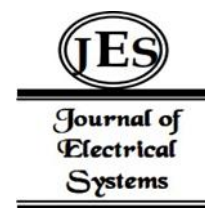


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Assessing the Community Engagement Practises by the Universities Through a Comprehensive Measurement Index



Abstract: - Community engagement by universities holds importance as the output a university produces should be socially relevant. Community university engagement refers to the university and community working together for a common welfare goal with equal ownership. Community engagement practises are less standardized globally, unlike teaching-learning and research. Therefore, the research aims at identifying the factors for the measurement of community engagement in universities to systematise its practice. The quantitative study is conducted on 99 faculties of both private-owned and public-owned universities. The research proposes some motivating factors that make faculties do community engagement. Also, 17 factors are suggested after reviewing the interviews and the literature for preparing a comprehensive measurement index of community engagement. Literature does suggest different factors for assessing community engagement among universities but none of them primarily talks about community engagement in the Indian system of higher education. This research will sensitize the readers, especially the policymakers to the factors that motivate faculty to do community engagement. The study will also make academicians rework their community engagement more systematically. The study altogether takes a global approach, although, the analysis part is restricted to Indian academicians.

Keywords: assessment, engagement, faculty, index, society, Universities.

I. INTRODUCTION

Societal interactions among university students are required for maintaining quality education. Here, quality refers to responsible education. One that trains students to be responsible towards the society they are living in. Social interactions shall be included in the process of teaching-learning and research.

One effective way of engagement is community-university engagement. Here, community refers to the group of people bound together economically and socially. This can also be a global community which refers to different nations (UNESCO Chair report, 2015). Community University engagement gives the platform for responsible higher education. In Engagement the focus is on the benefit of both the Community and the University, and the practice is involved in routine teaching and learning (UNESCO chair report, 2015). This modern way of outreach does not simply educate the population and meet the general needs, rather it approaches meeting the specific needs of the community through partnership (Tandon and Hall, 2015).

Local communities are the reservoir of knowledge. Knowledge generated by them is a result of years of experience. The knowledge generated in the university if combined with the knowledge the locals possess will provide society-oriented learning. Therefore, service learning is important. Once the students interact with the communities, they exchange knowledge, and this makes them learn to apply their classroom theories to real practises. One major problem in this exchange is that the validation of the local knowledge is questionable since it is not documented properly. This issue can be suppressed by universities playing a major role in facilitating local community through engagement/partnering and teachers acting as an agent to connect with society addressing their issues. Universities can document the local knowledge carefully and then channel it to the students. Once channelized, students will be benefitted from the experiential local knowledge. Establishing a comprehensive index for the measurement of community engagement will lead to the documentation of this knowledge. Universities will understand the importance of community engagement and will document some of the best practices globally. Currently, universities are practising uni-directional relationships with nearby communities. Uni-directional here refers to unequal ownership of knowledge generation. The ownership of knowledge generation rests in the hands of the universities currently. This practice can be made bi-directional by institutionalising community engagement.

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II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Community engagement

The concept of 'community engagement' is not new. Boyer (1966) first introduced the concept by referring to the 'Scholarship of engagement'. According to (Hollander *et al.*, 2001) the core mission of an engaged campus is confined to community building. "Such a campus.... neighbourhood resource development" (Hollander *et al.*, 2001). An engaged University is a type of university which works with the local communities, schools, civil societies, and industries to handle mutual needs and derive a mutual benefit (London, 2001).

Holland *et al.* (2003) explain that community-university partnerships have a shared mission "a successful community-university.... common goals" (Holland *et al.*, 2003). Carrión *et al.* (2012) called it a third mission of the universities. Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2015 describes the purpose of engagement as to prepare engaged citizens. "To enrich scholarship.... contribute to the public good" (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2015). "An engaged University is a type of university which works with the local communities, schools, civil societies, and industries to handle mutual needs and derive a mutual benefit" (London, 2001).

GUNI report of 2014 states that "Education can also help in developing ethical awareness and facilitate the civic commitment of citizens and professionals." Therefore, Higher education institutes (HEIs) as agents of education and knowledge creation, exchange and dissemination need to become more conscious of their importance and responsibility towards society. Thus, the time is ripe for "reviewing and reconsidering the interchange of value between university and society; that is to say, we need to begin thinking along the lines of 'social relevance of universities'" (GUNI, 2014).

