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PRIA

Participatory Research in Asia

OCCASIONAL PAPER

Fostering Social Responsibility in Higher Education in India

Acknowledgement

This paper is based on the deliberations held and materials researched during the work of the Sub-committee on “Strengthening Community Engagement in Higher Education” set up by the Planning Commission in 2011.

As part of my long standing involvement in promoting participatory community-based research as an intervention in empowerment of the poor and the marginalised, I have been promoting partnerships between the world of practice and the world of research in the country, and internationally.

As UNESCO Co-Chair in Community-based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education, I have been further facilitating community engaged practices of higher education institutions in which students, scholars and researchers participate in mutually respectful ways.

I am thankful to Harsh Mander, Chair of the above sub-committee. Dr Narendra Jadhav, Member Planning Commission was particularly encouraging to take forward the recommendations of the committee, and formally requested me as UNESCO Chair (on the occasion of its launch in India in December 2012) to take this work forward.

Pawan Agarwal, Adviser (Higher Education), Planning Commission has been my constant source of inspiration and innovative ideas in these endeavours; I am thankful to him for his support and guidance in various activities being undertaken in this regard.

I hope you find this paper useful in promoting community engagement and social responsibility in higher education in India.

Dr Rajesh Tandon

UNESCO Chair in Community-based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education

www.unescochair-cbrsr.org

Founder-President, PRIA, New Delhi

www.pria.org

Preface

The 12th Plan is making significant strategic directions in the advancement of higher education in the country. As greater public and private investments in higher education take place over the next five years, it is imperative that the expanding access is complemented with improved quality of learning. The products of such educational institutions should not only improve their livelihoods and advance their professional opportunities, but also become and act like good citizens of the country.

It is in this context that 'fostering social responsibility in higher education' needs to be placed as an important pillar of the future directions. By improving engagements with the community, institutions of higher education can reinforce the values of social responsibility amongst the youth. Partnerships with communities and civil society need to be encouraged to realize this potential.

It is with this in view that a Sub-committee on 'Strengthening Community Engagement in Higher Education in India' was set up by the Planning Commission in September 2011 under the Chairmanship of Shri Harsh Mander. The Committee made some excellent recommendations in this regard. However, the deliberations of the Committee evolved a more visionary framework for fostering social responsibility through strengthened community engagements. I want to thank the Chairperson and members of the Committee for the same.

The Member Planning Commission encouraged us to discuss the follow-up of the recommendations of this Committee. He chaired a meeting where further strategies evolved. It was felt that given the far-reaching implications of this approach to fostering social responsibility in higher education in India, dissemination of this material in the public domain would stimulate further dialogues and innovations.

We are grateful to Dr Rajesh Tandon and his colleagues in PRIA (Participatory Research in Asia), New Delhi for assisting in the preparation of this document. It is wonderful that UNESCO has invited Dr Rajesh Tandon to be a co-chair on Community-based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education. We look forward to working closely with him in advancing the practice of this approach in India.

It is hoped that this document would be used widely by institutions of higher education and civil society in India.

Pawan Agarwal
Adviser (Higher Education)
Planning Commission

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Introduction

Despite India's economic growth, the country continues to witness poverty, marginalization and deprivation, structurally located in rural, tribal, slum, homeless, Dalit and Muslim households. New forms of social exclusion, urban poverty, environmental degradation, conflict and violence have also emerged in the past decade. Ensuring inclusive development, democratic governance and sustainable growth require new knowledge, enhanced human competencies and new institutional capabilities in the country. It was expected that education would contribute solutions to these problems to some extent. However, in spite of enhanced investment on expenditure, leading to increased enrolment, these issues remain largely unattended. The role of institutions of higher education in societal development seems to be the potential missing link.

Today the '19th century idea' of the university is undergoing drastic changes. There is conflict between different goals of higher education—social transformation and attainment of social justice through education on the one hand and, on the other, education as means to individual prosperity and advancement. There are divergent opinions between education as a public good and education as a commodity for private consumption. Further, a significant proportion of the new entrants into higher education in India are going to be from groups that have traditionally not accessed post-secondary education; thereby, making the social composition of classrooms more heterogeneous than ever. This creates an opportunity for promoting learning of the students, who come from diverse communities, in a manner that they may take the benefits of higher education back to these communities and at the same time also draw upon the knowledge nurtured by such communities. The question is, importantly, one of integration of knowledge – bringing together education and work, theory and practice, university and society. This kind of integration is an urgent task at a time when India is investing heavily in its higher education sector and would like to see positive transformation in human resources in a relatively short period¹.

