

Common Core Curriculum for Rural Engagement

Submitted to
**Department of Higher Education
Ministry of Human Resource Development
Government of India**

National Council of Rural Institutes
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Background

Rural or Community Engagement in Higher Education is one where sustainable networks, partnerships, communication media, and activities between Higher Education Institutions and communities are fostered at various levels. There is an inevitable and symbiotic relationship that exists between communities and Higher Education Institutions.

Communities help provide human resources that are necessary for higher education systems to foster and carry out their purposes. Higher Education Institutions in turn train students who eventually fill various societal roles and statuses including the job vacancies. They also establish social enterprises, non governmental organizations, not for profit organisations and businesses of their own in society.

Engagement activities between communities and higher education stakeholders may be formal or informal. Examples of community engagement initiatives include building relationships through collaboration initiatives, community campaigns, cooperatives, small businesses, consultation meetings & conferences, sports events, cultural events, community development and community research projects.

These days, vast online repositories through university libraries and other digital media provide a unique ability for Higher Education Institutions to share success and failure case studies and experiences with communities in ways that were unimaginable prior to the 1990s.

Thus, meaningful community engagement should bring benefits for communities and continuous academic development to institutions.

Introduction

University education has been adopting several strategies for focusing on the development of the spirit of Community Service. There has been no particular curriculum for inculcating this spirit among the students. Hence it is felt that it is the need of the hour that a Rural Community Engagement curriculum be developed which can be offered as a compulsory course to all the students. It has been felt that in order to bridge the gap between the expectations and actual practices, there is a need to integrate the two important aspects viz., living and learning.

There is an impending need for the engagement of the enthusiastic young generation in course of their education about their local community issues, challenges prevalent more so, in the rural community. There is a huge gap between the textual knowledge and evolving contextual practices, especially in rural India.

Rural India which is prone to various natural disasters like the floods, landslides, droughts and cyclones has to build disaster resilience. Disaster resilience is the community's ability to anticipate, and wherever possible, prevent or minimize the potential damage on account of a disaster. It covers community coping capacity, to maintenance of certain basic functions and structures under all climatic conditions, and to recover and adapt to the changes that occur as a result. Community engagement tries to aid this requirement of the society.

A draft curriculum has been developed based on group discussions held by group of faculty members from across Central and State universities along with the senior practitioners and proponents of community engagement in India.

Characteristics

The following core characteristics form the basic frame work of the community based learning model which are prime factors that are considered while developing the curriculum.

Meaningful Content: In Community Engagement, learning occurs in relevant places where challenges are experienced. It focuses on issues that involve students through direct engagement with the communities for addressing and responding to these challenges.

Voice and Choice: In Community Engagement, learning tasks are active processes and they allow students to take an active role in the decision making process while performing these tasks.

Personal and Public Purpose: In Community Engagement process, the learning goals connect personal achievement to public purpose through community engagement.

Assessment and Feedback: In transacting Community Engagement Course, there is an administration of ongoing assessment supported by mentoring that gives students the opportunity to learn from their successes and failures. It also gives an insight into their prevailing standards and the understanding the gap between the current and expected standards.

Resources and Relationships: Community partnerships increase the community resources and community relationships which are utilized by students during learning and action, making it interactive, real time learning.

Curriculum Design

- Objectives
- Rationale
- Proposed Model of Curriculum
- Practicum Details
- Assessment
- Outcomes

Learner Objectives

The following Objectives have been framed for the proposed curriculum.

1. To understand the historical perspective of rural development and transformation in India.
2. To study and understand the changing profile of rural India in terms of consumption patterns, land use patterns, cropping, lifestyle, living standards, settlement patterns.
3. To study and understand rural poverty, dynamics and issues in rural distress.
4. To assess Rural Development Programmes in India, their coverage, outlays, modalities and outcomes.
5. To study rural infrastructure needs and align them with the budgets and programmes.
6. To outline the various employment programmes and their mandate.
7. To understand the new village technology interface in terms of information, participatory processes, mainstream and alternative technologies in agriculture, rural livelihoods and industries and communication.
8. To teach students to identify signs of distress, financial, social, political and natural and find coping mechanisms.

9. To help students understand the electoral and democratic processes that form the basis for the political governance in rural societies.
10. To orient the students into handling susceptibility of rural communities to impending emergencies arising out of natural and manmade disasters, climate variability and motivating them into assuming eco responsibility.
11. To orient students on Village Development Plans incorporating the aspects of the Village Disaster Management Plan.
12. To provide practical opportunities for students for participation in rural community mobilization, service engagement and empowerment activities along with trained resident community volunteers.
13. To promote preparation and implementation of community resilience development plan for identified, mutually agreed and prioritized aspects
14. To channelize financial and physical support from Corporate Social Responsibility grants and philanthropic as well as special programme support like the Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana

Rationale

Community engagement can be a big game changer for rural communities. Though traditional extension and outreach programs are desperately trying to bring in the desired outcomes, are just not sufficient to heal the rift between higher education and public life. What is required is an approach that extends beyond service and outreach to actual 'engagement'. By this, we mean that there is a need to move from a model of 'public service' where universities do things for 'passive & needy public', to one of 'public work that taps, engages and develops the civic agency, talents and capacities of everyone, inside and outside the academy'. Therefore, the requirement of today is an 'engaged model of university outreach' which is far more collaborative than the customary conventional approach.