The concept related to making a university, socially responsible. The practice is included in the other two core missions of a university. Therefore, a university should practice engaged teaching and engaged research where the community is involved at every step of the process of learning (Fitzgerald *et al.*, 2016). If not coincided then teaching and research are a one-way process (FIICI Higher Education Summit, 2017). Campus Compact (2018) referred it to as 'service learning. The national education policy of India 2020 also mentions the importance of community engagement by stating that "A university will mean a multidisciplinary institution of higher learning that offers undergraduate and graduate programmes, with high-quality teaching, research, and community engagement" (National Education Policy, 2020).

Mainstreaming community engagement

Universities globally are aware of their social responsibility but there must be specific ways to measure the extent to which a university is trying towards this. Globally there have been various scales proposed for measuring the engagement practices of universities. These scales or indicators provide directions for achieving the objectives cohesively and systematically (Reed *et al.*, 2022). It measures the excellence of universities (Marhl and Pausits, 2013). As the University's output directly affects society at large so the measurement of their social responsibility is crucial.

There can be many factors that can affect the community engagement practises of a university. Hollander *et al.* (2001) stress having community partners and community engagement to be mentioned in a university's mission. Researchers like Gray *et al.* (1998), Bringle and Hatcher (2000) and Holland (2005) suggest having centres for community engagement in universities. Researchers like (Bell *et al.*, 2000; Furco 2001; Letven *et al.*, 2001; Furco, 2010) believe that faculty support and academic policies about community engagement are essential in a university to make it an engaged university. Gelmon (2005) adds up that the administration of the university should explicitly mention the importance of community engagement in their discussions. Also, Gelmon mentions having credit courses on community engagement and having trained faculties to teach them. This will involve the major stakeholders-students and teachers in engagement. He lays the importance of involving students in engagement activities. This will result in more experiential learning. According to Gelmon, the data collection and analysis should involve the local stakeholders of the research. Colbeck (2006) supports the suggestion of Hollander *et al.* (2001) and makes an addition that universities should measure community engagement. In addition to the above-discussed factors, Carnegie (2008) a comprehensive index includes mentioning engagement practices in the marketing material of universities, making campus areas accessible to locals, inviting locals into some decision-making of the university, prioritizing community engagement in faculty recruitment, faculty teaching courses related to service learning and community engagement.

University of Bradford's approach to measuring community engagement intends to measure the inputs, outputs, and outcomes of both universities and Communities (Pearce *et al.*, 2007). Sandmann *et al.* (2009) consider Coordinating infrastructure (Hart *et al.*, 2009); Internal and external fundraising; Assessment and measurement; Faculty development; and Community voice as important criteria for measurement. "Research studies...part of the academy" (Furco, 2010). Bivens (2011) findings support Sandmann's measurement criteria. Carrión *et al.* (2012) gave a comprehensive indicators list where the number of faculty and staff working for community engagement in a university is important. Also, the number of events open to the community depicts the level of engagement of a university. Furco (2014) suggests philosophy and mission; faculty involvement and support; student involvement and support; community partnerships and support; institutional support for measuring engagement. Despite several indexes, Marhl & Pausits (2013) mentions that the third core mission lacks a cohesive index. Even globally recognised index like the Shanghai Ranking or Times Higher Education World University Ranking recognises teaching and research as the main ingredients if measuring institutional excellence (Marhl & Pausits, 2013).

III. RESEARCH GAP

Right from the beginning, the Comprehensive index is missing. "The lack of standardised measurement instruments for evaluation of civic engagement is widely noted" (Rowe and Frewer, 2000; Granner and Sharpe, 2004). Southern Region Indicator Work Group (2005) reports supporting the notion that only a few conventions are established to determine quality community engagement. "Little has been achieved which they engage" (Goedegebuure and van der Lee (2006).

IV. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Lack of a comprehensive index for measuring the university's engagement with the community results in just outreach activities. Outreach is a narrow form of community engagement where university and community relations are uni directional.

To make a university do complete community engagement, a specific index is required. This research includes a study to identify factors that make universities do community engagement. The study is conducted in India and since Indian universities are broadly owned either by the Government or private so before identifying the factors, research was conducted to understand whether there is a difference in engagement approach between teachers at publicly owned universities and privately owned universities.

99 teachers at Universities in Rajasthan, a state in India were interviewed using a predefined questionnaire. Questions were based on a 7-point Likert scale and their engagement was evaluated based on various constructs as shown in table I.

