Community University Engagement (CUE) in Indian HEIs: Experiences from Punjab, Bengal & Assam

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CERSSE, Jain University, Bengaluru
March 18-19’ 2015
Higher Education in India

- Important actor vis-à-vis the quest for sustainable solutions
- In a state of turmoil: massification, quality, funding
- Increasing demand for public accountability
- Need to re-visit its essence, relevance & credence
- Faced with both challenges & opportunities
CUE: Concept & Rationale

- Implies relationships between the university and the targeted communities
- Seeks two-way discourse between the Universities and the communities
- Connects the institutional missions of teaching, research and service
- Recognition to alternate knowledge forms
- Emphasizes co-production of socially relevant knowledge
Global Scenario

Canada: Extensive emphasis on socially relevant research

Ireland, Netherlands: Science Shop model

Indonesia: National Policy on Community Engagement

SA: Growing importance of social responsibility of HEIs

UK: RAE conducted by Research Councils

Networks: GUNi, PASCAL, CCPH, AsiaEngage, GACER, etc.

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Indian Perspective

• Escalation of socio-economic problems despite a steady economic growth

• Education system expected to contribute in providing solutions.

• 12th plan emphasized on the role of HEIs in societal development

• Importance given to mutually beneficial relationships between the universities, community & CSOs

• UGC launched the Scheme on fostering community engagement in HEIs
### Study in India

**OBJECTIVE**

- Mapping CUE Initiatives in India
- Understanding perceptions, attitudes towards social responsibility of HEIs

**UNIVERSITIES**

- Punjab University
- North Bengal University
- Gauhati University, Tezpur University, IIT-G

**INSTRUMENTS**

- Surveys
- Interviews
- Dialogues

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Key Features

PUNJAB

- Executed in association with communities
- Centre for Social Studies, Department of Lifelong Learning & Extension

Action Projects

- Efforts to build skill sets/capacities of communities
- Extensive knowledge sharing initiatives

Adoption of villages

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Key Features

**BENGAL**

- Initiative of COFAM, DBT, NBU
- Collaborates with communities, uses indigenous knowledge, builds capacities

**Joint initiatives for promotion of horticulture**

- Pursuing extensive community engagement
- Part of their broad mission statement
- Capacity building, social outreach

**Initiative of Christian colleges**

- Carried out by Agricultural Universities
- Research carried out in participatory mode

**Joint Agri-researching**

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Key Features

ASSAM

- Part of service-learning, application of knowledge in the field
- Ensuring well being of the communities

Student initiated projects

- Programme on Peace & Conflict Studies
- Course on Literacy & language education

Novel & innovative courses

- Nodal initiative of Gauhati University
- Provides an open forum for discussion of social issues

Community Radio

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Emerging Trends

- Ambiguity on ‘community’ and ‘community engagement’
- Institutional impediments: Structural fallacies, rigid pedagogy
- Limited capacities of the community to engage
- Absence of synergy between the academia and community
- Lack of liasoning between different stakeholders
- Resource constraints: Lack of finances, shortage of manpower
Ways Forward

• Need to chalk out a clear vision on community engagement

• Alignment of institutional policies & practices in favour of community engagement

• Advocacy at various platforms, coordination between various stakeholders

• Developing sensitivities with respect to community needs and aspirations

• Tremendous opportunities under the new UGC Scheme