UNESCO Chair on Community Based Research
&
Social Responsibility in Higher Education

A Framework for Action
2012–2016

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I.   Civilizational Crises & Knowledge Democracy

We live in uncertain and complex times; citizens around the world are asking their leaders for answers to their daily travails.

The civilizational crises at this juncture of human history are manifested in three distinct, yet interrelated, trends. First, the scale of material prosperity achieved by many households and communities is unprecedented in human history; material well-being, quality of life, longevity of consumption and accumulation of wealth has reached mind-boggling levels today. Yet, such prosperity co-exists with unprecedented and widespread deprivations; shocking as it may seem, deprivation within seas of prosperity can be found around all societies today. If humanity has the means to generate such wealth and material well-being for some, how come those means are not applied for the well-being of all?

The second trend of civilizational crisis is manifested in the large-scale disturbance to the larger eco-system in which humanity has thrived over the centuries, and civilizations were built and nurtured. The almost irreversible changes manifest in ecological systems and networks due to exploitation of natural resources that threaten the very foundation of present human civilization. Restoration of that delicate balance requires use of inclusive intelligence of nature itself.

Third, there is a growing disconnect between the aspirations of individuals and the responses from governance institutions in societies. As aspirations for collective and shared well-being rise, deficits in the design and operation of institutions in governing human collectives have begun to show. Deficits in democracy as the most respected and accepted form of governance of societies have become all too obvious even in those societies which have a longer tradition of democratic institutions.

It is being argued that knowledge mobilization at a grand scale will help address these challenges. Much of this discourse is focusing on the concepts of **knowledge economy**, knowledge as a commodity and knowledge as a profession in the global market place. Institutions of higher education are being resourced to provide a flexible, highly skilled work force and "patented" and "patentable" knowledge so that economic progress can be fuelled. However, the roles of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and universities as public institutions, and knowledge as a common public good, can only be advanced in the perspective of **knowledge society**. In this perspective, knowledge is seen to serve the larger public purpose for human and social well-being, even though for the most part the nature of knowledge and the origins of knowledge are not brought into question.

Yet, many public institutions have also relied on "science" as a means for producing new knowledge; in this narrow scientific pursuit of knowledge, other forms, modes and types of knowledge have been marginalized and de-legitimized. Current modes of knowledge production and control have failed to address two major challenges of humanity till today: conflicts around human co-existence, and in relationship with nature.

It is useful to recognize that "subaltern" perspectives have begun to be drawn on in addressing the major challenges of our times. The relations of power, domination and control that characterize such conflicts between humans and with nature have been the central themes of subaltern discourses and world-views for a long time. Interestingly, such subaltern word-views have demonstrated the practice of co-habitation and co-existence with different human collectives, and with nature around them. Such practices of co-habitation have evolved a vast body of knowledge that privileges human understanding and the capacity of its institutions in a longitudinal, trans-generational sense. Rootedness of such knowledge in the subaltern communitarian practices has the potential to inform new ways of organizing human collectives and co-habitation "from the bottom up".

A radically different proposal is that of **knowledge democracy**. In this view, multiple modes, forms and expressions of knowledge are accepted as legitimate; ecologies of knowledge and cognitive justice provide new bases for propagating knowledge democracy as an approach to finding new ways of understanding and addressing these crises. Over the past four decades, various approaches to research have demonstrated ways to include such diversities of knowledge in enquiry. Participatory research and community based research have been mainstreamed methodologies in this stream of practices for the operationalization of a knowledge democracy while simultaneously generating innovative solutions for sustainable transformations of societies.

II. Social Responsibility in Higher Education

While progress in science and technology has brought considerable benefits for many in terms of greater well-being, prosperity and life expectancy, not all have reaped such high rewards. Rapid growth, technologization and consumerism, to name a few, have left a legacy of poverty, social exclusion, inequality and injustice, cultural corrosion, illiteracy and environmental deterioration. We are indeed confronted with a perpetuation of disparities between, amongst and within nations and yet there is a wealth of knowledge within communities around the world that goes untapped. The world's indigenous peoples, women and others – the poorest of the poor – have understandings and knowledges that, if tapped, could indeed help move us along a more healthy and sustainable path of development.

HEIs can no longer continue to stand aloof and disconnected but, rather, must create opportunities and become spaces of encounter where students and communities of the 21st century can learn together to become more active, engaged citizens in the creation of knowledge for a more just and sustainable world. How HEIs can better tap into existing knowledge, encourage the co-creation of new knowledge through participatory processes of enquiry and investigation, and use the findings to challenge and find new solutions to social and environmental problems is the contribution the work outlined in this report will make.

The Final Communiqué from the UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education of July 8, 2009 opens with a section on the "Social Responsibility in Higher Education". Item 1 notes: "Higher education is a public good and the responsibility of all stakeholders." Item 2 notes: "Higher education has the social responsibility to advance our understanding of multifaceted issues...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."

