Gauging the Impact of Community University Engagement (CUE) Initiatives in India

Thinking Thursdays: IIHEd Research Seminar Series
Aug 31, 2017
O P Jindal Global University, Sonepat, Haryana

Wafa Singh
India Research Coordinator; UNESCO Chair in Community Based Research & Social Responsibility in Higher Education
About UNESCO Chair

• Unique Chair based in a Northern University and Southern Civil Society Organization

• Supports North-South-South and South-South partnerships, enhancing ‘knowledge democracy’

• Strengthens engagement between communities, civil society & academia

• Promotes discourse on Social Responsibility in Higher Education

• Renewed for second term till 2020

UNESCO Co-Chairs
Prof Budd Hall and Dr Rajesh Tandon
Context

- Challenges of contemporary times
- Co-existence of plenty & poverty; democracy & exclusion; industrial development & degradation of natural resources
- Increased focus on institutions & processes that help address such challenges
- Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) emerge as crucial actors
- Debates on Social Responsibility further challenges HEIs to innovate & act for public good
Multifaceted term; applicable to a range of activities

Implies mutually beneficial relationships between universities & communities

Participative; committed to creation & sharing of new knowledge

Entails recognition of theoretical & popular knowledge

Thrust is on mutual empowerment; developing a sense of active citizenship

Source: National League of Cities (NLC); Sustainable Cities Institute SM (2013)
## Community University Engagement (CUE)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principles</th>
<th>Forms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mutually agreed interests to be respected &amp; articulated</td>
<td>Linking learning with community service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CUE to encompass all three core missions of Higher Education</td>
<td>Linking research with community knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should cut across disciplines &amp; faculties</td>
<td>Knowledge sharing with the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should be assigned credits</td>
<td>Devising new curriculum &amp; courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be feed into performance assessment of faculty/administrators</td>
<td>Inviting practitioners as teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social innovation by students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

[UNESCO](http://unesco.org) [uniTwin](http://untwin.org) [University of Victoria](http://uvic.ca) [PRIA](http://priainitiative.org)
Impacts of CUE: Why is it important?

- Provides evidence & justification for pursuing the process; yardstick to determine the relevance of CUE
- Contributes towards strategizing ways-forward & scale-up plans
- Helps design a framework for improved implementation
- Positive re-inforcements for institutional efforts
- Indicates the promise that CUE holds, its significance & potential in future
What the academic literature says?

- Limited literature on documentation & illustration of CUE impacts

- Available ones point towards problems in measuring CUE impacts: lack of focus on outcomes/standardized tools/variety of approaches used

- Benchmarks for capturing socio-economic contribution present; but absent for measuring CUE impacts

- Tremblay, 2017 argues: ‘There is no one-to-one relationship; impacts reflected on a variety of connections, contributions & benefits
India study

- Carried out in association with British Council, India

- Broad objectives: Mapping of CUE practices in India & their impact assessment

- Universities covered: University of Punjab, BPSMV, North Bengal University, IIT-G, North Eastern Hill University & Gauhati University

- Qualitative assessment (surveys, interviews, dialogues) used for documentation

- Data triangulated through different modes of enquiry
Study results

- CUE is more than a process involving only binary stakeholders
- Includes sub-processes involving secondary stakeholders (CSOs, government)
- Impacts all stakeholders differently
- Emerging impacts rally around economic benefits, enhanced learning outcomes, improved quality of life, professional development, etc
- Results outline the importance of use of simple qualitative tools for impact measurement exercise
Study results: Impacts on stakeholders

- Students (IIT-G)
- Researchers (NEHU)
- Teachers (Gauhati University)
- Communities (NBU)
- Universities (BPSMV)
- CSOs (PRIA)
- Government (GoI)
Closing reflections

- Current societal challenges have necessitated re-emphasis on CUE
- Impact assessment exercise an opportunity to gauge benefit/relevance
- As a monitoring mechanism; helps to review and reframe the process
- Provides clear differentiation between CUE & plain outreach
- Helps us appreciate the multitude of connections with respect to knowledge, awareness, skills, economic empowerment, quality of life etc.
Connect with UNESCO Chair

Wafa Singh

@Wafasingh

@UNESCOchairCBR/

Email:
wafa.singh@pria.org

Websites:
www.unescochair-cbrsr.org
www.pria.org
www.marthafarrellfoundation.org
References


- Erickson, M. S. (2010). Investigating community impacts of a university outreach program through the lens of service-learning and community engagement (pp. 5-18). Retrieved on May 30, 2017 from: [http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2840&context=etd](http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2840&context=etd)


References


