Civil Engagement in Higher Education and its role in Human & Social Development

Dr. Rajesh Tandon[?]
President

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Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA)
42, Tughlakabad Institutional Area, New Delhi - 110 062, India
Phone: 29960931-33, 29956908, Fax: (91-11) 29955183
Email: rajeshtandon@pria.org, Website: www.pria.org

[?] **Dr. Rajesh Tandon** is an internationally acclaimed leader and practitioner of participatory research and development. He founded the Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) twenty-five years ago, a voluntary organisation providing support to grassroots initiatives in South Asia, and since 1982 has been its Chief Functionary. A Ph.D. from Case Western Reserve University and an Electronics Engineer (IIT, Kanpur) with a Post Graduate degree in Management (IIM, Kolkatta), he has specialised in social and organisational change. He has published extensively on various aspects of development, the role of the voluntary sector, civil society and citizen participation.

Abstract

Over the past century the world has seen many social, economic and political transformations. It has transformed from a largely colonial era to a largely democratic one. Yet, while democratization of political culture guaranteed citizens' rights and freedom, it did not result in democratization of learning and knowledge production.

The change in education systems has been slow in the coming. Economic trends and civil society movements in the past decade have been facilitating changes in perceptions of what constitutes 'knowledge' and in redefining the mission and mandate of HEIs. With increasing demands on HEIs to scale up their teaching and research functions, HEIs are facing new challenges of contributing to human and social development. The meaning and agenda of human and social development has also changed over decades, and new civil society actors have been closely associated with this phenomenon.

This chapter looks at how the engagement of civil society organizations with the world of higher education has resulted in interesting trends in social policy formation and knowledge production. Illustrated through examples of effective engagement between higher education institutions and social and human development efforts of civil society – PRIA in Asia and The Afrikan Multiversity in Africa – the paper draws lessons from these interventions, highlighting future potentials for HEIs. Advocating the view that research and teaching functions of HEIs should serve the larger mission of human and social development, it looks at the gains to be obtained from such partnerships. Exploring alternative sources and modes of learning and knowledge production, the paper provides a vision of the possibilities that engagement with civil society can open up in terms of contribution of HEIs to social and human development in the coming decades.

I. Context

Higher education (HE) and higher educational institutions (HEIs) like universities around the world have been experiencing the forces of economic and social transformations. The forces of globalization are affecting the HEIs in many complex ways - in the supply of students, on the one hand, and in expectations generated from the graduates of HEIs, on the other. The growth in supply of HE and proliferation of HEIs, in both public and private domains, has raised questions about the quality of their teaching and research functions. HE is no longer viewed as public good and its contribution to labour market has been most commonly argued for. Yet, the humanity is facing ever increasing challenges for its own survival today. New priorities of human and social development are posing new challenges for policy makers and political leaders. The societal development issues have become so complex (like multiculturalism, sustainability, etc) that new knowledge is needed to address them, and HEIs are expected to generate such knowledge. Further, rising expectations from growing numbers of younger populations in many parts of the world put pressures on HEIs to include human and social development in their teaching and extension functions as well. It is in this changing and complex context that HE is challenged to rearticulate its future relevance to society. The introductory chapter of this volume very clearly outlines the contours of this challenge in a comprehensive manner. In responding to such challenges, HEIs need to explore new forms of civil engagements. This paper attempts to address this question in some depth. It argues for locating human and social development in a democratic framework, and suggests that civil society, in its myriad manifestations, could become an active partner of HEIs. The paper then identifies ways in which HE and HEIs could explore possibility of engagement with civil society in order to broaden and deepen their contributions to human and social development.

II. Democratic Shifts

Historically, HE was limited in its access and coverage in different regions of the world. In India, a few elite social and economic classes had the privilege to gain HE. This

historical 'Brahmanical'[1] order legitimated the notion of stratification in human development. It assumed, till as recently as the turn of the twentieth century, that certain higher class and caste groups would inherit the ruling responsibilities; hence, members of such elite groups should be adequately prepared for this function intellectually. HEIs were thus catering to the preparation of the ruling elites through their teaching function.

Over the last century, and more significantly into the twentyfirst century, the above assumptions about the teaching and research functions of HE have been systematically challenged. Democratic political systems began to gain currency in many countries of the world, specially after liberation from colonial regimes. Ruling elites based on aristocracy, landed property or 'Brahmanical' privilege were gradually replaced by 'mass' leaders elected on the basis of universal franchise. A new class of political leaders emerged, many of whom, in many developing countries, did not have access to even secondary education. The role of HEIs in intellectual preparation of such new political elites became somewhat uncertain.

