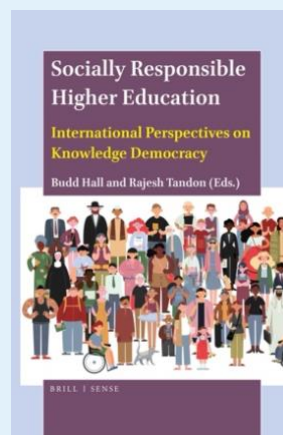




## **BOOK LAUNCH**

### **EVENT REPORT**



### **ORGANISED BY**

UNESCO Chair In Community Based Research And Social Responsibility In  
Higher Education

&

Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA)

### **IN PARTNERSHIP WITH**

UNESCO New Delhi

(Cluster Office for Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, the Maldives, and Sri  
Lanka)

**JUNE 14<sup>TH</sup> (MONDAY), 4:00-5:15 PM IST**

## SPEAKERS



**Mr. Eric Falt, UNESCO New Delhi**



**Dr. Rajesh Tandon, PRIA**



**Prof. D.P. Singh, UGC**



**Dr. Sarita Anand,  
Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan**



**Ms. Pratikalpa Sharma,  
Gujarat National Law University**



**Dr. Pankaj Mittal,  
Association of Indian  
Universities**



**Dr. N.V. Varghese  
NIEPA**

## KEY MESSAGES

- The specialized knowledge, resources and capacities that are included in higher education institutions enable them to be incubators of solutions.
- The ethical, moral and spiritual dimensions of value- based education ensure that we always put the greater good above self- benefit.
- HEIs need to prepare the next generation of professionals, sensitive to climate mitigation and adaptation, and enable them to play their role for society even as they start with their professional careers.
- Community engagement in HEIs helps people realise their role in democracy; it means creating zones where ideas of local communities get integrated with the education system.
- Social responsibility cannot be seen in isolation, but has to be integrated in the entire curricula.
- Create an organised public pressure for universities to change.
- Channelise funds from CSR towards research and teaching in HEIs.



### **Ms. Sumitra Srinivasan, PRIA**

Ms. Srinivasan initiated the session by welcome all the participants and panelists. She gave a brief description of the book *Socially Responsible Higher Education: International Perspectives on Knowledge Democracy*. She suggested that in many ways it is a seminal book since it raises the urgent need for universities to take back and reimagine the right to reclaim the public purpose of higher education. It brings with it examples from around the world on how universities are reclaiming this purpose now, and policies in different countries are supporting such efforts. This makes the book extremely relevant for higher education policy makers, administrators and academics who are keen to make this change.

### **Mr. Eric Falt, Director and Representative, UNESCO New Delhi Cluster Office for Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, the Maldives, and Sri Lanka**

Mr. Falt began by congratulating Dr. Budd Hall and Dr. Rajesh Tandon, the co-editors of the book *Socially Responsible Higher Education: International Perspectives on Knowledge Democracy* and all the authors who contributed to it. He noted both the gender diversity amongst the authors and the amalgamation of various perspectives from diverse countries, with a greater representation of cases from the global South, terming the book a “win-win” from the start.

Reflecting on the theme of the book, Mr. Falt spoke of how the world today is grappling with several urgent and complex challenges that intersect issues of climate change, health, peace and rising inequalities. The co-creation of sustainable and inclusive solutions to these challenges is a shared responsibility as envisioned in the Global Sustainable Development Agenda, in which higher education institutions (HEIs) must play an important role. The specialized knowledge, resources and capacities that are included in higher education institutions enable them to be incubators of solutions, and this is a role they must play well if we are to make significant progress in terms of the SDGs. Higher education institutions in their quest to become pillars of modern knowledge societies, must not disengage from local communities and must not ignore indigenous knowledge systems. They have the responsibility to prepare citizens to actively participate in social and political issues, with a full understanding of their civic and environmental activities. Each and every learner entering a university can be and should be enabled to develop their full potential in order to put their life projects into practice, and if each life project is aimed at solving just one problem that they are passionate about, then we can hopefully make a dent in some of the global challenges we face today.