The economic development of the country has grown the service sector in the informal and small-scale social economy, which would also entail competency upgradation through new forms of knowledge systems and educational provisions. The challenging goals of skills development as envisaged in the National Knowledge Commission, and the huge requirements of capacity enhancement in hundreds of municipalities alone would require many more knowledge workers in the next decade. Teachers and students in institutions of higher education can play their roles of public intellectuals in support of such

efforts, and institutions of community knowledge can be developed to support such requirements.

As many Indians continue to live in rural India², and many rural communities are disadvantaged, it follows that there should be substantial academic engagement in teaching and research with rural India. Areas of study would come from many disciplines and be interdisciplinary, including best practices in rural development, rural health issues, natural resource management, livelihoods diversification, poverty alleviation strategies and good governance. An emphasis on community engagement is an opportunity to inspire the systematic development of resource materials on the rural sector to build the knowledge and capacity needed to empower disadvantaged rural citizens³.

Community Engagement

Most of the innovative examples of community engagement by institutions of higher education tend to focus on 'helping' the community through the students. Students volunteer to support local schools, clinics, etc.; they help in tree plantation, or garbage collection. In many such examples, the purpose of engagement is almost welfarist, based on the assumption that community needs knowledge and expertise that students bring. The *second* general purpose in these engagements is the learning of students about local realities through volunteering of their time and efforts, periodically; usefulness to local communities is a secondary consideration, if at all. It is important, therefore, to more clearly and forcefully mandate that the core purposes of such community engagement by institutions of higher education is to serve mutually agreed interests of both communities and institutions. This implies that the partnership is mutually beneficial, and based on give and take by both sets of parties. Its translation in practice would entail recognition of authentic and actionable knowledge that communities have, which institutions can learn from; and empirical and theoretical knowledge of a macro nature that institutions have from which communities can benefit. It also implies that the thrust of this engagement is mutual empowerment, in the quest of supporting more democratic citizenship in the communities, amongst the students, and academics alike⁴.

This means that:

- i) The engagement must be seen as one of the core purposes of contributions that institutions of higher education make—in

²1979, Prof. Upendra Baxi, former Vice Chancellor of Delhi University, called for "socially relevant legal education" that would address the needs of India's people.

Ex-Law Minister M. Veerappa Moily voiced concern by stating that the rural poor "seem to be outside the formal system today"

³Jane Schukoske, CEO, Institute of Rural Research and Development

⁴ Participatory Research in Asia, www.pria.org

¹Tejaswini Niranjana, Centre for the Study Of Culture And Society.

addition to teaching and research; this contribution is a combination of citizenship building, public service and social responsibility and accountability.

- ii) It thus implies that community engagement would be a core mandate of such institutions, integrated in the two core functions of such institutions—teaching (curriculum, local issues, practicums, etc), and, research (accessing local knowledge, identifying local issues/problems for study).
- iii) It will be applicable to all faculties, curriculum, courses and disciplines, and not ‘ghettoised’ in social sciences or service oriented faculties alone. Thus, faculties of natural sciences, engineering, arts and music, etc. will also have to creatively think of ways in which their own teaching and research activities can embrace community engagement meaningfully, so that both functions of teaching and research can also improve through such an engagement.
- iv) This will imply that students get formal credits for the work they do in their community engagement, preferably through their existing courses. It will also mean that faculty get ‘recognised’ and rewarded for their contributions to community engagements (much in the same way as they do for teaching and research).
- v) It will entail mainstreaming community learning and change as essential principles for curriculum development for future citizenship; institutions of higher education thus embed themselves in the larger national efforts of creating active, informed and ethical global citizens of India⁵.

Social Responsibility and Community Engagement – Global Call

The second UNESCO conference on higher education held in Paris in July 2009 recognised the significance of social responsibility and community engagement for institutions of higher education; its declaration stated explicitly that “Higher education is a public good and the responsibility of all stakeholders”. “Higher education has the social responsibility to advance our understanding of multifaceted issues...and our ability to respond to them... It should lead society in generating global knowledge to address global challenges, inter alia, food security, climate change, water management, intercultural dialogue, renewable energy and public health.”