Table I: Variables

Variable	Literature support
Prioritize CUE in the mission	Carnegie 2008 ACU 2001 Colbeck 2006 Gelmon et al. 2005
measures its engagement with community	Colbeck 2006 Carnegie 2008
brings up CUE in the marketing material	Gelmon et al. 2005 Carnegie 2008
The administrative heads of my institution explicitly prioritize CUE	Hart et al. 2009 Gelmon et al. 2005
learning outcomes focusing on community engagement	Author
provides development support to faculties or staff	Author
feedback mechanism from the community alike student feedback	Author
records or document its engagement/ involvement	Furco 2010

Variable	Literature support
Campus areas accessible to community members	Carnegie 2008, Hart et al. 2009
involves community members in their major decision making	Carnegie 2008, Furco 2009
prioritize community engagement as an essential criteria for Faculty recruitment	Carnegie 2008, Hart et al. 2010, Furco 2009
institution prioritize community engagement as an essential criteria for Promotions	Gelmon et al. 2005
involve students in decision making	Gelmon et al. 2005, Hart et al. 2010
has credit courses focusing on community engagement	Gelmon et al. 2005, Furco 2009
have directorate, office or center at the campus	Furco 2009
has trained faculties to promote institutional community engagement	Gelmon et al. 2005
funds allocated	Furco 2009
Prioritize CUE in the mission	Carnegie 2008 Colbeck et al. 2006, Gelmon et al. 2005, Furco 2014
measures its engagement with community	Colbeck et al. 2006 Carnegie 2008
brings up CUE in the marketing material	Hart et al. 2009, Carnegie 2008
The administrative heads of my institution explicitly prioritize CUE	Hart et al. 2009 Gelmon et al. 2005
learning outcomes focusing on community engagement	Author
provides development support to faculties or staff	Author
feedback mechanism from the community alike student feedback	Author
records or document its engagement/ involvement	Furco 20014, Gelmon et al. 2005
Campus areas accessible to community members	Carnegie 2008, Hart et al. 2009, 2010, Furco 2014, Gelmon et al. 2005
involves community members in their major decision making	Carnegie 2008, Furco 2014, Gelmon et al. 2005
prioritize community engagement as an essential criteria for Faculty recruitment	Carnegie 2008, Hart et al. 2010, Gelmon et al. 2005
institution prioritize community engagement as an essential criteria for Promotions	Gelmon et al. 2005, Furco 2014
involve students in decision making	Gelmon et al. 2005, Hart et al. 2009, 2010.
has credit courses focusing on community engagement	Gelmon et al. 2005, Furco 2014, Hart et al. 2009, 2010
have directorate, office or center at the campus	Hart et al. 2010, Furco 2014, Gelmon et al. 2005
has trained faculties to promote institutional community engagement	Gelmon et al. 2005, Furco 2014
funds allocated	Furco 2014
department has organized events	Gelmon et al. 2005
funded by my institution for carrying out community based activities in recent years	Furco 2014, Gelmon et al. 2005

Variable	Literature support
participated in either training programs, conferences or seminars focusing on Community Engagement	Hart et al. 2009, Hart et al. 2010, Gelmon et al. 2005, Furco 2014
involve students while doing any kind of community engagement	Furco 2010, Gelmon et al. 2005, Hart et al. 2009
been a part of a joint project between the university and the stakeholders	Author
My community related work is prioritized while assessing my work/promotion	Furco 2014, Hart et al. 2009
have been rewarded for my community engagement work by my institution	Furco 2014
taught courses focusing on community engagement in recent years	Carnegie 2008,
take students to the community for their social enhancement as a part of my teaching/ research	Furco 2014, Gelmon et al. 2005, Hart et al. 2009
Curriculum development	Gelmon et al. 2005
Organizing activity	Gelmon et al. 2005
Teaching	The Author
Public lectures/ Organizing conferences or workshop	Hart et al. 2009, Gelmon et al. 2005
Attending conferences/ workshops	The Author
Student involvement	Gelmon et al. 2005, Hart et al. 2009
Government or non-Government Projects	The Author
Research	Hart et al. 2009, Gelmon et al. 2005
Data collection	Gelmon et al. 2005 Dobbs & Moore, 2002
Data analysis	The Author

Ho: There is no significant difference in community engagement between the teachers of public-owned universities and private-owned universities.

The ownership of the university affects its policies and working culture so the study aimed at understanding whether ownership (in terms of Government or Private) affects the community engagement of both the population. As the data is non-normal, a non-parametric Mann-Whitney test was carried out to understand whether there is a difference between both the groups, one group consisting of Teachers from a Government owned university and another group consisting of teachers at a Privately owned university in Rajasthan, India. The test proved that there was no statistical difference in community engagement between Government and Private Universities teachers based on various constructs. Hence, the study fails to reject the hypothesis.

