STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Main Recommendations

1. Community engagement should not be seen as an 'addition' to learning and teaching, but intrinsic to it. This is essential if education is to be a vehicle for social transformation and attainment of social justice, rather than as means to individual prosperity alone, on the other; if education is to be a public good rather than merely a commodity. For this, institutions of higher education need to locate their learning and teaching in the communities in which they are located, and to harness the idealism and dynamism of the youth.

2. Facilitate the creation of an Alliance for Community Engagement, which will be a membership-based network primarily engaged in promoting ideas and practices of community engagement throughout the country.

3. Create an Autonomous Empowered Committee on Community Engagement as a funding and policy mechanism (also link the Committee formally to various Centrally Sponsored Schemes where capacity development requirements may well be included at the district/provincial levels to these efforts, to mobilize more resources) It is recommended that Rs 1200 crores may be earmarked for this initiative in the 12th Plan, with Rs 100 crores in year 1, Rs 150 crores in year 2, Rs 250 crores in year 3, Rs 300 crores in year 4 and Rs 400 crores in year 5.

4. Enable Flexibility in Curricula to enable more meaningful Community Engagement in Higher Education institutions

5. Credit Community Engagement in Higher Education Institutions in conducting evaluations

6. Create new Community Institutions primarily engaged in community based knowledge

Rationale

Rapid economic growth in India is fuelling demand for post-secondary education in its various forms. It is estimated that nearly 32 million learners will be enrolled in some form of formal post-secondary education by the end of the 12th Five Year Plan (2012-2017). The Government of India has also been enhancing public investment in the growth of tertiary and vocational education since the 11th Plan. In addition, private investment in post-secondary education has also been expanding rapidly.

Simultaneously, the country is witnessing continuation of earlier trends of poverty, marginalization hunger and deprivation, structurally located in rural, tribal, slum, homeless, Dalit and Muslim households. New forms of social exclusion, urban poverty, environmental degradation, conflict and violence have also emerged in the past decade. Ensuring inclusive development, democratic governance and sustainable growth require new knowledge, enhanced human competencies and new institutional capabilities in the country.

It was expected that education would address these problems to a large extent. However, inspite of enhanced investment on expenditure, leading to increased enrolment, these issues remain largely unattended. The role of institutions of higher education in societal development seems to be the missing link.

In the implementation of the ambitious goals of RTE in the 12th Plan, nearly Rs 48,000 crores per annum are likely to be spent; nearly one million teachers would require professional upgradation. Likewise, annual public expenditure in major centrally sponsored schemes would exceed another Rs 100,000 crores per annum, where millions of health workers, para-engineers and other staff of PRIs and municipalities would need to be professionally deployed for effective implementation. The economic development of the country, driven largely through the service sector in the informal and small-scale social economy, would entail competency upgradation through new forms of knowledge systems and educational provisions. The challenging goals of skills development as envisaged in the National Knowledge Commission, and the huge requirements of capacity enhancement in hundreds of municipalities alone would require many more knowledge workers in the next decade. Teachers and students in institutions of higher education can play their roles of public intellectuals in support of such efforts, and institutions of community knowledge can be developed to support such requirements.

Historically, higher education in India has attempted in 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. From the pre-Independence Zakir Hussain Commission to the post-1947 Radhakrishnan and then the Kothari Commission on higher education, educationists have emphasized the need for students to be aware of social issues.

The instituting of the National Service Scheme (NSS) in 1969 was a concrete manifestation of this emphasis. This was, however, in the mode of 'adding on' community engagement to teaching and learning. The NSS, which exists in every university in the country and in some of the undergraduate colleges, has about 20 lakhs of students enrolled as volunteers. While many worthwhile projects are undertaken by the NSS (such as blood donation, building village roads, afforestation, teaching children in urban slums), they tend to remain as assorted activities without any clear links to the role of higher education itself.

Today the 19th century idea of the university is undergoing drastic changes. We see a conflict between social transformation and attainment of social justice through education on the one hand, and education as means to individual prosperity alone, on the other; between education as public good and education as commodity. Further, a significant proportion of the new entrants

into higher education in India will be from groups that have not traditionally accessed the university. The social composition of the classroom today is more heterogeneous than ever. This is an opportunity for students who come from diverse communities to take the benefits of higher education to those communities even as higher education also draws upon the knowledge nurtured by such communities.