Cristina Escrigas, Executive Director of the Global University Network for Innovation (GUNI), agrees it is time to "review and reconsider the interchange of values between university and society; that is to say, we need to rethink the social relevance of universities". Humanity, she continues, "is now facing a time of major challenges, not to say serious and profound problems regarding coexistence and relations with the natural environment. Unresolved problems include social injustice, poverty and disparity of wealth, fraud and lack of democracy, armed conflicts, exhaustion of natural resources and more".

On September 23, 2010, eight international networks[1] supporting community–university engagement across the globe gathered to issue a call for increased North-South cooperation in community–university research and engagement. They called for "all higher education institutions to express a strategic commitment to genuine community engagement, societal relevance or research and education and social responsibility as a core principle."

In their present formulation, institutions of higher education are expected to serve three missions: teaching, research and service. The mission of "service" is seen independent of teaching (or education) and research (or knowledge). In operational terms, primacy is attached to the teaching and research functions of HEIs; "service" is undertaken afterwards. Many connotations of "service" tend to assume that knowledge and expertise available to HEIs will be transferred to communities and thus help them address their problems. No assumption is made that community

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[1] The eight networks were the Centro Boliviano de Estudios Multidisciplinarios (CEBEM), Commonwealth Universities Extension and Engagement Network, Global Alliance on Community Engaged Research (GACER), Global Universities Network for Innovation (GUNI), Living Knowledge Network, PASCAL International Observatory, Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA), and the Talloires Network.

engagement may sometimes actually contribute to improvements in HEIs, specially to their teaching and research functions.

It is important to approach the challenge of engagement by HEIs in larger society in an integrated manner, to be able to explore ways in which this engagement enhances teaching (learning and education) and research (knowledge production, mobilization and dissemination). The engagement should be approached in ways that accept multiple sites and epistemologies of knowledge, as well as the reciprocity and mutuality in learning and education through such engagement. In this sense, it calls upon policy-makers and leaders of HEIs around the world to "rethink" social responsibilities of higher education and to become part of the societal exploration for moving towards a more just, equitable and sustainable planet over the next decades.

III. Creation of UNESCO Chair

The UNESCO Chair in Community Based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education grows out of and supports the UNESCO global lead to play "a key role in assisting countries to build knowledge societies" (Box 5: UNESCO Medium Term Plan).

It further falls within the Overarching Objective 1 in the Medium Term Plan of "attaining quality education for all and lifelong learning" and is linked to paragraph 47 of the Medium Term Plan which states, "The UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN networks will be mobilised as think tanks and as arenas for production and transfer of knowledge." It also builds on paragraph 49 which states, "Higher Education and Teacher Education will be central for the realisation for EFA goals and MDGs...." It will further enable the achievement of one of the expected outcomes under Strategic Programme Objectives, namely, "Vulnerable and disadvantaged groups as well as indigenous peoples be empowered to participate in development processes throughout life in all regions." Para 54 of the Medium Term Plan further states that, "All programmes will integrate interdisciplinary approaches...and capacity-building through the integration of research and education."

This recently created UNESCO Chair uniquely has its home in two complementary but distinct institutions. It is co-located at the Community Development Programme in the School of Public Administration at the University of Victoria (UVic) in Canada and at the Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) located in New Delhi, India. Dr. Rajesh Tandon, Founding President of PRIA and Dr. Budd L Hall, Professor of Community Development at UVic serve as the first Co-Chairs. The Global Alliance for Community-Engaged Research (GACER) is the global network facilitated by Drs. Tandon and Hall to influence policy development and to share lessons within key regional and global spaces and it serves as a link to regional and global networks around the world.

The UNESCO Chair supports North-South-South and South-South partnerships that build on and enhance the emerging consensus in knowledge democracy. It strengthens

recent collaboration between the Higher Education section in UNESCO, the Global University Network for Innovation (GUNI) and the Global Alliance on Community University Engagement (GACER). It co-creates new knowledge through partnerships among universities (academics), communities (civil society) and government (policy-makers) leading to new capacities; new solutions to pressing problems related to sustainability, social and economic disparities, cultural exclusion, mistrust and conflict; awareness among policy makers; enhanced scholarship of engagement; and modified pedagogy of community based research.

It is hoped that the work of the UNESCO Chair will contribute to:

- *Supportive policies*: through government support and research funding
- *Trained professionals*: researchers, scholars, students, practitioners
- *Enhanced partnerships*: between civil society, universities, North-South-South networks
- *Supportive leadership*: from academic councils, university administrations, vice chancellors and civil society leaders.