While progress in science and technology has brought considerable benefits for many, the associated rapid growth, increasing technology and consumerism have left a legacy of poverty, social exclusion, inequality and injustice, cultural corrosion, illiteracy and

environmental deterioration. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) can no longer continue to stand aloof and disconnected but, rather, must create opportunities and become spaces of encounter where students and communities of the 21st century can learn together to become more active, engaged citizens in the creation of knowledge for a more just and sustainable world.

In their present formulation, institutions of higher education are expected to serve three missions: teaching, research and service. The mission of “service” is seen independent of teaching (or education) and research (or knowledge). In operational terms, primacy is attached to the teaching and research functions of HEIs; “service” is undertaken afterwards. Many connotations of “service” tend to assume that knowledge and expertise available to HEIs will be transferred to communities and thus help them address their problems. No assumption is made that community engagement may sometimes actually contribute to improvements in HEIs, especially to their teaching and research functions.

It is important to approach the challenge of engagement by HEIs in larger society in an integrated manner, to be able to explore ways in which this engagement enhances teaching (learning and education) and research (knowledge production, mobilization and dissemination). The engagement should be approached in ways that accept multiple sites and epistemologies of knowledge, as well as the reciprocity and mutuality in learning and education through such engagement. In this sense, it calls upon policy-makers and leaders of HEIs around the world to “rethink” social responsibilities of higher education and to become part of the societal exploration for moving towards a more just, equitable and sustainable planet over the next decades.

There is now a growing trend of community-university engagement worldwide:

1. The **Global University Network for Innovations** (GUNI) Conference is an international forum for debate on the challenges facing higher education. GUNI 2013 wants to focus on Knowledge, Engagement and Higher Education: Rethinking Social Responsibility. In this edition it looks at critical dimensions in our understanding of the roles, and potential roles, of higher education institutions as an active player in contributing to the creation of another possible world. It seeks concepts, descriptions, practices, research outcomes and learning methodologies able to show the growth of the theory and practice of engagement as a key feature in the evolution of higher education.

Cristina Escrigas, Executive Director of the Global University Network for Innovation (GUNI), agrees it is time to “review and reconsider the interchange of values between university and

⁵ www.communitylearningproject.org

society; that is to say, we need to rethink the social relevance of universities". Humanity, she continues, "is now facing a time of major challenges, not to say serious and profound problems regarding coexistence and relations with the natural environment. Unresolved problems include social injustice, poverty and disparity of wealth, fraud and lack of democracy, armed conflicts, exhaustion of natural resources and more".

GUNI convened its third report on Higher Education in the World in 2008 (www.guni.rmies.net) on 'New Challenges and Emerging Roles for Human and Social Development'. This Report analyses the latest knowledge, research, experiences and practices to rethink and propose new routes for the interchange of values between higher education institutions and society. This may be achieved through reconsidering the role that is assigned to higher education in terms of its contribution to human and social development in economic, political, social, human, environmental and cultural spheres.

2. **Global Alliance for Community Engaged Research** (GACER) began in 2008 with the purpose of promoting community-university partnerships in research in a manner that includes the knowledge of the community in co-production (www.communityresearchcanada.ca). It is a global network to influence policy development and to share lessons within key regional and global spaces and it serves as a link to regional and global networks around the world. On September 23, 2010, eight international networks supporting community–university engagement across the globe gathered to issue a call for increased North-South cooperation in community–university research and engagement. They called for "all higher education institutions to express a strategic commitment to genuine community engagement, societal relevance or research and education and social responsibility as a core principle."
3. The **UNESCO Chair** in Community Based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education grows out of and supports the UNESCO global lead to play "a key role in assisting countries to build knowledge societies". The UNESCO Chair uniquely has its home in two complementary but distinct institutions. One of them is Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) located in New Delhi, India; headed by Dr. Rajesh Tandon. The UNESCO Chair supports North-South-South and South-South partnerships that build on and enhance the emerging consensus in knowledge democracy. It strengthens recent collaboration between the Higher Education section in UNESCO, the Global University Network for Innovation (GUNI) and the Global Alliance on Community University Engagement (GACER). It co-creates new knowledge through partnerships among universities (academics), communities (civil society) and government (policy-makers) leading to new capacities;

new solutions to pressing problems related to sustainability, social and economic disparities, cultural exclusion, mistrust and conflict; generates awareness among policy makers; enhanced scholarship of engagement; and modified pedagogy of community based research (unescochair-cbrsr.org).

