Strengthening Community University Research Partnerships:
GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES

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A user’s manual

Strengthening Community University Research Partnerships

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Global Study on Organizational Structures of CURP

Methods and Outputs:

- Global web based survey - 336 responses from 53 countries in 4 languages.
  - Respondents from HEI, CSO, funding agencies, and policy makers.

- 12 Country case studies

- Products: an e-book and a set of practical guidelines

- Open Access policies: http://unescochair-cbrsr.org/unesco/publications/
Key Survey Findings

- Global South data difficult to obtain
- Large variation in the language, conceptualization and practice of these engagements
- ‘Knowledge cultures’ of CSOs and HEIs vary tremendously
- Contradiction between professed commitment to co-construction and practice of doing CBR (i.e. origins of research, sharing of resources)
- Expressed need for building community capacity to play equitable roles in the research partnerships
- Over 60% of HEIs identified have some form of facilitative structure created within the last 10 years
Institutional supports

- Over 60% of HEIs identified have some form of enabling CURP structure created within the last 10 years
- Over 60% of CSOs do not have access to library and academic funding opportunities
  - Strong evidence for capacity at CSO level
- CSOs rely heavily on volunteers. More than 65% of CSOs have between 1-20 volunteers
Survey Highlights

Role and Process of Partnership

- Co-creation of knowledge is a primary goal in CURP (95%)
- Less than 15% of CURPs originate in the community
- Participation in decision-making and distribution of funds is predominantly controlled by HEIs.

Challenges and Recommendations

- Differences in timeline expectations (43.7%), and participation of members (42.9%)
- Different nature of knowledge cultures and diverse institutional processes that shape how research partnerships function
Survey Highlights

Training in CBR

• Over half the respondents have not had training in CBR

• Most common training need is CBR methodology
  • including the philosophy and practice of co-created knowledge and ways of increasing equity in partnerships
  • methods and tools in participatory research, research design, data collection and analysis

B. Hall, Canada
Country Case Studies

Two categories of countries:

1. Those where a clear national/provincial policy for such engagements and partnerships already exist.
   - Canada, South Africa, United Kingdom, Indonesia, Argentina, Netherlands, United States, Brazil

2. Those countries where such policies are in the making and potential for institutionalization of such policies is very high.
   - India, Uganda, Ireland, Jordan

- Existing policies and funding mechanisms reviewed in each country
- 2 HEI and 2 CSO selected for institutional review
1. When overall policy framework at national/provincial levels positions Higher Education (HE) as contribution to socio-economic transformation, there is greater readiness to accept Community Engagement (CE) as an integral part of the mandate.

2. Explicit inclusion of CE in national policy is a more recent phenomenon in most countries, and it encourages HEIs to institutionalize CE.

3. When government creates a focal office on CE, HEIs take it seriously and practices get institutionalized.

4. Very few such CE structures within HEIs are co-governed with community representatives, and mostly remain within the unilateral control of HEI administration.
5. Where explicit focus on research in CE is encouraged through **funding councils/schemes**, HEIs engage in building research as a part of community engagement plans/activities.

6. Principles of **mutuality and co-construction of knowledge** with community is not explicitly incentivized in such funding mechanisms.

7. **National networks for knowledge sharing** of CE with focus on research generate greater momentum at national/provincial levels.

8. **Provision of awards**, recognitions and accreditations of universities for engaging in CE activities further incentivizes CUE.
Some Conclusions

• When national policy creates formal expectations to promote CE, HEIs tend to show greater readiness and financial support for CE

• Top leadership of Ministries/HEIs can have huge impacts on promotion of CE in general, and CURPs in particular; by prioritising CE in research functions

• Middle level leadership—Deans, Centre Directors, Professors—and student leaders can nurture and operationalise CE by championing these in their faculty, centres, associations

• Even with monitoring mechanisms, accountability to communities and reporting to civil society is not a common practice at all
Some Conclusions

- Long term commitment is required to institutionalise such practice; 5-10 year partnerships is critical
- Investing in CB of students and faculty at HEIs in CBPR methodologies is critically missing
- In general, civil society has shied away from demanding greater responsiveness and accountability from HEIs in various countries around the world
- The mind-set in HEIs continues to negate community knowledge and practitioner expertise in research;
- Widespread systematisation of practitioner knowledge and sensitisation of the next generation of researchers can make a difference