IV. Framework for Action

The broad framework for action to elaborate further the work of the UNESCO Chair needs to be strategically determined. In several recent conversations with networks and institutions involved in supporting the creation of this Chair (see annexure 1), it has become clear that many different experiments and efforts are already taking place in promoting community based research, community–university partnerships, community engagements by HEIs and social responsibility. The Chair will, therefore, act strategically to:

- Provide a *space for encounter* of these multiple experiences and practices across institutions and actors.

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- *Amplify the voices* of practitioners of community based research and social responsibility for policy dialogues, development and reforms.
- Support *multiplication and scaling-up of capacity enhancement* of actors inside and outside the institutions of higher education.

The above perspective demands that the programme of activities of the Chair serve multiple constituencies and multiple spheres. The building block of this work is local and national – in Canada and in India. Yet, regional and global spheres of action are also very strategic at this juncture as many networks and associations of HEIs and policy-makers at regional and global levels need to be engaged and influenced.

Broadly defining the mandate of the UNESCO Chair in three distinct, yet inter-related arenas, the framework for action must include:

- Research and knowledge mobilization
- Capacity enhancement
- Policy development

In order to ensure the greatest strategic impact over the next four years (2012-16) to generate the kinds of outcomes that have been identified earlier, the work programme should be operationalized and implemented in partnership with other initiatives, locally and globally. The UNESCO Chair will utilize its "**convening**" capacities with vast numbers of networks and institutions in civil society, academia and the government; working in partnership with others will be the practice for scaling up impacts.

The broad areas of work, based on the above considerations, are identified as:

A. Research & Knowledge Mobilization

Two broad streams of research will be focused upon:

a) Innovations in Community based Research Methodologies

Over the past decade, in several local sites, on a variety of issues related to social justice, inclusion, poverty alleviation, environmental sustainability and gender justice, community based research has been practised to address real issues facing the people and communities (variously emphasized under the rubric of MDGs, Human Development, Sustainable Livelihoods, etc). Much of this practice has attempted to facilitate co-creation of knowledge in ways that synthesize local experiences with professional expertise. It is in the synergy of such interactions that new knowledge is produced, which has practical and theoretical relevance and resonance.

In addition, there is evidence that partnership facilitation structures between communities and HEIs enhance the capacities of civil society organizations to

systematize knowledge in their sectors, to play the role as equals in the co-construction of knowledge with engaged academics and generally strengthen the knowledge democracy functions in society. These innovative structures, based both in the community and higher education settings, need much more study from an impact assessment perspective. Innovative practices have not been systematically documented, analyzed and synthesized for larger dissemination and further use.

b) <u>Approaches in Social Responsibility</u>

Demand for public accountability and local relevance of higher, post-secondary education is growing rapidly in many societies; this demand is being responded to in many different ways by different types of institutions. Some respond through service learning and student internships; some by co-production of knowledge where local communities act as partners; some others bring in the experiences of communities and practitioners in designing curricula and teaching new problem- and issue-centred courses. This social responsibility is expressed both inside and outside the institutions. Inside, it is expressed in the manner in which institutions are governed, the values and principles of citizenship that are integral to education, and respect for diversity and human rights as guiding beacons for conducting the core business of such educational institutions. Externally, the process of engagement with communities and practitioners – in civil society as well as government and the private sector – is premised on mutual respect, shared influence and openness to two-way learning. Practical manifestations of this take place in partnership projects, education based on lifelong learning and recognition of prior learning based on practical knowledge. Inquiry into the institutional, policy and leadership aspects of such approaches has lagged behind practice in a diversity of settings and contexts.

One of the key challenges in the developing world is the absence of good information about innovations, new practices and policies. A key activity of the programme will be sharing this knowledge in a manner that practitioners can access and utilize the same. One of the primary vehicles for reaching out will be the new portal – www.practiceinparticipation.org – launched by PRIA where a whole section would be devoted to community based participatory research. Global dialogues and partner networks would be another ongoing vehicle for doing the same.

B. Capacity Enhancement

Community based research has emerged over the past 35 years in a variety of discourses and practices. While easy to define as an approach to knowledge construction based on themes, issues and questions coming from the "community", the reality is that this is a complex and value based process. In spite of the proliferation of textbooks and courses, individual and collective skills in community based research have largely been acquired in an informal manner. It is important that specific and targeted interventions are made to strengthen and deepen capacities of individuals in undertaking such innovative research methodologies. Preparing a new

generation of engaged scholars, within both the academic as well as civil society sectors, needs to be attended to.

Both formal and non-formal channels of learning need to be supported. Formal channels would entail recruiting students at undergraduate and graduate levels to study community based research methodologies in formal and distance education courses; once initial curriculum is developed and piloted, then its scaling-up will be enabled through a system of accreditation such that many other institutions can conduct such learning programmes.

