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# FOREWORD



The higher education landscape in India has witnessed a number of changes over the years. Gradually, the sector has been moving towards transformation and evolution into a system which is competitive and world-class. This has been driven by the policy sector which has been focussing particularly on quality, accountability and establishment of world class institutions. This brings fresh hope and energy for a transformation which is progressive, futuristic and aimed at building a better tomorrow. We at FICCI have been committed towards contributing to this vision of Indian higher education, and have been taking steps towards realizing it, through advocacy and outreach at various levels. The annual FICCI Higher Education Summit, which brings together policy makers, academic think-tanks, civil society and industry for extensive deliberations on higher education models every year, bears testimony to this fact.

As we present to you the 13<sup>th</sup> edition of **FICCI Higher Education Summit 2017, 'Leapfrogging to Education 4.0: Student at the Core'**, I am pleased to share the document drafted by one of the taskforces under FICCI Higher Education Committee, which has contributed significantly towards the shaping of the Summit. The **Taskforce on 'Social Outreach in Higher Education'** was constituted in February 2017 with the vision of providing a framework for social outreach in higher education in the country. Through its year-long deliberations, the taskforce engaged in extensive brainstorming and discussion, which included contributions and feedback from the committee members and significant others. The end result is this document, which reflects on the social outreach function of higher education, its rationale,

relevance, and most importantly, provides practical prescriptions as to how to achieve this. Apart from the taskforce members, it includes contributions from a number of our partners and colleagues, who agreed to be a part of the process.

I take this opportunity to thank the taskforce Chair, **Dr Rajesh Tandon**, Founder-President, PRIA & Co-Chair, UNESCO Chair in Community Based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education, New Delhi; **Mr Ashwin Naik**, Resident Fellow & Leadership Group Member (LGM), Ashoka India, Bengaluru; **Ms Nandita Abraham**, Chief Executive Office, PEARL Academy, New Delhi; **Prof Sanjib Rout**, Chairman, C V Raman Group of Institutions (CVRGI), Bhubhaneshwar; and **Prof Mukti Kanta Mishra**, President, Centurion University of Technology & Management (CUTM), Bhubaneshwar for producing this document and also all the contributors, including FICCI partners and close colleagues, who have played an important role in putting this document together.

On behalf of FICCI's Higher Education Committee, I would like to recommend this document to Indian higher education policy regulators, including Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), University Grants Commission (UGC), Association of Indian Universities (AIU) and all universities and colleges, and request them to use it to encourage and execute meaningful and relevant social outreach in Indian higher education.

**Prof Rajan Saxena**  
Chairman, FICCI Higher Education Committee



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Finally, we would be failing in our duty if we did not mention the untiring efforts of Ms Nidhi Jain and Ms Mallika Marwah, our most efficient colleagues at FICCI and Ms Wafa Singh from PRIA,

who have been with us in our journey right through, and have provided the support we needed at all times.

If we have missed naming everyone in our gratitude trail, we apologise. Rest assured we sincerely appreciate all the support we got in our journey, irrespective of its magnitude.

**We do really thank each and every one of you!**

#### **Taskforce on Social Outreach in Higher Education**

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# INTRODUCTION

'Higher education cannot remain aloof; it needs constructive engagement and innovation'

**Prakash Javadekar**, Minister for Human Resource Development,  
speaking at the FICCI Higher Education Summit, 2016

Today, when we are almost 20 years into the process of accelerated educational reform in India, we stand at a crucial juncture poised as we are to become the world's youngest nation.<sup>1</sup> This has important implications for Indian higher education, which is aiming to look forward and transform into a sustainable higher education model in the future. With staggering increase in Gross Enrolment Ratios (GERs) owing to increased access, higher education sector in India today boasts of a vast variety of resources physical, digital and human at its disposal. This necessitates the use of these abundant resources judiciously, in the right manner and in the correct direction. The appropriate way to do this is to first revisit the mandate of the higher education sector itself.