Table II: Analysis table: Mann-Whitney Test on Teachers

Ranks					
Questions based on variables	University working in	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Interpretation
My institution prioritize CUE in the mission	Government University	48	51.34	2464.50	No Difference
	Private University	51	48.74	2485.50	
My institution measures its engagement with community	Government University	48	51.43	2468.50	No Difference
	Private University	51	48.66	2481.50	
My institution brings up CUE in the marketing material [Brochure, website, etc.].	Government University	48	52.39	2514.50	No Difference
	Private University	51	47.75	2435.50	
	Government University	48	51.44	2469.00	No Difference

Questions based on variables	University working in	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Interpretation
The administrative heads of my institution [Chancellor, VC, pro VC, deans, directors] explicitly prioritize CUE in campus magazines, reports, budget, or planning documents	Private University	51	48.65	2481.00	
My institution has directorate, office, or centre at the campus for promoting Community Engagement	Government University	48	49.09	2356.50	No Difference
	Private University	51	50.85	2593.50	
There are Campus areas in my institution which are accessible to community members	Government University	48	52.49	2519.50	No Difference
	Private University	51	47.66	2430.50	
There are funds allocated (internal or external) for promoting institution's engagement with community in my institution	Government University	48	52.53	2521.50	No Difference
	Private University	51	47.62	2428.50	
My institution records or document its engagement/ involvement with community	Government University	48	51.55	2474.50	No Difference
	Private University	51	48.54	2475.50	
My institution provides development support to faculties or staff who engage with community	Government University	48	55.01	2640.50	No Difference
	Private University	51	45.28	2309.50	
My institution involves community members in their major decision making	Government University	48	53.73	2579.00	No Difference
	Private University	51	46.49	2371.00	
My institution prioritizes community engagement as an essential criterion for Faculty recruitment	Government University	48	54.33	2608.00	No Difference
	Private University	51	45.92	2342.00	
My institution prioritizes community engagement as an essential criterion for Promotions	Government University	48	52.20	2505.50	No Difference
	Private University	51	47.93	2444.50	
My institution involves students in decision making related to community engagement	Government University	48	52.00	2496.00	No Difference
	Private University	51	48.12	2454.00	
My institution has credit courses focusing on community engagement	Government University	48	50.04	2402.00	No Difference
	Private University	51	49.96	2548.00	
My institution has learning outcomes focusing on community engagement	Government University	48	50.80	2438.50	No Difference
	Private University	51	49.25	2511.50	
My institution has feedback mechanism from the community alike student feedback	Government University	48	51.58	2476.00	No Difference
	Private University	51	48.51	2474.00	

Questions based on variables	University working in	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Interpretation
My institution has trained faculties to promote institutional community engagement	Government University	48	51.52	2473.00	No Difference
	Private University	51	48.57	2477.00	
Syllabus/ curriculum development	Government University	48	53.48	2567.00	No Difference
	Private University	51	46.73	2383.00	
Organizing any activity	Government University	48	53.13	2550.00	No Difference
	Private University	51	47.06	2400.00	
Teaching	Government University	48	53.50	2568.00	No Difference
	Private University	51	46.71	2382.00	
Organizing conferences/workshops	Government University	48	52.16	2503.50	No Difference
	Private University	51	47.97	2446.50	
Attending conferences/workshops	Government University	48	52.15	2503.00	No Difference
	Private University	51	47.98	2447.00	
Students' assignment, projects and/or dissertation	Government University	48	52.81	2535.00	No Difference
	Private University	51	47.35	2415.00	
Government or non-Government Projects	Government University	48	54.00	2592.00	No Difference
	Private University	51	46.24	2358.00	
Research problem identification	Government University	48	52.51	2520.50	No Difference
	Private University	51	47.64	2429.50	
Data collection	Government University	48	52.97	2542.50	No Difference
	Private University	51	47.21	2407.50	
Data analysis	Government University	48	52.93	2540.50	No Difference
	Private University	51	47.25	2409.50	
I have been funded by my institution for carrying out community-based activities in recent years	Government University	48	52.31	2511.00	No Difference
	Private University	51	47.82	2439.00	
I have taught courses focusing on community engagement in recent years	Government University	48	52.86	2537.50	No Difference
	Private University	51	47.30	2412.50	
My department has organized events [guest lectures; training sessions] by the community members for students/ faculties in recent years	Government University	48	49.57	2379.50	No Difference
	Private University	51	50.40	2570.50	
I have participated in either training programs, conferences or seminars focusing on Community Engagement in recent years	Government University	48	51.69	2481.00	No Difference
	Private University	51	48.41	2469.00	
	Government University	48	50.84	2440.50	No Difference

