Enablers for an Inclusive Learning Environment through Social Work Intervention

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1. Introduction:

Learning or informal education starts from the very birth of a child. The process starts from the daily-life experiences of an individual, and plays a vital role in one's psychosocial development. Informal education is different from non-formal education. Non-formal education, like formal education is not restricted to space and time. While formal education starts in school and is imparted through various institutions with fixed time and space, non-formal education comes with the advantage of being more flexible in nature. The concept of non-formal education is of recent origin. Non-formal education includes education through correspondence courses both short term and long term.

UNESCO's Report on education for 21ˢᵗ Century states that education should rest on four pillars of learning and those are: learning to know (gathering of appropriate knowledge); learning to do (creative use of acquired knowledge); learning to live together (participative and cooperative existence) and learning to be (continuity or sustainability). Higher education generally encompasses learning at the tertiary level where it aims to train people through higher educational institutes to take up various responsible roles in the society. These institutes are the drivers of a country's economic as well as intellectual growth and prosperity.

The classical and traditional university model encompasses teaching and research as the two most dominant attributes. The concept of academic freedom though exists, its presence cannot be felt due to 'political authority and economic power' of the elite class. Robins Committee Report in 1963 emphasizes the utilitarian perspective of higher Education, which later acted as a catalyst for disseminating education to the masses (Robert Anderson, 2010). Echoes of Robin's idea of a university as a propellant of common culture can be heard in the Bologna declaration of 1988, which mostly referred as "the magna carta of European Universities." It stated universities as autonomous

institutions whose one of the responsibilities, apart from knowledge creation, includes the embodiment of culture and its values within the society. In the prevailing globalized economy where "mixed culture" acts as incentives to increase the national cultural diversity, universities' role as a facilitator for unifying the myriad cultures poses a great challenge. In this context, social work education needs to be knowledge based and should be inclusive in its perspective.

The Northeast region of India, comprising eight states namely Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim is a home to various tribes, ethnic and linguistic groups. Due to innumerable reasons, most of these groups have been facing marginalization. In general, the term 'marginalization' describes the overt actions or tendencies of human societies, where people who they perceive to undesirable or without useful function, are excluded, i.e., marginalized. These people, who are marginalized, from a group or community for their protection and integration and are known as 'marginalized groups'. This limits their opportunities and means for survival. Peter Leonard defines marginality as, "being outside the mainstream of productive activity and/or social reproductive activity."

This paper focuses on the factors that are being used synonymously as enablers of empowerment of marginalized communities through social work intervention. Here, not only social work education through distance mode is the key focus, but also other interventions that would contribute to knowledge accumulation and innovative inclusive model for empowering communities is emphasized. The study focuses only on the linkage between the various factors that enhance an inclusive model of social work intervention for societal development.

2. Review of Literature:

Universities are always looked up as change agents, but today's world concerns "change in education" particularly in the area of education ethos, purpose and policy (S. Sterling, 2004). This requires a transformation of traditional Universities towards Entrepreneurial Universities (B. Clark, 1998) with education sustainability in focus (B. Clark, 2004). The emergence of the concept of "Living Lab" to embrace emerging technologies, new policies and culture through value co-creation between universities, academia and industries find tremendous relevance in education sustainability context (M.Eriksson et al, 2005).

Many education experts and faculties felt the need for inclusive educational learning against content driven learning. A practical approach towards fostering creativity and innovation can be achieved through course curriculum revision to encourage development of cross-curricular competence (R. Cachia, 2010). A curricular change with inclusion of interdisciplinary subjects helps graduates to become industry ready (M. Silva, 2001). However, to execute the innovative course curricula, there is a need to revisit our traditional teaching methodology techniques, which is based on traditional "pedagogy" principles. Practice of andragogical principles for adult students in higher education now become a primary focus for education practioners (M. A. Thompson et al, 2004).

Universities direct contribution to the national economic growth is through technology transfer and licensing to small or big firms or through spin-off companies. According to evolutionary theory, technological innovations are possible because of the co-creation between a university and industry or through spin-off firms through technology transfer offices; (R. R. Nelson et al, 1982).In general spin-off companies are responsible for creating and bringing a large proportion of commercially oriented innovations to the market (W. J. Abernathy et al, 1979). In order to incorporate changes for maintaining a sustainable education system which consists of ethos, vision, processes, people and policies, motivation in the form of university appraisals is desired. Mainstream university ranking requires revision to incorporate parameters related to education sustainability development initiatives, its execution and maintenance by universities.

