance of understanding traditions in society, and cultural practices should be studied in light of social issues.
- Participants acknowledge the work of the social work pioneers in India in introducing and strengthening the profession of social work and its training. The introduction of social work was developmental in nature but over the

years has become more remedial with the individualization of services. The dwindling political interest and funding in social welfare services has been a factor in the decrease of service delivery.

- The appropriateness of Participatory Action Research as a research methodology is essential because it provides a platform to different backgrounds and experiences. This group process is an effective way to bring these differences together for creating change. It promotes a democratic and creative way to facilitate research that allows people to be involved thus counterbalancing the research fatigue syndrome found in many communities today.
- There is importance of the revised Bachelor's curriculum and the new Master's program and the significant impact these will have on the future of social work training and practice.
- There is a need evaluation of the social work curriculum at the Diploma, Bachelors and Masters levels at the Department of Social Work.
- The development of the Masters program will help alleviate the lack of indigenous writing available to students training to be social workers.
- Efforts should be made to encourage students and practitioners to write about their social work practice and experience. These articles need to be published and available for use by teachers at the university.
- The Masters program will incorporate social workers in the community as speakers and sectional instructors in order that practical experience can be a major part of social work education and this should also be encouraged at the Bachelors level.
- Effort should be made to collect practical case studies from all over Gujarat for use in the classroom. Individual social workers can play a part in promoting the values and skills of a social worker by involving themselves in social and political discussions via the radio, newspaper and media to bring the voice of social work into the everyday lives.
- Work needs to be developed concerning the positive links between social work and traditional authority and ways that the two institutions can promote development within the communities that they serve.
- Research concerning the present and future relationship between social workers and traditional authority, in particular, it would contribute to the literature and would highlight their overlapping roles in the community as well as how they could work together to foster positive community development.
- Research concerning the effects of globalization, particularly in health and social programs, would add to important documentation relating to poverty issues that affect our society. Included in this study could be the social workers role in supporting the empowerment of people to change their situations and take control of their own economic, health and social issues affecting them.
- Research linking indigenous social mechanisms in the society to social work education and practice would be invaluable to the profession. An example given during this research project is the exploration of a potential working relationship between indigenous medical practice and social work practice.
- Traditional practices were incorporated into the teaching material. In regards to social work values, many are embedded in our traditional thinking. Some of the western theories could be adapted to the Indian setting through using local examples.
- Lecturers need to be more practical, using Indian examples with their teaching material.
- The references in the reading list are very old and not up-to-date. So, recommended to add Indian writer in the reference list. We have many local writers who have written about social policy in different fields of study including social work and sociology.
- Both government and non-government organizations (NGO) have social policy statements that could be used. We therefore recommend that, as much as possible, Indian writings and local social policy examples should be used and referred in curriculum.
- It was very apparent that all members of the group felt practicum was the most important part of their training and much discussion centred on making the fieldwork more workable.
- The group recommends at least 8-week block practicum be extended. The fieldwork practicum needs to be revised with a gradual shift from organizational fieldwork to community fieldwork.
- Participants acknowledge that this developmental approach to fieldwork has been tried in the past and there must be encourage continuing its efforts to organize communities whereby social work students can practice holistically in the community.
- The HEIs should recognize that application - of concepts, theories, technologies and models - into practice is as important as learning them in a classroom or laboratory is, which otherwise might be viewed as rot learning i.e. memorization technique based on repetition.

- Active learning and associative learning kindle the critical faculty of the learner to become energetic. Simply, its impact on the learner lasts longer – often for a lifetime. Learning must become an involvement – an 'empathized involvement'. Learning without involvement ends up in placement prospects and pay packs