Mr. Falt took this opportunity to remind all of Mahatma Gandhi's wholistic vision of education because the ideas he espoused decades ago still remain topical and relevant even today. For instance, Gandhi emphasised that the real purpose of value-based education was not about those who gained knowledge but those who used the knowledge to give back to society through service. He believed that higher education should produce experts who are relevant to society's needs and work to address them. The ethical, moral and spiritual dimensions of value-based education ensure that we always put the greater good above self-benefit. Gandhi recognised that learning can also come from appreciating the local communities in everyday life. Therefore lifelong learning does not only take place in the confines of a classroom, a concept which has greatly contributed to shaping principles surrounding community-based research and knowledge democracy.

We must respect and appreciate the past. Digging deeper into our time honoured traditions and storehouse of accumulated knowledge can provide us with valuable insights as we anticipate the future. UNESCO's Futures of Education Initiative aims to rethink education and learning with a horizon of 2050 in a world of increasing complexity, uncertainty and inequalities. The term "futures" particularly denotes the many parallel and diverse futures of education. It relies on a broad, open and consultative process among youth, civil society, governments, businesses and other relevant stakeholders to ensure that their voice is added to this participatory process. The final report will be presented at the UNESCO General Conference, 2021 and it will be the first step in catalyzing educational communities world wide to rethink the purposes and role of education. It will affirm education's role as a global common good and fundamental human right.

UNESCO Institute of Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean undertook an extensive global discussion to understand how higher education could look like in 2050 and how it could contribute to a better future for us all. Certain outcomes were noteworthy through this consultative process: first that values such as respect, empathy, equality and solidarity should be at the core of future higher education institutions' missions to enable more humane higher education for all. Second, higher education can be shaped as a public good and as a driver of social and economic development of countries and regions, which means we have to find innovative ways of financing it for all, especially in the context of the Covid-19 Pandemic. Another lesson is that we must draw strength from inter-culturality and diversity, respecting cultures and identities and creating spaces for dialogue. This can only be achieved if higher education becomes more responsive to diverse communities, attracts indigenous learners, ethnic minorities, and the most vulnerable sections. Lastly there is a need to create inter-connectedness because it is important to forge collaborations between all – both local and global communities and bond higher education with other forms of education including non-formal education and informal learning.

There are a lot of different contributions that UNESCO has made over the years. In 2019, the Global Convention on Recognition of Qualifications for Higher Education was adopted by UNESCO General Conference, making it the first legally binding UN Treaty on Higher Education having a global scope. Beyond mobility this Convention pushes for more inclusive higher education systems since countries are engaged to put in place mechanisms to facilitate recognition in their countries of degrees or studies obtained abroad. There will be more deliberations on knowledge exchanges on the future road map for higher education which will take place during the third World Higher Education Conference organised by UNESCO with support from Government of Spain in 2022. Mr. Falt concluded by saying that sharing knowledge is a wonderful way to give back, and this book will serve many academics, researchers around the world who are working in the field of higher education and knowledge democracy.

**Dr. Rajesh Tandon, Co-Editor of book; Founder-President, PRIA & Co-Chair, UNESCO Chair in Community Based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education**

Dr. Tandon welcomed everyone and shared that two years ago the idea of this book was conceptualized and Dr. Tandon and Dr. Hall wrote to their partners in their networks, enquiring what were their perspectives on some of the stories from the ground related to social responsibility in higher education. From those 75 submissions, Dr. Tandon, Dr. Hall and their team distilled 22 chapters for this book. Most of these contributions are from the Global South. The book touches upon a number of themes, some of which were highlighted by Dr. Tandon. The first is educating for post-pandemic inclusive recovery, which is important in the context of growing inequalities during the pandemic. The second theme is preparing the next generation of professionals, sensitive to climate mitigation and adaptation, and how they can

begin to play their role even as they start with their professional careers. Their higher education studies are critical to sensitise them to address societal problems. The third theme revolves around respect towards diversity of knowledge systems. Many young individuals in higher education institutions seem to disregard even experiential knowledge that their own grandparents or community leaders have. Lastly locally actionable knowledge can be produced to address local priorities of SDGs.

The approaches to social responsibility are very diverse. Previously, social responsibility was seen in terms of the “third mission” of HEIs which is service, with no reference to the first two missions- teaching and research, which are part of the commitment to social responsibility. Increasingly it is being recognised that service mission is not independent of teaching and research mission. Therefore there are many different ways of approaching social responsibility and it varies in the context in which such institutions are located. Within community- engaged teaching, University Grants Commission (UGC) has been part of many new innovations.

