



## THE WORLD VIEW MATRIX OF NORTH EAST AS A STRATEGY WHEN DESIGNING CURRICULUM FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

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### KEYWORDS :

#### Introduction:

World is changing rather fast than ever before. In this ultra-modern world, the theories, formulas, inventions, technologies and traditional beliefs get outdated and replaced by new inventions and technologies. The question arises in our mind- Is there anything permanent in this world? The author the book called "Future Shock" Alvin Toffler is worried about the human values, family and marriage institutes will last in this modern world.

Our modern education system teaches us about capitalism-earn more anyhow and become rich. Those who have the power of money, are mini kings of this modern world. Impoverished people do not have power to bargain in the market. This attitude of the creamy layer of particular community grants hidden blessing and indirect approval to the pragmatism in the social arena. Whatever is useful and practical is preserved and passed it on to posterity.

Ageing presents a challenge to human development. The transition from childhood to adolescence to adulthood, and to old age is a process that requires monitoring of different dimensions of life. A graceful ageing is a reflection of the full realisation of human development, leading to lower mortality and to greater longevity. Ageing is 8a dominant theme of the 21<sup>st</sup> century calling for a deeper research into the extents of this phenomenon. The shift in the family and society make up globalization, mobility and market has made ageing more challenging than ever. A study of ageing and the aged becomes constructive in harnessing the best of this stage of life for the betterment of the aged, family and the society. Introduction of the discipline of "Gerontology" in higher education necessitated by a global agenda will certainly help the families and societies to take care of the aged and make them feel that old is gold and beautiful. Traditions are invaluable, but change is inevitable. A better future can be earned out by being rooted. The tradition and the world view of North east and in particular the way they treat their "aged" may provide a ground norm in creating a curriculum that incorporates the elements of gerontology. This paper explores that possibility.

#### Significance of the study of Gerontology

The basic Indian philosophy is that, it is the family's primary responsibility to take care of the old, and only when this fails should the state come forward to assist. In western society, age is a secret shame, or at least an embarrassment about which one doesn't speak. Old people are often not treated as human beings. The young frequently mock, exploit and degrade them. They are frequently placed in old age homes or hospitals by their children during vacation time and after summer they forget to bring them back. The prosperous nations of the west tend to treat their old people as a commodity that feeds the new booming industries of well – staffed retirement villages and nursing homes for those who can afford them, but the elderly poor languish under grossly inadequate care.

The experience of old age differs radically across the country, India. In the northern states, the income producing elderly family members are accorded higher respect because of their economic contributions to the family. In the western states of the country, for elders, the family remains almost the only source of residential, economic, and emotional sustenance. The southern states of the country have undergone major changes in its society and economy. The migration of young people to the gulf region has resulted in leaving the old in families with no one to look after. The demographic transition which has happened in a big way in these states compared to other Indian states has left fewer members in families and fewer still to care for the

old. Perhaps the single most striking dimension of the emergence of new modes of ageing and family in India is the near flood of old age homes' that has risen in India's southern states. It is in the family that an individual fulfils his needs and it performs important tasks which contributes to society's basic needs and helps to perpetrate social order. An old age home is considered as secondary institution in which the functions of the family are done partially. Family intimacy and love, material simplicity and tradition are sharply juxtaposed against material success, loneliness, alienation between generations, modern food and parties, and a selfish disregard for others, seniors and the past.

Declines in fertility and mortality have led to population ageing and increased longevity throughout the world, including across much of India (Hermaling 1995). As the longevity of life in modern era is increasing day by day, the number of aged person is also increasing. India is still poised to become home to the second largest number of older persons in the world. Not only the population of aged is in rise, but the psychological and sociological problems are on rise (Acharya, 2012). Earlier times families provided an important context for aging. Due to mobility and job the family is not often able to care adequately for their old. Families do bring resources like time, money, goods and services to their aging members and not necessarily their presence. Family members not only offer emotional support, information and connections but also introduce conflict, criticism, demands and occasionally unhealthy or unhelpful advice or examples (Waite & Das, 2010).