9. PARTICIPANTS SUGGESTED FOLLOWING WHILE ADDRESS THE CURRICULUM ARENA FOR INDIANISATION-

- Incorporating Local Knowledge Systems
- Traditional Ecological Knowledge by integrate indigenous agricultural practices, such as crop rotation, mixed cropping, and organic farming techniques used by local farmers. In addition by teaching about local flora and fauna, emphasizing their ecological roles and significance in local culture.
- Health and Wellness Practices- By including traditional medicinal knowledge and practices, such as the use of local herbs and Ayurvedic principles. Furthermore, by Educating students about traditional health practices and the importance of a balanced diet based on locally available foods.
- Mother Tongue Instruction- By using local languages as the medium of instruction in early education to ensure comprehension and cultural connection. Parallel to this, there is need to include folk tales, proverbs, and local literature in the curriculum to promote language preservation and cultural literacy.
- Storytelling and Oral Traditions- Incorporating storytelling sessions where elders share local myths, legends, and historical accounts. In addition by using oral traditions to teach moral values, community history, and social norms.
- Cultural Arts and Crafts- Integrate local art forms such as Madhubani painting, Warli art, and other regional crafts into art education. Simultaneously, Conduct workshops where students learn traditional dance, music, and theater from local artisans and performers. There can be provision of include practical lessons on traditional crafts like pottery, weaving, and basket making, linking them to cultural heritage and potential economic activities.
- Community Engagement and Participation- Develop projects that involve students in community service, such as assisting in local festivals, fairs, and rituals. Parallel also encourage students to document and present their community's cultural practices through projects and exhibitions.
- Field Visits and Learning Excursions as part of Curriculum - Organize visits to historical sites, local museums, and cultural centers. Also facilitate interactions with local leaders, artisans, and knowledge holders.
- Localized Curriculum- Develop textbooks and learning materials that include case studies, examples, and illustrations from the local context. In addition, also collaborate with local educators, cultural practitioners, and scholars in curriculum design.
- Provide training for teachers on integrating local knowledge and cultural practices into their teaching methods. Also equip teachers with resources and materials that reflect the local culture and traditions.
- Use Sustainable Practices and Environmental Education- Teach sustainable living practices rooted in local traditions, such as water conservation techniques, waste management, and the use of renewable resources. In addition, also Highlight local conservation efforts and the role of indigenous communities in protecting biodiversity. Include lessons on the traditional environmental stewardship practices of local communities. Engage students in activities like tree planting, maintaining community gardens, and preserving local water bodies.
- Celebrating Cultural Diversity- Celebrate local festivals and cultural events in schools, encouraging students to participate and learn their significance. Organize cultural days where students showcase their traditional attire, food, and customs.
- Intergenerational Learning- Promote intergenerational learning by involving grandparents and elders in educational activities. Create platforms for elders to share their knowledge and stories with students.

10. IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

To successfully integrate these elements, collaboration with local communities, government bodies, and educational institutions is vital. Regular assessment and feedback mechanisms should be in place to ensure the curriculum remains relevant and effective. By valuing and incorporating indigenous cultural values and practices, the education system can enhance cultural pride and community resilience among rural populations.

Recommendations on integrating local knowledge and wisdom from rural communities into the curriculum-

Integrating local knowledge and wisdom from rural communities into the curriculum can enrich the educational experience by making it more relevant and culturally meaningful for students. Here are several strategies to achieve this:

- Community people collaboration

- Cultural mapping and documentation
- Cultural sensitive Curriculum creation
- Place (region based) education
- Interdisciplinary research
- Create new learning opportunities
- Curriculum Design and Content by Incorporate Local History and Culture- Develop lessons that focus on the history, culture, and traditions of the local community. This can include local folklore, historical events, and cultural practices that are unique to the area.
- Use local stories and legends in language and literature classes to teach language skills while preserving oral traditions.
- Integrate traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) in science and environmental studies. For example, local agricultural practices, water conservation techniques, and medicinal plant knowledge can be included in the curriculum.
- Teach traditional crafts, arts, and music as part of the arts curriculum, emphasizing their cultural significance and techniques.
- Community Involvement- Invite local elders and community experts to participate in classroom activities and share their knowledge. They can give lectures, conduct workshops, or participate in storytelling sessions.
- Establish mentorship programs where students can learn directly from skilled community members, such as artisans, farmers, and healers.
- Educational Materials and Resources by Developing Localized Learning Materials-Create textbooks and supplementary materials that include case studies, examples, and illustrations relevant to the local context. This helps students see the relevance of their learning to their own lives and community.
- Use multimedia resources such as videos and audio recordings that capture local dialects, music, and cultural practices.
- Institutional Support and Policy-Advocate for educational policies that recognize and support the inclusion of local knowledge in the curriculum. This might involve collaboration with local education authorities and community leaders.
- Secure funding and resources for programs that aim to integrate local knowledge, ensuring sustainability and scalability.