Another global debate that has emerged is with regard to decolonizing the curriculum. The syllabus should not remain the same throughout the world in HEIs, rather it should entail pluriversity. Place-based, contextual curriculum is therefore critical. Finally in addition to becoming rigorous researchers, our students can also undertake community partnerships based research, where research questions can be shared with the community. Very interestingly the theme of linguistic and cultural diversity has emerged in theory and practice. Looking at the case study in the book based on the Qatar experience, the authors write about the practice of change of instructional language from English to Arabic in Qatar University, mainly in social sciences, to analyse the practical aspects of language selection-based visions in the country and their symbolic dimensions on individual, social, and cultural identities.

#### **Professor D.P. Singh, Chairman, University Grants Commission**

Professor Singh began by congratulating the editors of the book Dr. Hall and Dr. Tandon for bringing together through this book, diverse perspectives from different countries. He also congratulated the authors for sharing their experiences and highlighting so many issues related to the pertinent topic of socially responsible higher education. The authors of the book recognised the fundamental, overarching goal of higher education institutions in raising global awareness about community engagement. The global best practices on community engagement have also been covered in the book providing an international perspective, which raise the credibility of the content to familiarise our new generation with better skills and training for community building practices. Knowledge democracy means bringing in suggestions from every social class, without being discriminated on the basis of caste, religion and gender. Promoting democracy of knowledge would not be possible until we celebrate diversity in our higher education institutions. Community engagement in HEIs helps people



realise their role in democracy; it means creating zones where ideas of local communities get integrated with the education system. The education system of 21<sup>st</sup> Century is about the wholistic development of the individual which includes value education.

In February 2018, Government of India launched the Unnat Bharat Abhiyan (UBA) to bring about a transformative change in rural development by the active participation of higher education institutions with rural communities, and reorientation of communities through research and development. An expert group of UGC developed a national curricular framework and guidelines for fostering social responsibility and community engagement in higher education institutions in India. One of the verticals of UGC's quality mandate launched in 2018 is social industry connect, which requires every institution to adopt at least five villages for exchange of knowledge and for the overall socio-economic betterment of the communities. In light of the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020), some of the key principles of the UBA are being reused. Dr. Singh was hopeful that the community engagement framework of the UGC will fulfil the twin mandates of improving quality of learning and practical activities of students to improve the socio-economic conditions of the community.

Community participation and ownership has been reinforced by local actions of local community organisations during the lockdown. Several rural institutions like Gandhigram Rural Institute, Dayalbagh Institute, Central University of Orissa and others are active in using their teaching & learning practices for community engagement. The NEP 2020 also speaks of community engagement as a social responsibility of our higher education institutions. Apart from teaching and research activities, our higher education institutions need to take major accountability of community engagement and services. For this we need to build a network of our educational institutions, schools, NGOs and the government who can potentially address emerging issues. Apart from promotion of multi-disciplinarity, the NEP 2020 also promotes Indian languages, art and culture. Our universities with their broad remit of creation and dissemination of knowledge and their unique position in society have a critical role in achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

**Dr. Sarita Anand, Author of Part 4, Chapter 16: “*Tagore, Social Responsibility and Higher Education in India*”; Assistant Professor, Department of Education, Visva-Bharati Santiniketan.**

Dr. Anand started by speaking of Rabindranath Tagore's work towards social responsibility of the individual and the institution. She then spoke of the Rural Extension Centre (REC) at her university, Visva-Bharati University, which is the oldest department of the PH.D unit at the university, and till today is working towards improving conditions of the community. Similarly the agricultural department works with local communities on agricultural practices, as well as towards preserving their tradition and culture. The social work department at the university

also engages heavily with the local communities on issues related to health, hygiene, vaccination awareness and so on. The learnings from the community engagement is brought in the M.Ed Program, where they are following the UGC's community engagement framework for social responsibility in higher education. The departments also use their theoretical knowledge practically with the community by aligning their expertise towards the needs of the community. Several festivals, including "Poush Utsav", Holi Festival and various "melas" hosted by the university allow for local artisans and craft persons to sell their handmade crafts to people. Dr. Anand sang a line from a folk song, highlighting the importance of preserving and promoting folk music and traditions during these events. There is also an agricultural fare, where local communities and the agricultural department of the university collaborate to produce locally produced woodwork, bamboo-based products and pottery amongst other crafts.