Post-colonial governments opened up new possibilities of support to HEIs as well. Public funding of HE became a more common norm in many such countries. Gradually, private support (largely from rulers, kings and chieftains) declined and HEIs (specially universities) became publicly funded institutions. In countries where national public resources were scarce, and multiple development agendas were competing for them, allocation of public funds for HE remained small. In some countries (like India), earlier allocations of public funds towards HE were reasonably high even in relation to allocations of public funds for primary and secondary education. The changing nature of HE by mid twentieth century created new partnerships between states and HEIs. In many countries, HE was only available in publicly funded (governmental) universities and institutes. Political decision-makers (not necessarily with academic credentials) became the new king-makers of 'deans' and 'vice-chancellors'.

[1] Brahmins are the highest priestly caste in India; Brahmins alone could study Sanskrit language and scriptures; they were the intellectuals of society.

During this period, universalization of primary and secondary education as state policy in many countries increased the demand for greater access to HE from among the masses. Many more HEIs came into being as demands from both popular aspirations of masses and labour pool requirements of economy increased rapidly. With growing economy, and its changing nature from agriculture to industry and services, the labour factor requirement changed dramatically, with much higher component of training in HE being needed by the employment conditions in the market place. Liberal, democratic aspirations for education also fuelled further the demand for HE in many societies. As a result, HEIs developed new partnerships with the private sector, and by the end of twentieth century, privately-funded HEIs began to increase in number in many countries.

This trend towards privately funded HE further increased due to two associated phenomena. First, many national governments began to reduce their budgetary allocations towards the HEIs, as their public resources became subjected to more egalitarian allocations in the welfare state framework; somehow, HE began to be construed as a 'privately affordable' good by many policy makers. Second, forces of globalisation began to transnationalise economies and labour supplies. Migration of skilled labour, within and across countries, grew rapidly in the last decade. More service sector and knowledge-based economies generated, and continue to generate, enormous demands for more varied and open access to HE by a growing number of young populations. The demographic realities began to shift this demand for HE into younger populations of Africa and Asia, as European populations are stabilized.

The partnership between HEIs and state institutions had also included government funding and sponsorship for research. As new forms of collaboration with private sector increased, private funding of research also increased. This was particularly so in those disciplines where new processes, inventions and products could be commercially exploited through patenting. Thus, in many southern countries, declining public funding for HE also affected their research capabilities and outputs. Private funding did not come into social and human disciplines in the same volume and speed as it did into natural sciences, engineering, biotechnology, information technology and management.

Thus the quality of research in HEIs in such countries on issues of human and social development had declined substantially by the turn of the twentyfirst century.

As a consequence of growing democratic aspirations, the demand for "massification" in supply of HE has increased significantly. Old established, `ivy league' kinds of HEIs (and they exist in all societies) now face increasing competition from new privately funded, career-oriented institutions of HE. Both teaching and research on social and human development issues has thus begun to shrink in many developing countries.

Thus, today's reality of HEIs presents a somewhat blurred and confusing picture, when viewed from the lens of social and human development. HE is being largely viewed as a `private good' linked to the forces of economic development. HEIs have built systems and mechanisms to engage with governments and public authorities; they have also created linkages, interactions and partnerships with for-profit private sector in both teaching and research functions of HEIs. But, the interactions of HEIs with civil society have been somewhat undeveloped and inadequately conceptualized. Thus, civil engagement in HE may be particularly relevant from the lens of human and social development in the twentyfirst century.

III. Human Development

The quest for improving life has been an ongoing human enterprise. The Human and Social development discourse among policy-makers and political leaders gained currency after the second world war. The dominant agenda for human development during these decades has been focused on economic growth and associated improvements in the standard of living, as largely manifested by per capita GNP. The meaning of human and social development, however, has gradually evolved during the past 3-4 decades. The ILO initiated discourse on 'basic needs' in the late 1960s became one of the early benchmarks of 'good' human development; these needs were characterized as food, health, water, shelter and housing. The fulfillment of basic needs continues to be a pressing concern for nearly one billion people around the world even today, despite considerable and remarkable progress that has been made during these

decades. In a recent study about good society in 45 Commonwealth countries, citizens universally asked for fulfillment of basic needs (Knight, et al, 2003).

During the decades of 1980s and 1990s, human and social development issues became further refined and sharpened. Issues of gender justice gained widespread recognition in policy circles. Environmental issues gained visibility after Rio conference of the UN in 1992; yet, its climate change agenda is still to be adequately grasped by G8 leaders of the world. Rights of children, indigenous communities and socially excluded minorities were brought to the center-stage of policy making in the past couple of decades. `Development as a human right' perspective brought a new energy to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (agreed to in 1948). As democratic political processes gained wider acceptance in most societies, new forms of democratic aspirations—equality, justice, participation—have begun to gain ascendancy in many societies. The recent discourse on democratic governance, and its emphasis on transparency and accountability in the public sphere, has opened up another important dimension to human and social development in the twentyfirst century. Citizenship and democratic governance are the twin pillars of human and social development; they address the phenomenon of human actualization from the demand side—participatory citizenship; it also focuses on democratic governance from the demand side of development (Tandon & Mohanty, 2002).

