



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



- UNESCO Chair in Community Based
- Research and Social Responsibility
- in Higher Education



India Launch of the UNESCO Chair in Community-Based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education

New Delhi December 10-11, 2012 and Ahmedabad December 12-14, 2012

Introduction

The work of the UNESCO Chair needs to be in the heat and the dust of where India is being reinvented **Meenakshi Gopinath**

The progress in science and technology has brought considerable benefits for many, but the associated rapid growth, increasing technology and consumerism has also left a legacy of poverty, social exclusion, cultural corrosion, illiteracy and environmental deterioration. We believe that the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) can no longer continue to stand aloof and disconnected from this scenario.. **Rajesh Tandon and Budd Hall**

A little knowledge that acts is worth more than much knowledge that is idle **Khalil Gibran**

On May 25th, 2012 an agreement was signed between the Director-General of UNESCO, the President of the University of Victoria and the Chair of the Governing Board of the Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) to create a jointly held Chair in Community-Based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education. Dr. Rajesh Tandon was appointed as the Co-Chair based at PRIA with Dr. Budd Hall as the Co-Chair from the University of Victoria. Two launches were planned to introduce the work of the Chair to national and international communities, the first to take place in New Delhi, India December 10-14, 2012 and the second to take place in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada on March 4th and 5th, 2013.

The India launch consisted of several related activities: A formal launch on the morning of the 10th of December which included a signing of an MOU between PRIA and UVic, a Symposium on the afternoon of the 10th of December followed by a trip to Ahmedabad, Gujarat which included a visit to the Gandhi Ashram and a Symposium on Community-Based Research and Social Responsibility hosted by the Gujarat Vidyapith, a university founded by Gandhi ji and organized by UNNATI, an important civil society organisation working throughout the State of Gujarat. In addition there were several meetings between PRIA and UVic representatives, between the two co-chairs, and between the UNESCO Co-Chairs and the Vice-Chancellor of the Gujarat Vidyapith and with the Director of UNNATI.

Special Thanks

We are deeply appreciative of the many people who helped to make the India launch possible. We thank the Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute for financial support of the travel

arrangements for Dr. Budd Hall. In particular we thank Professor Najeeb Jung, Vice-Chancellor and Prof. Zubair Meenai of Jamia Millia Islamia for hosting the December 10th launch, President David Turpin of the University of Victoria for travelling from Victoria for the occasion, the staff of PRIA who carried out the many detailed practical and protocol arrangements in New Delhi, Mr. Binoy Acharya and the staff of UNNATI for arrangements in Ahmedabad and Dr. Sudershan Iyengar, Vice-Chancellor of Gujarat Vidyapith for hosting the December 14th Symposium.

Formal Launch Programme

Both the formal launch and the symposium took place in Rabindranath Tagore Hall on the campus of Jamia Millia Islamia. There were about 50 participants made up of invited guests from community groups, academics and students.

Inaugural Session

10.30 am – 12.30 pm

Welcome

Prof. Zubair Meenai
Head, Dept. Of Social Work,
Jamia Millia Islamia

Introducing UNESCO Chair

Dr. Budd Hall
Professor, School of Public Administration
University of Victoria

Dr. Rajesh Tandon
President,
Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA)

Special Address

Prof Najeeb Jung
Vice Chancellor,
Jamia Millia Islamia

Special Address

Dr. Alisher Umarov
Chief and Program Specialist for Education
UNESCO New Delhi cluster office for Bangladesh,
Bhutan, India, Maldives & Sri Lanka

Special Address

His Excellency Mr. Stewart Beck
Canadian High Commissioner to India

Special Address

Ms. Sheela Patel
Chairperson, PRIA

Special Address

Dr. Dave Turpin
President, University of Victoria, Canada

Address by Chief Guest

Dr. Narendra Jadhav
Member, Planning Commission
Government of India

Vote of Thanks

Ms. Martha Farrell,
Director, International Institute
For Lifelong Learning, PRIA

Summary of remarks

Following the welcome by Prof. Meenai, Prof. Budd Hall, spoke of the 35 years of collaboration between Dr. Tandon and himself in the development of participatory research. He noted that the focus of the Chair is on contributing to CBR and Social Responsibility capacity in the Global South through a focus on advocacy and policy development, capacity-building for the next generation of community-based researchers and assessing the effectiveness of institutional arrangements for facilitating community-university engagement and research¹.

