PATHWAYS TO HIGHER EDUCATION

(2009-2013)

A Review Report

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INTRODUCTION

This is the second review report of the Pathways to Higher Education programme, part of the Social Justice Initiative of the Higher Education Innovation and Research Applications (HEIRA) at the Centre for the Study of Culture and Society (CSCS). The first review report, commissioned in June, 2010 and submitted in August, 2011, along with concurrent internal reviews, provided a detailed set of guidelines and recommendations which were used to make the necessary revisions in the design and expected outcome/impact of the programme, changes in the content and pedagogy of the training programme, and reconfiguration of the various individual components of the programme. These changes were recommended with the key objectives of:

1. enhancing the overall effectiveness of the programme interventions;
2. creating a 'model' of engagement with more substantive questions of social justice beyond improving the access of students from hitherto marginalised backgrounds to higher education, which could be promoted for wider adaptation and replication; and
3. developing the conceptual foundation, problem/information base (including baseline data) and programme ideas for future engagement through the Social Justice Initiative.

This review report is organised as follows: the overall objectives of HEIRA, Social
Justice Initiative and the programme have been discussed in section 2, along with a detailed discussion on the relevance, significance and potential of a programme such as this. An outline of the review method have been provided in the following section. Detailed observations on the design, implementation and outcomes of the programme have been presented in section 4, followed by a detailed list of recommendations in section 5. In this last section, the report provides the contours of a monitoring framework for higher education.
LOCATING/FRAMING THE PROGRAMME

HEIRA was established in 2007, formerly as the Higher Education Cell at CSCS, with the overall objective of revitalization of the higher education sector. Five thematic areas were identified for organising and operationalising its work, namely: the Networked Higher Education, Regional Language Resources, Social Justice in Higher Education, Gender and Integrated Science Education. Each of the thematic areas was developed with its own set of interests, objectives, programmes and outcomes; without sacrificing any (present or potential) space for convergence and integration. It is envisaged that HEIRA would attempt to create and strengthen institutional partnerships between the research institutions/centres, universities and the undergraduate colleges as its key stratagem. The strategies are operationalised through support for Curriculum Development and Production of Resource Materials; Teacher Training Initiatives and Skill-building for students; Building Research Capacity.

Amongst these the Social Justice in Higher Education theme, within which the present programme titled Pathways to Higher Education is located, was initiated with the objectives of:

1. improving the quality of access to higher education institutions for students from marginalised backgrounds; and
2. creating wider recognition of the centrality of social diversity questions to the sphere of higher education.
The Social Justice Initiative is premised around the commonly recognised learning issues in India as being closely linked to social disadvantage. These include access to diverse resources beyond the limited kinds available in the traditional classroom, access to technology, receptive institutional environment for fostering confidence and growth in students, and importantly, relevance of the curriculum and the overcoming of language-related challenges. More specifically, the programme Pathways to Higher Education is being implemented with the objectives of:

1. improving the quality of access to higher education for students from disadvantaged backgrounds in undergraduate colleges by building their critical and analytical skills; and
2. building a viable model of social diversity for undergraduate college campuses.

**Relevance of the programme**

In Chapter 10 titled 'Education and Skill Development' of its Approach Paper to the 12th Five-Year plan, the Government of India (2011), writes that:

'A well educated population, adequately equipped with knowledge and skill is not only essential to support economic growth, but is also a precondition for growth to be inclusive since it is the educated and skilled person who can stand to benefit most from the employment opportunities which growth will provide.'

And further that,

'There is a need for concerted action in several key areas in order to ensure that skill formation takes place in a demand driven manner. Curriculum for skill
development has to be reoriented on a continuing basis to meet the demands of the employers/industry and align it with the available self-employment opportunities.'

On the 'planned' focus of higher education and its objectives, the paper discusses

'Higher education is also essential to build a workforce capable of underpinning a modern, competitive economy... In sum, with new regulatory arrangements and focussed action in key areas, particularly expansion and quality improvement, we hope to build a robust higher education system that would sustain rapid economic growth, promote international competitiveness, while at the same time meet the rising expectations of the young enterprising Indians.'

Thus, there has been an untenable emphasis on re-thinking higher education as means/pathway of accessing and entering the labour-market. The content of higher education is increasingly being determined in response to demands of the market, and education is being conceived of as a set of skills required to equip young people to participate and compete in the globalised world. There is a clear conflation of education with skills and skill-development, which is an inherently problematic conception and one that has been criticised extensively, as neoliberalist tendencies of capitalism. The critics argue that skilling typically focus only on commodifying skills and therefore, obviates personhood and undermines individualism. The pressure is being intensified through the introduction of higher education reform which focus on wider participation

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1 See Urciuoli (2008) for a more detailed discussion on the problematics of skill-building programmes as market-integrative devices and its narrow and laden conceptualisation.
of private sector, greater institutional autonomy and increasing internationalisation of higher education, all of which are being publicly debated and criticised for various reasons, at present. This is contributing to increasingly complex outcomes with regard to access for youth from socially disadvantaged backgrounds and inclusion of questions of social justice within the field of higher education. Newer forms of exclusion are being produced through de-legitimisation of certain forms of knowledge and processes of knowledge-production, denial of entry to students without the necessary capacity to finance their education, and newer hierarchies of education where professional, marketable education is being favoured over other types of knowledge.