Historically recognized as a public good, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) as public institutions have been entrusted with the responsibility of societal development through the creation of knowledge. FICCI's Higher Education Summits have repeatedly emphasized this aspect, deliberating on how to make the sector more valuable in the process of societal and national development. Higher education in India has also attempted at integrating 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.<sup>2</sup> Even in the current context, Indian higher education policy has made attempts at revamping the sector in order to increase its relevance and enable it in ways such that it contributes to the development of the nation. A step forward in this direction is the Ministry of Human Resource Development's (MHRD) plan of designation of world class institutions, as mentioned in NITI Aayog's three year action agenda document (released in August 2017).<sup>3</sup> The University Grants Commission (UGC) guidelines for the establishment of

world class institutions<sup>4</sup> reiterates the importance of addressing the 'development concerns of the nation' and includes 'tangible and intangible contribution to the society' among the prerequisites of a world class institution.

Under the 12th Plan Guidelines, the UGC launched a scheme on Establishment of Centres for Fostering Social Responsibility and Community Engagement (CFSRCE),<sup>5</sup> which outlines the importance of universities connecting to their societies to ensure the latter's overall development. Therefore, to adhere to the standards prescribed by Indian higher education regulators like MHRD and UGC, it is essential that universities demonstrate their social contribution. This can be done by investing in meaningful and mutually beneficial social outreach activities. Social outreach in this context refers to the efforts of academia to connect with society in ways that serves three purposes: advances learning outcomes of students; contributes to societal development and welfare; and helps higher education demonstrate its social worthiness/responsibility.

It is with this background the members of the FICCI Taskforce on 'Social Outreach in Higher Education' began reflecting on the 'social outreach' function of higher education. This document, a result of the reflections on the value, relevance and importance of social outreach in higher education, aims to provide practical action-points on how HEIs can achieve meaningful social outreach. The document brings out the differences between 'traditional' social outreach models followed by universities for decades, and 'new-age' social outreach practices, which characterise the progressive higher education models the nation wants to build. This document should serve as a handy reference for all university administrators, faculty and the policy sector on how to put futuristic and innovative models of social outreach in practice in regular higher education curriculum.



# BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

There is need to move away from the traditional to an innovative approach to education'

**Dr Chandrababu Naidu**, Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, speaking at the FICCI Higher Education Summit, 2016

**H**igher education in India today is witnessing enormous massification, with steep increase in GERs in tertiary education from 20.8% in 2011-12 to 24.5% in 2015-16.<sup>6</sup> MHRD figures<sup>7</sup> reveal the number of universities and colleges has increased 34 times and 74 times respectively, between 1950 and 2014, across the length and the breadth of the country. This has resulted in the higher education sector being in a state of complete flux, a point reiterated by the FICCI & EY Report Higher Education in India: Vision 2030,<sup>8</sup> which argues that 'while we have tremendously enhanced quantity, we have been lagging behind on the quality parameter'. The report attributes the cause for this to archaic regulatory structures and old standardized approaches in higher education. In order to address these challenges, the report calls for transformation in the field of higher education and research as a pre-requisite for the overall development of the nation. The report further argues,

*In 2030, we want to be pioneers of a higher education model that is the best in the world, delivering social, economic and intellectual value par excellence... In order to achieve this, a transformative and innovative approach would be required across all the levers of higher education: from curricula and pedagogy to the use of technology to partnerships.*

This aspect of transformative processes in higher education was central to the discussions in the FICCI Higher Education Summit held in 2016 around the theme 'Education for Tomorrow'. Deliberations at the 2016 summit appropriately focused on how to make education and educational processes relevant for a

better future, practical applications of social outreach, and the need for higher education to be more inclusive and open to engagement with non-academic actors for societal benefit.