Dr. Tandon acknowledged many with whom he had worked and learned from over the years. He drew attention to the convergence of thinking between the goals of the UNESCO Chair and 12th Five Year Plan of the Government of India. He noted that the 12th Five Year Plan that will be approved December 27th, 2012 would make recommendations that all public Universities in India make a commitment to community-university engagement. Four principles for this work were outlined. First, a mutuality of interest exists between communities and universities to work together in new ways. Second, engagement is understood as holistic cutting across research, teaching and outreach. Third, engagement should be seen to cross all academic disciplinary boundaries. Fourth, engagement should be mainstreamed as a core element in the life of universities.

Prof. Najeeb Jung noted that Jamia Millia Islamia has a deep history of community engagement. Founded in 1920 by two streams of Muslim intellectuals at the instigation of Mahatma Gandhi, Jamia is a product of a ‘fiercely secular and fiercely nationalistic’ Islamic community that continues its engagement traditions in scores of project from

¹ Full text of Budd’s remarks in appendix

literacy to rural development to urban planning. JMI welcomes the new Chair and pledges full support to the goals thereof.

Dr. Umarov, UNESCO Representative, provided an overview of the role of UNESCO Chairs in general and hoped that this Chair would be an active and productive one. He told the story of the India mathematics genius, Ramanujan, who with no formal training in maths, became one of the greatest math minds of his generation. The moral of the story is that powerful knowledge exists amongst unexpected people in the world and we should be open to this.

His Excellency Stewart Beck, Canadian High Commissioner to India was delighted to see this new partnership between Jamia, PRIA and UVic. He said that Canada has around 300 MOUs between Canadian Universities and Indian higher education and other organisations. The Canadian High Commission looks forward to collaborating as the work evolves.

Ms Sheela Patel, Chair of PRIA Governing Board said that the leadership of PRIA welcomes the Chair and says that both Rajesh and Budd have a huge responsibility to practitioners. The time for reproducing existing knowledge is over. It is the time now to bridge the community and the academy. Poor people's knowledge is not being heard and it is time that we learn to listen. It is time to give the 'right to research' to everyone. Universities have steep learning curves ahead and must learn to work in new and respectful ways.

Dr. David Turpin, President brought greetings from the University of Victoria. He noted that UVic is ranked #1 in Canada and #2 in North America by Times Higher Education rankings of Universities under the age of 50. He also noted the long-standing relationship between UVic and PRIA. He noted that the Chair is part of the very core of what UVic is all about: a destination university, an institution committed to civic engagement and a university that deeply values experiential learning.

Narendra Jaday, a member of the Planning Commission of the Government of India, a cabinet-level position, and a former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Pune was the Chief Guest. He notes that the gap between Higher Education and society in India is at a crisis level. Higher Education has over recent years distanced itself from the majority of people in society. He has been in the lead on the new section in the 12th Five Year Plan calling for the creation of new structures and new practices in community-university engagement. He welcomes the creation of the Chair and says that once the proposed 12th Five Year Plan recommendations are implemented, he sees a key role for the India Co-

Chair in providing leadership and elements of coordination. He shared numerous examples of CU engagement that he has led from his earlier position with Pune.

Martha Farrall of PRIA then offered a vote of thanks to those assembled and the group broke for tea and a light lunch before the afternoon Symposium.

Symposium on Fostering Social Responsibility in Higher Education in India

The afternoon was organized around a panel by four engaged scholars chaired by the remarkable Dr. Meenaski Gopinath, from the University of Delhi and a member of the University Grants Commission, the government body responsible for Universities.

