

**2020 in Autonomie Locali e Servizi Sociali No 1 April 2020 pp 193-202**

**International Collaboration for Changing the Culture of Research: The UNESCO Chair in Community-Based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education**

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**Background**

We first met in October of 1978 in Caracas, Venezuela at a founding meeting of the International Participatory Research Network. Budd had spent the first influential years of his research career in Tanzania from 1970 – 1975. He was a research officer with the Institute of Adult Education at the University of Dar es Salaam. During those years influenced by the ideas of the late Mwalimu Julius K Nyerere, Paulo Freire, Marjorie Mbillinyi, Yusuf Kassam, Marja Liisa Swantz and others Budd began to articulate what was named participatory research in Tanzania. (Hall, 1975) Rajesh had just finished a PhD based on a year's living in southern Rajasthan working with rural women and men farmers on theories and practices of rural development. We agreed to work together on developing an international network to support theories and practices of participatory research. In 1983, Rajesh led a team of civil society activist researchers to found PRIA, an NGO research and training organization that has continued its work of building research capacity with grassroots civil society organisations across most of the states of India. Budd continued work with the International Council for Adult Education, the international NGO that had supported the original international participatory research network until 1991 when he joined academic life at the University of Toronto and later the University of Victoria.

While we continued to share our ideas and work together over the years between 1991 and the early 2000s, we were able to join forces in a more sustained manner beginning in 2006 when the University of Victoria created an Office of Community-Based Research (Hall and Berube, 2010). Budd was appointed as the Director of the Institute and Rajesh was named as the Chair of the International Advisory committee. We realized that universities in the global North as well as the global South were beginning to explore new approaches to engaged scholarship, research that emerged from the communities where universities were located. In Canada this type of research was labeled community-based research. We felt that in order to better support the emergence of structures of community-based research in both the global South and the North that global networking was needed. In 2008, we launched the Global Alliance for Community Engaged Research (GACER) following conversations with the Living Knowledge Network in Europe and many other individuals in Asia, Africa and Latin America. GACER published regular newsletter connecting practitioners. We began a close working relationship with the Barcelona based Global University Network for Innovation (GUNi) collaborating in an editorial capacity in a series of Reports on Higher Education (refs) from 2005 -present.

In 2009, UNESCO held an International Conference on Higher Education. GACER was active in presentations and in working on the final communique. The final communique drew attention to

the need to recognize non-western forms of knowledge and for higher education institutions to take up active roles as agents of social responsibility. As a follow-up to the 2009 international Conference, UNESCO higher education division invited us to submit a proposal to create a UNESCO Chair in the broad area of social responsibility in higher education. We proposed that our chair be structured as a joint chair with leadership shared between Budd, an academic located in the Global North and Rajesh, a civil society leader working in the global South. In 2012 the UNESCO Chair in Community-Based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education was created (Hall and Tandon, 2017). The mandate of our Chair is to build research capacity in the field of community-based research in the global South through South-South and North-South-South partnerships. We have extended the mandate to the 'excluded North' as poverty, discrimination, exclusion are day by day increasing in the so called wealthier parts of the world.

Our theory of change, is based on the concept of international networking from and for the deepening of local participatory knowledge creation for social change. We are committed to sharing all of our work in an open access manner and supporting the communities of knowledge workers committed to transformative change... We understand our focus on knowledge democracy as a contribution to movement of activists, practitioners, scholars and social movements, and community organizations. Since the beginning of our work in 2012, we have worked closely with a number of key regional and global associations including The Talloires Network, the Living Knowledge Network, the National Coordinating Council for Public Engagement in Higher Education (UK), PASCAL International Observatory, International Association for Higher Education, Association of Commonwealth Universities, and the Asia Pacific University Community Engagement Network.

### **Research, Advocacy and Capacity-building: Approaches to change**

The UNESCO Chair supports and implements research, advocacy and capacity-building in the broad field of community-based research and social responsibility in higher education. Our research has focused on a series of global state-of-the-art studies resulting in the release of three open access books (Munck et al, 2014, Hall et al, 2015, Tandon et al, 2016). These research projects have contributed to deepening our understanding of engaged scholarship on an international scale, feeding our both our advocacy and training activities. Advocacy has taken the form of engagement with our global networking partners as advisors to many international projects, contributors and editors of global reports, facilitation of the 'Big Tent' Global Communiqués, and focused attention on the attainment of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The main instrument of our capacity-building is the Knowledge for Change Global Consortium on Training in Community-Based Research.

Our 2014 study, *Higher Education and Community-based Research: Creating a Global Vision* describes, analyses, and points a way forward for the field of community-based research as practiced within higher education. It sets the historical background for current debates and engages the leaders in this field to create an imagination-driven agenda for transformation. It surveys the rich experience of community-based research participants across countries and regions, stressing both the diversity of these experiences and their common themes. Finally, it sets forth visions of how higher education and community-based research can together move forward, to the benefit of all society.