4. **Living Knowledge Network in Europe** (www.scienceshops.org) has emerged from the movement of Science Shops supported through many European governments and the EU over the past decade; these 'science shops' are intermediary structures between universities and local communities to mediate research on community identified problems jointly. Science Shops have primarily comprised of engineering and natural science disciplines.
5. **PASCAL International Observatory** (www.pascalobservatory.org) has focused its attention on promoting university partnerships with regional and local governments over the past decade. The whole essence of PASCAL is on sharing knowledge, experience and mutual learning; and in bringing international knowledge and experience to bear on local issues in a way most appropriate to its members. PASCAL has launched several ground-breaking international research and development projects, using innovative methodologies, and designed to secure practical outcomes at regional level and has helped build relationships and dialogue between the policy and research communities in innovative ways.
6. The **Talloires Network** on Civic Roles and Social Responsibilities of Higher Education (www.tufts.edu/talloiresnetwork) began in 2005 and now has more than 200 universities as its members worldwide; its focus has been on the promotion of university engagement in communities to strengthen democratic citizenship.
7. Another important mechanism is to promote community engagement in specific research projects by creating a window of research funding for joint community-institution proposals. The most innovative early start to this approach came from Canada by its Social Science and Humanities Research Council in 1999. This very popular scheme is called **CURA (Community University Research Alliance)**. Similar models have been adopted in USA for health science research and in Europe for natural sciences research.

A key principle of this research funding is to incentivize such research where communities see value and are willing and able to participate in the very activities of research; it is thus a promotion of participatory research methodology where research is with communities, and not just 'for' them. This approach also ensures accountability of research process and outcomes to a wider community.

In Malaysia, the government had invited universities to develop strategic plans for community engagement, and then selected proposals for funding over 3-5 years. This has generated some very innovative efforts in several Malaysian universities. Two regional conferences on university-community partnership have been organised in Malaysia in the recent past.

Community Engagement in India

There have been many experiences and approaches to community engagement in India in the past. Historically, higher education in India has attempted to integrate advanced knowledge and skills with larger social concerns. General education, complementing curricular instruction of more specialized varieties, was thought to be important in shaping future citizens and enabling active engagement with society. From the pre-Independence Zakir Hussain Commission to the post-1947 Radhakrishnan and then the Kothari Commission on higher education, Indian educationists have emphasized the need for students to be aware of social issues. The instituting of the National Service Scheme (NSS) in 1969 was a concrete manifestation of this emphasis. This was, however, in the mode of 'adding on' community engagement to teaching and learning. The NSS, which exists in every university in the country and in some of the undergraduate colleges, has about two million students enrolled as volunteers. While many worthwhile projects are undertaken by the NSS (such as blood donation, building village roads, afforestation, teaching children in urban slums), they tend to remain as assorted activities without any clear links to the role of higher education itself.

Many such innovations and efforts are also going on in the contemporary context. However, systematisation, mapping and analysis of such experiences in India have not yet been undertaken. Recent deliberations have brought up some interesting examples, briefly illustrated below:

1. In 2005 **University of Pune** launched the *Samarth Bharat Abhiyan programme* under the leadership of the then Vice Chancellor Dr. Narendra Jadhav. Under this at least one village was adopted by each college. In total, 573 villages were adopted for over-all integrated development. A 12-point agenda was chosen which covered environment awareness; drug addiction issues; history writing of village; writing flora and fauna of villages; energy crisis issues; water and soil testing; GIS mapping of villages; socio-economic and health issues.

There were groups formed by students and they visited adopted villages on Sundays. History of 400 villages was written by history teachers and students in a span of 2 years. GIS mapping was done for 52 villagers by geography students with the help of GPS instruments, which were provided by the university to

colleges. Four lakh trees were planted, nurseries were set-up. Water and soil testing was done by chemistry students through which it was found that 80% of the villages did not have potable water. Many soft skill developments programmes were also conducted by English departments in the village schools. The rapport that got developed over time was so good that on most Sundays and holidays, students groups were found in these villages. (www.samarthbharatabhiyan.org)

2. **Institute Of Rural Research and Development (IRRAD)** started 'Good Governance Now' in 2008 by training 35 residents of six villages in Mewat, Haryana, one of the most underdeveloped districts in India. Individuals are selected for training based on their experience, understanding and ability to retain information and their willingness to learn and work for their respective villages. In 2011, the initiative reached people in more than 100 villages in Mewat. The training is held for one day, once a week for a year. Its curriculum covers government benefits and the right to information law. Trainees then help in carrying the information to others in their home villages. Some individuals are further trained to serve as master trainers for the next group. Trainees learn how to voice local concerns to the government. Local IRRAD staff trained as 'governance guides' help trainees apply for benefits and ask questions about delay and denial. When officials do not respond, trainees invoke the right to information law to find out the answers.