Many outstanding literary, artistic and scientific achievements have come at an advanced aged. It is high time for our education to introduce the discipline of "Gerontology" to the curriculum of higher education. This would enable our youngsters- the back bones of future, realise the great contributions the aged have made in the family and society. At this stage of life, the aged are unable to contribute due to the physical imbalance. The bonding that takes place in the family from grand parents to the present may not be visible but it has enduring value. The present generation may not realise the great loss of what they are going to miss in the absence of elderly in the families. The presence of the aged is a continuum in the families and societies. The transfer of values through the continuum cannot be replaced by anything else. The inconvenience and difficulties in taking care of the aged is nothing compared to the immense contributions they have made for society. The inclusion of the discipline 'Gerontology' can open the eyes of the young and change their attitude towards the elderly in the family. And they also will realise that the family transmits cultural standards to next generation as family is the most important institution that has survived through the ages.

#### Northeast at a glance

Northeast is the eastern most region of India connected to East India via a narrow corridor squeezed between Bhutan and Bangladesh. It comprises the contiguous seven sister states, namely Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura plus the Himalayan state of Sikkim. These states are officially under the umbrella of North Eastern Council (NEC). The largest cities according to the population census 2011 are Guwahati, Agarthala, Shillong, Aizawal, Imphal, Silchar, Dibrugarh, Nagoan, Jorhat, Dimapur, Darjeeling, Gangtok and Kohima.

**Communities:** Northeast has over 220 ethnic groups and equal number of dialects. The hill states in the region like Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland are predominantly inhabited by

tribal people with a long degree of diversity even within the tribal groups. Besides the indigenous inhabitants, people from Tibet, Myanmar, Thailand, West Bengal and Bangladesh have migrated into the region at various period of history.

**Culture:** The colourful kaleidoscope of North Eastern societies and culture has been a topic that aroused the inquisitiveness in the minds of erudite scholars and researchers all across the world. The social values of cultural legacy of the North East Indian state are reflected in the life style of the inhabitants. It does not follow the social stratification of the traditional Indian society. Exploring North East and knowing more about their culture can be a very interesting activity for a person. The traditional society in North East India is a family that has at least three or four generations living together. Thus fulfilling every human need forming a wonderful idyllic society in the forest clad hills of the region.

#### **Traditional Emergence of Education:**

The people in North East had minimum necessities and livelihood, one's wealth became a cause of celebration for all thus bringing about a mind set of economic equality and enhanced social status and recognition. All had the same type of education within the village which addressed the pressing problems of the village society. But with the influx of British and other social agents, brought about a different educational system. This education brought greater advancement which also brought with it consumeristic craze for a society that had little access to human comforts in the past. This led to sudden rise to greed leaving all spectrums of traditional values for a toss. The emerging elite had a better life style as they had better access and employment opportunities, influence and capital. This disturbed the social fabric and brought about an unequal situation.

Modern education in North East India came with the advance of the British and along with them the missionaries. Until then, each society, tribe and community had its own social educational system which kept the village community strongly bonded. Christian missionaries brought great in road into the North East by providing education and health facilities. Education brought better amenities and employment. This gradually brought in a migratory process looking for better education.

It is not a rare sight when visiting villages that often only the little ones and the older ones are in the village while the young are absent in search of education and employment. This leaves the old and the young fend for themselves without much support. This migration is a symptom of the cause that there are no sufficient quality centres of education in the land. Hence, there has been great thrust to prevent the migration from the State by providing standard institutions within the State so that the young can find equal and better opportunities within.

The present society is rapidly moving from agrarian too consumer communities. However, each tribesman and woman is a self defined person and strives to live their life with less dependence on others. It is a frequent sight to see the very senior citizens of the society still going to the field/ tending a garden for his or her livelihood. There is a tendency not to depend on others- that is a social value inculcated from childhood. The "Nupi"(woman) market at Imphal (Manipur) is case in point. The senior women come to sell things in the women market-it is an effort on their part to be an asset to the family and be relevant in time and that way they learn love and respect. At the same time, there is a great bonding between the grand parent and the grand child or the great grandchild that the fabric of the family remains strongly united and the senior ones enjoy great respect.