Thus, key agenda in human and social development facing humanity over the coming century are the following:

a. <u>Inclusive Globalisation</u>

It has been widely acknowledged that forces of globalisation have benefited some and victimized others. Growing inequalities within and across societies have generated resistances and protests against globalisation. New and more inclusive ways of harvesting globalisation have to be evolved for human and social development.

b. Sustainability and Climate Change

Widespread exploitation of natural resources has resulted in ecological changes which may be unsustainable, irreversible and damaging to human life. New approaches, technologies and life styles need to be evolved to address these.

c. Peace and Global Citizenship

The world today is insecure, and various forms of terrorism are affecting life, livelihood and development. Forces of violence are global, and require new solutions for peace and global citizenship, based on mutual respect and shared responsibility.

d. Human Rights and Social Inclusion

Despite increases in various compacts of human rights, rights of women, minorities, children and indigenous people, large scale violation of basic human rights continues around the world. Unless vast sections of population, hitherto excluded, get their entitlements, they would remain disaffected from the mainstream of human and social development.

e. Democratising Governance

Despite rise in democracy as a political form in many countries of the world, systems of governance at local, national, regional and global levels face enormous democratic deficits. New processes, forms and institutions need to be evolved to address these deficits urgently.

IV. Roles of Civil Society

It may, therefore, be pertinent to ask the question where has HE been in these discourses on human and social development during the past 5-6 decades? What roles have been played by HEIs in the developing fields of human and social developments?

A critical review of the processes shaping above human development agendas would suggest that HEIs have been mostly followers of this discourse, rather than its creators or champions. Ofcourse, many individual scholars have contributed immensely to the shaping of these issues; their contributions have to be acknowledged. But, in national and transnational debates on these issues, the new player has been **civil society**.

Citizens groups, associations, NGOs, not-for-profit research institutes and independent think tanks (as actors of civil society) have been most active in identifying, analyzing and articulating these issues of equity, justice, inclusion and rights. Through studies, campaigns, grassroots mobilizations and structured policy dialogues, such civil society actors and their national/global coalitions have been the most significant and central actors in ensuring that these issues of human development have become part of the national and global policy-making (Edwards & Gaventa, 2001).

Some HEIs have responded to these opportunities by opening new centers of studies on gender, environment, etc. Some HEIs have started teaching these topics in undergraduate and graduate level courses. Some have begun to systematically undertake research in these emerging issues of human development. But, by and large, viewed from around the world, HEIs have not been able to adequately engage with these central concerns of human and social development of today. The critical question, therefore, is why is it so? Why have HEIs not been at the forefront of new priorities and concerns in human and social development of tomorrow?

Historical analysis and available experience suggests several reasons for this disconnect between HEIs and contemporary issues of human and social development. First, these issues (like gender justice and environmental sustainability) emerged from concrete social mobilizations and actions to improve the conditions of the exploited and the marginalized. As this social activism progressed, hitherto hidden and suppressed human realities began to surface. Growing presence of independent media in many countries gave wider publicity to these issues, thereby bringing them to the attention of policy makers and ruling elites. For examples, the realities of domestic violence against women could only be expressed in a modality that challenged the accepted tenets of knowledge. Likewise, the practices of local elders in water harvesting and forest protection could only be communicated with reference to indigenous knowledge framework. Thus, popular knowledge, indigenous knowledge, generated through practice of generations in lived realities became the basis for articulation of these new issues. As the movement of Participatory Research then described it, this knowledge faced negation and rejection from the dominant modes of knowledge production that

most HEIs valued. The **epistemological conflict** underlying these different traditions of knowledge production, dissemination and utilization became one of the main reasons for this disconnect between HEIs and such issues of human development (Tandon, 2002).

Second, championing of these issues by civil society in most parts of the world created conditions for distancing from HEIs. Historical antagonism and apathy between grassroots animators, citizen leaders and social activists, on the one hand, and HEIs, on the other, led to a situation of such a disconnect. As Brown (2001) has argued, such a disconnect between the world of research and the world of practice has many different roots in different regions of the world.

> "Practitioners and researchers at first blush march to very different drums. Stereotypical practitioners are action-oriented, focused on immediate and concrete problems, and concerned with having direct impacts on those problems. Stereotypical researchers are theory-oriented, focused on long-term conceptual issues, and concerned with producing knowledge and conceptual results. Practitioners are embedded in institutional contexts that press them to solve practical problems; researchers work in institutional contexts that reward contributions to theory or knowledge. These differences set the stage for misunderstanding and poor communications at the practice-research boundary, even when the participants share many concerns and values".

How can various roles of HEIs be performed through new forms of civil engagements in pursuit of the emergent agenda of human and social development?

