



## **Social Responsibility and Higher Education: A Call for Chapter Proposals**

The UNESCO Chair in Community Based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education is editing a book with a working title of *Social Responsibility and Higher Education: International Perspectives on Knowledge Democracy*. The book is being prepared as a contribution to the 2021 UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education. We have attached notes which elaborate our thinking to date and may provide ideas about contributions that you wish to consider. The book will be published as an open access publication with an option to print hard copies as desired.

### Global and Gender balance

Our goal is to have a balance of authors coming from those parts of the world where the majority of people live. We are also seeking a gender balance amongst the contributions. We hope to have chapters from emerging scholars and thinkers from academia, civil society, research funding bodies and elsewhere.

### Content suggestions

The Public Good and the Audit Culture

The Arts and transformative pedagogy

Social Infrastructure and Higher Education

Decolonisation of higher education

Indigenous Perspectives and higher education

Institutionalising community based participatory research

Turning the Tables-Critical Perspectives on Rankings

Community University Engagement: The Challenges Ahead

Mother Tongue teaching and Higher Education

Community Student Learning

Feminist Revisioning of Higher Education

Alternative higher education institutions

Regional perspectives: Africa, Asia, Latin America, Arabic-speaking states, Caribbean, US and Canada

Co-constructing knowledge with civil society organisations and social movements

***But make your own suggestions*** if you have a theme/issue that you feel should be included

### Submission Process:

Please submit a 350-500 word (including references) synopsis/proposal of your chapter by **October 31** to Sumitra Srinivasan at [sumitra.srinivasan@pria.org](mailto:sumitra.srinivasan@pria.org). You will be informed if your proposal is accepted by **January, 2020**. You will be required to submit an electronic copy of your full chapter (approximately 5-6000 words) to Sumitra by **May 31, 2020**. Publication date of December 2020/January 2021.

## **Social Responsibility of Higher Education: International Perspectives on Knowledge Democracy**

**Budd Hall and Rajesh Tandon**

The social responsibility of higher education was chosen as the opening paragraph of the Conference Communique of the UNESCO World Conference of Higher Education (WCHE) in 2009. Specifically the communique notes, “Higher Education as a public good is the responsibility of all stakeholders, especially governments.” It goes on to note, “Faced with the complexity of current and future global challenges, higher education has the *social responsibility* to advance our understanding of multifaceted issues, which involve social, economic, scientific and cultural dimensions 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”

In the years that have followed the 2009 World Conference on Higher Education, we have seen an extraordinary growth in policies, critiques, practices, theories and networks that have added significantly to a depth of understanding, identification of challenges and new architectures of knowledge in response to the calls for social responsibility. The creation of our UNESCO Chair in Community-Based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education as an example is one direct outcome of the WCHE.

The call to social responsibility has been elaborated in many parts of the world. Anamika Srivastava notes in the Raj Kumar study, *The Future of Indian Universities*, that “Social responsibility is universities’ prime responsibility which should get manifested not only in their core activities but also in their governance structure and institutional environment.” A few years earlier in a submission to the Rae Commission, Ontario’s Postsecondary review, it was noted, “the social contract with universities is formulated over time and shaped by history... The social contract requires continuous reflection and dialogue among the university and society as each era renews the social contract according to its needs”. It reminds us of the 1972 report on Creating the African University which noted that, “The truly African University must be one that draws its inspiration from its environment: not a transplanted tree, but one growing from a seed that is planted and nurtured in the African soil” Ron Barnett, a leading Western philosopher of higher education confirms that, “The university is now back ‘in’ society. If once, the phrase, ‘the ivory tower’ had any legitimacy, now the phrase has no prospect of its being a serious depiction of the academy’s situation”. And in his recent book on Higher Education in a Globalising World, Peter Mayo comments, “...There has been a general groundswell of reactions against the neoliberalisation of universities in many parts of the world, a reaction where people cling to the idea of knowledge and learning as a public and not a commodified good”.

### **Engagement**

The concepts of engagement, public engagement, community-university engagement, engaged teaching, community engaged learning, covers another wide range of responses to the call for social responsibility in higher education. “Universities will need to implant engagement into their culture, mores, policy-making and daily life. ‘Third mission’ must become the all-

informing ‘first mission’” as the senior HE scholar Chris Duke informs us. Ahmed C Bawa, Chief Executive of Universities South Africa elaborates, “University mandates throughout the world have statements that relate to community-based engagement in some form or other. It is important to understand why it is that this has happened, what forms these take, what effects they have on universities, what effects they have on communities with. Which they are involved, what effects these have on the students who are involved, how they relate to teaching, learning and research and how they are organised internally in terms of the structures and governance of universities”.