Chair:

Dr. Meenakshi Gopinath

Principal, LSR, Univ. of Delhi &
Member, University Grants Commission

Panelists:

Prof Pankaj Mittal

Vice Chancellor,
BPS Mahila Vishwa Vidyalaya, Sonapat,
Haryana

Mr. Jayant Kumar

Director Programmes,
CASA

Dr. Azra Abibi

Assistant Professor,
Jamia Millia Islamia

Prof Devi Prasad,

Professor
Tata Institute for Social Sciences
Mumbai

Summary

Dr. Gopinath reminded us that universities are centres for the dissenting traditions and that engaged citizenship has to move beyond contemporary fractured polity. The coming together of knowledge, learning and action is like the coming together in Hindu traditions of land, water and sky, the cosmic swan.

Dr. Pankaj Mittal, the Vice-Chancellor of an engaged new women's university in Haryana, south of Delhi with 7,000 women students. She spoke of many of the community university engaged projects. They have created a Centre for Society-University Collaboration. They have adopted villages with teams of students and staff working with villagers to create new possibilities for children and women in particular.

Mr. Jayant Kumar is the Director of CASA, a national NGO with roots in the work of the Indian Social Institute and Ranchi Institute. Jayant welcomed the chair and noted that in India today, for the most part, as students go higher and higher with their studies, they distance themselves from community. In an era when there is much talk of corporate social responsibility, it is high time we had University social responsibility.

Dr. Azra Abibi is an assistant Professor of Social Work at Jamia Millia Islamia. JMI has been linked to basic education since the ideas of Gandhi-ji's *Nai Talim* or basic education for all. JMI has been a leader in national literacy work and is looking forward to further collaboration with PRIA through the UNESCO Chair.

Prof. Devi Prasad has recently moved to Tata Institute of Social Sciences, the top such institute in India. A lifetime partner with PRIA, Devi Prasad noted that higher education in India is in an alarming state. Currently only 12 per cent of Indian students are accessing higher education and the emphasis is overwhelmingly on professional and technical offerings. Wealth generation is said to be a main goal of higher education in India. Social responsibility, according to Prasad means three things: responsibility to others, accountability to the institutions and the public, and, responsibility to one's own values. These things cannot be taught in a classroom.

Discussion for 30 minutes followed the presentations by the panel. Drs. Gopinath, Tandon and Hall made some final remarks to end a powerful day.

Reflection on the launch

Budd's thoughts:

I was very impressed by the level of support from important institutions and creative higher education and civil society leaders for the idea of the Chair. It was also made clear to us that there are serious responsibilities that we have taken on in moving this project forward. What we do will be watched with expectation and hope. I am also aware of the deep division between broader society expectations for higher education with market interests coinciding with a demand for flexible and skilled labour for the

global assembly lines and the legitimate demands of the poor, the ignored or the excluded for direct benefits to them from higher education institutions.

Rajesh's thoughts:

The wide support received from academic institutions in Delhi was reflected in the full attendance of all the guests, speakers and Chief Guest. Dr. Jadhav, senior most policy-maker on higher education in Government of India has mandated the UNESCO Chair to coordinate the activities in the 12th Five Year Plan which focus on community engagement of HEIs. The enthusiasm amongst scholars and civil society to partner with the UNESCO Chair has reposed enormous expectations of effective programming.

**Symposium on Community-Based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher
Education,
December 14, 2012**

Introduction

Mahatma Gandhi was born in the state of Gujarat. It was to Gujarat that he returned when he came back to India after his years of study in England and his years working in South Africa where he developed many of his social movement approaches when working against racial discrimination of Asians and Blacks there. Gujarat has historically been at the heart of wealth producing India. Ahmedabad is the home of the Sabarmati Ashram where Gandhi ji, his wife Kasturba and others lived for a number of years. Ahmedabad is also where Gandhi founded the university that was to provide the nationalist movement with a new type of educated and committed cadre. His university, the Gujarat Vidyapith was one of three anti-colonial universities created in the 1920s, the first being that created by Rabindranath Tagore at Shantiniketan in West Bengal, the second being the Jamia Millia Islamia in Delhi and the Gujarat Vidyapith, the third.

Ahmedabad is also the home of UNNATI, a regionally based, but internationally respected NGO that has 25 years experience with participatory research, advocacy and action on issues of Dalit rights, gender perspectives and democratic local governance. UNNATI is a partner of PRIA and was the organiser of the Symposium and other visits.