To conduct the governance training in Mewat, IRRAD staff works with students and their teachers from Jindal Global Law School in Sonapat, Haryana. The field staff know the communities, their local language and culture well. Students prepare community legal education materials, the research procedures; and in the process students learn about abject rural poverty and develop a sense of civic responsibility.

Inspired by IRRAD's rural governance initiative, the **Jindal Global Law School** runs a clinic course entitled, "Good Rural Governance and Citizen Participation." IRRAD seeks to spread the 'Good Governance Now' model by encouraging partnerships of other NGOs and law schools/academic institutions. In West Bengal the **National Bengal University of Juridical Science** took up similar initiatives in some areas.

3. Many law schools in India have volunteer **Legal Aid Clinics** in which students stage Legal Aid Camps in villages to raise legal awareness and to record problems villagers are experiencing. To make sure the students are giving accurate advice and are using good judgment, proper student supervision is needed from faculty and attorneys. The Gazette of India on August 18, 2011 contained a Notification dated 10 August 2011 on National Legal Services Authority (Legal Aid Clinics) Regulations, 2011. The regulations describe the operation of legal aid clinics,

including staffing and record keeping. The regulations state that they apply to legal aid clinics run by law students. They also state that law students may adopt a village for legal aid camps. The Notification describes the role of the State Legal Services Authority, and specifically authorises final year students to render legal aid under the supervision of a faculty member, and allows trained paralegals to work in clinics. A serious question is: Will law school teachers be ready to supervise them?

4. **B.P.S. Mahila Vishwavidyalaya** in Sonapat decided to set up a Loka-samaja Aantarasambandha Shodh Kendra or Centre for Society-University Interface Research (CSUIR). CSUIR is an attempt to re-connect University and its environs by creating awareness in young university students; by establishing an interface with the community through visits to the villages and the community; by interaction with the people with a desire to learn; by developing add-on innovative community oriented courses; by conceptualising small nature-friendly, society-friendly technologies; by working in the field for clean air, clean drinking water, clean streets (environment and health and sanitation).

The courses, started with the objective to take the students to the villages as learners, helpers and analysers/facilitators, are:

- i. Integrated Energy Resource Management (Indian women in general, and rural women in particular are recognized as an unparallel resource of knowledge and energy.)
- ii. Folk Medicine (rural women are a treasure house of knowledge in herbal medicine and remedies)
- iii. Integrated Farming/Dairy/Food Technology/Marketing (men and women can create livelihood through these.)
- iv. Fabricating Small Nature Friendly Technologies (examining the need for and creating small time inexpensive nature friendly technologies)

5. **Participatory Research in Asia** (PRIA) has been involved in the propagation and execution of community engagement for decades. Following are a few examples of its association with academic-community engagements (www.pria.org):

- i. Engagement of dalit girls with the Kurukshetra University to study the dynamics of caste discrimination and their future career options, through Centre for BR Ambedkar Studies.
- ii. Mysore University has created a system of student support to women's self-help groups from neighbouring communities and on-going capacity development of local panchayats⁶.
- iii. Garhwal University created a mechanism to engage local communities in identifying issues and problems they face in agriculture and rural development so that MPhil and

PhD students could identify topics for research from this list; research findings are shared with the local communities regularly.

- iv. Association of School of Social Work in India and PRIA worked with faculty and students of 24 different schools around the country to facilitate direct engagement of both students and teachers in facilitating community empowerment.
- v. Students and teachers of business administration departments from Patna and Muzaffarnagar supported local panchayats in village planning by collecting data of local assets and mapping the village.
- vi. Students and faculty of local colleges from planning and economic departments helped Dumka municipality in preparing plans for the upgradation of the city's infrastructure.