The goals of ensuring inclusive development, democratic governance and sustainable growth can be meaningfully achieved through a process of broadening and deepening involvement of institutions of higher education; in societal development, and in the process, the idealism and dynamism of the youth can also be harnessed for in a more meaningful manner. Specifically, therefore, the following goals can be realized through promotion of such community engagements: To bridge the gap between theory and practice, in order to make theory more relevant and practice more informed, where community knowledge systems are seen as legitimate partners in the process of development of innovations and trained human resources;

To promote deeper interactions between higher educational institutions and local communities for identification and solution of real-life problems faced by the communities in a spirit of mutually agreed interest and interaction;

To facilitate partnerships between local communities and institutions of higher education so that students and teachers can learn from local knowledge and wisdom, thereby democratizing knowledge production;

To engage higher institutions with local communities in order to make curriculum, courses and pedagogies more appropriate to achieving the goals of national development as described in the 12th Plan;

To catalyse acquisition of values of public service and active citizenship amongst students and youth alike in the process of such engagements, which would also encourage, nurture and harness the natural idealism of youth;

To undertake research projects which are need-based and community-oriented, including community as research partners, leading to policy formulation for societal development Forms of Community Engagement

In recent years, several innovative forms of such engagement have already begun to take place in different institutions of higher education in the country. These have been largely individual efforts as a result of pioneers and champions inside the institutions, and support from certain civil society actors from outside.

In order to operationalize the above goals, it is important that an institutional mechanism is developed to adopt a holistic and functional approach to community engagement based on the following core principles:

i) Mutually agreed interests and needs of both communities and institutions be articulated and respected;

ii) Engagement must encompass all the three functions of institutions of higher education—teaching, research and outreach/practice;

iii) Institutional engagement cutting across disciplines and faculties should be mandated, including natural sciences, and not restricted to social and human sciences alone;

iv) Participation in community engagement projects by students should earn them credits and partially meet graduation requirements and it should be integrated into their evaluation systems;
v) Performance assessments of teachers, researchers and administrators in such institutions should include this dimension of community engagement.

The question is, therefore, one of integration of knowledge – bringing together education and work, theory and practice, university and society. This kind of integration is an urgent task at a time when India is investing heavily in its higher education sector and would like to see positive transformation in human resources in a relatively short period. To be an integral part of the objectives of higher education, university-community linkages have to be integrated into the processes of making and sharing knowledge, into teaching-learning, research and practice. Strengthening higher education-community linkages means that we place the connection between community and the university at the heart of the educational process in order to ensure the continuing relevance of higher education.

The following are illustrative forms of such engagement:

- Linking learning with community service

In this approach, students and teachers apply their knowledge and skills in a chosen community to improve the lives of people in that community. This can be achieved through 'adoption' of a specific village or slum, and then providing engagement opportunities to students from various disciplines and courses to apply their knowledge to address the challenges of that specific community (examples: the Samarth Bharat Abhiyan)

- Linking research with community knowledge

In this approach, various faculties and programmes of higher educational institutions devise joint research projects in partnerships with the communities. In this approach, the community's own knowledge is integrated into the design and conduct of the research. New research by students and their teachers gets conducted and students complete their thesis/dissertation and research papers to complete their academic requirements (which can later be published), and at the same time the community's knowledge is systematised and integrated in this research (eg. CSUIR in BPSMV University; PRIA/Garhwal University Mountain research Centre).

- Knowledge Sharing & Knowledge Mobilisation

The knowledge available with students and teachers in various disciplines is made available to the local community to realize its developmental aspirations, secure its entitlements and claim its rights from various public and private agencies. These can take the forms of enumerations, surveys, camps, trainings, learning manuals/films, maps, study reports, public hearings, policy briefs, engagement with urban homeless shelters, teaching and health services in poor communities, legal aid clinics for under-trails etc. (IRRAD-JGLU's Good Governance Now Initiative & Mysore University's women's empowerment programme; legal aid cells in V. M. Salgaocar Law College; the Legal Aid Society of the W.B. National University of Juridical Sciences etc)