Hence, higher education which is generally organized into highly specialized disciplines requires a paradigm shift towards a more systemic perspective, emphasizing collaboration, cooperation and partnership (UNESCO Chair, 2015). There is an urgent need to promote rural community-student engagement through the Rural Immersion Camp, Village Visit, Village Study, Inputs for instilling Rural Resilience, Climate Change Adaptation and Eco Responsibility.

The various forms of community engagement are: (PRIA, 2014):

- 1. Linking 'formal' learning and the local community*
- 2. Researching with the community*
- 3. Sharing knowledge with the community*
- 4. Designing new curriculum and courses*
- 5. Involving local practitioners as trainers*
- 6. Social Innovation by students*

Proposed Model of Curriculum

The curriculum is for one semester. It is interdisciplinary in nature and more practice oriented.

S.N	Module Title	Module Content	Teaching/ Learning Methodology	Numb of Classes
1.	Rural society	Dynamics of Rural Society : Social, Economic, political and cultural	Group discussion	2
2.	Change	Community Goal Setting: Inner Engineering	Group Exercise	2
3.	Participatory Learning, Social Mapping	Approaches and Methods, Community Project Proposal and Project Management, Concept and Steps, Thematic Maps, Social Maps, Transect Walk, Seasonal Map	Field Visit Participation	6
4	Village Development and Disaster Management Plan	Village Development Plan including aspects and process of preparation of Village Disaster Management Plan	Case Study Interview, Participation, Field Visit	4
II	Resource Mapping	Natural and Human Resource Mapping and Management	Demonstration, Interview, Field Visit Mapping	4
5	Rural Institutions	Engagement with School/ Street Committee /Health Centre/ Panchayat / SHGs	Case Study Field Visit, Survey	4
6	Close to Community	Awareness : Health & Hygiene/ Rights / Policies & Programmes/ Transparency/ Corruption/ Social Benefits, Identification of beneficiaries, plugging leakages in benefit schemes	Lecture, Preparation of Awareness Programme Aids coaching	4
7	Rural Resilience	Rural Resilience- Risk Reduction Role and Responsibilities Rehabilitation: Physical and Psychological aspects	Lecture, Demonstration, Training	4
8.	Professional Intervention	Partnership with public , Private and non-governmental organizations Project Proposals/ Plans/ Evaluations / Implementation	Field Visit, mentoring facilitation	2
9	Rural Financing	Understanding basics of rural financing; educating villagers in the same	Mentoring & facilitation	2
10	Basics of rural entrepreneurship	Identifying and promoting opportunities for local tourism spots, local folk arts, local arts/handlooms /artisanship and cultures	Mentoring & facilitation	2

Practicum details

Every Saturday or continuously for a week, students are engaged in the rural community to take up the following activities for developing field perspective on rural resource management, issue-based work and complex emergencies. The students are required to engage in an on-going Development Programmes, Rural Resilience Development Programmes, rural distress response programmes in the respective locations.

1. Interactive Awareness programs with community experts and village leaders with PRA.
2. Interactive community exercise with community experts and village leaders on Village Development Planning.
3. Involving students in the literacy programmes of selected village.
4. Conducting training programmes with Self Help Groups and government officials for training in different vocations and developing skills.
5. Conducting information collection, collation and use(Data Management) workshops with the help of school resources of the selected villages and Self Help Groups.
6. Identifying the committees and establishing the committees with the help of village level officers.
7. Establishing village networks with the help of village level officers and district officials.
8. Conducting / facilitating health camps and public health campaigns.
9. Reporting the health concerns of the villagers, drainage system of the village and health habits of the villagers to the concerned authorities and facilitating address of these concerns.
10. Organizing orientation on preparing a system for community plantation management and community water management.
11. Creating awareness about the climatic change hazards in the villagers and inputs on how to address the same.
12. Organizing awareness programmes relating to water, soil fertility management, energy management.
13. Identifying opportunities for improving local infrastructure and working with Villager leaders and local administration for sanction and implementation under relevant schemes
14. Organizing awareness & promotion programs on income generating opportunities from local tourism spots, local artisanship(toys, handlooms, paintings), local folk arts or rural entrepreneurship opportunities.
15. Preparing seasonal maps and Timeline maps to understand and ready the villagers on the Seasonal hazards like drought/floods and prepare action plans dovetailing with Govt. schemes, based on local knowledge and local solutions.