Our 2015 study, *Strengthening Community University Research Partnerships: Global Perspectives* presents findings from a global study of institutional arrangements for the facilitation and support of research partnerships between Civil Society Organizations (CSO) and Higher Education Institutions (HEI). The book outlines a number of important trends, challenges and approaches associated with how research partnerships are initiated, supported, and evaluated through a comparative study of different types of institutional arrangements. This includes a detailed overview of a global survey administered in over fifty countries and four languages, and twelve country case studies demonstrating strong institutional and policy support for Community University Research Partnerships.

*Training the Next Generation of Community-based Researcher*, completed in 2016 creates new interdisciplinary knowledge by examining CBR training practices in the thematic areas of local asset development, participatory citizenship, Indigenous research methodologies and water governance in global and institutional settings. It further builds a global partnership to create more training opportunities with an emphasis on the Global South. It includes a series of pedagogical principles for the training of community based research coming out of three data sources: systematic literature reviews on training, teaching and learning CBR in five thematic areas, a global survey on training opportunities and capacity building in CBR, and 21 case studies on HEIs and CSOs providing top training programs in CBR.

### **Advocacy on knowledge, higher education and the UN Sustainable Development Goals**

Many recent debates about higher education have focused upon quality, financing and student mobility. Larger questions about the social relevance of higher education has only just begun to be raised afresh. A recently published report by the Global University Network for Innovation (GUNI) clearly argues: “Social responsibility emerges as the need to reconsider the social relevance of universities in light of the encounter of the local with the global, regarding priorities, demands, impacts and knowledge needs in the context of globalization. The competitiveness of nations – as the only way to achieve progress – should be balanced with inclusive social development and sustainability of the entire global population.” (University World News, 2017). This question can only be addressed adequately if it is agreed that the overarching purpose of higher education is shared ‘public good’. HEIs and universities, therefore, are public institutions, contributing to public goods, irrespective of the nature of their financing. Treating higher education as a private good, to be financed by the individual students benefitting from it, as economists have argued, is to severely curtail the real and potential contributions of higher education (GUNI 2017). The purpose of higher education has to be defined in the contemporary societal context differently, independent of the means of resourcing a particular university or HEI. At the International Conference on the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) hosted by GUNi in September 2017, Federico Mayor, Former Director-General of UNESCO remarked, ‘Universities have abandoned their previous commitment to educating future citizens. In this world where globalisation of indifference is growing, universities must prepare their students as citizens who practice and value freedom, equality and solidarity’ (Tandon, 2014) . In many societies, regions and communities, HEIs are some of the most resourced institutions. They have enormous physical infrastructure (classrooms, labs, residences, office space, recreational facilities, etc.) which are far superior to

anything available to local communities, or even local government agencies. And much of this infrastructure is underutilized, when viewed in a 24 hour per day lens. HEIs also have enormous digital capacity in hardware, software and human-ware. They have financial resources, endowments and revenue streams. Intellectual resources and capacities of HEIs are unparalleled in such locations and places. Most importantly, HEIs have youthful energy, commitment and hope, as is reflected in its students. Further, in promoting engagement with society, universities have expanded their service mission, in which students are encouraged to contribute to development of communities.

However, core functions of teaching and research have remained cut off from such engagement. Engaged teaching and research can make universities contribute more directly to locally relevant and contextually appropriate SDGs. A classic example of this is the Responsible Research & Innovation (RRI) initiative of the European Union. RRI is a key action of the “Science with and for Society (SWAFS)” programme of Horizon 2020 (H2020). The European Commission defines RRI as ‘an approach that anticipates and assesses potential implications and societal expectations with regard to research and innovation, with the aim to foster the design of inclusive and sustainable research and innovation’ (Tandon, 2017). This implies that societal actors (researchers, citizens, policy makers, business, third sector organisations, etc.) work together during the whole research and innovation process in order to better align both the process and its outcomes with the values, needs and expectations of society. Further, the 2014 Rome Declaration on RRI outlines where the focus of future initiatives should be placed. In particular, the declaration calls European institutions, member states, regional authorities and research and innovation performing organisations to focus on:

- Building capacity for RRI through a variety of tools such as securing available resources and supporting global initiatives;
- Reviewing and adapting metrics by providing guidelines for the implementation and assessment of RRI;
- Implementing institutional changes that foster RRI in research and innovation performing organizations by reviewing their own procedures and practices to identify opportunities and obstacles, engaging civil society, developing and implementing strategies and guidelines, adapting curricula and providing training, and including RRI criteria in the evaluation and assessment of research staff (Angelaki, 2016).