This year's summit goes a step further. The 13th FICCI Higher Education Summit is themed '**Leapfrogging to Education 4.0: Student at the Core**'. Education 4.0 is essentially a futuristic education model and focuses on individual student learning. This model pays attention to the 'learning process' that eventually defines the manner in which young students evolve into 'global citizens', with humanistic elements, values, beliefs and insights, and not merely learn to become a good workforce. This model also aligns with the vision of UNESCO, which in its Communique of the World Conference on Higher Education, 2009 says:

*Higher Education Institutions, through their core functions (teaching, research and service to the community), carried out in the context of institutional autonomy and academic freedom, should increase their interdisciplinary focus and promote critical thinking and active citizenship. This would contribute to sustainable development, peace, well being and the realization of human rights.<sup>9</sup>*

These aspects on new learning objectives and learning outcomes under Education 4.0 assume special importance when viewed in the larger context of the need to invest in social outreach activities. Such a vision of higher education helps us conceive the ideas of social outreach in higher education as a broader function of facilitating student learning, inculcating values, and contributing to holistic development.

<sup>6</sup> NITI Aayog, 2017

<sup>7</sup> MHRD, 2017

<sup>8</sup> FICCI & EY, 2013

# SOCIAL OUTREACH IN HIGHER EDUCATION: TOWARDS A COMMON UNDERSTANDING



Social outreach in higher education is understood by different universities and academic stakeholders differently. Our experience tells us that many universities in the Indian higher education system are continuing with the age-old, conventional and traditional notions of social outreach where it is viewed as an extra-curricular activity performed mostly in a charitable mode. Viewed in this perspective, activities like planting of trees, cleaning of garbage bins, organizing blood donation camps and conducting sanitation drives are undertaken as social outreach. These activities are also sometimes referred to as 'extension activities'. Such activities are often ghettoised into arts/humanities departments with the onus falling mostly on disciplines like social work and sociology. Further, this approach also segregates the three missions of higher education (of teaching, research and service), as it views all social outreach activities as a part of the service mission alone, while the teaching and research missions of HEIs remain aloof and excluded from the social outreach agenda.

It is this perception and approach to social outreach that we need to move beyond, if we are looking at progressive transformation of higher education and its evolution into Education 4.0. A futuristic model must stand on the pillars of partnerships, inclusion, social development, innovation and creativity. Viewed along these lines, a new model of social outreach in higher education will need to be built around the principles of reflexive learning, engaged teaching and collaborative research, contributing to the development of a sense of active citizenship in

students. Producing active citizens (as opposed to good, efficient workers) means students need to be trained/educated in a way that they become conscious and aware of their roles and responsibilities towards the society they live in, and thus contribute to the development of the nation as responsive citizens. Therefore, the new model of social outreach must move beyond being an 'extension' of curriculum, and evolve into an integral component of learning processes in higher education serving the larger goals of nurturing students into active citizens.



To achieve these goals, the new model of social outreach has to be structured around the core curriculum and become central to the academic community, taking forward all the three missions of higher education, i.e., teaching, research and service. For such reformulation of learning objectives and learning outcomes through investment in social outreach activities, universities do not need to do anything different or additional. They only need to do their core work differently.<sup>10</sup> The 'core work' referred to here are the higher education missions of teaching, research and service. These three missions need to be approached and integrated differently when implementing the new model of social outreach we are talking of. This reorientation calls for viewing the value of the missions in the current context, wherein teaching is viewed beyond a one-way delivery of knowledge, research is viewed as a potential tool for addressing contemporary challenges, and service is viewed in the larger perspective of development of values and a sense of citizenship (against engaging in charitable activities alone). With this reorientation, teaching would impart comprehensive and holistic knowledge; research would respect multiple epistemologies of knowledge and emphasize its social co-creation; and service would be built on the premise of the use of knowledge for action.

The important point to remember here is that it is not possible to move forward with the new model of social outreach if it is integrated into old approaches to the three missions of higher education. What must change is the approach towards the three missions.

What are these new approaches to higher education missions? Closely following the ideals of Education 4.0, the new approach to higher education missions focuses on being more engaged with the real world, inclusive, innovative and forward looking. We refer to this approach as engaged teaching, engaged research and engaged service. In this approach, new forms of the three missions become part of the regular academic discourse. Social outreach is no longer exclusive to the curriculum, but contributes significantly to student learning outcomes by facilitating the process of learning, by making it more reflexive, participative and student-centric. The new model further breaks the ghettoisation of outreach functions into arts and humanities and becomes an integral component of all disciplines, including the sciences and commerce, business and technology.