These two blending aspects - of one not wanting to be a burden and be an asset to the family and the younger ones wanting to be loved by the older generations and loved in return. Education enables this quality to be cultivated in every sphere... This will bring a seamless transition making every stage in one's growth an integral aspect of the family.

#### **Care given to the aged**

During several years of living in North East, time and again I was impressed by one outstanding characteristics of the communities here: their deep respect for tradition and for their elders. The philosophy that it is the family's primary responsibility to take care of the old, is kept true and still has been in practice among the communities of North Eastern society. The elderly here are well cared by their children. The idea of nuclear family is of very recent origin when the families are

shifted from the remote villages to the towns and the capital cities for education and employment, the children are accompanied by their parents or one of the children stay in their parental home until the death of the parents. This traditional familiar practice is not found in any other part of our country. A deep sense of duty and obligation exists towards the family here. It is a frequent site to observe the amount of attention they get from their family members, their participation in family ceremonies, their position of command voice in taking decision etc. And these make their life active and joyful. The aged are looked upon with great deal of respect. They are considered to be mines of experience and knowledge. Young people approach them for advice and guidance. Children try their best to provide them an atmosphere too live a happy life and it is considered to be the first and foremost solution to their problems.

#### **Theoretical construct that would support my argument**

John Dewey (1859-1950) founded the Ideal University Laboratory School at Chicago in 1896. This school served him as a scientific laboratory in obtaining knowledge of facts and laws still unknown to the educationalists of the world. It was here that he tested, modified and clarified his theories after practical experience of school situations. Dewey thinks that education is a continuous process of adjustment, having as its aim at every stage an added capacity of growth. The task of educating so many students at so many different educational levels with such a variety of abilities, needs and goods require a completely different approach. With this increase in a diversified school population, Dewey advocates that broader curriculum programmes are needed and emphasis should be placed on the development of the person as being equally important as the intellectual and the academic. Such a curriculum acknowledges that the social responsibilities of the education must present situations where problems are relevant to the issues of living together, and where observation and information are calculated to develop social insight and interest.

Second hand and third hand information recorded in books and experienced by others is far too predominant in our modern-day procedures of education. There must be provided a great number of opportunities in which text book material and oral expression are accompanied by direct experiences for students.

To make this direct experiences possible, I would propose The Project Method and Experimental Method of John Dewey.

**Project Method:** Dewey recommends projects to be used as a teaching technique. A project is a purposeful activity proceeding in a social environment. This method lays emphasis on the pupil's purpose, needs, interest, self-activity and participation in the entire process of teaching .Dewey

Suggests that problematic situations should be provided to students in and around the class room.

**Experimental Method:** Dewey emphasises the fact that all learning must come as the by-product of experimentation. He wants to test everything before finally accepting it. According to him, experimental method in tune with the heuristic method through which all ideas and hypothesis are tested to discern whether they are true and useful to society. By following this method the young student may find ample scope to develop himself as a responsible member of the family and the society.

These two methods can attract the interest and hold the attention of the students. Education is life itself. Therefore the curriculum should include those subjects and activities that are related to the student's pattern of life. It would be suggested that in order to learn the experiences and life pattern of the aged people the students could visit them in families or the institutes where they are cared, and observe them closely. This would enable them to realise the difficulties and their psychological feelings the aged undergo in their day-today life. By doing so they too will realise that this stage of life and its difficulties are inevitable in one's life. This in turn can create a special love, concern and affection towards the elderly people.

It has been observed that people attach unique and special qualities to the old. *Folk wisdom social science indicate that the aged in the communities are associated with characteristics that are positively valued, by man like maturity, wisdom and spiritual and self acceptance.*

Introducing gerontology as a discipline in the curriculum of higher education will certainly bring a change in the attitudes of the young people toward the elderly. Thus the progress of our nation can be marked by the care which it provide for the aged.

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