11. CONCLUSION

As highlighted in initial stage that, in Indian social work research and writing there gap between theoretical knowledge and research as it relates to practical experiences of life. This chapter dwelt into the discussion and recommendation from the group members who found this gap frustrating in their own social work education and we felt very strongly that practical and political actions emerging from the project should be useful to the future of social work education and practice with respective to region of Gujarat.

Throughout the research process, PAR group talked about the curriculum and our experiences with it because through the PAR process we were encouraged to bring together our diverse knowledge and experiences in order to change the situations we find ourselves in. Smith (1997) rightly argued that "PAR is about power" and it is also about shifting power to a more equal power sharing relationship with our own selves, a group, community, society and the world.

At the start I have highlighted- "One overall goal of PAR is to achieve states of being, in which people are more aware, connected, heard, capable, and productive. People in a PAR process work to integrate shared, democratic power within the group and into society; to strengthen the personal, inner power of individuals; and to create opportunities for empowering moments of truth".

So, is the result that this research project created space to critically examine the people and institutions affecting our lives, in the word of Park (2001) "PAR recognizes different forms of knowledge, some of which are not always acknowledged in traditional research?"

In this research project, we were able to use knowledge gained through dialogue with the different speakers, analysis of course outlines, sharing personal experiences and the group process itself in order to analyze knowledge important to social work education and practice.

The relational knowledge surrounding this research includes firstly, the relationship with the PAR process, a new and often uncertain relationship for the group members that evolved into one that revolutionized their ideas concerning research; and secondly, the relationships with each other and how, as these relationships grew, new knowledge was generated through the relationships people forged with each other. The relationship with our society conveyed the tensions, sorrows, passion and joys that group members had concerning issues in society. The struggle with what is Indian culture and the issues relevant our society were acknowledged through the frustrations, anger, misunderstandings, joys, pride and love of the group as we came together to interact and grow as a group. Finally, the relationship with our profession, social work, was at times extremely intense and passionate and confusing. "If social work was never born and if it has not died, then where is it" shows the depth of these emotions and concern for the profession expressed by all in the group. There was never a doubt that all group members had a passionate relationship with the profession and were prepared to go far and take risks to create a more effective profession.

This study highlight the reflective knowledge as a form of knowledge that is based on critical analysis and evaluation of issues through looking at the wider, macro systems that affect society. It is through critical awareness that conscientization occurs in order to change the situations around us.

Through this conscientization process, confidence is built in order that the group can transfer knowledge from within to the outside in order to take practical actions to change their situation.

Through the dialogical process, more questions were asked than answered thus creating space for group members to critically examine these issues. As this process evolved, action plans emerged that enabled group members to act upon their new knowledge through.

Freire (1997) describes "this type of education seen in his own world as perpetuating a culture of silence. He argues that Rather than being encouraged and equipped to know and respond to the concrete realities of their world, they were kept 'submerged' in a situation in which such critical awareness and response were practically impossible. "

Moderator note-"The PAR process allowed for the people to express their views and to struggle with these different views affecting them. One lady member at the start said how evil colonialism was; after hearing others share their views, she came back the next week and stated that she felt the word evil was too strong in describing colonialism. At the next FGD she seemed to have resolved in her own mind what she felt about colonialism. The freedom to question, change your ideas and thinking, and develop other ways of thinking was important to this research process. "

As Reason (1994) rightly argued that "PAR values the people's knowledge, sharpens their capacity to conduct their own research in their own interests, helps them appropriate knowledge produced by the dominant knowledge industry for their own interests and purposes, allows problems to be explored from their perspective, and, maybe, most important, liberates their minds for critical reflection, questioning, and the continuous pursuit of inquiry, thus contributing to the liberation of their minds and the development of freedom and democracy. Knowledge production from this project has raised several issues like these, which need further research. "

Group members responded positively in every FGDs and were inspired throughout the PAR process to think about alternatives to the traditional kind of education. They particularly thought about different approaches to social work fieldwork placements and to a participatory approach to classroom teaching.

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CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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APPENDIX A. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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