For the learning process in acquiring skills for social work profession, its education methodology holds a significant place as it the teacher/instructor is not the undisputed possessor of knowledge (Desai, 2002). Social work education is context based and learners contribute their own perspectives, interpretation and life experiences in building a vast knowledge base. Thus, the learners' wisdom and creativity should be enhanced by self-learning experience and participation. An Inclusive model of social work education and intervention for empowerment of marginalized groups and communities would encompass various factors/ enablers as drivers for social change.

The Encyclopedia of Public Health defines marginalized groups as, 'To be marginalized is to be placed in the margins, and thus excluded from the privilege and power found at the center". Latin observes that,

'Marginality' is so thoroughly demeaning, for economic well-being, for human dignity, as well as for physical security. Marginal groups can always be identified by members of dominant society, and will face irrevocable discrimination." Marginalization has aspects in sociological, economic, and political debates. Marginalization may manifest itself in forms varying from genocide/ethnic-cleansing and other xenophobic acts/activities at one end of the spectrum, to more basic economic and social hardships at the unitary (individual/family) level.

As mentioned earlier, conflict is inevitable in society. There has been and still exists dominance of some social groups by others. Conflict is eventually the result of overthrow of dominant groups by the subordinate groups (Ritzer 2003). However, positive and collaborative social work intervention would enable to bring about harmony and social development through inclusive practices of communities. This has to be mobilized by enthusiast-trained social workers with applied knowledge and skills. Closely connected to conflict theory is the perspective of 'Structural Functionalism' that acknowledges the interconnectedness of the social structures and institutions of society. Similarly, the Functional Theory of Stratification has regarded social stratification as both universal and necessary. Thus, stratification is a functional necessity and marginalization of groups is an outcome of such stratification.

In this context, it becomes an obligatory and crucial responsibility of universities to create an inclusive learning environment through various techniques framed and executed through university policies. Social work intervention techniques would help in dealing with problems of marginalization, injustices and foster optimum utilization of available resources- both human and material; if needed, create resources and build innovative developmental models for social change. Inclusive knowledge would accelerate social development that would cut across caste, class, sex and economic inequalities.

3. Factors to Build Inclusive Knowledge through Social Work Intervention:

Following are the eight factors that have been identified as social work interventions for inclusive learning. These factors would enable to enhance social development through initiatives by the universities, which are committed to society and empowerment of the people. Optimum utilization of available resources and creativity are the guiding principles of these interventions.

1.	**Inclusive University Policies:** The university policies have provisions for free education, community outreach programs, anti-racial, caste, gender discriminatory guidelines
2.	**Participatory Rural Appraisal:** Identification of needs of the community and the available resources to be utilized for community development. Optimum utilization of available resources is crucial with the involvement of the people.
3.	**Upgradation of Social Work Curriculum:** Upgradation and inclusiveness of the aspects of overall common issues and features of minority groups
4.	**Design Specific CSR programs:** Corporate Social Responsibility is a mandatory field for almost all organizations that include activities, schemes, benefits for the marginalised communities, mostly of an underdeveloped neighbourhood.
5.	**Social Work Research on Marginalized Groups:** Identification of social issues and needs in marginalized groups or communities, Understanding the cause-effect relationships and drawing implications for policy formulation.
6.	**Development of Learning Feedback Mechanisms:** Development of an effective channel through which the marginalized group learners' learning experiences, performances, grievances can be evaluated.
7.	**Dedicated Social Work Team:** Building a collaborative social work team comprising of members from the university, learners and MSW counselors, appointed social workers to work for empowerment of communities or other developmental projects.
8.	**Rewards and Recognition:** The management may introduce different reward schemes and recognition for outstanding performers in social work activities

Framing and adopting inclusive university management policies and practices is crucial for any university if it has to function in an effective way. Policies result in the main advancement of its inclusive education and creative societal environment. The innovative decisions of the board of members and higher officials, in the form of university policies, reflect the ideologies, values and principles that the institution is built on. Policies related to flexibility with respect to disability,

economic background of learners belonging to marginalized groups, their admission, fee structure, examination and other perspectives contribute to an inclusive learning environment. This factor is the basis on which the outcome of all other developmental strategies will be based on. It provides a blueprint of the interventions in future.