The Symposium was held in the *Adivshi Talim Kendra* Hall of the Gujarat Vidyapith with about 50 participants from civil society, the university itself, local governments and other invited guests.

Programme Details:

Welcome	Mr Binoy Acharaya, Chair, UNNATI
National Perspectives	Dr. Rajesh Tandon, PRIA
International Perspectives	Dr. Budd Hall, University of Victoria
Arts, Education and Social Responsibility	Dr. Darlene Clover, University of Victoria
Future Directions for strengthening Social responsibility in Higher Education	Dr. Sudershan Iyengar, Vice Chancellor, Gujarat Videapeeth
Vote of thanks	Ms. Namita Kumari, PRIA

Summary

Following the welcome by Binoy Acharaya of UNNATI, Rajesh Tandon opened the Symposium with references to his early work with Tribal Peoples in Southern Rajasthan in the mid-1970s during which time he found that the high level training that he received at IIT Kanpur and IIM Kolkata was of no value in understanding rural development. He found the farming women and men there were in possession of better knowledge than he in spite of the fact that they had little formal schooling. His work over the past 35 or so years has in part been dedicated to acknowledging and supporting ‘people’s knowledge’, to giving visibility to this knowledge and to building capacities so that poor people gain confidence about what they know and learn how to work together to take action as needed. He finished by sharing information about the plans underway with the 12th Five Year Plan to require universities to deepen their commitment to community-university engagement and research.

Budd Hall spoke about global trends in higher education noting that HEIs are under pressure from market forces to produce graduates who ‘fit’ better in the global economic production architecture. HE is a space of contestation, he noted, and emphasized the fact that engagement and social responsibility in higher education is most certainly a trend as

well. He spoke of the concept of knowledge democracy and of the focus of the work of the UNESCO Chair.

Darlene Clover offered, what participants found particularly interesting and strong, an insight into the role of the arts in research and engagement in higher education. She spoke of arts-informed research, arts-based research and illustrated her talk with photographs from community-university research collaborations where the arts were used. She made a powerful case for engaged scholars to pay more attention to the arts if they wish to have more impact in their research and outreach work.

The discussion following the first three presentations was wide ranging and sophisticated. The audience was very well informed on various practices of engagement as a strong majority were coming from civil society organizations. There were fewer university participants than the organizers had expected. Some highlights:

- Binoy shared a story of how he learned to watch watermelons grow from an older farmer in a village.
- The advice that CBR was about ‘learning to listen.’
- A statement about links between choices of community interventions and ideology.
- The importance of the continuity of experience – staying in the villages
- We need to recognize the investment in knowledge creation that is being made by civil society organisations.
- How do we safe-guard against co-optation in this new field of engagement?

Vice Chancellor Sudershan Iyenegar closed the Symposium with a series of provocative observations and suggestions. He noted that what was being called for in the message of the UNESCO Chair is a new paradigm, a new relationship between Higher Education and society. Can we really create a different approach to higher education? He notes that in the discussions at national level in India about creating a single national voice for higher education, the foundational purpose of higher education is to “create wealth”. What room for other responses do we have? He suggested a strategy of holding talks with the Association of Indian Universities, with the Indian Council for Social Science Research, the Indian National Science Academy about CBR and social responsibility of higher education. He suggested that it would be useful at GV to add community members to the University Senate. He closed by inviting the UNESCO Chair representatives to establish a pilot project at the Gujarat Vidyapith to explore ways of moving from rhetoric to reality.

Ms. Namita Kumari gave Vote of thanks. The lunch followed.

Appendix:

Remarks by Budd Hall at the India launch of the UNESCO Chair in CBR and SR in Higher Education, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, India, December 10, 2012

Vice-Chancellor Najeeb Jung, Vice-Chancellor David Turpin, Chairperson Sheila Patel, distinguished guests, Sisters and Brothers. Thank you for honouring us with your presence here today.

My name is Budd Hall, I live and work as a guest on the traditional territories of the Lekwammen, Esquimalt and WaSaaniich First Nations Peoples at the University of Victoria, in Victoria, British Columbia which is at the south-western tip of Vancouver Island on the Pacific West Coast of Canada.