Forms of Community Engagement

An analysis of illustrations and experiences from India and internationally suggests that several innovative forms of such engagement have already begun to take place in different institutions of higher education in the country. These have been largely individual efforts as a result of pioneers and champions inside the institutions, and support from certain civil society actors from outside.

In order to operationalize university-community engagement, it is important that an institutional mechanism is developed to adopt a holistic and functional approach to community engagement based on the following core principles:

- i) Mutually agreed interests and needs of both communities and institutions be articulated and respected;
- ii) Engagement must encompass all the three functions of institutions of higher education—teaching, research and outreach/practice;
- iii) Institutional engagement cutting across disciplines and faculties should be mandated, including natural sciences, and not restricted to social and human sciences alone;
- iv) Participation in community engagement projects by students should earn them credits and partially meet graduation requirements and it should be integrated into their evaluation systems;
- v) Performance assessments of teachers, researchers and administrators in such institutions should include this dimension of community engagement.

⁶ www.uni-mysore.ac.in

The question is, therefore, one of integration of knowledge – bringing together education and work, theory and practice, university and society. This kind of integration is an urgent task at a time when India is investing heavily in its higher education sector and would like to see positive transformation in human resources in a relatively short period. To be an integral part of the objectives of higher education, university-community linkages have to be integrated into the processes of making and sharing knowledge, into teaching-learning, research and practice. Strengthening higher education-community linkages means that we place the connection between community and the university at the heart of the educational process in order to ensure the continuing relevance of higher education.

The following are illustrative **forms** of such engagement:

Linking learning with community service

In this approach, students and teachers apply their knowledge and skills in a chosen community to improve the lives of people in that community. This can be achieved through ‘adoption’ of a specific village or slum, and then providing engagement opportunities to students from various disciplines and courses to apply their knowledge to address the challenges of that specific community (example: the Samarth Bharat Abhiyan).

Linking research with community knowledge

In this approach, various faculties and programmes of higher educational institutions devise joint research projects in partnership with the communities. In this approach, the community’s own knowledge is integrated into the design and conduct of the research. New research by students and their teachers gets conducted and students complete their thesis/dissertation and research papers to complete their academic requirements (which can later be published), and at the same time the community’s knowledge is systematised and integrated in this research (examples: CSUIR in BPSMV University; PRIA/Garhwal University Mountain Research Centre).

Knowledge sharing and knowledge mobilisation

The knowledge available with students and teachers in various disciplines is made available to the local community to realize its developmental aspirations, secure its entitlements and claim its rights from various public and private agencies. These can take the forms of enumerations, surveys, camps, trainings, learning manuals/films, maps, study reports, public hearings, policy briefs, engagement with urban homeless shelters, teaching and health services in poor communities, legal aid clinics for under-privileged, etc. (examples: IRRAD-JGLU’s Good Governance Now Initiative & Mysore University’s women’s empowerment programme; legal aid

cells in V. M. Salgaocar Law College; the Legal Aid Society of the W.B. National University of Juridical Sciences, etc).

Devising new curriculum and courses

In consultation with local communities, local students, local community-based organisations and local government agencies, institutions of higher education can develop new curricula in existing courses as well as design new courses. This will enrich the curriculum of existing courses through locally-appropriate subject-matter (which interests local students most); this will also create new, locally appropriate educational programmes that will interest new generation of students (examples: CSUIR at BPSMV’s Courses on Micro-financing, Integrated Energy Resource Management and Folk Medicine; Dayalbagh Educational Institute’s courses, etc).

Including practitioners as teachers

Local community elders, women leaders, tribals and civil society practitioners have enormous practical knowledge of a wide variety of issues—from agriculture and forestry to child-rearing, micro-planning and project management. This expertise can be tapped by inviting such practitioners inside the institution to co-teach courses both in the classrooms and in the field. Such instructors should be duly recognized, compensated and respected for their knowledge (example: Women slum leaders as instructors in urban planning courses, SPARC, Mumbai).

Social innovations by students

In consultation with student unions, associations and clubs, student initiated learning projects which have a social impact can be supported. Such social innovation projects by students can also have meaningful links to curriculum and courses (example: TISS-Koshish efforts on justice for beggars; and homeless shelters with Aman Biradari).