In adopting this approach, the questions that emerge are: How can the new model of social outreach be made part of the core academic curriculum? How can the social outreach function contribute to the teaching and research missions? How can a 'technical' discipline like sciences be brought under the ambit of social outreach?

In the following section, we aim to answer these very questions and provide a framework for the integration of a new social outreach model into the current higher education system.



<sup>10</sup> Tandon, 2017a



# PUTTING SOCIAL OUTREACH INTO PRACTICE

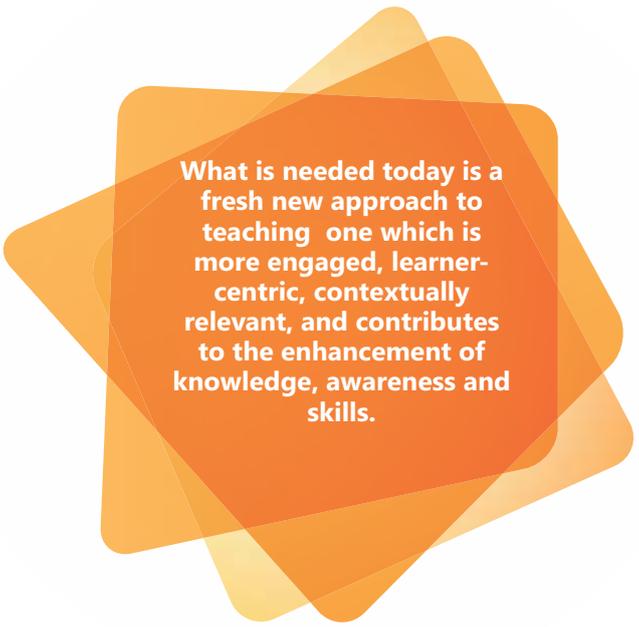
**H**ow can meaningful social outreach be assimilated into engaged teaching, engaged research and engaged service? This section provides some insights into how the learning processes and pedagogies in higher education under the new higher education model (Education 4.0) need simple reorientation in order to fulfil the mandate of social outreach in higher education. By incorporating practical action-points into the higher education missions, learning is enhanced and the process is made more meaningful and relevant to the students and for society. How to do this is also illustrated through relevant case studies of Indian universities where such reorientation has begun and is being implemented.

## 1. Engaged teaching

Teaching of undergraduate and graduate students is a core task of all colleges and universities. Teaching requires students, teachers, curriculum and pedagogy.<sup>11</sup> The value of social outreach in higher education comes to the fore when we revisit the core purpose of the teaching mission of HEIs.

The purpose of teaching is to enable learning of students. However, the reality of the present system of teaching in most HEIs is that students feel dis-empowered when taught in the classroom style delivery of content. Despite advances in teaching aids, infrastructure, updated curricula and pedagogies, students are unable to relate what they study in the classroom to the larger world in which they live and in their future workplace.

The reason is that exclusion marks most pedagogies currently being used to teach students. Lectures being delivered one-way, without room for interaction with real world, practical realities,



**What is needed today is a fresh new approach to teaching one which is more engaged, learner-centric, contextually relevant, and contributes to the enhancement of knowledge, awareness and skills.**

results in the disconnect between students and the real world, which then defeats the entire purpose of learning. When we focus on learning, a teacher does more than deliver content.<sup>12</sup> She/he becomes a facilitator of learning, teaching content that is related to the real world outside.

Further, engaged teaching entails interaction of students with the curriculum and the world around the university. An engaged, outward, trans-disciplinary stance will enable enriching the curriculum and promoting learning in multi-modal pedagogies in addition to the classroom and laboratories.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, new approaches to learning based on dialogical, co-learning, participatory and problem oriented methods are required. Disciplinary studies should make connections with real world and real-time issues in the future. New, critical and reflexive learning systems need to be incorporated which enables students to use their disciplinary knowledge to further societal objectives of development.