The problem of access and exclusion in higher education has been further compounded with the increasing privatisation and professionalisation of higher education.\(^2\) Higher education has increasingly become the means of equipping one's self with the necessary training, and more importantly certification, which can help with the entry into the formal labour force. Such education is often unaffordable and requires certain technologies and equipments that students may not have access to. As a result, students from disadvantaged backgrounds are often forced to stay away from the professionalised, elite education, increasingly delivered through private or privatised institutions. Such institutions lay claim to providing the means for integrating with the rapidly 'globalising' world around them. Thus, the students from disadvantaged backgrounds, often first-generation entrants to higher education institutions, from

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\(^2\) For a more detailed discussion on the privatisation of higher education in India and associated problems of access (financial, quality and lack of learning material), see Mahajan, 2012.
economically precarious backgrounds struggle to access quality education, much of which is increasingly being rendered obsolete and irrelevant, under pressure from the institution of the Market, which frames and understands all knowledge in terms of acquired skills to be used at work, in the 'real-world.' Thus, there has been a rapid shift towards the neo-liberalisation of higher education in India, which has contributed to the commercialisation of education. This commercialisation is problematic on a number of fronts: for converting higher education into a for-profit good/commodity/service, but more significantly for introducing an alternate set of concerns and questions which are used to manage, evaluate and sustain public institutions under pressure from neoliberalism. The crises in the sciences (which have rapidly gravitated towards engineering and technology), the social sciences and the humanities, and its increasing distance from one another, have further contributed to the problem.

A second problem for youth from disadvantaged backgrounds relates to de-legitimation of traditional, embedded knowledge systems. The problem, although a part of the colonialist, modern education system which resurrected hierarchies of knowledge and skill which disregarded native knowledge and practices as inferior and irrelevant, is becoming increasingly pronounced and relevant in today's world. This is because of the growing demand for market-driven skills and knowledge under increasing influence of

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3 For a more detailed discussion on the neoliberal reform of higher education and its articulation in government's policy documents, see JBG Tilak (2012).

4 For further discussion on the dangers of neoliberalising knowledge and the perceived crises of humanities, see Wendy Brown (2011).
neoliberalism, of the colonialist continuities of knowledge, quality and skills which are transcribed onto academia, and the unending conception of education, particularly higher education as part of the modernisation project. All of this has worked to de-legitimate certain forms and ways of knowledge and knowing. These work, sometimes in obvious, but often is silent, unacknowledged, and therefore unaddressed, to further disadvantage students from marginalised backgrounds whose only means of achieving social mobility is through their integration with the private or privatised, professional, modern education, to which access remains a critical issue.

In the earlier years, the problem of access was primarily dealt with through reservations. Most such programmes, which work with youth from marginalised backgrounds in the field of higher education, are framed with the objective of enhancing access through affirmative action. Despite affirmative action in the form of reservations, remedial, lower-cut offs and scholarships, and other institutional incentives, youth from marginalised communities remain under-represented in higher education. The problem is not restricted to access (or entry) alone, but includes a number of other issues such as questions of language, quality of learning material, human resource issues, disjunction between the research institute and the teaching within undergraduate colleges, imposition of hierarchies of disciplines/knowledge, and so forth. In the recent years have seen an introduction of a range of policies, programmes, research centres and training cells which seek to address the problem faced by youth from disadvantaged

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5 See G. Sen & R. Basant (2010) on the limitations of the existing affirmative action policies in higher education in India.
backgrounds when entering higher education. All of this require, alternate imagination, modes and programmes for interventions to address social justice issues in higher education. Responses to questions of social exclusion in and during education are typically organised around fellowship and volunteer programmes which encourage youth to engage with communities around them (and sometimes far away through global exchange programmes) in extension to their academic calendars; through cells which provide remedial teaching in English and computers; and more recently, through research and training centres which seek to re-think causes and processes of social issue and work as advocacy and training centres for the design and implementation of inclusive policies.

Similar sentiments which focus on the conception of education and training as aggregate of skills, marketability of skills, education for the purpose of enhancing productivity: both at the individual and collective levels, and increasing emphasis on demand-side factors determining the nature and content of skills, are echoed within other development programmes (community-based, participatory development programmes) working with young people, especially in developing countries. Over the years, programmes working with young people have become significantly popular, and while the earlier conceptions focussed on preventing abuse and crime; these have increasingly moved towards investing in young people to build their individual and community's capacities. By and large, such programmes work towards skilling young people, predominantly to become:
1. better, more responsible and disciplined workers and volunteers in the task of
nation building (through employability training programmes which have the
added emphasis on building softer skills such as communication, 'anger'
management, emotional management and so forth); and

2. towards creating more responsible/responsive citizens (which are largely driven
by neoliberalism with its emphasis on the withdrawal of the State, with focus on
creating and strengthening markets with as little regulation as possible and
increasing privatisation of social action/community development) in response to
the growing crises of governance.