Building collaboration through Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) is an important factor for change at the grass-root level. This technique aims to enable local communities to conduct their own analysis and to plan and take action. It involves project staff acquiring knowledge from villagers about the village to empower the villagers to plan, make decisions and take action towards improving their own situation. Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) is considered one of the popular and effective approaches to gather information in rural areas. This approach was developed in early 1990s with considerable shift in paradigm from top-down to bottom-up approach.

Here, appraisal implies the finding out of information about problems, needs, and potential in a village. It is the first stage in any project. 'Participatory' means that people are involved in the process – a "bottom-up" approach that requires good communication skills and attitude of project staff. Rural – The techniques can be used in any situation, urban or rural, with both literate and illiterate people. PRA is based on village experiences where communities effectively manage their natural resources. PRA is a methodology of learning rural life and their environment from the rural people. It requires researchers / field workers to act as facilitators to help local people conduct their own analysis, plan and take action accordingly. It is based on the principle that local people are creative and capable and can do their own investigations, analysis, and planning. Thus, it is a significant factor to be considered for inclusive social work education.

Building an effective social work curriculum and its upgradation after an adequate interval with the changing demands of time and situations is a significant intervention factor for social development. It should focus on multiculturalism of the region, enhance field study- Case Study based courses: exploration of best practices of NGOs and other Welfare organizations - of social work syllabus by including more of cultural diversity of the NE region, Peace and conflict management techniques- field experiences should be incorporated and amended over time. Identification and development of entrepreneurial facilitation schemes/programs /activities- Identifying the specific role of

government, skill development, schemes designing and implementation should be encouraged and adopted in the curriculum.

Designing and implementing specific Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs is an important factor for social work intervention. CSR activities may focus on building awareness of social work and developing entrepreneurial skills designing activities and implementation-enforcement – fieldwork placement of social work students – impact assessment. The purpose of corporate social responsibility or CSR is to guide organisations to act "in an ethical and transparent way that contributes to the health and welfare of society". There has been a growing interest in social responsibility of organizations during the past few decades. As organizations do not operate in vacuum, their activities will affect their surroundings, which include their stakeholders, society and other influenced parties. We can argue that the responsibility of addressing global issues ideally involves everyone, since everyone is in some way impacted. Some universities refer to themselves as 'engaged' or socially responsible institutions involved in civil and community service or 'outreach'. More and more universities around the world are integrating social responsibility into their mission statements, including their research and teaching missions, arguing that higher education is better off when it gives back to the society that is responsible for funding it.

As a university is involved in various research activities, it is obligatory to enhance social work research on marginalized groups. Since the NE region of India comprises of various ethnic, linguistic and cultural groups, most of which are marginalized, it is necessary to procure more knowledge on their issues for effective social work interventions. A dedicated social work team needs to be built to carry out the research and other activities with regard to developmental interventions, may be through projects, CSR activities, by conducting PRA techniques, data collection, implementation of schemes and other benefits, creating awareness, advocacy for the marginalized groups, etc. The management may introduce different reward schemes and recognition for outstanding performers in social work activities. Development of an effective channel through which the marginalized group learners' learning experiences, performances, grievances can be evaluated.

4. Methodology:

The enablers identified through literature review shares a complex relationship between them and thus to give a structured pattern, Interpretive Structural Modeling (ISM) is used. The order and the direction of the complex interrelated relationships can be imposed through ISM. This methodology has been widely used in management research for better understanding of the system and precisely to identify the relationships between various barriers and enablers of the same. Responses collected from important administrative personnel of the university and experienced social work practitioners have been used to create Structural Self-Interaction Model.

We followed the different sequential steps of ISM as defined in the various literature of S. Chidambaranathan et al 2009, M. N. Faisal et al 2006, T.C. Kuo et al 2010, J. Thakkar et al 2008, to build the Structural Self-interaction matrix (SSIM), Reachability Matrix which helps to identify the driver factors and the dependence factors in building an inclusive model of social work intervention.

