



Knowledge Democracy at Going Global Conference, Miami, Florida, USA

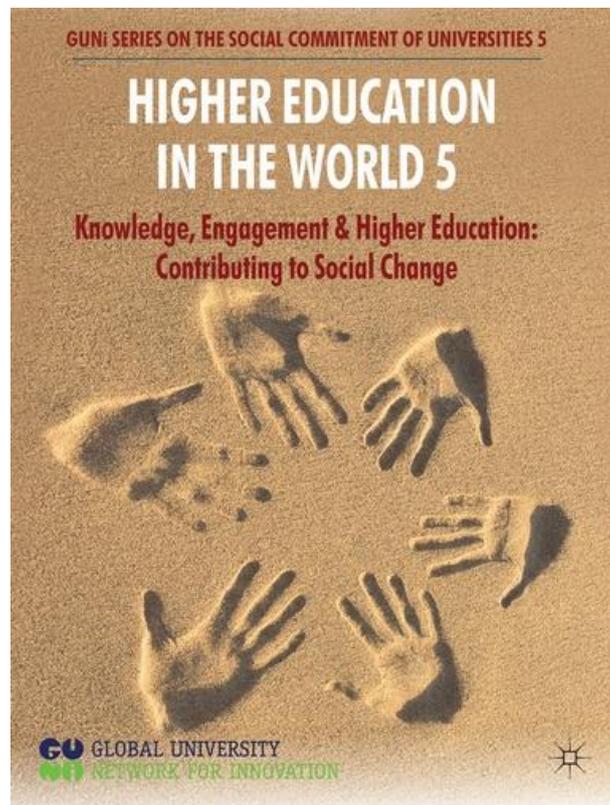
29th April- 1st May' 2014

“We are witnessing most glaring economic inequality in human history; before we know it, climate change would have wiped out significant habitations around the world; one human language is lost every two weeks. Without knowledge democracy, humanity’s democratic aspirations would not be realised”, spoke Dr Budd Hall, while launching GUNI’s 5th World Report at the Going Global 2014 conference on higher education in Miami on May 1, 2014. (http://unescochair-cbrsr.org/pdf/Miami_remarks.pdf)



Picture: Dr Budd Hall, introducing the GUNI 5th World Report at the Conference

Dr Budd Hall, UNESCO Co-chair (along with Dr Rajesh Tandon) on Community-based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education is also a co-editor of this Report entitled “Knowledge, Engagement and higher Education: Contributing to Social Change” published by Global University Network for Innovation (GUNI) in February 2014. The conference was attended by nearly 1000 delegates from 70 countries (<http://www.palgrave.com/products/title.aspx?pid=280842>)



Picture 1: GUNI World Report on Higher Education
(<http://us.macmillan.com/book.aspx?isbn=9780230535565>)

In presenting the highlights of recommendations in this Report, Dr Tandon (Founder-President, Participatory Research in Asia) argued for recognition and legitimacy of multiple epistemologies, modes of production of knowledge and its utilisation (<http://unescochair-cbrsr.org/going-global-ppt/>).

Dr Paul Manners, Director of National Coordinating Centre for public Engagement in UK demonstrated how the pressure from UK’s research council for demonstrating ‘impacts’ of research is opening doors for serious efforts by universities at public engagement.(<http://unescochair-cbrsr.org/presentation-on-deepening-public-engagement-in-uk-universities/>)

More than 100 delegates from nearly 40 countries, mostly of global south, had a highly stimulating conversation on this theme following the launch. In many parts of the world, higher education institutions (HEIs) are being viewed by the general public as elitist, secretive and arrogant. They are dis-connected with society around them, both in terms of their research and teaching. Stories from Kenya, Ghana, Kuwait, Palestine, Brasil, India, Canada, Mexico and UK were repeatedly highlighting

the urgency for respectful and mutually beneficial community engagement by HEIs. The relevance of life-long learning frameworks in integrating engagement in both research and teaching seemed to be critical in these conversations. While leaders in HEIs are talking about ‘co-construction’ of knowledge, it is unlikely to be institutionalised unless the research enterprise genuinely acknowledges diversity of knowledge systems and epistemologies, a message reinforced in the GUNI Report 5.



Picture: A delegate giving a presentation at the conference

The British Council, the organiser of this annual conference, is seriously promoting this community engagement agenda in countries (like in India where it works closely with the UNESCO Chair) as well as globally where its conference in 2015 is likely to have much central focus on this theme.



Picture: Delegates at the Conference

May 9' 2014