The dominant and popular associations of youth and their 'roles' are evidenced in the
draft National Youth Policy (2010) of the Government of India, which discusses the
following as its key objectives: 'building patriotism', 'responsible citizens who care for
their families and communities', 'instill sense of national unity', 'help them become
economically self-reliant and productive units of the country', their lifestyles, according
to the draft policy should be 'free of substance abuse and other unhealthy addictions and
dissuade them from engaging in “harmful” sexual practices', 'instill and nurture
volunteerism' and so forth. A large number of programmes with youth are commonly
organised around the themes and sites of Education and Employment/Work-places,
given their centrality to questions of individual and collective productivity, opportunity
and mobility. On the other hand, though sporadic, there are a number of programmes
premised in more substantive, critical and multi-disciplinary/multi-domain frames,
which work with young people to equip them to engage with questions of social justice and exclusion to transcend narrow and fixed identities of workers, voters and volunteers.

Overall, there is an urgent and critical need to move beyond the questions of numerical representation of youth from marginalised backgrounds, and engagement with questions of social exclusion and justice through short-term, experience based programmes into more substantive terrain. The Pathways to Higher Education programme at HEIRA is located within and against these contested conceptions and content of citizenship of youth (including questions of access to knowledge and opportunities for mobility which makes higher education ever more pertinent and relevant), particularly for those from socially marginalised backgrounds. It engages significantly with questions of social justice and/within the field of higher education. It seeks to work in/with the undergraduate college space, which increasingly represents the society at large, in more ways than one.

The focus of the Pathways programme and its objectives are as follows:

1. teachers' engagement- training for adoption of new pedagogic practices, curriculum development in areas of citizenship and social justice, and orienting them to deal with issues of social justice in their contexts;

2. students' engagement- transforming learning practices/knowledge by changing pedagogic priorities, and increasing social and political engagement; and
3. in vitalising the culture of the colleges by building greater sensitivity to questions of social justice and self-reflexivity amongst students through the activities of the Pathways cells.
METHODOLOGY

The review of the programme was commissioned in August, 2011 by HEIRA. The key objective of the review\(^6\) was to:

'evolve a dynamic Impact Monitoring Framework for assessing improvement in quality of access to higher education, based on a case study of the Pathways to Higher Education Programme designed and administered by the Social Justice Initiative of HEIRA, CSCS. This would build on the recommendations of the review of the programme conducted last year. The IMF’s scope is to include beneficiary pools such as teachers and students as well as institutional processes and structures.'

The review was organised in three phases:

1. The first part included observation of the students' workshops: two rounds of workshops were organised, the first of which were common though tailored to the specific context of each college and emerging concerns from within the workshop. The second round workshops included specific inputs identified and designed on the basis of the students' projects. The reviewer could attend the first round workshops at Farook College in Calicut, Kerala and AV Baliga College in Kumta, Karantaka. The workshop reports from the other colleges were made available to the reviewer.

2. The second phase included observation of the teachers' workshops, organised in

\(^6\) Quoted from the Terms of Reference for the review commissioned by HEIRA to the reviewer.
December, 2011 and an internal team meeting to assess the progress and identify potential areas of future work.

3. The second phase involved a follow-up visit to five of the nine colleges, with the objective of collecting students' experiences from the workshops, assessing progress on the students' projects and most significantly, identifying co-ordination and convergences between the various components of the project. The colleges visited during this round included: AV Baliga College in Kumta, Karnataka; St.Aloysius' College in Mangalore, Karnataka; Farook College in Calicut, Kerala; SIES College and St. Xavier's College in Mumbai, Maharashtra. The visits included conducting focus group discussions with the participant students and interviews with the facilitator-teachers. Where it is was possible, effort was made to conduct these two separately, since it was noted that teachers tended to prompt or steer discussions in specific directions, and students were often reluctant to speak in the presence of the teachers.

Internal field visits and workshop reports were also made available to the reviewer. In addition to this, entries to the Facebook page created by and for the Pathways groups in each of the colleges, and written feedback from students not directly involved in the Pathways programme from SIES College were also provided.
The key findings from the review of the programme have been detailed in this section.

**The re-designed programme**

Following the internal and external reviews commissioned in 2010-11 and on the basis of the team's experiences from the programme, certain design modifications were incorporated into the programme.\(^7\) This was done for a number of reasons, which have been outlined in greater detail in the earlier review reports: first, it was found that there was a need for re-aligning the various components of the programme with the objective of enhancing impact, most significantly for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. It was suggested that there was a need for a less diffused, safe space for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, especially when they enter higher education, which is more conducive for them to start developing analytical and critical skills. Second, to shift the focus of the students' workshops away from technology as a skill to technology as a space for mediating differences, learning, archiving marginalised knowledge and so forth. Third, given wider institutional issues, it was found that the Pathways Cells, meant as the space for driving larger campus-based interventions seemed to have diffused impact and where core students participants from the students' workshops were unable to continue their learning activities. Fourth, access to technology was somewhat

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\(^7\) The first review report, commissioned to the same reviewer, has been excerpted in Annexure 1 of this report.
compromised especially in colleges in smaller cities and towns. A number of changes were thus made into the design of the programme. The modifications in the design of the programme were designed with the objective of enhancing the overall impact and overcoming some of the operational issues within the programme.