Before addressing this question, it may be worthwhile to describe what civil society means in the contemporary context. Civic associations, community based groups and local socio-cultural formations have existed in all societies throughout human history. Many of these were based on culture of mutual help and collective responsibility. All religious and spiritual traditions further called upon their followers to make philanthropic contributions for the well-being of fellow citizens and society at large. With the emergences of welfare states and rise in private sector during the past century, this civic phenomenon became gradually invisible.

The reappearance of civic associations in developing countries began to be noticed in 1970s as development issues and models began to be articulated by Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs). In developed countries, failures of government and excesses of private sector gave rise to such activities as social economy and housing, on the one hand, and consumers and environment associations, on the other. By late 1980s, after the fall of Berlin Wall, `civil society' emerged as a new actor in discourses and policy circles, both in the developing countries of the south and in the developed economies of the north.

While numerous definitions and arguments about civil society have emerged in the past two decades, it is useful to reemphasise the concept of **trinity** in understanding institutional arrangements in society — the state, the market and the civil society (Tandon, 2002). Most societal functions and activities could be classified to be predominantly emanating from, and largely based in, the sector of the state (from local governments to national) or institutions of the market (economic functions of production and consumption organised in many ways) or civil society (arts, culture, sports, leisure, religion, welfare, civic action, etc.). All individual and collective initiatives for common public good can be part of civil society. Thus welfare, service, care and mutual help activities are included in the sector. Early conceptualizations included academia and media as part of civil society too (D' Olivera & Tandon, 1994). This conceptualization recognizes that education, including higher education, is a public good.

Today, millions of civil associations are active in all societies, addressing the entire range of issues related to human and social development. They provide welfare and charity; they supply services; they undertake independent research; they build coalitions to raise issues and demands to advocate; they partner with governments and private sector to evolve specific solutions. They operate at very local village/neighbourhood level and at the transnational/global levels too. Salamon (1994) calls it the `global associational resolution' and analyses their economic contributions around the world. This phenomenon of civil actions and civil associations is new reality of human and social development in the twentyfirst century.

V. Roles of HE

It is generally acknowledged that HE performs three sets of roles: teaching, research and extension. In the context of human and social development, the most frequently referred to role has been that of extension. HEIs extend their knowledge and expertise to communities around them, with the objective of helping these communities. While some form of community extension (or extra mural) activities are prevalent in most HEIs around the world, its practice is most evolved in North American HEIs. Called Community Service-Learning programs, these place students in a community (or company) to work there for a fixed period. Many students opt for such programmes and find them useful in advancing their education and careers.

While describing the popularity of these programs in North American universities for the past two decades, Boothroyd & Fryer (2004) have presented a somewhat mixed picture:

> "These efforts did little to link regular curricula and research programs with social issues. Few could conceive of education for a university degree as including learning from and with people without degrees, or of advanced research as including average citizens and officials in formulating research questions, let alone in the devising of methods and the analysis of results. Much of the professorial activism at that time was in the form of their lending to political movements their superior knowledge and intellectual credence — a kind of intellectual noblesse oblige."
>
> Despite their growing popularity, community service has remained the third leg of HE, largely at the margins of the two core functions of teaching and research.

Service Learning in Ancient Times

Learning from the community, and in turn contributing to it, has been practiced elsewhere too. Interestingly enough, this theme of service to the community was the mission of some of the oldest universities in human civilization. Taxila, the oldest known university, in the then western region of India (now Pakistan) functioned during 7th century BC and 8th century AD. Taxila means the "Rock of Reflection". At its peak, it had 1800 scholars and nearly 8000 students in residence. The leitmotif of this university was "service to humanity". Scholars and students came from Arabia, Persia and Mediterranean societies. It produced pioneering scholarship in such fields as Grammar (Panini was the scholar credited with it), Economics (Kautilya was its originator) and Charaka was its first and most famous Physician.

A later contemporary of Taxila was Nalanda University that functioned during 5th century BC and 11th century AD in the eastern sub-Himalayan region of India. Nalanda means "lotus of learning". At its zenith, it had 2000 professors and 10,000 students. The professors and students came from such distant places as China, Mangolia, Siam, Sumatra, Japan etc. Students to Nalanda University had to be sponsored by a community, with the promise of returning there to serve. It made great innovations in the fields of Mathematics (the concept of zero was invented here), Astronomy and Metallurgy. Its most famous teacher was Budha himself.

Despite limited popularity of service learning programmes in HEIs of developing countries, some examples of large-scale engagements between HEIs and civil society actors have begun to emerge in these regions of the world. The following two examples from developing regions of Asia and Africa illustrate how civil engagement can contribute to linking teaching and research functions of HE to advancement of human and social development agendas.