At times like these I am so very aware of the thanks that I owe to the thousands of persons from so many parts of the world that have taught me whether they were aware of it or not. All of us are products of our communities, our colleagues, our friends and our families. For today, I mention only three: two friends and companions in the search for a better world, Martha Farrell and her husband, Dr. Rajesh Tandon, my co-chair. Finally to Dr. Darlene Clover, my wife and intellectual partner with whom I continue to grow and evolve.

It is appropriate that we launch our Chair at the campus of Jamia Milia Islamia, a university founded in the 1920s by the coming together of two streams of community based activist intellectuals. The Islamic anti-colonial activists and the pro-Independence Western Muslim intellectuals were brought together under the influence of Ghandi-ji to form what Rabindranath Tagore called, “one of the most progressive educational institutions in India” For this launch to co-hosted by Jamia Milia Islamia and PRIA, The Society for Participatory Research in Asia, one of the world’s leading civil society based research and training centres for grass roots social, environmental, cultural and economic change provides us with the strongest possible foundations. It is fitting that we learn from one of the Hadiths of the Islamic faith, that, “Knowledge is my companion, it is with me wherever I go. My heart is its container, not the bookshelf”

When I first met Rajesh Tandon in Caracas, Venezuela in 1978, I could never have imagined that we would establish an intellectual friendship and productive working relationship that would last 35 years yet alone lead to the creation of this joint UNESCO Chair in Community Based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education. Our meeting in Caracas was to establish the first international network of what we called participatory research. We were both working for civil society organisations. We had no internet, no fax machines, a very limited budget for phone calls and an annual budget for the entire global network of \$15,000. The budget for Asia, with over half of the world’s population was \$500.

Our goal was to increase visibility for an approach to research that combined social investigation, education and action. Our vision was one where knowledge of ordinary

people could become a dynamic element in a process of active social change, a process where people gained confidence in their own knowledge and skills and where they could learn of the power of working with others to make a difference. We felt at that moment, working, as we were in civil society locations, that we were breaking what we called the 'academic monopoly' on the production of knowledge. Our experiences working in rural Tanzania, tribal India and with peasants in Latin America was of research being used to undermine people's sense of themselves as academics from outside in the guise as sociologists, economists, anthropologists became experts in other peoples lives. The knowledge created by these scholars, however well intentioned, was written in forms, locations and for purposes that had no positive impact on the lives of the people from whom the original information had been gathered. In fact most of this work made those people living their complex lives appear to be naïve or even ignorant about who they were, where they had come from and how they might create a better world.

I share these thoughts about our early work together because they point to important theoretical and practical foundations that these many years later have resulted in the creation of this UNESCO Chair in Community Based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education. The UNESCO Chair programme was established several years ago to contribute to building academic foundations in the full range of intellectual achievement in the Global South. The emphasis in the UNESCO description of these Chairs is on doing this through partnerships, which support North-South-South and South-South networks and relationships. There are several hundred such Chairs throughout the world. Our Chair has two distinctions. First, ours is the only Chair with this specific mandate having its origins in the Final Communiqué of the 2009 World Conference on Higher Education. Secondly, ours is the only Chair that is shared. Our Chair is a result of an agreement between the Director-General of UNESCO, the President of the University of Victoria and the Chair of the Governing Board of the Society for Participatory Research in Asia. And in line with our underlying values and intentions, it is a partnership between an established industrialised nation, Canada and a rapidly industrialising nation, India. Further our Chair is a partnership between a University and a civil society research organisation.

The fact that such a Chair could have been created is the result of several phenomena. At the global level, UNESCO has become aware over the past 30 years that institutions of higher education have a much stronger and more dynamic role to play in shaping the world today than merely producing skilled labour power, however critical that is. Higher Education institutions have opportunities to create generations of new students who can critically examine structures of power, develop skills to work with those labelled as marginal or excluded, can become civic leaders in deeper forms of democracy. In fact if higher education institutions do not take this social responsibility to heart, we will have little hope of peacefully tackling the tough issues of income inequality, continued gender discrimination, destruction of the biosphere or even regional or world peace.