Overall, the modifications incorporated into the design of the programme have been successful. Instead of working intensely through the students' workshops with a core cohort and later with a larger, more diffused student community; the focus in the re-designed programme has been on retaining the initial cohort itself. This has served a number of crucial objectives.

1. By encouraging the students to identify a social problem: at any level, related to higher education, and to develop a research project/change campaign around it, the programme has helped the structure the student engagement. This, now works as the theme around or means by which the students are encouraged to develop the necessary critical and analytical skills, which are crucial for their higher education.

2. It provides the programme with longer window of engagement, which has been used to provide extended guidance through the state-level coordinators, the second round of workshops on a range of crucial research skills. These skills have been identified on the basis of the theme and research problem selected by the students, and thus helps them complete their projects.

3. Higher education is possibly an inhospitable space for students from
disadvantaged backgrounds who have to navigate the many transitions of language, pedagogy, curricula, disciplines and so forth. Recognising the need for creating a safe space for young people to develop the necessary skills, competencies and confidence to navigate their higher education, the programme now provides for an extended, intense engagement spread over a year. In providing a safe space to the students, the programme helps the students develop these initial skills.

Recognising the issues related to the nature and outcomes of campus activities, intended to be organised through the Pathways Cells, the design modifications have served three crucial functions, which include:

1. From the early formulation where the nature of campus activities were sometimes narrowly framed and targeted the unnamed, unknown students on the campus which resulted in an extensive though somewhat diffused impact; with the re-design, the campus activities have become better integrated into the overall scheme of the programme. They serve as an extension of research/change campaigns undertaken by the students. This then, provides an additional space for engagement and reflection with the students who learn to communicate their findings, problems, points of view, and thus present alternate and or marginal perspectives to problems germane to higher education.

2. The Pathways cells are student-focussed, and student-led. They serve as an extension of the safe space discussed above: which is both spatially and
politically an opportunity for them to ideate, archive, analyse and reflect.

3. It had been noted in the previous review report that the Pathways cells were becoming spaces where existing hierarchies between the teacher and the student and among the students were being re-inscribed. In imparting a focus to the constitution, content and activities of the cell, the programme has managed to circumvent such institutionalised social hierarchies.

The third key component of the programme relates to teacher-training. With the re-designed programme, the intervention has been expanded to include- teacher training to orient them to re-conceptualise social justice in more substantive ways and equip them with the necessary skills to ideate on ways and means by which they can integrate it within their curricula and pedagogy. As a result of this, teacher training has evolved into a more reflexive space where the teachers are encouraged to design new or re-design existing courses or modules. In the long term, this intervention area is likely to see the largest impact, though the immediate outcomes are somewhat difficult to ascertain.

Overall, the programme seems to have developed a stronger focus: by restricting its target community to the selected student cohorts and teachers; in creating and providing a structured and sustained space to students' engagement through their research projects/change campaigns and the Pathways cells; and by aligning the various components of the programme for intensive impact. This is all the more significant given that HEIRA encourages creating institutionalised models for intervening in higher
On students' workshops

Reflecting on the changes within the overall prorgamme, the students' workshops were re-designed and operationalised for the first time this year. By and large, the workshops have been successful in encouraging the students to reflect and ideate over questions of social justice and helping them acquire the necessary/relevant skills which will help them in their higher education (varying from the use of social media, project conceptualisation and planning, analytical skills relating to identification of a social problem and ideating over means of dealing with it). Three key points of criticism have been provided on the content and design/delivery of the workshop with the objective of further strengthening the immediate and intermediate outcomes from the projects.

The students' projects are conceptualised through the use of appreciative enquiry, an organisational development tool, now used widely within the field of development management. The tool, instead of focussing on problems, begins with assets or what works and inferring lessons from it, to design and deliver the planned future. While it helped provide a radical criticism of the problem or deficit-based approach to planning for development, it is not as if appreciative enquiry is without its own problems. It has

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8 In this, it is worth pointing out that in the recent years, a tradition of criticism as an integral part of any/all evaluation has been developed. The criticisms pointed out here, following this tradition, will work towards further strengthening the programme, more specifically its premise and conceptualisation.
been commonly found from critical evaluations of appreciative enquiry that it refuses to acknowledge questions of power and authority, social construction of meaning and is vulnerable to being used instrumentally.⁹ Some of the tensions/failure in ideating using this approach were evident during the students' workshops. These related to the use of assumed skills/knowledge/ethics which constructed a deprived other (devoid of skills to look after themselves, ignorant or lacking in knowledge and indisciplined). For example in Farook College, the project ideas related to micro-production units, vocational training to help the poor students, public education to 'make' the law-abiding citizen. Similarly, in A V Baliga College, Kumta, while being asked to think of situations which worked and why (discover), the participants' ideas were essentially conceived of in deficit or deprivation (the road is bad, public transport does not work, corruption and bureaucracy, lack of laboratory facilities and so on). While the use of appreciative enquiry is not entirely responsible for the nature/form of project ideas initially generated by the students, which are only manifestations of the wider social processes; it also fails to provide the participants with a useful structure and vocabulary with(in) which to conceive of their ideas. Though it is appreciable that through the use of appreciative enquiry the project encourages them to re-think themselves as victims but as catalysts, its fails to equip them with the necessary concepts, vocabulary and questions with which to think critically.