1. Revitalizing Social Work Education in India

Between April 1995 and 1999, PRIA (Society for Participatory Research in Asia) in collaboration with ASSWI (Association of Schools of Social Work in India) was involved in a unique development intervention with social work educators of India. The initiative with social work educators was significant as they prepare social work professionals, who comprise the potential human resource base for NGOs, Government and Corporate sectors. More than seventy Schools of Social Work were part of this process, creating a sizable impact at the national level. By working in close collaboration with the regional associations of social work educators, the intervention aimed to widen its outreach, thus making the impact more sustainable.

The intervention included a series of Interprofessional dialogues, at national and regional levels. The dialogues provided opportunities for social work educators, renowned academicians and experienced practitioners of participatory

development (PD) and participatory research (PR) to come on a common platform. The focus of the dialogues was to study the status of social work education, assess the implications of Participatory Development and Participatory Research in social work education and practice and to make efforts to incorporate the same in the social work curriculum. The design of the dialogues were interdisciplinary, with practitioners and educators sharing and learning from each others experience.

As part of this initiative a research fund on participation had been initiated by PRIA inorder to catalyze involvement of faculty and students of Schools of Social work and other institutes to undertake field based research on community participation issues.

Building on the lessons of the five year collaboration, PRIA and ASSWI initiated a new phase of the joint collaborative intervention in 2000 for strengthening research and teaching on participation, democratic governance and citizenship. This intervention was initiated to bridge the gap between the growing need for greater and more concentrated efforts on strengthening social change initiatives and the insufficient supply of trained professionals to contribute to them.

To effectively plan and implement this intervention, a strategy to strengthen five social work education institutions as Regional Nodal Centres (RNCs) was undertaken by PRIA and ASSWI. The RNCs were envisioned to become Centres of excellence in the field of participation, democratic governance and citizenship, offering specialized courses on civil society and citizens participation at the bachelors, masters, M.Phil., and Ph.D level. For promoting studies on themes of participation, citizenship and governance, libraries of these shortlisted institutions were provided many field based documents and other knowledge resources.

PRIA's ongoing efforts to influence social science research and teaching were streamlined in the form of a programme "Strengthening linkages with Academia". The interventions now included many different disciplines of social science. The programme aimed at influencing the nature of academic pursuit in Indian universities, particularly in social sciences, to make them (i) open to knowledge coming from the field, (ii) willing to adopt new methodologies to pursue research, (iii) engage in research on contemporary issues which have the potential to influence policy as well as development practice, and (iv) impart new insights to students through teaching.

What are the larger implications of this experiment in India? Viewed from a global perspective, it appears that professional education of many practitioner-oriented disciplines (like Social Work) can be made more relevant and practical through creative partnership with civil society organisations. Teaching of professionals may become organically linked to the realities in which they would function through such forms of civil engagement. In addition, such a partnership can enhance the contribution of HEIs in

production of socially useful and practical knowledge. A partnership of this variety can, therefore, result in mutual benefit – a win – win – for both the HEI and its civil society partner organisations.

2. Multiversity for Indigenous Knowledge in Uganda

This second example is located in East African context, and describes an innovative, research and teaching initiative in contemporary scenario.

The concept of Mpambo Multiversity is an outgrowth of debates and deliberations among hundreds of African scholars, social leaders and activists dedicated to the cause of building a better Africa.

Multiversity is an antithesis to the concept of University. 'Uni' means one and versity comes from 'versal', meaning all. In other words, the concept of university promotes the idea of the prevalence of one form of knowledge everywhere. This universal knowledge (primarily western knowledge) is believed to be closer to the truth than any other form of knowledge. Challenging this understanding of knowledge, the concept of Multiversity asserted the existence of "a multiplicity of knowledges concomitant with communities, their ecology, history, language and culture" (Wangoola, 2007). It emphasized a paradigm where knowledge systems were seen as horizontally, and not vertically, placed. All knowledge systems, whether indigenous Afrikan, Chinese, Indian or Western, had equal relevance, space and identity in the global knowledge pool. None was superior nor inferior.

> *"Multiversity" is a space to affirm, promote, advocate and advance the multiplicity of thought and knowledge as a necessity to vitalize the world's knowledge, as well as human knowledge as a whole. It is a concrete valorization, celebration, application and popularization of pluralism at the intellectual level, and at the level of thought and knowledge" (*www.blackherbals.com*).*

In the context of Africa, this meant a focus on the development of African indigenous knowledge which had been subverted through years of colonial rule.

In this endeavor, Mpambo adopts an integrated approach promoting the development of indigenous scholars, knowledge and teaching. It does so through (i) promotion of mother tongue scholars (ii) teaching of mother tongue higher education to help the younger generation develop a sense of respect and learn from indigenous knowledge and, (iii) collection and documentation of indigenous knowledge giving it a high level of quality and sophistication.