Questions based on variables	University working in	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Interpretation
I have been a part of a joint project between the university and the stakeholders [Government; industry; competitors; Non-Government Organizations; Community] in recent years	Private University	51	49.21	2509.50	
I involve students while doing any kind of community engagement	Government University	48	51.48	2471.00	No Difference
	Private University	51	48.61	2479.00	
My community related work is prioritized while assessing my work/promotion in recent years	Government University	48	52.63	2526.00	No Difference
	Private University	51	47.53	2424.00	
I have been rewarded for my community engagement work by my institution in recent years	Government University	48	53.06	2547.00	No Difference
	Private University	51	47.12	2403.00	

The above analysis shows that a single comprehensive index can be created for the universities in India. The respondents were also asked about the factors that will motivate them to do more community engagement. Interestingly, community engagement as a criterion for a university's accreditation was considered the biggest motivator for a faculty to do community engagement. Similarly, community engagement as a criterion for the allotment of funds was also considered the most important motivating factor. Faculties also revealed that providing training on community engagement will motivate them to do it more. Few believed community engagement should also be considered during the promotion. Other factors along with the ranks are listed in table III.

Table III: Weightage to factors

Factors	Range	Interpretation		Rank (As per the agreement)
Mission and vision focusing on Community engagement.	Agree (58)	More than 50 per cent faculties in the study agreed.	Moderate agreement	4
Prioritizing Community engagement in Marketing material [Brochure or advertisement] of your university.	Agree (45)		Low agreement	9
Community engagement as an essential criterion in NAAC.	Agree (71)	More than 50 per cent faculties in the study agreed.	High agreement	1
Community engagement as an essential criterion in NIRF.	Agree (72)	More than 50 per cent faculties in the study agreed.	High agreement	1
Community engagement in high priority list of funding agency.	Agree (72)	More than 50 per cent faculties in the study agreed.	High agreement	1
Community engagement as an essential criterion in promotion schemes.	Agree (59)	More than 50 per cent faculties in the study agreed.	Moderate agreement	3

Factors	Range	Interpretation		Rank (As per the agreement)
Community engagement as an essential criterion in recruitment criteria.	Agree (51)	More than 50 per cent faculties in the study agreed.	Moderate agreement	5
Financial rewards for carrying out Community engagement activities.	Agree (49)		Low agreement	7
Community access to campus.	Agree (48)		Low agreement	8
Credit based Community engagement courses in the curriculum.	Agree (50)	50 per cent faculties in the study agreed.	Moderate agreement	6
Training faculty/student on Community engagement/experiential learning	Agree (65)	More than 50 per cent faculties in the study agreed.	High agreement	2

Respondents were also asked to list down the factors that shall be included in the index so that better community engagement can be measured. After consolidating and reviewing the suggested parameters and literature, the following factors are suggested.

Table IV: Additional suggested Parameters for Assessment

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Number of Faculty training on Community welfare through FDPs, or workshops. ● Number of paper presentations on Community welfare ● Recognition of Community welfare in awards, training, and promotion. ● Number of villages adopted for Community welfare [Catchment area of the University]. ● Number of local issues solved by the students.

V. CONCLUSION

Community engagement has been practised in one or the other form by universities globally but like teaching and research, there should be some standards that every university shall follow while practising community engagement. Index about community-university engagement will provide the standards that shall be followed by every university for fruitful community engagement. Although the index can vary among regions, the objective of community welfare should be fulfilled.

The factors suggested by the researchers in the literature section of this paper may be followed by the universities at their own pace. Locals can be involved in the decision-making of the activities that are called community connect by the university. This will increase the effectiveness of the activities since the locals will discuss the real issues and these activities will aim at meeting the local issues and solving them. Including community engagement as an essential criterion in faculty, the requirement will also make faculties more motivated towards these activities. Additionally, if locals are invited to the campus, their presence will make the universities more community friendly. They can be invited either just to have a visit of the campus and give feedback on the facilities available or some common areas like the library, sports ground can be made open for the locals to use on weekends.

The article helps in understanding the importance of community-university engagement and the importance of its assessment for maintaining its standard practises alike the standard practices being followed for teaching-learning and research. Although, the study is conducted on a limited sample, the suggested parameters can be used by the policy makers to create an index for the measurement of community-University engagement. Future research can identify additional factors for stablishing such index.

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