The second key criticism relates to the conception of engaging students in social change projects, primarily through campaigns. The campaigns, developed this way, were

⁹ For further discussion, see Reed (2007) and Grant and Humphries (2006).
expected to use social media or other related platforms for mobilisation and dissemination. In doing so, a number of themes were identified collectively by the participants in each of the colleges. The identification of the theme was essentially produced on the basis of the various vectors of social stratification, which manifest itself in the college space, including for example, language, caste, money, attitude, access to training opportunities and so forth. While in the case of colleges located in cities like Mumbai, these vectors of stratification were clearly evident, this was not the case in Kumta's A V Baliga College. Recognising the need for not focussing solely on projects which were built around these vectors of social stratification, the facilitating team suggested that they could rethink their projects as small-scale, collective research projects. This served the following critical functions:

1. Campaigns demand that students are able to clearly identify the vectors of stratification/differentiation. However, these are sometimes too difficult to identify (or possibly to admit), which makes conceptualising and developing a campaign ever more difficult for the students.

2. Campaigns tend to be excessively reliant on definitive change, or a set of objectives that they seek to achieve. Given the constraints of limited conceptual vocabulary (the participants being first year entrants to higher education institutions), time, resources and access, these could have easily degenerated into public-education type, edifying campaigns for change, with simplistic and simplified definitions attached to it. A research project on the other hand, is not overtly self-burdened with the idea of change, and instead provides the research
team (in this case the student cohort) with the opportunity to acquire and develop crucial skills, relevant to their higher education.

3. The campaign mode makes certain assumptions regarding coalescing of interests, mobilisation of opinion, access, and so forth. However, during the workshops the students were not able to generate sufficiently substantive problems and possible road-maps to achieve it.

4. The campaign mode also assumes a certain trajectory of creating, growing and exiting, which is difficult to achieve within the limited time that students possess.

5. By focussing on a research project, the prorgamme managed to circumvent issues of access to technology, which is often controlled by the teachers. Instead, it focussed on building a set/portfolio of both generic and specific research skills which would be helpful in the future, and more directly related to higher education.

In the early stages, it was sometimes observed that the students tended to think of social problems as something that resided outside their own selves, a problem of which they were not a part or did not belong to or were affected by. As a result, social change tended to be framed in terms of a catalyst (their own self) who assumed certain privileges and responsibilities in achieving social change. Conceived in this way, social change became externalised or externally located, one in which processes where framed through the presence of a victim Other and saviour Self. It might be worthwhile to rethink social change campaigns as research projects, and encourage participants to
critical assess positions, adopt a more historical and structural analyses, and encourage them to think of creative ways in which to attack a/any social problem.

Third, in a number of workshops, project templates were handed out to the students at the initial stage of ideation. In some cases, these mechanics of organising and managing their projects became an over-riding concern which interfered with the ideation, critical analysis of the problem and in developing consensus of the project. It has been commonly found that in project planning meetings, especially at the community level, that mechanics and templates of project management inhibit discussion and force participants to think in linear and simplified ways. It might be best to share the template only after the projects have been selected, discussed with the facilitators and consensus around the topic developed within the group.

What did you learn/acquire?

The second round of follow-up visits was undertaken with the objective of identifying emerging issues and assess the outcomes of the programme, particularly at the student level. In doing so, the reviewer went to the participants with one central question: 'What did you learn/acquire through the programme?' The objective behind framing this question was not necessarily to develop a list of skills or competencies gained by the

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10 See Dar (2008) and Dar & Cooke (2008) for a more detailed discussion on the problems associated with the deployment of management and managerialist tools of planning and monitoring in development, which in turn degenerates into re-constituting development into narrow, managerialist, modernist, neoliberalist forms.
student as a causal or direct outcome of the programme, but to 'read' the responses for content and depth. This helped develop an understanding of the substantive yet nuanced ways in which they framed and articulated their research problems thus ascertaining the critical and analytical skills developed by them, understand the relevance of the programme to their higher education experience, mapping the collaborative knowledge production processes and issues therein, and assessing the quality and rigor in formulating any argument.

Through the two round of students' workshops, the second one focussing exclusively on building research skills, the student participants have acquired a range of methodological, analytical and critical skills. At three of the five colleges, the students were able to present their research projects in significant detail and in an impressively nuanced manner. They could articulate the specific skills that they had acquired and identify potential ways in which they could use these skills in their future. At SIES College, Mumbai, for example, the students had identified the urban-rural divide in higher education as the key theme of their project. The students have begun to question of the notion of poverty as deficiency and deviation, the linguistic cultural divide between the South Indians and Maharashtrians, recognising slums as geographies of production critical to the urban economy, the subjectification of the poor and so forth. They had also acquired useful research skills of conducting interviews, analysing data, writing story-boards and scripts, drafting their arguments, managing their time, accessing key informants, research ethics involved in maintaining anonymity and
confidentiality, collaborative working and so forth. Similarly, in Farook College, Calicut, the students had selected inequality in education as their project topic. In this, the students richly described the issues, its relations (not necessarily causal) with questions of religion, gender in the Malabar belt, social mobility, the narrow marketised conception of students as 'products', and so forth. They drew extensively on their own and their friends' life experiences in beginning to understand the research question. However, the teacher facilitators had developed a survey which relied extensively on testable hypothesis, codified responses and proposed to use quantitative analysis to establish causal relationships between household economics and access to higher education. Even though the student responses clearly showed both the irrelevance of establishing such a causal relationship and the creative ways in/with which to re-think questions of access in higher education. There is a need, therefore, to channel these rich descriptions and individualised narratives to encourage the students to think creatively and critically, and much less to have them complete the research project, laden with positivistic though restrictive and dated research data and analysis.