By providing a space for people to explore the dimensions of their own knowledge – their community knowledge – the Mpambo Multiversity facilitates their empowerment. It is through this empowerment that a shift in knowledge paradigm is motivated as people learn to use their own knowledge to chart their

future – innovate on traditional knowledge to adapt to and counter the changes around them, spearheading innovations for development.

By promoting the development of indigenous knowledge, the Mpambo Multiversity sought to bring about cognitive democracy in Africa. And through this, it helps to generate self-belief among its students and scholars and to motivate the creation of indigenous social and human development paradigms that would help bring the African people out of their prevalent derelict socio-economic conditions.

What lessons of global relevance can be drawn from Mpambo? The contestations between indigenous knowledge systems and the more modern "scientific" enterprises are now becoming universal. Global ecological movement has reaffirmed the "scientific" values of herbal medicines and traditional water conservation techniques. Under the Intellectual Property Rights regimes of World Trade Organisation (WTO), commercial patenting of such indigenous knowledge is moving ahead at rapid pace. Gallopin & Vessuri (2006) have analysed this phenomenon of multiple knowledge systems in the context of sustainable development in some detail. Ironically, some HEIs are now using their research expertise to facilitate such `privatisation' of knowledge they once criticized for being "unscientific". In a world of global trade and economics, private control over indigenous knowledge, through scientific enterprise, raises the importance of restoring and reviving scholarship of indigenous knowledge. It further illustrates the possibilities of linking the research function of HE to such local practices, networks and associations within the society. This form of civil engagement can then broaden the contributions of HE to human and social development on such aspects as multiculturalism, sustainability and inclusion.

What lessons from a global perspective can be drawn from the above experiments in linking HE to social and human development agenda? Given the largely positive outcomes of promoting civil engagement with HEIs in the illustrations above, it is pertinent to ask the question: why such civil engagements by HEIs are not so common around the world? Why the spread of innovation has not been more widespread, given the challenges facing human and social development today? In examining these questions and possibilities, including the experiments in Community Service-Learning, several issues become critical. **First** relates to the meanings and visions of knowledge,

its production and dissemination. Collaborations between HEIs and civil society flourishes where respect for different forms of knowledge and varied epistemological frameworks is manifest. Strong acknowledgement of indigenous knowledge systems and their contemporary relevance helps to build bridges across traditional divides as well. Boothroyd & Fryer (2004) describe the reasons for the relative success of some specific experiments like The Learning Exchange:

> "The Learning Exchange is built on the premise that many different kinds of knowledge have value and legitimacy and they all need to be incorporated into attempts to resolve social problems or implement effective development strategies. The Learning Exchange tries not to privilege academic knowledge or scientific knowledge over knowledge developed through experience or wisdom gained through the navigation of difficult life situations. This professorial is at odds with the views of many, perhaps most, in the academy".

In general, HEIs and their academic culture makes it difficult for co-construction of knowledge with other civil actors for addressing emerging challenges for human and social development. Where such co-construction has been stimulated, positive outcomes for human and social development have been accomplished.

Second relates to the relative power and resource differentials between HEIs and civil actors. Various efforts by HEIs towards genuine civil engagement falter due to the enormous power and resources that HEIs can bring to a partnership, in comparison to what civil actors may muster. Such power differentials contribute to the previously mentioned difficulties experienced in co-construction of knowledge for human and social development. In this respect, many HEIs have to evolve innovative methods and structures which transcend these power differentials. A very interesting and recent example in this regard is the decision by University of Victoria in Canada to make Community-based Participatory Research (CBPR) one of its core competencies. The University has set up an office of CBPR to act as a focal point for promoting such civil engagement in the Canadian, as well as international, arena. It has brought community leaders and academics to sit together in decision-making structures to overcome such power differentials.

Third issue relates to differential approaches in application of research to address concrete local human and social development problems. A common issue faced in civil engagements by HEIs is the manner in which research questions are framed. Some HEIs have been successful in contributing to actual solutions to real problems that communities face by devising a joint problem framing and analysis process where experts from university and local residents sit together to design the research process. The Science Shop movement in continental Europe (the Living Knowledge Network) reflects some of these practices; this is specially remarkable as many experts in these Science Shops are natural scientists, whose general predisposition is to 'avoid any contamination' from the real world in conducting their research. Physicists, chemists, metallurgists, biologists, etc. have created outlets in the community to jointly identify, with the community, practical problems faced in those localities; these outlets then help to bring research expertise from the HEIs and collaborate with the civil actors in the community to carry out research in these practical problems.

Thus, HEIs can promote and encourage co-construction of knowledge and joint teaching of students through various approaches to civil engagement. Many of the examples mentioned above suggest a variety of ways in which practical arrangements for civil engagement have been made by some HEIs. In the final analysis, the overarching purpose of such civil engagement is to deepen the contributions of HEIs to human and social development through the research and teaching functions of HE.