In 2005, **University of Pune** launched the Samarth Bharat Abhiyan programme under the leadership of then Vice Chancellor Dr. Narendra Jadhav. Under this initiative, at least one village was adopted by each college and as a result a total of 573 villages were adopted for overall 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 two 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 (Tandon, 2014).

A deep change in the purpose of education implies a change in curriculum content, in the educative offer and in the conception of what a degree is and what it is preparing students for. Students should no longer be narrowly confined to disciplinary boundaries. Today's fourteen year old will graduate out of the formal education system in 8 years and find himself or herself in a world where seven out of ten jobs of that time have not been invented yet, today. How and what we consider skills today might change dramatically in the near future. Hence, engaged teaching calls for new ways of educating students that demand deeper

changes in pedagogies. This also calls for dynamism and flexibility in the way education is imparted in universities. The courses offered must seek to address the concerns and requirements of the students, rather than blindly following age-old prescriptions. If teaching is to 'facilitate the learning process', this requires a structural change in higher education processes and regulations.

**Dayalbagh Educational Institute (DEI), Agra**, has incorporated an interesting provision of multiple entry and exit points enabling a student to move from the vocational to the academic stream and vice-versa, on clearing requisite tests. It integrates seamlessly with the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) National Vocational Education Qualification Framework (NVEQF). Recognizing this, AICTE has selected DEI as the first institute under the NVEQF/NSQF. DEI Technical College, DEI Prem Vidyalaya Girls Intermediate College and REI Intermediate College are registered as Vocational Educational Providers and DEI Centre for Applied Rural Technology is registered as a Skill Knowledge Provider. Further, the system of education at DEI has been designed in such a manner that there is always scope of 'lateral entries' from one class to another, and from one stream to another, which facilitates the student learning process, without the latter having to worry about unnecessary structural procedures (DEI, 2017).

Engaged teaching involves dynamic revision of curriculum, introduction of new courses and engaged pedagogy. This is essential to further learning objectives to make students ready for the future. Unless the course curriculum responds to this challenge, the basic purpose of education is defeated.

<sup>11</sup> Tandon, 2017b

<sup>12</sup> Ibid

<sup>13</sup> GUNi, 2012

**Birla Institute of Technology & Science (BITS) Pilani** has made several efforts at making the teaching process more engaged, meaningful and relevant through a variety of initiatives. The Institute has set up Teaching Learning Centres (TLC) across each of its campuses. TLCs have been engaged in improving the overall teaching-learning environment at BITS Pilani. TLC is envisioned as an entity that fosters the teaching-learning experience and promotes the use of latest technologies in the teaching-learning process. It also serves as a forum for discussing teaching pedagogy and evaluation techniques and resolving challenges in the teaching-learning process through a collegial rather than a prescriptive approach. Further, curriculum changes as well as introduction of new programmes are proposed by individual departments after a thorough discussion with all faculty members in the department across all the campuses. BITS has also put in place a process for systematic and periodic review of the curriculum at large. This includes collecting continual feedback from students, faculty, alumni, and industry as well as using the feedback to make changes in the curriculum (BITS, 2017).

Policy prescriptions have supported the incorporation of engaged teaching in universities. UGC's scheme on Establishing Centres for Fostering Social Responsibility & Community Engagement clearly mentions integration of service learning/experiential learning into curricular programs. In the National Assessment & Accreditation Council (NAAC)'s new Quality Indicator Framework (QIF)<sup>14</sup> for assessment of universities, key indicator 2.3 refers to the teaching-learning process, categorically asserting the importance of 'student centered methods, such as experiential learning, participative learning and problem solving methodologies [which need to be] used for enhancing learning experiences'. FICCI's Higher Education Vision 2030 also places 'curricula and pedagogy' as one of the levers which would require 'transformational and innovative' interventions. It prescribes 'adopting learner-centric paradigm of education, new pedagogical techniques like blended learning, experiential/interactive learning and project based approach to learning for enabling application of concepts learnt in the classroom'.<sup>15</sup>