At St. Aloysius College, Mangalore, and St. Xavier's College, Mumbai, the research projects had yet to take off for a number of different reasons. At St. Xavier's College, the teachers cited lack of clear instructions and confusion over ways in which they could possibly proceed. On the other hand, at St. Aloysius College the students did not seem particularly interested in their project work. The discussion was marked by a almost-resolute silence on their part and despite many efforts to engage them, there was
no response from their side. However, outside the classroom, once the teachers were not around, the students were back to their noisy, interested selves. Unlike other colleges, both St. Xavier's and St. Aloysius College host a wide variety of societies, clubs and associations which encourage student participation in extra-curricular activities. Participation in such clubs is incentivised through extra marks that the students can earn. Also, the colleges appear to be more resourceful in terms of access to corporate and charity sponsorship for campus-based events, student fairs and other events, and research programmes. The Pathways programme is often conceived of as one-such additional space in such colleges, though lesser resourced, more intensive and one that is not duly recognised. However, this does not mean that students from socially disadvantaged backgrounds have quality access to higher education or that questions of social justice are no longer relevant in such institutions. It might be worthwhile to develop an alternate method of intervention in such spaces. The existing associations, clubs, cells and societies are often framed in the old-school mode of social work as the means of achieving social justice without any significant critical engagement. Alternate models of intervening whose objective could be to re-orient the wider political imagination of such spaces might be a more effective way of intervening, rather than creating an additional space, which is perceived incorrectly.

Discussing the relevance of such skills and students' perceptions of it, the teacher facilitator at A V Baliga College, Kumta shared that the

'students come and ask “What is the use of all this?”'. The projects are very
good, the students are enthusiastic about their field work and the documentation. But they are not so interested in the discussion of it. They do not know the significance of what they have done.... These skills the students acquire through the workshops, they are not able to transfer it to their subjects or in their classrooms.'

Thus, while he agrees with the relevance of such programmes, he points out that students often view these as one-time projects. It is essential that there is a follow-up discussion with the students, in helping them understand: one, the relevance of what they have researched; second, the ways in which the skills acquired by them can be transferred and translated into their on-going and future higher education. The programme can consider organising a day-long workshop with the students at the end of the year-long project cycle to help them understand the relevance of what they have learnt/acquired and its value: both to them as individuals, as knowledge production from a markedly marginalised perspective, on subjects which are often under- or poorly-researched, and the implications and significance of their findings.

**Teachers' workshops**

An annual teachers' workshop is organised each year. The workshop aims at orienting teachers to re-think disciplinary boundaries, integrate marginal and marginalised perspectives within their classroom teaching to address questions of social justice in more substantive ways, to re-frame the curricular objectives and attempt to develop innovative curricular material, not as new content but one that attempts to re-think its
objectives and address concerns pertaining to social justice through the integration of hitherto marginalised knowledge forms and processes of knowledge-production. The teacher-training workshops are extremely successful in that they have equipped teachers to problematise their disciplines, their teaching material and method. The success of the workshop cannot and must not be judged by assessing it in the short-term through the introduction of innovation in courses and modules, curriculum and teaching methods; but in more substantive ways, which have been outlined in the section on Recommendations.

There is one critical observation that relates to the role of teachers in the students' research projects. First, teachers sometimes tend to short-circuit the research process in their haste to complete it on time. As a result, the learning opportunity around which the programme is designed is no longer realised in its entirety. In some cases, the teachers impose their own disciplinary frames and methods, which runs counter to the spirit of critical questioning, which the programme aims for. And in still some other cases, the teachers significantly under-estimate the potential and engagement of the students, or attempt to control the research equipment, process and outcomes. Second, it appears that there has been some time lag between the first-round workshops and finalisation of the topics and methods, which is understandable, and sometimes the teachers may not be significant involved in the evolving discussions. There is, no doubt, the need for involving the teachers in the everyday-guidance and management of the research process, given that costs are involved and therefore necessary approvals are required. As
a result, some of the teachers cited lack of co-ordination within the operation of the project and lack of clarity in their roles. It might be useful to clarify this role, but to make sure that it does not stifle the research process, in any way.
RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations on the basis of the review have been organised into two parts. The first relates directly to the Pathways programme, being implemented by HEIRA. The second set of recommendations focus on developing an Impact Assessment framework for higher education.

Recommendations for the Pathways programme

The key recommendations for the Pathways programme are as follows:

1. Given the re-configurations designed within the programme, it appears to be developing into an excellent model for intervening within the higher education space. Based on the challenges emerging from some of the colleges, particularly in terms of the Pathways Cells being perceived as an additional extra-curricular activity, it might be worthwhile developing a more variegated model of intervening within the under-graduate colleges.