VI. New Forms of Civil Engagement

What can be potential new forms of civil engagement that HEIs can pursue in order to deepen and widen their contributions to the future agenda of human and social development? This question can be concretely answered in a specific historical and political context only; however, analysis of previous sections suggests some broader contours of civil engagement possibilities. The future agenda for human and social development, as enumerated earlier, is so vast and challenging that no societal actor — be it governments, private sector, HEIs or civil society — can address them alone. The

potential for advancing this human and social development agenda increases if new ways of collaborating are evolved between these actors.

The traditional definition of three functions of HEI was teaching, research and extension. There is a need to redefine them as *education, knowledge* and *service*. Teaching establishes the centrality of teaching and teacher; education argues for the centrality of learning and learner. Viewed in this perspective, **education** in the contemporary society is argued to be lifelong. HEIs need to redesign themselves to support the lifelong education of a growing number of people in most societies. In this mode, HEIs can make contributions to the learning of citizens, practitioners, officials and future researchers in many different ways. Distance and open learning approaches can complement classroom instructions; HEIs can reach where learners are, not the other way round. The contents for lifelong learning, however, can not be based on disciplines alone; practical needs and aspirations of learners need to be responded to. This opens up a huge possibility for civil engagement. HEIs can partner with civil actors, community elders and practitioners to design appropriate learning curricula and to facilitate such educational processes.

Another form of partnership in teaching function is where HEIs could invite civil society inside the institution. This invitation could include experienced practitioners acting as professors and teachers. In doing so, practical expertise and emerging developmental trends may also be available to students and faculty alike. University of Victoria, Faculty of Education, for example, regularly invites elders from first nation communities to be such professors on courses on marine ecology. In the examples presented earlier as well, such arrangements with local practitioners and indigenous experts were effectively marshalled. Co-teaching with practitioners can help to systematize the practical insights of human and social development as new theories emerge which may have much wider application in other societal settings. Such arrangements could also help energise and inspire students to explore their own professional contributions to human and social development.

HEIs have enormous intellectual and infrastructural resources to support the increasing educational demands and aspirations. Civil engagements by HEIs would enable them to respond to such demands and aspirations in a more relevant, ongoing and effective manner.

Thus, different forms of civil engagement around the teaching function of HEIs can contribute to human and social development.

The second main function of HEIs is research. If this function is focused on **knowledge**, then several new possibilities of knowledge production, knowledge mobilisation and knowledge dissemination can be explored.

The knowledge production and mobilisation function of HEIs can make immense contributions to future agenda of creating incentives and enabling systems for the students and professors to engage in socially relevant research. Civil engagement by HEIs in the promotion of knowledge production and mobilisation can take several forms. HEIs can begin to acknowledge the multiplicity of traditions in knowledge, and create spaces and opportunities for practitioners (from government, community and civil society) to engage with scholars in HEIs in **co-production of knowledge**. Research problems and questions can be framed by scholars in HEIs together in consultation with the community. This may help identify a research agenda which has larger societal relevance from the perspective of human and social development. The Living knowledge Network (www.livingknowledge.org) in Europe, through its Science Shop movement, has attempted to accomplish just this; it has enabled scholars from HEIs to embed themselves in community problematiques.

Another form of civil engagement in knowledge production and mobilisation function of HEIs has been joint research projects with civil society actors. Scholars from HEIs and civil actors (trade unions, cooperatives, community based organisations, NGOs, issue-based social organisations) apply for joint research funding. In so doing, HEIs identify mutual responsibilities in advance; sharing of tasks and resources is mutually negotiated at the start of the research project with the partner civil actors. Such an

approach to designing research projects also helps to clarify, in advance, the manner in which findings of research will be disseminated to multiple constituencies, and utilized to advance the shared agendas of scholars and civil actors. In this regard, Canadian Social Science and Humanities Research Council has a very innovative programme to fund joint research projects, in operation for more than a decade. CURA (Community University Research Alliance) funds are only available for those research projects where a HEI and a civil actor are jointly applying for it. Such research funding mechanisms can incentivise civil engagement by HEIs in a planned, long-term and durable perspective.

Partnership between HEIs and some social movements and campaigns by civil actors can also be built around an ongoing requirement of knowledge production and mobilisation. For example, Global Campaign Against Poverty (GCAP) is presently in operation in several countries around the world. It focuses on the challenges of achieving UN's Millennium Development Goals in all countries of the world by 2015. The Campaign, therefore, seeks to generate concrete, empirical analysis of the status of achievement of each MDG in each developing country, and an understanding of causes and constraints impeding the progress. In some countries, select academics have begun to engage with such knowledge requirements of GCAP. It is worthwhile to explore how HEIs can partner institutionally in advancing the campaign agenda of GCAP globally.

This form of partnership with specific civil coalitions of campaigns or movements can be built over a medium to long-term. Each coalition has a clear knowledge agenda to which HEIs can make enormous contributions. The intellectual resources of HEIs can thus be mobilised in a systematic manner towards co-construction of knowledge for specific agendas of human and social development.