Structural Self-Interaction Matrix

A contextual relationship based on "leads to" type between the different enablers has been established through expert opinions of different academicians and industry personnel.

4 symbols are used to denote the direction of relationship between the two enablers (i and j):

V: enabler i generally lead to j;

A: enabler j generally leads to i;

X: enabler i and j generally lead to each other; and

O: enablers i and j are unrelated.

In simple terms:

V for the relation from i to j but not in both directions;

A for the relation from j to i but not in both directions;

X for both direction relations from i to j and j to i; and

O if the relation between the variables does not appear valid.

Factors for Building an Inclusive Model to Empower Marginalized Group through Social Work Interventions

i \ j	Rewards and Recognition	Dedicated Social Work Team	Development of Learning Feedback Mechanisms	Social Work Research on Marginalized Groups	Design Specific CSR programs	Social Work Curriculum Upgradation	Participatory Rural Appraisal
Inclusive University Policies	V	A	V	X	V	V	V
Participatory Rural Appraisal	V	X	X	X	A	A	
Social Work Curriculum Upgradation	V	X	X	X	V		
Design Specific CSR programs	X	A	O	A	A		
Social Work Research on Marginalized Groups	V	X	X				
Development of Learning Feedback Mechanisms	X	X					
Dedicated Social Work Team	V						

Reachability Matrix

The SSIM is converted to a Binary Matrix known as Initial Reachability Matrix by substitution of 1s and 0s by the following rules:

if the (i, j) entry is V, then the (i, j) entry in the initial reachability matrix becomes 1 and the (j, i) entry becomes 0;

if the (i, j) entry is A, then the (i, j) entry in the initial reachability matrix becomes 0 and the (j, i) entry becomes 1;

if the (i, j) entry is X, then the (i, j) entry in the initial reachability matrix becomes 1 and the (j, i) entry also becomes 1; and

if the (i, j) entry is O, then the (i, j) entry in the initial reachability matrix becomes 0 and the (j, i) entry also becomes 0.

The following table shows the Initial Reachability Matrix based on the above given factors.

Table 2: Initial Reachability Matrix

i \ j	Rewards and Recognition	Dedicated Social Work Team	Development of Learning Feedback Mechanisms	Social Work Research on Marginalized Groups	Design Specific CSR programs	Social Work Curriculum Upgradation	Participatory Rural Appraisal	Inclusive University Policies	Driver Power
Inclusive University Policies	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	7
Participatory Rural Appraisal	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	5
Social Work Curriculum Upgradation	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	7
Design Specific CSR programs	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	3
Social Work Research on Marginalized Groups	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	8

Development of Learning Feedback Mechanisms	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	6
Dedicated Social Work Team	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	8
Rewards and Recognition	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	3
Dependence power	8	5	7	6	5	6	7	3	

MICMAC Analysis:

The 4 quadrants in the Driver Dependence Matrix categorize the enablers depending on the driver and dependence power as follows:

Quadrant I: Autonomous Enablers

Quadrant II: Dependent enablers

Quadrant III: Linkage enablers
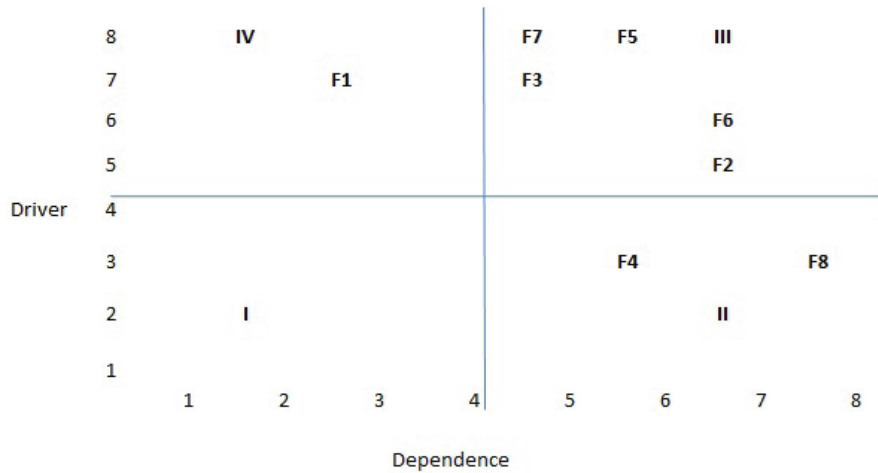
Quadrant IV: Driver enablers

Fig 1: Driver- Dependence Matrix

5. Discussions and Implications:

With reference to Fig 1: Driver-Dependence Matrix, the following points needs to be discussed as to ascertain the role of each factor in building and inclusive framework of learning through social work intervention.