2. Given that the programme has now entered its final year, the team might wish to develop wider institutional platforms, and if possible, collaborations with the objective of disseminating the potential and experiences of intervening in higher education, using this Pathways model. Possibly as a start, HEIRA can explore institutional collaborations with the various Centres for study of social exclusion and inclusive policies, set up through the University Grants Commission. The
mandate of the Centres is in alignment with the objectives and scope of the present Pathways programme. The existing programmes and research within these Centres would benefit from the rich and substantive imagination and experiences on questions of social justice in higher education that HEIRA can provide.

3. The students have begun to pick up critical thinking skills. However, they do not fully comprehend the relevance and worth of what they have acquired through the projects. It might be worthwhile to organise an end-term workshop to encourage students to recognise and articulate the skills that they have acquired through the project and explore ways in which these can be used for their higher education.

4. The students' workshops are well-structured. The social change campaigns must be re-thought of as research projects to ensure that the challenges and concerns identified earlier regarding social change campaigns are duly addressed. The projects can be collaboratively implemented among the students and the teachers. It might be useful to rope in other interested teachers, apart from the college appointed facilitators.

5. The selection of research themes and projects should be guided, particularly in the initial stages. This will help in developing a critical perspective, impart richness in content and develop greater clarity. Some of the facilitators did not appear to be well-equipped in performing this function.

6. It is imperative that the programme starts thinking of research outputs in terms of knowledge products. Very often the teachers are inclined to present this either
as somewhat sterile reports or through public events/media such as conferences, competitions and films. These knowledge products can be possibly used by the teachers and students as potential learning material harvested online, for purposes of advocacy, and must be archived, preferably online, for further research work.

7. The role of the teachers could be possibly rationalised further to ensure that the imposition of disciplinary thinking and methods does not impinge negatively on the research projects. At the same time, involving other interested teachers within the project could also be attempted to provide a wider institutional foot-print to the programme.

8. The earlier cohort appears to have benefitted immensely from the programme. This points to the need for continued involvement with the earlier cohorts, possible through the various activities. Not just as audience of volunteers who can guide them, but also in archiving and disseminating the knowledge products produced through the present cohorts. This will also work to expand the overall institutional foot-print of the programme, thus lending it scale and wider legitimacy.

9. There is a need for better co-ordination between the regional facilitators, teachers and the students to ensure that the research projects receive adequate guidance and can be implemented without comprising with the learning objectives outlined for them.
Developing an impact assessment framework for higher education

On the basis of the review, the report recommends a framework for impact assessment in higher education. The framework is designed and recommended on the basis of certain key principles, which include:

1. That questions of social justice can no longer be assessed through the up-take or usage of a programme/policy but requires a more substantive re-conception or working definition of social justice to ensure that outcomes are assessed accordingly. This will include curricula that de-, or re-emphasises existing hierarchies of knowledge and therefore, power; material and methods that (de)-legitimate alternate processes of knowledge production, and so forth.

2. That higher education is often assessed in terms of the end-impact or end-term outcomes of an intervention; such as students' scores to assess quality of teaching material and teacher, or students' feedback to assess teaching quality, or number of students accessing affirmative action programme and so forth. While the end outcomes or impact is important, process-based outcomes are just as significant. Not only to understand the effectiveness of an intervention in the short- or medium-term, but also ensure that the inputs are 'delivering'.

3. More qualitative and complex indicators should be developed to comprehensively understand impact in higher education. These are often confused to be linear, simple and numerical, but are in reality complex, subjective, and therefore difficult to measure.

4. Impact of higher education interventions also tends to be multi-sited. That is, it
is not sufficient to consider a discipline, a material, a method, an institution or an individual. It must consider the multiple roles individuals can and do assume and resist the passive role into which most interventionist development programmes cast them. For example: students as producers of knowledge, teachers as learners, students as medium of transmission of knowledge, institutions as carriers of de-politicised social understanding and even resistances to it, and the inter-linkages among them.

The proposed framework for assessing impact for higher education is presented below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process-based Indicators</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Material and Methods</th>
<th>Institution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Participation in cohorts’ activities</td>
<td>- Participation in cohorts’ activities</td>
<td>- Learning infrastructure and assemblages created, for students, teachers and institutions</td>
<td>- Institutional footprint of programme activities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Collaborative role in knowledge production and/or exchange (and with whom).</td>
<td>- Initiating collaborative research (in what ways does it push knowledge boundaries: through collaboration with students, across disciplines, inter-disciplinary and so forth).</td>
<td>- Support from and access to available networks, repositories and archives.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome Indicators</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Material and Methods</th>
<th>Institution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Critical skills and competencies for analysis/synthesis acquired</td>
<td>- Innovations in material and methods used in the classrooms</td>
<td>- Originality and significance of knowledge produced</td>
<td>- Incorporation of concerns of social justice (integration versus new material from marginalised perspectives).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Originality and significance of knowledge produced or exchanged</td>
<td>- Originality and significance of research output (where applicable).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Originality in presentation/dissemination.</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

The framework, more specifically the indicators and means of verification/assessment,
should be suitably modified to reflect each programme's mandate, scope and objectives. It is important to note that not all sites of change listed above might be applicable in each of the programme. This, therefore, represents the sum of existing sites of intervention, from/to which sites, indicators and therefore means of verification can be suitably modified/added.
ANNEXURES


Key Observations: The key observations are:

1. The review suggests that equipping the students with technology skills enables but does not ensure quality engagement with questions of social justice given the lack of digital access, duration of exposure offered through the workshops, extraneous pressures for seeking employment and the overall, disabling college and classroom conditions which work to re-produce the various inequalities, which present considerable challenges to the programme.