## 2. Engaged research



Practices in research which are engaged and responsible not only contribute to enhanced public accountability of HEIs, but also play a valuable role in addressing societal challenges and the development needs of a society/nation

Producing new knowledge has been an important historical contribution of higher education. Social outreach integrated into the research mission of higher education can be of immense value to universities, students and all the concerned stakeholders. The new model of social outreach calls for investment in research which is of public importance, as also outlined in the three year action agenda document of NITI Aayog. Research done at universities must address critical local challenges impacting a number of local stakeholders.

This new approach to research, known as 'engaged research', requires moving beyond traditional notions of top down research (dictated by academics), to a more collaborative/participative form of research, where research questions are framed in accordance with local community needs, and the research is designed in collaboration with the local stakeholders who are impacted by the particular problem (the research intends to address). This forms the essence of what is known as Community Based Research.<sup>16</sup>

Social outreach interventions at the **University of Mysore** are driven by the research mission. Many initiatives have been undertaken with a view of using community based research approaches for societal benefit/upliftment. The Centre for Appropriating Rural Technology (CART) at the university was instrumental in utilizing the technical knowledge of professional engineers to improve the efficiency of rural practices and return them to the community. Using the tools of community based research, this collaboration helped in the process of developing low cost water lifting mechanisms, low cost electricity generation and production of indigenous hollow bricks from old tyres. Inspired by the same, rural women also developed improved 'chulhas' which utilize community waste. The technology is being patented in the name of the women. This was carried out in collaboration with the National Institute of Technology, Mysore (Pant & Thekkudan, p. 102). In this challenge, the basic purpose of education is defeated.

Undertaking research in partnership or community based research with societal actors necessitates new pedagogies, new ways of organizing, pursuit of new knowledge, along with recognition of indigenous and practitioner knowledge.<sup>17</sup> This furthers the students' learning objectives and contributes to their 'learn ability', helping to inculcate values like respect for multiple epistemologies of knowledge, being able to work in partnerships, being consciously aware of the needs and aspirations of people, and developing a sense of responsibility towards society.

**Kurukshetra University, Haryana** in collaboration with Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) undertook a participatory research project to understand the status of primary education among Scheduled Castes (SCs) in five districts of Haryana. Twelve young SC women aged between 18 and 25 years (most studying in colleges, others working in community-based organizations) were encouraged to come forward and actively undertake this participatory study. The young girls not only conducted the study but also analyzed the findings with the help of professors of the university and PRIA facilitators. The study was designed to understand and analyse the challenges faced by SC children in continuing their education, identify major reasons for their drop out and give suggestions for improving the educational status of SCs. This initiative not only helped the girls in generating their own knowledge about the existing practices of social discrimination in their society but also motivated them to challenge some of them. On the other hand, the academic institutions involved in the process found deeper meaning in their role of bringing issues that could influence policy dialogues and outcomes, particularly for SCs (UNESCO Chair, 2014).

<sup>16</sup> Munck et. al., 2013  
<sup>17</sup> Tandon, et. al., 2016

wider society (local stakeholders/civil society, etc.) in research and innovation by institutions, funders and policy-makers. Moreover, here lies an opportunity for learners to create a novel repository of case studies, outcomes research and basic data which would not only help further the entire field of research but also be valuable learning material.

**Dr B. R. Ambedkar University Delhi (AUD)**, in association with PRADAN (an NGO), offers a two-year MPhil Programme in Development Practice, whose pedagogy is two-fold: experiential learning and learner support and reinforcement systems. The program moves beyond conventional postgraduate research and focuses on 'practice/action' as a major part of the curriculum. The MPhil Dissertation as a full component entails engaging in a Community Based Research Project, whose research question arises from the needs and lived experience of the communities. The program also aims at strengthening research skills, particularly in relation to developing appropriate methodologies, both participatory and action-oriented, for answering critical questions arising from the field. Further, the dissertation process involves reflective exercises applying analytical tools to understand the implications of specific development interventions in the context of the community.

