

Sub-Themes Focus

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<http://asiaengage.ui.ac.id/focus/>

To provide context and focus for areas pertinent to community engagement in higher education, the following is an expanded description of the sub-themes. Presenters should submit their abstracts based on one of the following sub-themes and indicating which [multi-disciplinary area/s](#) it falls under:

Research Driven Community Engagement

Research Driven Community Engagement is applied when academics work towards ensuring their knowledge generated through research is relevant to help solve problems faced by communities. In many instances, they work on this in collaboration with NGOs and Government Agencies. The principle that should be adhered to in this pursuit is that of knowledge exchange – as academics work with communities they cannot assume that they are the sole custodians of knowledge; they have just as much to learn from communities as they have to give. These partnerships are built on equality, respect and mutual trust. Each participant shares the responsibility to utilise their particular knowledge and expertise for the shared agenda – generating knowledge and to enhance the quality of life or other benefits for the community. What distinguishes research driven community engagement from other approaches, lies in these ethical considerations; that every partner is equal in the process and that the knowledge generated is to be disseminated among all. The outcomes of such collaborative research are perceived to be more justifiable and sustainable since there is a degree of ownership amongst all stakeholders and the results of the research can be directly applied for the benefit of the community.

Community Engaged Teaching and Learning

Various studies have highlighted the importance employers ascribe to students' high quality technical skills. Equally essential, is the finding that students should be equipped with soft skills, such as (intercultural) communication skills, critical thinking, team work and leadership and organisational skills. Engaged Higher Education Institutions are working collaboratively with other stakeholders to enhance their curriculum to provide opportunities for students to develop the above competencies, to increase their public responsibility and solve problems that face communities and thereby improve learning. In this context, Community Engaged Teaching and Learning enables students to learn from the real world whilst benefiting the community by applying their skills to address their needs.

Two modalities of community engaged teaching and learning are most broadly used – the informal experiential learning which is commonly categorised as co-curriculum and the formal experiential community engaged teaching and learning. Formal community engaged teaching and learning pedagogies

are focused on both academic learning outcomes and community service for mutual benefit. Whereas co-curricular activities are often well represented in higher education institutions, it is the formal experiential community engaged teaching and learning that appears to be challenging to mainstream into the curriculum. Sharing best practices and knowledge exchange can help to drive forward the development and the mainstreaming of these beneficial programmes.

Knowledge-Driven Volunteerism and Community Engagement

Volunteerism, or the practice of giving time or talents to benefit communities, has long been an integral part of our societies. Lately, there has been a paradigm shift from the traditional modality of volunteerism which is characterised by episodic volunteering with the organisation/institution determining what volunteers do, organising them based on experiences and set-practices. The shift is now towards a knowledge driven and more sustainable model that acknowledges volunteers as valuable knowledge brokers, linking the know-how from academic institutions and practitioners with that of the community and its needs. This brand of volunteering that focuses on the development of volunteers in addition to task accomplishment often provide deeper and more meaningful experience to both the volunteer and the community it serves. One of the major setbacks in expanding and institutionalising this field has often been the lack of information and impact research done in the area.

Institutionalisation and Mainstreaming of Community Engagement

The engaged institution has the mission and drive to forward initiatives and interaction with external partners and communities, to build sustainable partnerships that can adequately respond to societal issues. Whereas engaged initiatives are not a new phenomenon, the institutionalisation and mainstreaming of engagement within higher education is a more recent trend. The institutionalisation of community engagement starts with proper governance and leadership within the institution and a strong vision and will to implement policies that support active engagement with stakeholders. Engagement has to be integrated within the three core missions of the university, in order for it to reach its full potential. However, universities face challenges and barriers, such as the gap between leadership rhetoric and strategic implementation plans and funding resources, promotional criteria and the recognition of engaged initiatives. All of these issues need to be addressed if higher education is serious about developing Engaged Universities; Universities in which community engagement is not regarded as the third mission but integrates and supports research, education and service. Sharing experiences of mainstreaming and systemising engagement and social innovation in the institution is pertinent for the area to move forward.

Measurement of Impact of Engaged Initiatives

Community engagement has gained momentum and evolved substantially in the missions of higher education in the last decade. However, what has received less attention is the measurement of impact of research driven community engagement. These are the measurement of impact of community engaged research, teaching and learning and volunteerism. The evidence based data that derives from these studies are essential for the development of scholarship for the field of community strategic partnerships and engagement.

Sharing experiences of evaluation and impact measurement will contribute significantly to set standards

and improve community engaged initiatives' practices. This will also provide evidence based data of impact that can convince funders of the value of establishing strategic partnerships with universities. All of these are necessary to substantiate the foundation of effective, meaningful and sustainable community engaged initiatives.