2. The skill-building workshops have helped students access and produce online learning resources, create space for presenting alternate perspectives from below on contemporaneous issues, opening spaces for dissent and gives rise to newer forms of social interaction, thus creating wider dialogue to shape the subjectivities of the students; though the focus has mostly been on the former two items in the first year.

3. The outcomes of Cells which have focussed on students from marginalised backgrounds only have been far more favourable. In the future, the Cells should be further developed as demonstrative institutional spaces (whether virtual or otherwise) repeatedly created, provided and accessed.

4. The activities of the Cells have focussed on related questions of social justice and ground it in the complex realities of various contexts using diverse formats. The production of such spaces and access to them for students from the marginalised backgrounds is commendable as it opens space for wider social interaction, newer sites and patterns of exchange amongst diverse subjects with diverse subjectivities; and creates a safe space for leisure and recreation.

5. The Cells are and can further evolve into a demonstrative space where the students present their own politics, texts, imagination, and life experiences and initiate action. Various avenues for “serv(ici)ing” the community which remain mired in old-school social work with little space for reflexivity and resistance are already available within the college institutions; and access to such spaces remains uneven. The Cells can play more meaningful roles in steering the content and eliciting participation of students from marginalised backgrounds in such spaces.

6. The teachers' engagement should be developed further and intensified, given their limited exposure and dominant organisational socialisation which limits their autonomy and imagination. There is a need for recognising significant initiatives from some of the teachers and developing suggestive directives for other teacher participants.

Recommendations: This section summarises the key recommendations from the review:

1. The programmes interventions could be redesigned such that longer engagement is possible between the teachers, the students and the institutions; and their convergence, resulting in amplified impact and possibly creating resources for future use.

2. The intervention with the teachers' can be used to generate data for designing future
interventions with the faculty across undergraduate colleges.

3. Given the multiple sites of proposed change, HEC might choose to focus on the individual student as the key site of change, with other interventions designed as input interventions leading to this. Though, the programme must focus on existing structures, people and processes in place that can be revitalised, instead of introducing new ones.

4. Given that the HEC has been working towards developing systemic solutions it could possibly adopt one college in each of the three states for purposes of demonstration. Faculty members and other resource persons from HEC can work closely with each of these colleges to develop 'models' for replication.

**Developing an impact assessment framework:** Some suggestive guidelines for developing the impact assessment indicators and collecting data for it are as follows:

1. Complexifying the indices of Social Exclusion: There is a need for generating more data on profiles of students to understand variables which affect students' quality access to higher education, holistically. As part of their research projects, the students can articulate their many identities, standpoints from which such data can be carved out.

2. Building critical perspectives on social work: Enhancing access to existing and popular spaces which engage in social action/work for students from disadvantaged backgrounds and diversifying the conceptualisation and content of such spaces can be an outcome area.

3. Accessing alternate sites of learning: Mapping enhancement in quality of access to other sites/opportunities of learning beyond the classroom is one possible outcome. Also, the response of the campus in ensuring wider access can be used as an outcome of the programme, though these are likely to be far fewer.

4. Diversifying pedagogy: An important indicator would be development and use of teaching material and methods which are sensitive to questions of social justice.
2. Workshop structure (students' workshops, cohort 2)

Day 1
The first session was to introduce the participants to story telling. Why do we tell stories? Why are stories important? What does telling of a story achieve? Where do we find these stories from? The participants were given a clear catalyst to structure their stories, enabling them to see themselves as story tellers. The focus was in hearing everybody’s stories, getting them to question what lies behind telling of a story and building a safe space where different stories can be heard. In the second session, we continued with the story-telling motif, but this time the stories were more focused around questions of change. We introduced them to ideas of change without defining what it is that we think they should be changing. There was a discussion around different kinds of changes – changes which are about infrastructure and changes which are about the personal, and encouraged them to think of both kinds of changes. We used videos that showed Mumbai in different forms as catalysts to talk about these kind of changes.

Day 2
On the Second day, we continued with the idea of story telling but at a more complex level. We introduced to them the idea of story-telling for change. To participants at both colleges, we showed a couple of videos from around the world where people have told stories to change and also told stories of change. Using the videos as an example, we asked the participants to now think of themselves as change makers and see what are the ways in which understand change.

Day 3
The third day for both the colleges was a day of consolidation. Based on their discussions and identification of problems, the participants formed a narrative proposal. They presented these proposals to an audience of their peers and faculty members who are going to be involved in the activities for the rest of the academic year. They were introduced to the structure of a project proposal so that they can bring coherence and build a work plan and budget for their activities. The students in their own groups are now going to create proposals for their activities and submit to them for perusal in a month’s time. Based on these proposals, funds will be allocated to them and they will be documenting the process as they go along.
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