Societally relevant higher education is applicable to everything that a university does--- teaching, research, service. It is applicable to all disciplines and faculties, not just in extra-mural or extension departments. Also, HEIs – historically recognized as public institutions- have been the sites for knowledge production. In the context of the SDGs, when we realize the need for ‘alternative perspectives of knowledge’ to fill the 7 knowledge deficit for achieving these; the ‘research’ function of HEIs gain much pertinence (Marniese and Marsel 2017). However, the achievement of the SDGs requires an innovative approach towards the higher education missions, and the latter needs to be moulded in a way which helps achieve SDGs in the long run, particularly the research mission. In this light, being ‘engaged’ in a mutually beneficial way is important. As we can no longer afford a business as usual approach, there is a widespread call for innovation from all sectors. Of particular importance are the increasing expectations from the field of research. In the context of the SDGs, research needs to contribute much more than what it has been doing traditionally. In addition to giving an understanding of phenomena, research is now perceived as being able to provide ‘new solutions, through appreciating and incorporating

alternative perspectives of knowledge'. It has to be recognized that faced with the complexity of challenges and in the face of real-time SDG targets, civil society, politicians, donors and private actors have real and increasing expectations. To address these expectations, there is a need to strengthen the societal contribution of research, in various areas of socioeconomic development. It is time to now bridge the gap between research and society, in ways in which the former can contribute towards the development outcomes of the latter. Lessons for this are available from the Science Shops model in Europe, which pursues research, based on research questions which emerge from the community. The RRI model too demonstrates how research can be used responsibly and innovatively to further development objectives. The achievement of the SDGs will also require finding new solutions to various socio-economic challenges, and new knowledge will be essential towards this end. Universities can undertake partnerships with local communities and stakeholders to co-create such knowledge which is appropriate to local contexts and decision-makers. Co-creation of such knowledge is a pre-requisite to finding sustainable solutions. This in essence, lays the foundation of 'engaged research', which 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 (FICCI 2017). 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. High-quality, engaged university research in developmentally strategic areas can inform good policy, and can unearth solutions to key problems across all SDG focus areas. Calls for this form of engaged research has played a critical role in establishing the validity and appropriateness of 'Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR)', as a tool, which has the potential to provide sustainable solutions to critical societal challenges, and thus contribute towards achieving the SDGs.

### **Community-based participatory research contributing to the achievement of the SDGs**

In order to achieve the SDGs, a societal transformation is necessary and all actors must be mobilized. Through CBPR, there is a need to encourage strengthening of the collaborations between researchers, communities and civil society promoting the societal contribution of research. CBPR can effectively contribute towards the 'development of new knowledge and insights on various societal challenges linked to SDGs, and play an important role in providing sustainable solutions for the same'. Being community-based and involving the values of participation and research for co-learning and co-generation of knowledge, CBPR can be used for tackling local issues (such as water, sanitation, resource management, gender equality, etc.), and in the process, result in greater ownership of local problems as a step towards sustainable 'development', as compared to sustainable 'growth'. Three practical ways can be readily adopted under CBPR, for making the latter contribute to an informed understanding on SDGs:

1. Framing locally usable research. Students and faculty at HEIs may frame their research questions which may produce locally useful and actionable knowledge. Structured and regular interactions with local actors---district administration, local government, civil society, local business---may generate research questions that have relevance for achievement of SDGs locally. For example, SDG9 is targeting resilient infrastructure and sustainable industrialization.

Engineering faculty and students at HEI may study specific infrastructure gaps from a resilience lens in a city or district. Departments of energy, minerals and mining may find interesting research topics on green technologies for local industry. Students and faculty of economics and business may define their research to support small/medium businesses in that location to become resilient. Monitoring air quality and water treatment systems could be a very actionable research for teams of students and faculty.

2. Building community knowledge partnerships. HEIs may need to create boundary-spanning structures for realising cross-cutting partnerships. However, when dealing with such partnerships, equally important is to be mindful of the existential power differentials among partners, their respective capacities and capabilities to contribute to the partnership, and its impacts on such collective efforts. A well thought out and calculated partnership, in turn increases the impact it has on the process as a whole. For example, SDG11 focuses on improving the quality of urban life. HEIs can partner with municipalities to contribute new knowledge for improved urbanization and governance of urban services. Most cities lack capacity to generate and maintain habitation level data, especially where rapid migration is occurring. Several faculties—statistics, urban studies, planning, economics—can support such research. Studies of land use in urban areas and in-situ improvements in housing infrastructure may be carried out by faculty of architecture, geography, and engineering. Operations research faculty and students may undertake mobility analysis to provide insights into transportation design in cities. Once such partnerships are built, ongoing nurturance of relationships by HEIs may enable a wide variety of research opportunities for students and faculty in support of SDGs.