Social relevance of research is being required by policy makers and funding agencies world-wide. Indian government's recent emphasis on social responsibility of research demands clarity of choice of research topics and methodologies. UGC guidelines on Establishment of World Class Universities places emphasis on 'societal contribution' as one of the essential characteristics of a world class university. It reiterates the importance of universities striving to achieve 'social impact by engaging in applied research and innovation in issues of concern to developing societies'. It also urges the 'faculty of universities to engage academically with issues of concern to society'. Further, the UGC, through its scheme on Establishment of Centres for Social Responsibility & Community Engagement, also pushes for community based research to develop new knowledge, which would improve and better the lives of the people.

FICCI's Higher Education Vision 2030 for India advocates for 'community-focused, development oriented research at academic institutions that are relevant for a community/region'. Placing research as one of the key drivers for transformational education, the document encourages the 'conduction of research that is relevant to the economic and social requirements of the respective district/block in which they are located, which would lead to the latter's upliftment'.



### 3. Engaged service

Education needs to trigger the excitement that promotes civic values embedded in notions of active citizenship, triggering a lifelong journey of change making

The traditional notions of social outreach identify most with the service function of HEIs. Even in the new model of social outreach, the service function figures as a valuable prospect. This is because under the new model, we are going beyond the notions of 'traditional service' and delving into nurturing of active citizenship in students, marked by humanistic values, empathy, respect, tolerance and, most importantly, a consciousness about their responsibility towards society. Professionally certified students trained at universities may enter the real world with abundance of disciplinary knowledge, but, do they possess the values that can help them become active global citizens? Do they respect other domains of knowledge? And more importantly, do they possess the 'learn ability', which actually is the only real skill in many ways? This precisely is one of the most valuable attributes of active citizenship: being prepared to listen to other forms and domains of knowledge. Learning to respect knowledge diversity enables young graduates to be humble and open to new learning.<sup>18</sup>

**Bhagat Phool Singh Mahila Vishwavidyalaya (BPSMV), Haryana**, has institutionalized its social outreach practices through a structure known as the Centre for Society University Interface & Research (CSUIR). CSUIR aims at creating a liaison between the university and society. The underlying idea behind its conception is two-fold. First, the university believes that education is a process that requires practical exposure for learners beyond their conventional syllabus and classroom teaching, as education is not comprehensive unless coupled with practical application. The second idea is that the life of villagers is difficult and there is a lot that the university students can do to make it easier, cleaner and more hygienic by developing small technologies for day to-day use. It therefore aims to expose the students to the realities of rural daily life, and to encourage them to imbibe from the villagers ideas on ancient, traditional and extremely effective techniques. For example, Indian women in general and rural women in particular are recognized as an unparalleled resource of knowledge in areas such as energy management and home remedies. This learning is made possible

only when the students interact with the community members. The latter, in turn, are acquainted with modern ideas on sustenance and livelihoods, which are simple, effective and locally feasible (Singh & Tandon, 2015).

It is important to note that active citizenship is learnt in everyday life, and not through a classroom course.<sup>19</sup> Active citizens seek solutions to challenges of our times, ask questions, work as a team, are creative in approach, practice deep empathy and act as change-makers. They assume responsibility for the society and engage in initiatives aimed at society's welfare.

Higher education can either be focused on training professionals as value-neutral technicians, or on educating citizens capable of using their professional skills for the benefit of society.<sup>20</sup> University students using their domain knowledge for community/societal welfare is the best case scenario for any society or nation. If the students are able to do develop such responsibility and learnability, this is when they practice active citizenship.