I am deeply grateful to be working at the University of Victoria where the challenges of civic engagement lie at the heart of the strategic mission of our university. And while community university engagement is a growing trend in respected higher education institutions around the world, our university, I am proud to say has been in the forefront

in Canada and has gained much deserved recognition around the world. Ours is a university that has recognised the value of Indigenous knowledge throughout the disciplines, that has created a campus-wide Office of Community-based research, that makes sure that its world quality scientific research be put at the hands of people and policy makers who are dealing with issues of our oceans and our climate. We have created as well a community development programme within the School of Public Administration which is my home and the academic home of our Chair at UVic. Our university understands the language of knowledge democracy, of the co-creation of knowledge and is fully committed to supporting student, staff and faculty engagement in our own community and in partnership with others such as PRIA around the world.

Which brings me to the purposes of the Chair and some of the activities that we have initiated. As I said earlier, the overall purpose of all UNESCO Chairs is to strengthen academic capacities in the Global South. In our case that is within the fields of community based research and social responsibility in higher education. We see three challenges related to our Chair. The first is one of policy and advocacy. While many universities are beginning to grapple with what it means to become an ‘engaged university’, policy frameworks for the funding of collaborative partnership research are few, granting research councils are not universally on-side about the new forms of funding needed, Ministries of Education and local governments are not sure how best to support these emerging models of research and action.

The second challenge is one of building the next generation of community based researchers. Most of us like myself and Rajesh have learned which it means to engaged scholarship through trial and error, but if we are to see a dramatic increased in new students and younger academic staff becoming comfortable and skilled in community based research, we need to see what the best approaches should be and how to provide the training and opportunities to learn.

A final challenge is one of finding our how best to facilitate research partnerships between civil society organisations and universities and how to share knowledge of these best practices with others. We know that research partnerships of the kind we are speaking of take time. Building the social capital that is these research partnerships require is not just a matter of a good letter of agreement. People who have use knowledge very differently need to learn to work together and trust each other over a multi-year period. At the University of Victoria we have an Office of Community Based Research where community groups may come with issues and concerns and find students and academics who will work with them to find solutions. Our work deals with issues of Indigenous communities, issues of homelessness, of food security, of adaptive technologies for disabled peoples, of community mapping and more.

We are addressing these challenges through a partnership strategy. Our Chair is supported by most of the already existing regional and global networks working in the field of community-university engagement including the Asia Pacific University Community Engagement Network, Global Alliance for Community Engaged Research, the Talloires Network, the PASCAL International Observatory, the Global University Network for Innovation, The Bolivian Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies, the

Commonwealth Universities Extension and Engagement Network, and the Living Knowledge Network.

In 2013 we will see three first results of our work. On March 4, 2013 in Victoria, we will hold the Canadian launch of the Chair which will be linked with a day long symposium on Knowledge Democracy that will highlight contributions to community based research from the University of Victoria with special attention to Indigenous communities. We will also hold an academic seminar, bringing together a small number of the top people in the world to prepare the next World Report on Higher Education, a report that will focus on the theme of this Chair. Dr. Tandon and myself are the guest editors of this report. The report will be available in English, Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese and perhaps French. The report is linked to the May 13-15 Barcelona International Conference on Higher Education that will be hosted by the Global University Network for Innovation. The conference focus this year is on Knowledge, Transformation and Change in Higher Education and will bring 400-500 persons from all over the world together for the first time to focus on these themes.

Our work is framed within a context of knowledge democracy, a concept that calls for recognition that reality is represented in many diverse ways including artistic, spiritual and collective forms and that the knowledge of ancient landed people whom we call Indigenous or Tribal has yet to be taken fully into the canon of our universities. Knowledge democracy recognizes that knowledge is created everywhere that people look for solutions to improving their lives, be they disabled, poor, scheduled castes or scheduled Tribes. We associate ourselves with the work of the Portuguese sociologist Boaventura de Souza Santos and of Shiv Vasvanathan of India who say that, there will be no global social justice until there is global cognitive justice.

As I close my remarks, I extend our invitation to all here to join with us in this work. And let us all be reminded of the words of Rabindranath Tagore who founded his own engaged university, Visva-Bharati University in West Bengal so many years ago. He says to us, "You can't cross the sea merely by standing and staring at the water"

December 10, 2012