The 2014 GUNi report, *Knowledge, Engagement and Higher Education: Contributing to Social Change* has provided the most extensive global compendium on the discourses of engagement. With reports from 70 countries and over 100 contributors, World Report 5 is the benchmark by which the engagement ‘movement’ can be judged at a global level. “The report offers us elements of a vision for a renewed and socially responsible relationship between higher education, knowledge and society...The Report calls upon policy-makers and leaders of HEIs around the world to rethink the social responsibilities of higher education in being a part of society’s exploration of moving towards a more just, equitable and sustainable planet” (p xxxi Intro). Sophie Duncan and Paul Manners have led the UK National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement in Higher Education (NCCPE) since its inception in 2008. They note, “Principles of engagement capture the imagination and commitment of many of those working in HE...But this only takes us so far. Shifts in funding priorities...provide an equally important driver in the system”. (GUNi 2014)

The UNESCO Chair in CBR and SR in HE has led research and writing of two global studies in community-engaged and community led research, *Strengthening Community University Research Partnerships: Global Perspectives* and *Knowledge (2015) and Engagement: Building Capacity for the Next Generation of Community Based Researchers*. (2016). These global studies involved global surveys and both national and institutional case studies to illustrate how community-based research was being institutionalised around the world and how and where people were learning how to do community based research. The findings from these two studies have provided the theoretical and practice underpinnings of the Knowledge for Change (K4C) Consortium, a network of local community-based participatory research training centres that have emerged in the global South and the ‘excluded’ North. ([www.unescochair-cbrsr.org](http://www.unescochair-cbrsr.org)).

### **Decolonisation of HE and Knowledge**

“For the sake of argument, we postulate that the present state of education is W.E.I.R.D., Westernised, Economic-centric, Industry-led, Reputation-obsessed and Dehumanising” (2018 Razak, Sirat and Chang in *Higher Education in Malaysia*. “I think we need to remap the world, we need to remap our minds, we need to redraw our mindset and set new rules and standards for the new world to come” (Razak 2012 20). “Western Civilisation is a metaphysical construct, a conceit, an identity game, an intellectual invention designed to promote the interest of its inventors. If one wanted to be mischievous, one could say it was neither Western nor civilised” (2006 Davies). And from an Indigenous Canadian perspective we have the following, “For many scholars, working inside universities represents an opportunity to leverage university resources on behalf of communities. Other scholars use other ways to reframe university-based labour with regard to promoting social justice. “Discarding the notion of academic work as contained within

an academic ivory tower, these scholars emphasize how we can be in service to communities. Yet given the settler colonial roots of the academy...and neoliberal rationalisation guiding administrative decision making, it is not hard to guess at its settler colonial futures” (Tuck: 2017).

The philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah argues that the complaints of anti-universalists are not generally about universalism at all, but pseudo-universalism, “Eurocentric hegemony posing as universalism” (2017). When this happens, intolerance becomes intolerance for all things different. The illusion of the universal becomes a cry for the status quo. As a further illustration of the emergence of new voices of knowledge democracy, we refer to the National Inuit Strategy on Research produced by the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (2018). The report opens with this statement,

“The relationship between Inuit and the research community is replete with examples of exploitation and racism. Research has largely functioned as a tool of colonialism, with the earliest scientific forays into Inuit Nunangat serving as precursors for the expansion of Canadian sovereignty and the dehumanization of Inuit. Early approaches to the conduct of research in Inuit Nunangat cast Inuit as either objects of study or bystanders. This legacy has had lasting impact on Inuit and it continues to be reflected in current approaches to research governance, funding, policies, and practices.”

### **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals**

“None of the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals ...can be achieved without the contribution of higher education through research, teaching and community engagement” O’Malley ( 2019:561) The United Nations (UN) system universally adopted Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 as a beacon for socially, economically and ecologically sustainable development. This Agenda 2030 establishes 17 Goals which are universally applicable for all countries of the world<sup>1</sup> Within this globally agreed and universally applicable framework of SDGs, each country (and many provinces) has developed (or are in the process of developing) specific national and locally relevant benchmarks and indicators for achieving these commitments knowledge deficit is the most critical deficit confronting achievement of SDGs. Dominant existing knowledge systems are founded on the principle of instrumental rationality. Modern science practiced over the past three centuries is posited on the premise that scientific knowledge can be used to control and mine nature and its huge resources. Alternative perspectives of knowledge are required to fill this knowledge deficit in ways that learning and collaboration are organically linked to generating locally relevant solutions for SDGs<sup>2</sup> . Higher education and its myriad institutions can address this knowledge, learning and collaboration deficit in achievement of SDGs.