In practice, the above six forms can be integrated together in an organic and dynamic manner for each institution and its surrounding communities. These are illustrative of what can be further innovated upon, adapted and evolved by higher educational institutions in partnership with their communities and civil society actors.

Key Recommendations of the Sub-Committee

Recognising that higher education has isolated itself from the society resulting in breakdown of this vital social contract, the government felt that there is a need to launch a campaign to re-establish and

strengthen higher education's close linkages with society through a well-coordinated approach going way beyond the prevailing National Service Scheme (NSS). Universities and colleges should be encouraged to engage more intensively than before with wider society and contribute to local and regional development and provide intellectual leadership to society.

Therefore, as decided by the Steering Committee for Higher Education and Technical Education on 25 August 2011, a sub-committee was set up to 'Strengthen Community Engagement of Higher Education Institutions'. The Terms of Reference of the Sub-Committee were:

- a. To study and critically examine current status of community engagement of higher education institutions;
- b. To provide strategy, structure and plan for re-establishing and strengthening higher education's close linkages with the society through a well-coordinated approach so that the universities and colleges could engage more intensively than before with wider society and contribute to local and regional development and provide intellectual leadership to society.
- c. To conceptualize programmes, activities, and recommend institutional mechanism, estimate funding requirement for the purpose.

The following structures and mechanisms have been proposed by the Sub-Committee to ensure effective institutionalization and promotion of these innovative ideas and practices in institutions of higher education country-wide.

I Alliance for Community Engagement

Facilitate the creation of an active membership-based network that is primarily engaged in promoting ideas and practices of community engagement throughout the country. This mechanism should be an independent Alliance for Community Engagement (ACE) that comprises champions of such engagement from the sectors of higher education (including students) and civil society. It will serve as a platform for community engagement by institutions of higher education; it will act as a steering mechanism, as a vehicle for sharing knowledge and good practices. This Alliance will serve the following purposes:

- Encourage, promote, catalyse new initiatives in community engagement by a wide diversity of post-secondary educational institutions of the country by regular sharing of information;
- Document, synthesise and disseminate existing and emerging models, approaches, best practices and lessons of change and transformation through various media;

- Create a web-based platform for the dissemination and communication of practices and models, as well innovations and challenges;
- Create mechanisms for sharing such experiences and knowledge through national and regional conferences, workshops, field exposures and newsletters and web-based platforms;
- Evolve benchmarks and standards of quality, monitoring mechanisms and recognition/awards of effective and sustainable community engagements in the country;
- Disseminate knowledge internationally in a proactive and mutually responsive manner;
- Provide policy suggestions to the Autonomous Empowered Committee for promotion of University Society interface (details of Committee mentioned below)

The Alliance can thus act as a motivator, facilitator, encourager and recognizer of new initiatives in this field in a spirit of partnership; it can generate demands for engagement; it can act as a pressure group for implementation of policy in this regard; it can support the work of the Autonomous Empowered Committee mentioned below.

II Autonomous Empowered Committee on Community Engagement

Create a funding and policy mechanism through an Autonomous Empowered Committee on Community Engagement at the level of Planning Commission/UGC with the mandate to:

- Invite, scrutinize and fund innovative proposals from institutions of higher education in respect of fulfilling the above goals;
- Generate new schemes of funding as per requirements, including student and researcher fellowships, engaged scholars fellowships, etc
- Create funding schemes for community-university research projects, and guidelines for promoting the same through various existing research funding councils like UGC, AICTE, ICSSR, ICMR, CSIR, etc
- Define policy elaborations and criteria for effective integration of such goals in the national, provincial and local systems of higher education in the country.

It will be desirable that the Committee be chaired by a champion of community engagement in higher education, and comprise members from communities as well as the higher education sector. The Committee would also encourage the creation of new kinds of partnerships between community and civic organizations and higher education institutions.

Efforts therefore should also be made to identify key capacity gaps in relevant Centrally Sponsored Schemes of the government (NHRM, JNNURM, RTI, NREGA, etc) and find ways to incorporate community engagement efforts in higher educational institutions in assisting the implementation and delivery of such schemes and programs (e.g., Social Audit, Monitoring and Evaluation, Impact Assessment, and other forms of assistance to support effective delivery).

Given the innovative and somewhat emerging nature of community engagement in its diversity across various types of educational institutions and various contexts of communities, the Sub-committee proposed that two types of funding windows may be established:

Small Grants/Endowments

These grants can be for smaller institutions, new areas of engagement and support initiatives at planning and developing community engagements. Efforts at building joint partnership projects with civil society and private sector to achieve these goals may be particularly encouraged.