Quadrant I: Autonomous Enablers

There are no autonomous variables identified which indicates that all enablers in this study are interrelated and influences the system for propelling inclusive education in universities. This is also true in the context that a university for truly becoming entrepreneurial cannot exist in silo and a symbiotic link should exist between the various factors and their activities within and outside the university system.

Quadrant II: Dependent Enablers

Dependent factors are those, which have to be triggered by driver factors and linkage factors. They drive the CSR activities and rewards and recognition designed and implemented as per the university policies, backed by the linkage factors. Thus, effective CSR activities, rewards, and recognition are dependent on the inclusive university policies and other linkage factors to fabricate effective results.

Quadrant III: Linkage Enablers

They have strong dependence as well as driver power. For example, in this study, designing and executing PRA activities, curriculum upgradation, social work research on marginalized groups, effective learning feedback mechanism and dedicated social work team are dependent on university policies, however, they also drive or trigger effective CSR activities and rewards and recognition for good performances in the field of social change and learning. University curriculum reflects its concern and delivery potential towards the social and economic growth of a nation. Curriculum redesign to foster innovation among students depends on University policies and its zeal to create value in the knowledge body.

Quadrant IV: Driver Enablers

Factor 1, i.e. University Policy is found to be the driving factor. Policies result in the main advancement of its inclusive education and creative societal environment. The innovative decisions of the board of members and higher officials, in the form of university policies, reflect the ideologies, values and principles that the institution is built on. Thus, university policies will drive all the other factors for inclusive education and social empowerment, viz a viz- PRA, social work curriculum upgradation, CSR activities, social work research, creating learning feedback mechanism, creating a dedicated social work team and its functioning and formulating rewards and recognition for all the hard work and performances delivered. Universities should seek research-funding sources from business, industry, civil society and non-national state actors. Universities should create their own PPP (Private-Public Partnership) model to execute their applied and social researches and CSR activities. The Infrastructural requirement for experimental lab set-ups is a costly affair, which can be minimized through the collaborative research ventures. The role of the Government is also crucial in this area.

6. Conclusion:

Inclusive learning environment and inclusive social work intervention must be inculcated from the pre-primary or the primary level of education. Introducing creative and design thinking strategies at appropriate stages of learning will enhance social development focusing on the values of quality and justice. The identified university developmental intervention enablers are only suggestive and depend on the culture of the nation, interest of top management, support from the government, students and faculties' interest in propelling innovation.

Universities need to perform an internal and external analysis of the environment and should try to form a collaborative network with other universities at a regional or national level to mitigate their pitfalls or work towards achieving a common goal. In this era where students are inclined towards opting for Open and Distance Learning (ODL) and Massive Open Online courses (MOOCs), open as well as conventional universities need to foster the importance of learning through modifying teaching methodologies and the appraisal system for faculties and learners. Faculties and researchers should not be appraised only on the number of publications, but on the number of patents applied, ability to teach cross-departmental subjects, involvement in fundamental researches etc. The role of the Government as a conduit in the incorporation and implementation of the enablers is significant. The role of other non-university actors such as NGOs, civil societies cannot be overlooked as they can help universities in the generation of fund raising activities along with social outreach programmes and exercises.

7. Limitations and Further Study:

The different categories of universities are not considered in the study. The identified university innovation enablers depend on the various micro and macro level factors such as the culture of the nation, interest of the universities' top management, support from the government, students and faculty's interest in propelling social development. An empirical study on the degree of association between different factors and sub-factors could not be achieved in this study due to time and cost constraint. The model developed need to be tested for its reliability and validity across different social, political and economic scenarios along with different categories of universities.

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