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<sup>2</sup> Alternative perspectives of knowledge are required to fill this knowledge deficit in ways that learning and collaboration are organically linked to generating locally relevant solutions for SDGs

Higher education institutions (HEIs) can serve the public good of supporting achievements of SDGs locally and globally when this perspective is integrated in the core missions of a HEI—teaching and research. In this approach, SDGs should be integrated into each core mission:

- Promoting learning and teaching about SDGs
- Knowledge generation and mobilisation towards finding innovative solutions to achieving SDGs

## **Knowledge Democracy**

Knowledge democracy is emerging as an umbrella concept which allows for the integration of many approaches to knowledge and society. The European Commission support of Science With and for Society and Responsible Research and Innovation has been an important if regionally contained approach to knowledge democracy. Conceptual work linking knowledge, equity, democracy and engagement can be found in the thinking of de Sousa Santos (2007), Gaventa and Bivens (2011), Sörlin and Vessuri (2007), Hall (2011) and Tandon (2014.). Gaventa and Bivens note that, ‘without cognitive justice, which focuses on whose knowledge counts, the larger struggles for social justice will not be realized’ (2011, p. 1). A term that is increasingly used to describe an active, engaged and values-based understanding of knowledge is ‘knowledge democracy’. Knowledge democracy or cognitive justice is linked to the deeper transformations that our times appear to be calling for. De Souza Santos provides arguably the richest conceptual approach to an inclusive understanding of knowledge. The global lines that he is referring to are those that separate the visible constituents of knowledge and power from those who are invisible. For de Souza Santos, the way forward lies in the concept of ‘ecologies of knowledge’. An ecology of knowledge framework is centred on knowledge from the ‘other side of the line’, what others speak of as excluded knowledge. Knowledge democracy is in part the idea that knowledge is to be measured through its capacity to intervene in reality and not just to represent it. An intelligent society must be ready to generate knowledge (ideas, instruments and procedures) corresponding with transnational knowledge societies and networks. The idea of an intelligent society recognizes that all human beings have the capacity to create knowledge in the context of creating a new way of living or a new society. Now is the moment to widen the scope of knowledge in society and to move beyond creating socioeconomic well-being towards a true knowledge-based society, through engagement with citizenry as a whole, at all scales of activity, to dealing with the problematic issues of the day and the global issues (GUNi, 2009). Knowledge must contribute to society’s incorporation of sustainability shift paradigms. We need to connect different kinds and sources of knowledge and facilitate understanding between different cultures, forging links between knowledge and citizenship. This is necessary to breaking conformity of thought by proactively criticizing the world of ideas. The creation and dissemination of knowledge could contribute to transforming the paradigms and beliefs established in social, economic and political systems, and to moving forward to creative and innovative ways of thinking and imagining new realities. Knowledge could also help in ethical awareness and facilitate the civic commitment of citizens and professionals. It is an important moment for looking more deeply at the ethical, social and environmental implications of the advance of knowledge, and to increase the resources invested in analyzing the impact of science and technology in society. Knowledge is also linked with democracy, citizenship, inter-cultural relations, recognition of interdependence, new approaches to health and well-being, rights, mutual comprehension, peace-building and a deep understanding of life’s dynamics. Society needs to incorporate complexity and uncertainty in the way problems are analyzed and assumed.

We know there is a need to link multiple areas of knowledge that are complementary in the capacity to deal with complex problems and find solutions in the local and global context. Local needs require local proposals in global frameworks, and global challenges require global solutions that are locally acceptable. However, global solutions can come from local experience and vice versa. How we facilitate networking among a range of different social actors and levels of activity is also important. Coupling research, decision making and development to inform political decisions that affect large segments of population is a key issue to tackle for the collective well-being (GUNi, 2008). We understand knowledge democracy through seven principles: decolonisation and the recognition of multiple epistemologies, respect for the co-construction of knowledge, Broadening our research methods tool kits , sharing research findings beyond the academy, recognizing knowledge at the heart of transformative action, recognising the rights of Indigenous communities and others to own, control, access and possess their own knowledge (OCAP) and free and open access to most research findings.

### **Our Challenge**

Spooner and McNinch in *Dissident Knowledge in Higher Education* implore us to action, “From within the academy, we need to invoke the courage to defend intellectual freedom, to embrace feminism, Indigenous epistemologies, critical approaches and activist and unorthodox scholarship” (2017 p xxxi)

Greenwood and Levin in *Creating a New Public University and Reviving Democracy* note that, “We are now at a key juncture in history. The neoliberals have had their turn at remaking the world and the resulting path of destruction is clear. They have created a world more unequal and anti-democratic than it has been since the Industrial Revolution. This faces public universities with a choice. Public universities can either become an integral element in the recreation of social democracy or can continue to operate as an instrument of elite domination of the planet”

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