Assessment

This is a four credit add on course, with two theory class and two practical class of four hours per week for one semester which is equal to 36 hours of theoretical input and 72 hours of practical input.

Focus will be on engaging in study and capacity building for promoting the rural community resilience to disaster risks and climate change and assumption of eco responsibility.

The emphasis is more on the practical orientation of the student.

Outcomes

After completion of the course the student will be able to

- Understand the social, economic, political and cultural framework of the rural society
- Address the challenges with suitable responses for the identified rural issues
- Engage in the management of the rural community organisation
- Engage in village development planning and village resource management functions

Career Options

- Career in Community Development Projects of State and Central Governments
- Career in Corporate Social Responsibility Projects
- Career with links in the Rural India including Entrepreneurship and Facility Management
- Career as Nodal Officer for Rural Development
- Career as Rural Infrastructure Manager
- Career in Rural Documentation
- Careers with Rural Finance Agencies

Rationale for Faculty Development Programme

A course on rural community engagement of students at higher education level is being introduced in the Universities to enable students to transact the community interaction systematically and effectively.

The course will be of 50 lectures of 45 minutes each or 36 lectures of 1 hour each. It will be offered in a single semester with 4 credits. It may be ideally located in the first year of the respective post graduate programme. This shall be based on the stream of education, availability of faculty members and structure of the broader programme.

The course may be taught by a faculty member of any discipline as community engagement is an interdisciplinary subject and both contributes and gets contributed by every stream of higher education. This Faculty Development Programme is a preparatory input for teachers to provide them enough resource material to the Faculty Member or team of Faculty Members who handle the subject. It is both for those who are interested with no background and also those who have handled various student-community engagement programmes at various levels of transacting education earlier.

The Faculty Development Programme

The FDP is designed for 7 days with two days of field engagement. It would enable the faculty members with varied backgrounds to transact this course in the universities and higher educational institutions.

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4. To assess Rural Development Programmes in India, their coverage, outlays, modalities and outcomes.
5. To study rural infrastructure needs and align them with the budgets and programmes.
6. To outline the various employment programmes and their mandate.
7. To understand the new village technology interface in terms of information, participatory processes, mainstream and alternative technologies in agriculture, rural livelihoods and industries and communication.
8. To teach students to identify signs of distress, financial, social, political and natural and find coping mechanisms.
9. To help students understand the electoral and democratic processes that form the basis for the political governance in rural societies.
10. To orient the students into handling susceptibility of rural communities to impending emergencies arising out of natural and manmade disasters, climate variability and motivating them into assuming eco responsibility.

11. To orient students on Village Development Plans incorporating the aspects of the Village Disaster Management Plan.
12. To provide practical opportunities for students for participation in rural community mobilization, service engagement and empowerment activities along with trained resident community volunteers.
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Framework

This broad framework is suggested base on the structure of courses offered in the universities in the CBCS pattern. Universities organizing these Faculty Development Programmes could adopt or make changes as per the priorities and resource availability. The modules can be devised based on the expertise, experience and strengths.

Day 1

Rural society: Dynamics of Rural Society : Social, Economic, political and cultural aspects, Rural Change, Community Goal Setting: Inner Engineering

Day 2

Participatory Learning and Social Mapping: Approaches and Methods, Community Project Proposal and Project Management, Concept and Steps, Thematic Maps, Social Maps, Transect Walk, Seasonal Map, Resource Mapping: Natural and Human Resource Mapping and Management

Day 3

Village Development and Disaster Management Plan:

Village Development Plan including aspects and process of preparation of Village Disaster Management Plan

Day 4 Field Visit: PRA and Village Development and Disaster Management Planning

Day 5 Field Visit: Study of Rural Institutions: Engagement with School/Street Committee/Health Centre/ Panchayat/ SHGs

Awareness : Health & Hygiene/ Rights / Policies & Programmes/Transparency/ Corruption/ Social Benefits, Identification of beneficiaries, plugging leakages in benefit schemes

Day 6

Rural Resilience: Risk Reduction, Role and Responsibilities

Rehabilitation: Physical and Psychological aspects

Professional Intervention: Partnership with public , Private and non-governmental organizations Project Proposals/ Plans/ Evaluations/ Implementation

Day 7

Rural Financing: Understanding basics of rural financing; educating villagers in the same

Basics of rural entrepreneurship: Identifying and promoting opportunities for local tourism spots, local folk arts, local arts/handlooms/artisanship and cultures

Teaching Resources:

The Faculty Development Programme would enable identification and preparation of relevant course transaction resources. These resources include Reference Books, Films, PPTs, Case Lets and Case Studies, Village Project Work and Field Work. Preparation of Village Maps and Village Gram Panchayat Development Plans

Course material and caselets prepared by National Council of Rural Institutes, Ground Floor Shakar Bhavan, Opposite to LB Stadium Hyderabad website: www.ncri.in

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