Innovation, risk-taking, inclusion and learning from these smaller initiatives may be the main criteria for award of such grants. Setting up of coordinating interface structure also needs to be supported here.

Scale-up grants/Endowments

These grants may be made available to those institutions which have already piloted some initiatives and now want to scale them up in larger community contexts, throughout the institutional system and in stronger partnerships with civil society organisations and local governments. Systematised lessons from pilot efforts and potential for sustainability may be crucial criteria in approval of such grants.

III Curricula Flexibility

Flexibility in devising new systems of curriculum design, review and pedagogy that incorporate elements of community engagement should be encouraged. Universities and other higher education

institutions should be provided autonomy to make their programs, courses and initiatives more relevant to the needs of society. Such curricula flexibility would enable enhancement of the quality of knowledge produced by the university about communities and also help create new programmes. This includes various forms of incorporating community engagement and linking teaching, research and practice to better reflect the following:

- Linking learning with community service
- Linking research with community knowledge
- Knowledge sharing and knowledge mobilization
- Devising new curricula and courses as well as focus on pedagogy
- Including practitioners as teachers
- Social innovations by students

IV Crediting Community Engagement in Higher Education Institutions

Credits for community engagement in universities and other higher education institutions should be encouraged in conducting evaluations. This includes credits for teachers, students and visiting faculties who choose to engage in community based work and perform vital roles of public intellectual engagement. Student-initiated community engagement work (including internships, fellowships, course-work) should be particularly encouraged to leverage the dynamism and idealism of youth.

V New Community Institutions

It is also necessary to establish a few educational institutions which will primarily engage in community based and commons knowledge traditions. These institutions can be in vital aspects of community health, community cultures (arts, crafts, music, etc), community practices in sustainable development/natural resources, and other aspects of community knowledge production, application and dissemination.

THE AUTHOR

Dr. Rajesh Tandon is Co-Chair (UNESCO Chair in Community-based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education), Co-Founder & President of PRIA. He is a pioneer in innovative methodologies in participatory research, participatory planning, monitoring & evaluation.
E-mail: rajesh.tandon@pria.org

UNESCO Chair in Community Based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education

The UNESCO Chair in Community Based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education grows out of and supports the UNESCO global lead to play “a key role in assisting countries to build knowledge societies”.

The Chair uniquely has its home in two complementary but distinct institutions. It is co-located at the Community Development Programme in the School of Public Administration at the University of Victoria (UVic) in Canada and at Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) located in New Delhi, India. Dr. Rajesh Tandon, Founding President of PRIA and Dr. Budd L. Hall, Professor of Community Development at UVic serve as the first Co-Chairs.

The UNESCO Chair supports North-South-South and South-South partnerships that build on and enhance the emerging consensus in knowledge democracy. It strengthens recent collaboration between the Higher Education section in UNESCO, the Global University Network for Innovation (GUNI) and the Global Alliance on Community University Engagement (GACER). It co-creates new knowledge through partnerships among universities (academics), communities (civil society) and government (policy-makers) leading to new capacities; new solutions to pressing problems related to sustainability, social and economic disparities, cultural exclusion, mistrust and conflict; awareness among policy makers; enhanced scholarship of engagement; and modified pedagogy of community based research.

It is expected that the work of the UNESCO Chair will contribute to:

- *Supportive policies*: through government support and research funding
- *Trained professionals*: researchers, scholars, students, practitioners
- *Enhanced partnerships*: between civil society, universities, North-South-South networks
- *Supportive leadership*: from academic councils, university administrations, vice chancellors and civil society leaders.

Over the next four years, the co-chairs intend to work to mainstream the practice of community-based research in the teaching and research functions of higher education world-wide. We want to strengthen the engagements between communities, civil society and the academia in ways that contribute to improved well-being of all our peoples, as well as the transformation of institutions of higher education themselves. And, we want to promote the discourse on social responsibility of higher education in the perspective of ‘knowledge democracy’.



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42, Tughlakabad Institutional Area, New Delhi - 110062 India

Ph: +91-011-29960931/32/33, Fax: +91-11-29955183, Email: info@pria.org, Web: www.pria.org,

www.unescochair-cbrsr.org