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A Brief Report

A round-table on Community Based Research and Social Responsibility of Institutions of Higher Learning was organized at DRTC-CYSD, Bhubaneswar on 25th January 2023. The delegates of the round-table included the Vice Chancellors and faculty members from the Universities of Odisha, former Vice Chancellors, Officials from the Department of Higher Education, academia, CSO leaders, Think Tank and the Development Practitioners.

Address by the Panelists

Dr. (Mrs.) Pankaj Mittal, Secretary General, Association of Indian Universities in her address highlighted the disconnect between the universities and the society; and the consequences. University Society Responsibility (USR) is as important as the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), she said. Regular interface between the university and the community and exchange of knowledge are very critical to strengthen engagement with the society. The students pursuing higher education need to understand the issues and challenges of the community and develop projects to address them. Therefore, the community knowledge needs to be extracted through research, analyzed, documented and integrated with the university curriculum. The opportunities available under Unnat Bharat Abhiyan (UBA) can be harnessed for the purpose.

Dr. Rajesh Tandon, Co-chair, UNESCO Chair on Community Based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education; and President, PRIA reiterated on the National Education Policy, 2020 which focuses on producing engaged, productive and contributing citizens. The policy also aims at fostering community engagement and social responsivity, he added. While deliberating on community engagement, he emphasized on some of the key principles such as: valuing local knowledge, mutual learning and respect, linkage with the community institutions and the CBOs. The operational guidelines for the Higher Education Institutes which include: adopting existing

course for community engagement as well as offering new courses; and undertaking research in partnership with the local community were also shared with the delegates.

Dr. Budd Hall, Professor, School of Public Administration at the University of Victoria, Canada; and Co-chair, UNESCO Chair on Community Based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education shared the global perspective on knowledge and social responsibility in higher education. Dr. Hall in his deliberation highlighted on the dominance of English language; and exclusion of community based indigenous knowledge resulting in unequal knowledge distribution across the globe. Hence, there is a need for establishing knowledge democracy. With regard to social responsibility, he reiterated on 'Reimagining our future together – A new social contract for education' and said, the Higher Education institutions have transformative potential to take it forward.

Feedback and Suggestions shared by the Delegates

- Building Students' Perspective on University Community Linkage (encouraging students to be open to learn, identify Community Knowledge Resources – what they can take to the university, and prioritize critical issues in the community – how they can contribute to address the issues)
- Developing socially responsible citizens through introduction of credit courses on 'Citizenship Building' and inculcation of 'Values and Ethics'
- Inclusivity and integration of the curriculum
- Structured training programmes on university community linkage for the faculty members.
- Building resilient communities and localization of SDGs through community engagement
- Focused Action Research Projects and Documentation of Promising Practices
- Collective reflection on: Why community engagement is not happening naturally and finding ways out
- Infrastructure vs. Culture – Culture is more important for strengthening our economy; hence, community engagement is indispensable.
- Need for sensitive engagement with the indigenous communities
- Innovations: Introduction of 'Professor of Practice', Promotion of Indigenous Enterprisers, Indigenous Research Activities

> *Key Concerns*
> - Lack of openness to learn from the community.
> - Linking knowledge from the Science Lab. with the community and vice versa
> - Dominance of physical science and technology
> - Lack of resources for conducting social science research
> - Need for convergence between National Unnat Bharat Abhiyan and NSS.

Way Forward

- Sensitizing the young minds and the faculties through empathy building exercises.
- Partnership with CSOs involved in strengthening community institutions/ CBOs to work on the common action agenda.
- Integrating community-based participatory research with the course curriculum.
- Capacity building for creating a critical mass of faculty-facilitators in the community processes.

The deliberation was facilitated by Shri Jagadananda, former State Information Commissioner, Odisha; and Mentor & Co-Founder of CYSD.

The round table concluded with a vote of thanks to all the delegates and the panellists, by Prof. Madhumita Das, former Vice Chancellor, Fakir Mohan University.