- Devising New Curriculum and Courses

In consultations with local communities, local students, local community-based organisations and local government agencies, institutions of higher education can develop new curricula in existing courses as well as design new courses. This will enrich the curriculum of existing courses through locally-appropriate subject-matter (which interests local students most); this will also create new, locally appropriate educational programmes that will interest new generation of students (CSUIR at BPSMV's Courses on Micro-financing, Integrated, Energy Resource Management and folk Medicine; Dayalbagh Educational Institute's courses etc)

- Including practitioners as teachers

Local community elders, women leaders, tribals and civil society practitioners have enormous practical knowledge of a wide variety of issues—from agriculture and forestry to child-rearing, micro-planning and project management. This expertise can be tapped by inviting such practitioners inside the institution to co-teach courses both in the classrooms and in the field. Such instructors should be duly recognized, compensated and respected for their knowledge (Women slum leaders as instructors in urban planning courses, SPARC, Mumbai).

- Social Innovations by Students

In consultation with student unions, associations and clubs, student initiated learning projects which have a social impact can be supported. Such social innovation projects by students can also have meaningful links to curriculum and courses (example: TISS-Koshish efforts on justice for beggars; and homeless shelters with Aman Biradari)

In practice, the above six forms can be integrated together in an organic and dynamic manner for each institution and its surrounding communities. These are illustrative of what can be further

innovated upon, adapted and evolved by higher educational institutions in partnership with their communities and civil society actors.

A clear requirement for the effectiveness of these forms of engagement and their sustainability is an interface structure within each institution of higher education; such a structure would act as a communicator, mediator and coordinator of institutional linkages and partnerships with the communities and civil society. The structure should be inside the institution, have 2-3 staff, led by a champion of community engagement from the current faculty members, and report to head of the institution. Its governing mechanism should have representatives from within the institution and outside, including certain community leaders from the region. It should have some resources for operational, communication and coordination activities.

Key Recommendations

What kinds of structures and resources are needed to support the realization of such ambitious goals during the 12th Plan period? The following structures and mechanisms are proposed to ensure effective institutionalization and promotion of these innovative ideas and practices in institutions of higher education country-wide.

I. Alliance for Community Engagement:

Facilitate the creation of an active membership-based network that is primarily engaged in promoting ideas and practices of community engagement throughout the country. This mechanism should be an independent Alliance for Community Engagement (ACE) that comprises champions of such engagement from the sectors of higher education (including students) and civil society. It will serve as a platform for community engagement by institutions of higher education; it will act as a steering mechanism, as a vehicle for sharing knowledge and good practices.

This Alliance will serve the following purposes:

. Encourage, promote, catalyse new initiatives in community engagement by a wide diversity of post-secondary educational institutions of the country by regular sharing of information;
. Document, synthesise and disseminate existing and emerging models, approaches, best practices and lessons of change and transformation through various media;
. Create a web-based platform for the dissemination and communication of practices and models, as well innovations and challenges;
. Create mechanisms for sharing such experiences and knowledge through national and regional conferences, workshops, field exposures and newsletters and web-based platforms;
. Evolve benchmarks and standards of quality, monitoring mechanisms and recognition/awards of effective and sustainable community engagements in the country;

. Disseminate knowledge internationally in a proactive and mutually responsive manner;
. Provide policy suggestions to the Autonomous Empowered Committee for promotion of University Society interface (details of Committee mentioned below)

The Alliance can thus act as a motivator, facilitator, encourager and recognizer of new initiatives in this field in a spirit of partnership; it can generate demands for engagement; it can act as a pressure group for implementation of policy in this regard; it can support the work of the Autonomous Empowered Committee mentioned below.

An initial seed funding for the functioning of the Alliance in the first 3 years will need to be independently and directly provided by the Government.