**University of Petroleum and Energy Studies (UPES), Dehradun** has been engaged in providing exemplary service to adjoining communities through its project titled 'Rural Women Technology Park Project'. The work under this project is being done under three technology components: recycling of waste paper; identification and cultivation of Medicinal and Aromatic Plant (MAP) species; and information and communication technology (ICT) assisted art and craft design. The first component aims at building economic independence among rural women and awareness about environmental sustainability. This involves training local women Self Help Groups (SHGs) in the production of value added products. Under the second component, the MAP extraction lab at the UPES campus extracts essential oil for experimental purposes from different crop MAP species grown by local farmers. This extraction work aims to develop best post harvesting techniques for the farmers so that the latter can benefit in the form of improved yield and quality of MAP. The third component focuses on bringing creativity and innovation in the field of arts and crafts, which could be used by rural women, through ICT, leading to enhanced livelihood, self-sustainability and empowerment (Ahuja et. al, 2017).

Students at the mechanical engineering department at **Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati (IIT-G)** have formed a facilitator group named Rural Technology Action Group-North East (RUTAG-NE), which provides Research & Development (R&D) solutions to technical problems in the rural sector. By engaging local artisans and communities, the RUTAG group has set up a pilot project on production of plain Muga silk fabric with power loom at the Export Promotion Industrial Park in Amingaon, Guwahati. This has helped students apply their theoretical knowledge in a way which serves the communities around them, which in turn benefits these communities on account of time saved and increased production. Engagement with communities enhances the student's practical know-how on the indigenous techniques of silk production, thereby yielding mutual benefits. Such engagement in essence laid the foundation of 'service learning', i.e., combining community service and learning goals, which in turn enhances student growth and benefits society as well (UNESCO Chair, 2015).

<sup>18</sup> Tandon, 2017b  
<sup>19</sup> Ibid  
<sup>20</sup> Hall et. al., 2014

# WAY FORWARD



It is time that the Indian higher education system responds to the challenges of the current context, particularly when efforts at all levels are aimed at its transformation into futuristic models. To be the 'pioneers of the best higher education model in the world by 2030', HEIs in India need to emphasize 'education' and 'educative practice' in ways which seamlessly integrates social outreach functions and activities, thereby contributing to their social responsibility quotient.

There is an unique opportunity to align social outreach activities in higher education to the 'glocal' agenda of development, i.e., contributing to global Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets while addressing local issues through 'engaged' social outreach functions. Higher education as a critical societal actor, and the one creating knowledge, has an important role to play if we are to move towards sustainable development. With the amount of resources at its disposal, the time is opportune for the Indian higher education sector to fulfil its responsibilities as public institutions, and contribute towards achieving SDG targets.

Social outreach in higher education applied thoughtfully, practiced meaningfully and effectively can integrate the three higher education missions and transform HEIs into dynamic, innovative, socially responsible institutions. If higher education intends to continue being relevant to societal processes and in the nation's development, it needs to demonstrate its social worthiness in contemporary times and its role in making the world a better place. The social outreach function of higher education becomes even more pertinent in this context.





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## About FICCI

Established in 1927, FICCI is the largest and oldest apex business organisation in India. Its history is closely interwoven with India's struggle for independence and its subsequent emergence as one of the most rapidly growing economies globally. FICCI plays a leading role in policy debates that are at the forefront of social, economic and political change. Through its 400 professionals, FICCI is active in 38 sectors of the economy. FICCI's stand on policy issues is sought out by think tanks, governments and academia. Its publications are widely read for their in-depth research and policy prescriptions. FICCI has joint business councils with 79 countries around the world. A nongovernment, not-for-profit organisation, FICCI is the voice of India's business and industry. FICCI has direct membership from the private as well as public sectors, including SMEs and MNCs, and an indirect membership of over 83,000 companies from regional chambers of commerce. FICCI works closely with the government on policy issues, enhancing efficiency, competitiveness and expanding business opportunities for industry through a range of specialized services and global linkages. It also provides a platform for sector specific consensus building and networking. Partnerships with countries across the world carry forward our initiatives in inclusive development, which encompass health, education, livelihood, governance, skill development, etc. FICCI serves as the first port of call for Indian industry and the international business community.

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