**Ms. Pratikalpa Sharma, Co-Author of Part 3, Chapter 12: "Social Responsibility and Legal Education in India"; Assistant Professor (Research) Gujarat National Law University, Gandhinagar**

Ms. Sharma spoke of how all individuals are units of the society and social responsibility is a core aspect of the traditional Indian education system. She said that legal education is a tool to change society. National Law Universities are the engines of legal education in India. She then spoke of how an analysis of the NLU's work reflects a change in their orientation of social responsibility towards the community as well as their responsibilities towards their students. NLUs across the countries have created Centres of Excellence that are engaged with issues related to women and child development, environmental sustainability amongst others. Compulsory community development work has also been incorporated in university curricula at NLUs. At Gujrat National Law University there were 8 hours per semester kept aside for dedicating to work towards Swachh Bharat Abhiyan. This kind of work done at NLUs can help achieve SDGs through local solutions.

**Dr. Pankaj Mittal, Secretary General, Association of Indian Universities**

Dr. Mittal started by questioning that whenever we talk of social responsibility, we are reminded of Corporate Social Responsibility; however University Social Responsibility (USR) and Individual Social Responsibility (ISR) evade the mind. In a country like India which is a social welfare state, where the first university in the world was started, that is Taxila, there was the underlying principle of the strong connect between the university and the community. Moving towards a materialistic way of thinking, this link became weaker and those individuals working in universities began to consider themselves superior to the ones outside.



Dr. Mittal recalled her time at a university in rural India, which she said was also disconnected from the community around it. There the first centre was established at the university, called the Centre for Society, University, Interface and Research. This centre focussed on building the connect between the society and the university. The curriculum was designed in a way where 50% was taught at the university and 50% in the field. Social responsibility cannot be seen in isolation, but has to be integrated in the entire curricula. For instance, geography can do geo mapping; history students can write the history of the community while language students can study local and indigenous languages of their local communities. At the university where Dr. Mittal was working, they even worked on technological innovations based on needs and work of their local community, including “Upla” or cow dung making machine since cow dung cakes were made by rural women in that area locally. This activity made the local women so happy since they felt the university thought about them. Dr. Mittal ended by stressing that higher education institutions need to understand that social responsibility is their responsibility, not a side charity that they may engage in.

**Professor N.V. Varghese, Vice Chancellor of National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA), New Delhi.**

Dr. Varghese spoke of how the book *Socially Responsible Higher Education: International Perspectives on Knowledge Democracy* not only highlighted the academic interest in this issue, the activities, experiences and experiments of people but also gave the policy implications and guidance to universities to move towards developing and reorienting themselves towards social responsibility. Higher education is a key driver of collective capacity. It seems that the belief that we can achieve more when we are working together, when we have an inclusive approach than an individualistic one forms the basis for this understanding that it’s a collective capacity.

If we look into the educational expansion that has taken place, it has created opportunities for many, but has also left vast number of people either outside the education system or rendered lower quality of teaching and learning which are both marginalising factors. Looking at the last three decades that coincides with the growing of the market economy and globalisation processes, global poverty levels have come down but inequalities are high, that is contrary to previous trends where inequalities were growing while poverty was also growing. As students go higher in the educational processes, there is a cost benefit analysis that creeps into the choices students make for their education. One underlying factor is the urban bias; interestingly developing countries often imitate developed countries, focussing on industrial development rather than agricultural development and rural development. Unfortunately Gandhi’s vision of “antyodaya”, rural development and self-financing educational system was not embraced by society. Neglecting agricultural development and rural development is one of the major reasons for this change within our education system.

Higher education has two functions: knowledge production and knowledge transmission. Dr. Varghese asked : how do we take into account the diversity of knowledge production rather than going by the laboratory experiments of knowledge production? How do we deal with advantages and disadvantages of countering the local and the global? How do we address the competitiveness amongst the industry? Just like practising democracy is different from preaching democracy, practicing social inclusion is different from preaching social inclusion within social responsibility. How do we create an organised public pressure for universities to change? How can we make use of substantial funds that are part of Corporate Social Responsibility? One way is to ensure that a major chunk of these funds are channelised towards education and health. The second way is to mobilise these funds towards bringing high quality research in the university culture. Dr. Varghese ended his address by a thought provoking point about how we can push towards creation of a socially responsible market which offers an inclusive higher education system embedded in local languages, culture and knowledge.

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