II. Autonomous Empowered Committee on Community Engagement:

Create a funding and policy mechanism through an Autonomous Empowered Committee on Community Engagement at the level of Planning Commission/ UGC with the mandate to:
. Invite, scrutinize and fund innovative proposals from institutions of higher education in respect of fulfilling the above goals;
. Generate new schemes of funding as per requirements, including student and researcher fellowships, engaged scholars fellowships, etc
. Create funding schemes for community-university research projects, and guidelines for promoting the same through various existing research funding councils like UGC, AICTE , ICSSR, ICMR, CSIR etc. Define policy elaborations and criteria for effective integration of such goals in the national, provincial and local systems of higher education in the country.
. In addition, this Committee can be linked formally to various Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS) where capacity development requirements may well be included at the district/provincial levels to these efforts, thereby mobilizing many more resources.

It will be desirable that the Committee be chaired by a champion of community engagement in higher education, and comprise members from communities as well as the higher education sector. The Committee would also encourage the creation of new kinds of partnerships between community and civic organizations and higher education institutions.

Efforts therefore should also be made to identify key capacity gaps in relevant CSS as well as enactments (NHRM, JNNURM, RTI, NREGA) and find ways to incorporate community engagement efforts in Higher Educational institutions in assisting the implementation and delivery of such schemes and programs (eg. Audit, Monitoring and Evaluation, Impact Assessment, delivery, other forms of assistance)

Given the innovative and somewhat emerging nature of community engagement in its diversity across various types of educational institutions and various contexts of communities, it is proposed that two types of funding windows may be established:

a) Small Grants/Endowments

These grants can be upto Rs 1 crore over 2-3 years, and involve smaller institutions, new areas of engagement and support initiatives at planning and developing community engagements. Efforts at building joint partnership projects with civil society and private sector to achieve these goals may be particularly encouraged. Innovation, risk-taking, inclusion and learning from these smaller initiatives may be the main criteria for award of such grants. Setting up of coordinating interface structure also needs to be supported here. Nearly one-third of the annual budget may be earmarked for such small grants.

b) Scale-up grants/Endowments

These grants may range upto Rs 5 crores over 2-3 years, and may be made available to those institutions which have already piloted some initiatives and now want to scale them up in larger community contexts, throughout the institutional system and in stronger partnerships with civil society organisations and local governments. Systematised lessons from pilot efforts and potential for sustainability may be crucial criteria in approval of such grants.

It is recommended that Rs 1200 crores may be earmarked for this initiative in the 12th Plan, with Rs 100 crores in year 1, Rs 150 crores in year 2, Rs 250 crores in year 3, Rs 300 crores in year 4 and Rs 400 crores in year 5.

III. Curricula Flexibility:

Flexibility in devising new systems of curriculum design, review and pedagogy that incorporate elements of community engagement should be encouraged. Universities and other Higher Education institutions should be provided autonomy to make their programs, courses and initiatives more relevant to the needs of society. Such curricula flexibility would enable enhancement of the quality of knowledge produced by the university about communities and also help create new programmes. This includes various forms of incorporating community engagement and linking teaching, research and practice to better reflect the following:

. Linking learning with community service

. Linking research with community knowledge

. Knowledge sharing and Knowledge mobilization

. Devising new curricula and courses as well as focus on pedagogy

. Including practitioners as teachers

. Social Innovations by students

IV. Crediting Community Engagement in Higher Education institutions:

Credits for community engagement in Universities and other Higher Education institutions should be encouraged in conducting evaluations. This includes credits for teachers, students and visiting faculties who choose to engage in community based work and perform vital roles of public intellectual engagement. Student-initiated community engagement work (including internships, fellowships, course-work) should be particularly encouraged to leverage the dynamism and idealism of youth.

V. New Community Institutions:

It is also necessary to establish a few educational institutions which will primarily engage in community based and commons knowledge traditions. These institutions can be in vital aspects of community health, community cultures (arts, crafts, music etc), community practices in sustainable development/ natural resources, and other aspects of community knowledge production, application and dissemination.

Annexure

No.M-12015/20/2011-HRD

Planning Commission

Yojana Bhavan, Sansad Marg,

New Delhi-110001

Dated: 14th September 2011

ORDER

Subject: Formulation of the Twelfth Five Year Plan (2012-17) – Sub-committee Strengthen Community Engagement of Higher Education Institutions – regarding.

In recent years, higher education has isolated itself from the society resulting in breakdown of this vital social contract. There is a need to launch a campaign to re-establish and strengthen higher education's close linkages with the society through a well-coordinated approach going way beyond the prevailing National Service Scheme (NSS). Universities and colleges should be encouraged to engage more intensively than before with wider society and contribute to the local and regional development and provide intellectual leadership to society.