The third function of HEIs — **community service** — has already seen many innovative forms of civil engagement around the world. How can the human and social development agenda be advanced though new forms of civil engagement by HEIs? Traditional community service or extension modes of HEIs have been practiced through

the temporary placements of students into a local community. As has been argued elsewhere, such placements contribute more to the learning of students than to the service to community. In the new forms of civil engagement towards human and social development, HEIs can explore placements of students and scholars into some national and global communities. Scholars and students of HEI are typically seconded or interned in various government institutions and private companies. But such placements or secondments — from a community service perspective — is rarely made towards civil actors .

One particularly exciting possibility to explore for such secondment through civil engagement with new alternatives. Many experiments towards sustainable alternatives — products, services, institutions and lifestyles — are being carried out throughout the world. "Another World is Possible" is the slogan of World Social Forum engaged in the mobilisation of such alternative visions and models over the past seven years. National, regional and global fora convened under the banner of World Social Forum, are now incubators of such alternatives, HEIs could develop partnerships with such fora, with a view to second their scholars and students to learn from, and contribute to, the emergence of sustainable alternatives.

Thus, HEIs can systematically explore new ways and forms of civil engagement in each of their core functions of teaching, research and extension. In so doing, their primary goal is to enhance their contributions to the future agenda of human and social development, as elaborated earlier. As Peter Taylor argues in his introduction to this volume, HEIs have an enormous responsibility, and huge potential, for understanding this world. This social responsibility of HEIs can be more fruitfully realized through meaningful and innovative forms of civil engagements.

VII. Future Challenges

In light of the foregoing discussion, the HEIs need to critically examine their own mission in relation to contributions to human and social development of communities around their habitation, and around the world. As demand for human actualization

increases into this century, and as a larger proportion of population enters HEIs, there will be greater societal expectation of such contributions. The research and teaching functions of HEIs would have to serve this larger mission of ever evolving human and social development. This then sets up a series of strategic and practical challenges for HEIs to address, in their own unique and specific manner.

1. The foremost strategic challenge for HEIs to address is acknowledgement of other sources of contemporary and advanced knowledge on human and social development. HEIs have operated in isolation within the four walls of laboratories and academe without understanding how new forms of knowledge for human and social development was evolving. Such new knowledge emerged from the world of practice. This is particularly so for social movements, civil society coalitions and other think tanks which have been focusing on various aspects of human and social development. Such an acknowledgement by HEIs would then be accompanied with an acceptance of alternative sources of knowledge and modes of knowledge production. Exploration of such alternative epistemologies in fact deepens contemporary challenges facing human and social development. In this acknowledgement lies the possibility of exploring new partnerships by HEIs with such social movements and civil society coalitions.
2. In order for such opportunities for partnerships are made effective, many aspects of the current systems and approaches in HEIs may have to be altered. There has been considerable debate in many academic circles about the non-acceptance of action-oriented Participatory Research as a valid methodology of knowledge production. Refereed journals and respectable academic publications do not readily provide space for publication of such research materials. It has not gained the 'scholarly respectability' in most HEIs. The bold attempt by University of Victoria to open an Office of Community-based Participatory Research as an integral part of university's commitment is a rare exception. However, the system of scholarly recognition through publication and participation in Conferences needs to be reformed to encourage contributions to knowledge arising out of civil engagements.

3. Other incentive systems within HEIs may also need to be adapted and modified for such partnerships to become effective. Teaching function in HEIs may compulsorily include field practice, secondment and immersion programs. These may be linked to local civic initiatives or movements in a manner that students and their teachers learn about the issues of social and human development as they also contribute towards solving those problems. Academic rewards and research/teaching grants may need to be so linked as to stimulate such partnerships.
4. Finally, the HEIs may need to reexamine the values associated with the social positioning of their institutions. What are the larger values that HEIs serve in society? Beyond the preparation of intellectuals and knowledge contribution, what is their value-addition to deepening democracy in societies? How can they become incubators of more empowered citizenship? What values HEIs promote in the manner they conduct the teaching and knowledge functions? How these values become the reference point for new aspirations in human and social development? How can HEIs be the champions of larger agenda of human and social development in the twentyfirst century?

These and many other questions need to be posed in this discourse. Yet, the possibilities as well as requirements for civil engagement by HEIs are huge and growing. Future agendas of human and social development may become more adequately elaborated if civil engagement by HEIs is globally encouraged.

HE in this perspective has to be viewed as a public good. Its provisions and institutions have to be supported in the public spheres. Its leadership has to articulate the future vision of HE in the context of demands for deepening democracy and preparation of global citizenship in the contemporary world. In so doing, HEIs can reassert their contributions to emerging agendas of human and social development through coeative forms of civil engagement at local and global levels.

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