

Gauging the impact of community university engagement initiatives in india

Wafa Singh, author

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Abstrak

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Today, the world we live in is challenged with the co-existence of prosperity and poverty. In India, in particular, although we are witnessing staggering increase in various economic indicators, our Human Development Indicators (HDIs) remain unenviable. It is in this context that Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have assumed profound importance as having the potential to offer sustainable solutions to such societal challenges. As a result, the practice of Community University Engagement (CUE) has gained prominence, as a phenomenon seeking a two-way discourse between the communities and the universities, in an attempt to produce socially relevant knowledge which is inclusive and sustainable. Considering the importance and value of such an initiative, an attempt was made to tap such engagement practices between the HEIs and communities in India. In addition to plain documentation of such engagement, another highly crucial parameter in this regard is the measurement of the impact of such initiatives, on all the stakeholders involved in the process. However, academic literature related to this is still limited. In an attempt to fill this gap, the study at hand involved impact assessment of CUE activities as an important component. Using qualitative tools of impact assessment, this paper documents the empirical evidence of the impacts on various stakeholders, arising out of CUE activities, undertaken at various universities in India. The results generated through primary data, show that although it appears to be the case of binary stakeholders (Community and University), CUE envisages engagement, integration and cross linking among a number of sub stakeholders, getting impacted in a multitude of ways. Students get an opportunity of experiential learning; while teachers can take up socially relevant research, as part of the curriculum. Communities benefit by way of empowerment and sustainable livelihoods, while universities get a chance to project themselves as socially engaged institutions. Indirect and subsidiary stakeholders like Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and Government, respectively also take away several benefits from the process. Therefore, in essence, the paper makes the case of CUE by demonstrating the positive and mutually beneficial experience enjoyed by the stakeholders involved in the process.