3. Learning new competencies. Current training in research methodology in most universities does not prepare students to build partnerships. Not much attention is paid to attributes like critical thinking, conscientization and ethical orientation. Furthermore, training in research methodology does not teach how to integrate disciplinary interests with local research priorities. Students and their teachers do not know how to share their research findings with local stakeholders, other than in the form of a research papers written for a journal and/or a research conference. If a mutually beneficial partnership with local communities and institutions—business, government, civil society--- is built, research partnership may become supportive of new knowledge and its use. In order to be able to undertake such partnerships and locally relevant research, students and researchers at HEIs need to develop certain additional competencies.

### **The ‘Big Tent’ Communiques**

On September 23<sup>rd</sup> 2010, eight international networks supporting community university engagement across the world gathered to participate in the first Global Video Dialogue on Enhancing North-South Cooperation in Community-University Engagement. These networks, some of which did not know of each other, represent several thousand universities, professional bodies and civil society organisations. Networks that gathered for the Global Dialogue on Enhancing North-South Cooperation in Community-University Engagement are both university-led and community-led and were as follows: the Centro Boliviano de Estudios Multidisciplinarios, 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, and the Talloires Network.

They noted that, “In this age of faltering financial economies and particular attention to environmental sustainability, the video platform of the dialogue intentionally set out to explore a new way of working together by gathering from various corners of the globe without taxing already limited resources. The Global Dialogue was hosted by the Institute of Education at the University of London and Co-Chaired by Professor Sir David Watson, with the Centre for Higher Education Studies and Principal of Green Templeton College at Oxford University and Dr. Rajesh Tandon, President of PRIA and Chair of GACER. David Watson describes the exercise as having “all the joy of good professional companionship, along with the excitement of an innovative format and the reassurance that we were achieving results without burning significant natural or financial resources.” Rajesh Tandon noted that, "as higher education in India and China expand dramatically to meet the needs of our rapidly changing nations, the responsibility of higher education to their communities and regions must be a central concern." The idea of gathering internationally focused Community-University Engagement networks to discuss the unique role and perspective of each network, tensions and challenges faced, and ways in which such networks can work together to make an impact on complex issues affecting local, national and international communities originated with Budd Hall from the University of Victoria's Office of Community-Based Research and GACER Secretary”.

This first Global Dialogue produced a [‘Global Communique on Enhancing North-South Cooperation in Community University Engagement’](#) which was ‘owned’ collectively by all of the networks that had worked to produce the document. The communique was distributed to universities, government ministries, funding bodies and throughout the various networks. The experience of working together to produce a statement of common concern was a positive one and led to a decision to continue the tradition. The label of ‘Big Tent’ statements emerged as it seemed to be a good description for an intellectual co-owned space where diverse networks can share ideas for advocacy can be shared without worrying about administrative or bureaucratic complications. There have been [eight subsequent Big Tent statements](#) covering a variety of global issues. When the UNESCO Chair in Community-Based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education was created in 2012, it took on the facilitation role in the Big Tent process.

### **Building research capacity in the global South and the excluded North -The Knowledge for Change (K4C) Consortium**

Priority attention is being given in the early 2020s to creating opportunities for young people studying in universities as well as those working in in community settings to learn how to do community based participatory research. Based on previous state-of-the-art studies on international developments in community-based participatory research funded in part by the International Development Research Centre, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Canada and others, we responded to the question of how to create economical and sustainable structures in the global South and the ‘excluded’ North for building research capacity in community-based participatory research? The K4C strategy that has emerged supports the creation of K4C hubs as formal partnerships between universities and community or practitioner organizations which

emphasize training by doing CBR linked to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The K4C model builds capacities through a carefully crafted 21 week Mentor Training Program (MTP). Academics from higher education institutions and practitioners from civil society organisations are trained as Mentors, who go on to become champions and carry the socially responsible research agenda forward at the level of the university. On completing the MTP, the mentors are expected to design and launch a locally contextualized course in CBPR. Since 2017, this low-cost, high impact model has trained 70 mentors (in 3 batches), who have gone on to create 13 K4C Hubs in Canada, Cuba, Colombia, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Malaysia, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda.

## **Reflections**

Our approach to changing the culture of research through collective sharing of research findings, working together on advocacy for change and supporting new learning opportunities for the young draws has emerged from our work over nearly 50 years. What began as a rejection of colonial research approaches by a few people mostly working in the global South, has grown to occupy the attention of academics, funding bodies, community organizations, local governments, government ministries and intergovernmental bodies. A transformation of our research cultures from one focused on careers of academics and rankings of our institutions to one based on using knowledge to address the critical calls our communities for justice, fairness, the end to gender violence and attention the climate crisis and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals is critical. We invite all who share these values and ideas to join this movement.

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