

Higher Education & Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Making the Commitment

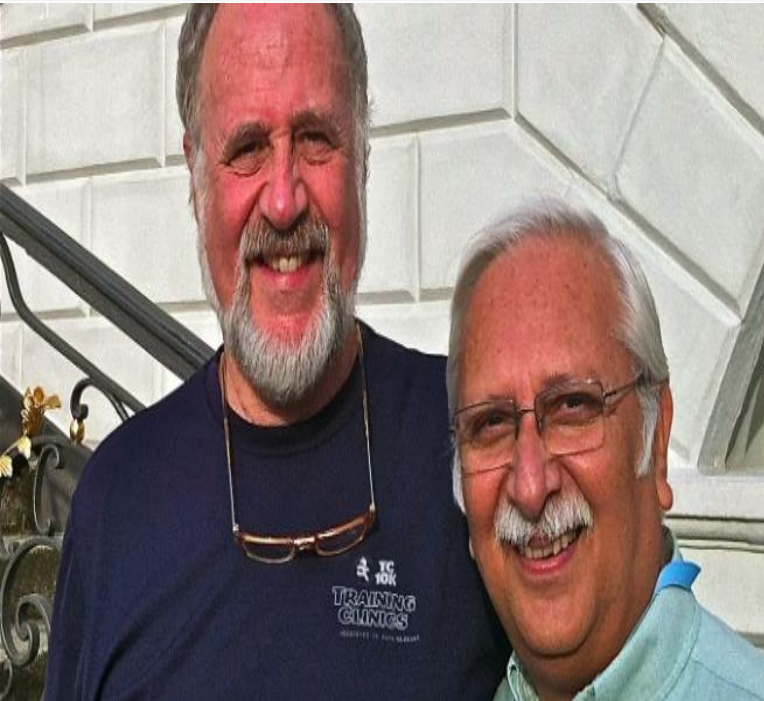
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About UNESCO Chair



**UNESCO Co-Chairs
Prof Budd Hall and
Dr Rajesh Tandon**

- Unique Chair based in a Northern University and Southern Civil Society Organization
- Supports North-South-South and South-South partnerships, enhancing 'knowledge democracy'
- Strengthens engagement between communities, civil society & academia
- Promotes discourse on Social Responsibility in Higher Education
- Renewed for second term till 2020



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Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

- Adopted by UN in 2015; SDG targets to be achieved by 2030
- Deals with social, economic & ecological development
- Seventeen goals; universally applicable to all countries
- Specific targets on poverty, hunger, education, water & sanitation, urban infrastructure, climate action etc.



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Capacity deficits

- Ensuring sustained support from political leadership
- Inadequate resources
- Limited institutional & human capacities
- Knowledge deficit



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Role of Higher Education

- Recent debates have focused attention on social responsibility of HEIs (GUNi, 2017: http://unescochair-cbrsr.org/pdf/resource/GUNI_6th_report.pdf; GUNi, 2009)
- As public institutions contributing to public good, the purpose of HEIs is being redefined (GUNi, 2014)
- With abundant resources (physical, human, digital), at their disposal; opportunities are endless (GUNi, 2008)
- Need to respond to global societal challenges & act towards achieving SDGs (GUNi, 2011; Tandon et. al., 2016a)



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Socially responsible HEI: Expectations

- Adopting the mantle of a 'civic university' (Hall, et. al., 2015: http://unescochair-cbrsr.org/pdf/resource/Hall_Budd_StrengtheningCommUniversityPartnerships_2017rev.pdf)
- Ensuring that SDGs are included in local research agendas
- Imparting knowledge, skills & competencies needed to make SDGs a reality (Tandon et. al., 2016b: http://unescochair-cbrsr.org/pdf/resource/Knowledge%20&%20Engagement_26-09-16_pdf%20ver-mail.pdf)
- Building capacities for SDGs policies/planning/management
- Mainstreaming SDGs across curricula through transversal reviews/refinement



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Higher Education's contribution towards SDGs

- Perspective on social responsibility needs to be integrated in all 3 missions of HE, and redefine them into (Tandon, 2017):
 - Catalyzing learning (instead of teaching)
 - Knowledge generation & mobilization (instead of research)
 - Service as mutual empowerment (instead of a mere charity function)
- Implies that instead of doing different things; HEIs should '*do their core work differently*'



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Re-orienting Higher Education's Missions

Teaching & learning

- Revising existing curriculum
- Introduction of new courses
- Engaged, innovative pedagogical tools

Research & knowledge

- Framing locally usable research
- Building knowledge in partnership
- Learning new competencies

Service

- Promoting 'engaged service'
- Service-learning; field-placements etc.
- Short-term projects



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Ways forward

- University leaderships to encourage mainstreaming of SDGs in all aspects of its functioning
- National/provincial ministries for higher education to push linking of SDGs with HE missions
- University/teacher associations; student associations; international networks to press demands for SDGs engagement
- UNESCO can play a critical role in pushing this agenda
- Civil society to engage with HEIs in the pursuit of SDGs engagement with Higher Education (Tandon, 2007)



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