Therefore in terms of decision taken in the meeting of the Steering Committee for Higher Education and Technical Education on 25 August 2011 to constitute sub-committees on cross-cutting issues, it has been decided to set up a Sub-committee to Strengthen Community Engagement of Higher Education Institutions. The composition of the Sub-committee is as under -

1	Mr. Harsh Mander	Member, National Advisory Council , New Delhi	Chairman
2	Dr. Rajesh Tandon	President, PRIA, New Delhi	Member
3	Prof. Indira J Parikh	Founder President , Foundation for Liberal And Management Education, Pune	Member
4	Prof. Devendra Kakkar	Assiciate Professor , School of Open Learning, Delhi University	Member
5	Dr. Arun Adsool	Principal , VP Arts Science Commerce College, Baramati, Pune	Member
6	Dr. Sanjay Chakane	Principal , Arts, Science and Commerce College, Indapur, Pune	Member
7	Dr. Tejaswini Niranjana	Lead Researcher, Centre for the Study of Culture and Society, Bangalore	Member
8	Dr. Jane E Schukoske	OP Jindal Law University, Sonipat	Member
9	Prof. S.B. Roy	Indian Institute of Bio-Social Research and Development, Kolkata	Member
10	Ms. Roopa Purushothaman,	Head-Future Capital Research & Co-Author BRIC Report, Mumbai	Member
11	Prof. Kapil Kapoor	Former Rector ,Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi	Member
12	Prof. Anand Mohan	Dayalbagh Educational Institute, Agra	Member
13	Dr. Aromar Revi	Director, IIHS, New Delhi	Member
14	Secretary General	Association of Indian Universities, New-Delhi	Member

15	Sm. Sharda Rekha	Joint Secretary , Youth Affairs, Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports	Member
16	Nominee of Secretary	Deptt. of Higher Education, MHRD	Member
17	Nominee of Chairman UGC	University Grants Commission	Member
18	Mr. Pawan Agarwal	Advisor (HE), Planning Commission	Member
19	Dr. S. Parasuraman*	Director , TISS, Mumbai	Member
20	Revd. Valsan Thampu*	Principal , St Stephen's College, New Delhi	Member
21	Sr. Cyril Mooney*	Principal, Loretto Sealdah, Kolkata	Member
22	Mr. Tarique Mohammad Koshish*	TISS, Mumbai	Member
23	Dr. MP Parmeswaran*	Chairperson, Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samithi, Kerela	Member
24	Vinod Raina*	Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samithi, Delhi	Member
25	Dr. Armaity Desai *	Former UGC Chairperson & DG, Nehru Yuvak Kendra, New Delhi	Member
26	Dr. Pankaj Mittal*	VC, BPS Women University Sonipat	Member-Convener

2.   The   Terms   of   Reference   of   the   Sub-Committee   are   -
a) To study and critically examine current status of community engagement of higher education institutions;
b) To provide strategy, structure and plan for re-establishing and strengthening higher education's close linkages with the society through a well-coordinated approach so that the universities and colleges could engage more intensively than before with wider society and contribute to the local and   regional   development   and   provide   intellectual   leadership   to   the   society.
c) To conceptualize programmes, activities, and recommend institutional mechanism, estimate funding   requirement   for   the   purpose;
d) Any other related issues

3. The Chairperson of the Sub-Committee may co-opt additional members and invite other persons or experts for all or any of the meetings of the sub-committee. The Sub-Committee will submit its report within 10 October 2011.

4. The expenses towards TA / DA of the official members will be met by the respective Governments / Departments / Institutions to which they belong. Non-official members will be entitled to travel by Economy Class of Air India (only Air India) and their expenditure towards TA/DA (as admissible to Grade I officers of the Government of India) will be paid by the Planning Commission.

5. This issues with the approval of the Member (HRD), Planning Commission and Chairman of the Steering Committee on Higher and Technical education.

Sd/-

Pawan Agarwal

Adviser (Higher Education)

Tel: 23096631

pagarwal.pc@gmail.com

*The members were co-opted by the Chairman of the committee.