Training workshops for cohorts of practitioners and researchers together would be conducted to pilot the curriculum and methods of learning for the non-formal channels in different locations in the South and North. These learning materials would then be converted into manuals in open source formats (for print, CD and new media) and made available in a manner that they can be used as well as new materials added and strengthened.

C. Policy Development

The capacity of institutions of higher education to sponsor, support and promote initiatives that deepen social accountability practices internally and externally needs to be strengthened in an action-learning mode. Practical experiences and insights gained from actual efforts will be the basis for such dialogue and sharing. Special attention will be given to institutional policies, structures and leadership.

Primary activity in this regard will be to co-convene short dialogues of leaders of institutions of higher education in different cross-cutting contexts. The dialogues would have to be carried out in partnership with, and as part of, ongoing conferences and meetings of leaders, ministers and professionals of higher education. The main focus of policy development is at the national level, though opportunities for regional and global policies (like ASEAN, EU, African Union, etc) may also be pursued. Policy development will attempt to use research, knowledge mobilization and dialogues for encouraging national research councils, national regulatory bodies and national ministries to frame policies that support community based research and social responsibility of higher education in different African, Asian, Latin American, Caribbean and Middle-eastern countries. The European Union's support can enable such policy development in eastern Europe and central Asia too.

V. Work Plan for Year 1 (July 2012 – June 2013)

Since the framework for action is now defined, planning for work is done on an annual basis, to take into account emergent opportunities and available resources.

Key activities during the first year comprise the following:

1. *Formal Launch of UNESCO Chair*   in India: December 3, 2012
    In Victoria, Canada: February 2013

    Each location will conduct a seminar; there will also be a small workshop on strategies for capacity development.

2. *GUNI Report and Conference on Higher Education*

    The Co-Chairs are Guest Editors of the forthcoming GUNI Report entitled "Knowledge, Engagement & Higher Education: Rethinking Social Responsibility".

Academic Seminar	March 4-6, 2013 at Bellagio
Global Conference	May 13-15, 2013 at Barcelona
Report finalized	June 2013
Published by Palgrave	November 2013

3. *Policy dialogues in forums of higher education*

    - Commonwealth Education Minister's Conference   August 27-29, 2012, Mauritius
    - International Meeting on Higher Education of OECD   September 17-20, 2012, Paris
    - Pascal International Observatory, International Conference   October 27-28, 2012, Berts, France
    - International Association of Universities   November 27-29, 2012, Puerto Rico
    - Congress of the Humanities and Social Science   May end 2013, Victoria, Canada

4. *Capacity development in community based research and community engagements*

    - Asian regional workshop and curriculum development (with UKM, Malaysia), November 2012-March 2013 (write-shops for material development).
    - African regional workshop and curriculum development (with Makerere University, Kampala), December 2012-April 2013 (write-shops for material development).

5. Research and Knowledge Mobilization

- Research on social responsibility as part of GUNI Report
- Case studies on innovative social responsibility
- Policy mapping on social responsibility
- UNESCO Chair blog & news
- Special Issue of the *International Journal on Action Research on Knowledge Democracy and Action Research*
- Website and portal based dissemination from PRIA

6. Chair structure

- MOU between UNESCO–UVic–PRIA
- International Advisory Committee
- Partner networks and institutions
- Chair administrative units at UVic and PRIA
- Annual review and planning

List of Partners

Networks:

- Association of Commonwealth Universities Extension and Engagement Network
- Asia Pacific University Community Engagement Network (APUCEN), Malaysia
- Centro Boliviano de Estudios Interdisciplinarios, Bolivia
- Community-Based Research Canada, Victoria, Montreal, Ottawa
- Global Alliance on Community-Engaged Research, Canada, India and Germany
- Global University Networks for Innovation, Barcelona, Spain
- Living Knowledge Network, Germany and Netherlands
- National Coordinating Council on Public Engagement in Higher Education (UK)
- Pascal International Observatory, UK, Australia, USA and South Africa
- REPAS, African Participatory Research Network, Senegal
- Talloires Network

Universities and Research Institutes

- Cátedra Paulo Freire, Universidad de Sevilla, Spain
- Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda
- Mpambo Afrikan Multiversity, Isegero, Uganda
- International Afro-Brazilian University, Ceara, Brazil
- Sri Padmavathi Mahila Visvavidyalayam, Tirupati, India
- Society for Participatory Research in Asia (Co-Chair), India
- Sriniketan-Institute of Rural Reconstruction, West Bengal, India
- University of Baroda, Gujarat, India
- University of Brighton, Community-University Partnership Programme, UK
- Universiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia
- University of Mysore, Mysore, India
- University of Victoria, School of Public Administration, Human and Social Development, Office of Community-Based Research, Victoria, Canada
- Veer Narmad South Gujarat University, Gujarat, India
- Waikato University, Office of the Pro-Vice Chancellor Maori, New Zealand