

Embedding Community Engagement Within Indian Higher Education Institutions' Functions: Insights on Community-Engaged Learning

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Abstract

Despite the growing volume of global research on community engagement and its outcomes, studies emerging from the Global South, particularly India, are sparse. This article makes a valuable contribution toward enhancing a scholarly understanding of engagement in India by highlighting the findings made through a qualitative study at eight Indian higher education institutions (HEIs). This inquiry explored the diverse modalities of the embedment of community engagement (CE) within HEI functions (teaching, research, and service), transforming these functions into engaged scholarship and thus creating community-engaged learning (CEL) opportunities through the introduction of socially relevant courses, immersive pedagogies, coconstruction of new knowledge for community welfare, and social outreach interventions. The article draws on these insights to propose a conceptual model to guide global HEIs toward transforming conventional scholarship into engaged scholarship, thereby yielding key CEL outcomes and thus contributing to a simple but pragmatic understanding of international CEL.

Keywords: Community engagement, engaged scholarship, community-engaged learning, experiential learning, teaching-learning



The worldwide increasing popularity of community engagement (CE) in higher education institutions (HEIs) reflects a growing appreciation of CE as a new approach to teaching-learning (T-L), research, innovation, and the cocreation of new knowledge for addressing societal challenges (Davies, 2023; Tandon et al., 2016). Positioned as a transformative approach to academic scholarship, CE mobilizes community-university partnerships and dismantles the barriers between theory and practice, making the former more relevant and the latter more informed (DePrince & DiEnno, 2019; Mittal, 2021). While addressing complex social problems, CE also trains and prepares students for effective service to society (Chang et al., 2020; Dickens et al., 2023). Such curricular engagement involves faculty, students, and communities for addressing community-identified needs and deepens students' civic and academic

learning, thereby enriching the teaching and research functions at HEIs (Benneworth et al., 2018).

Education emerging from such democratic engagement leads to multidimensional and holistic learning outcomes, resulting in socially conscious civic action (Dobson & Kirkpatrick, 2017; Sabharwal & Malish, 2016). This form of community-engaged learning (CEL), emerging from the embedment of CE within the academic functions of teaching, research, and service, collectively represents the "scholarship of engagement or engaged scholarship (ES)" (Boyer, 1996; Hart et al., 2023; Welch, 2016). In this framework, ES is not a separate activity but is infused within the core academic functions (Denny, 2018; September-Brown et al., 2023). It enables the application of theoretical knowledge by connecting classroom and course material with the immediate communities and their context, thus creating rich and multidimensional CEL

experiences (Benz et al., 2020; Molosi-France & Dipholo, 2022). This process facilitates the engagement of learners with what they are learning, resulting in internalization and transformation, which reflects the true premise of CEL (Molosi-France & Dipholo, 2022).

However, within this promising direction in the global engagement literature that embraces efforts to conceptualize CE, ES, and CEL, academic viewpoints from the Global South are conspicuous in their scantness. Further, the Indian context is sparsely represented in the literature, given the absence of empirical research studies on these aspects (Panwar, 2020). We view this position as both a challenge and an opportunity. Even as the challenge lies in the difficulty of positioning reference points for scholarly studies, this situation also presents an opportunity to conduct pioneering research on CE and CEL, especially considering the Indian National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which endorses ES practices (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2020). However, given the vastness of the Indian higher education sector, this policy is still in the process of being embraced countrywide, as it is being slowly rolled out in phases (since 2022–2023). Therefore, although it is too early to see this policy's impact on Indian higher education, its influence in the coming years is expected to be monumental. In this context, this article aims to position our research at this critical juncture, wherein its findings can contribute toward the realization of the vision of NEP with respect to CE practices. Sharing this research can also ensure authentic Indian representation in the global engagement and international CEL literature.

To achieve this objective, the authors designed a qualitative inquiry through an exploratory lens to answer the following research question: What are the different ways in which CE is embedded in HEI functions, and what kind of CEL experiences emerges therefrom? Here, the study first provides a review of the literature on CE and ES practices in global academia and the emergent CEL outcomes. Further, a summary of the methods is presented, followed by a discussion of the findings, which are based on interviews with 50 academics (including university leaders and faculty members) conducted at eight Indian HEIs best known for their engagement practices. The findings, depicted thematically,

reveal diverse modalities of CE embedment within academic functions, resulting in a variety of ES practices and the emergence of wide-ranging CEL opportunities. Next is a discussion that outlines the key emergent lessons and includes a conceptual model for guiding global HEIs on embedding CE within their functions (representing an ES approach) and achieving crucial CEL outcomes. The article concludes with a call for more regional, relational, and institutional approaches that provide an in-depth exploration of these engaged practices.

Literature Review

Different scholars and institutions have defined CE in different ways, aligned with their respective contexts (Shawa, 2020). Among the earliest and most popularly accepted definitions of CE was that proposed by the Carnegie Foundation, which defined CE as the “collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources, in a context of partnership and reciprocity” (Driscoll, 2009, p. 6). Also referred to as the “technical definition” of CE, this definition implies an engagement “with a community,” rather than done “to and for” a community (Starke et al., 2017; Thakrar, 2018). CE is also viewed as a practice that is embedded into the core academic framework, within the HEI functions of teaching, research, and service (Farnell, 2020; Franz, 2019), and is therefore approached as a pedagogy to enhance and systematically advance T-L (Fitzgerald et al., 2016).

Such an embedment of CE in academia has been referred to as the “scholarship of engagement” or “engaged scholarship” (ES), a term attributed to Dr. Ernest Boyer (Boyer, 1996; Welch, 2016). It refers to the scholarship resulting from collaborative and mutually beneficial partnerships between HEI members (i.e., faculty, staff, and/or students) and external nonacademic partners or communities (Denny, 2018). Such partnerships are aimed at generating and disseminating new knowledge for addressing public issues and creating CEL opportunities, thereby nurturing civically engaged students and faculty while enhancing the public value of higher education (Denny, 2018; Welch, 2016). Accordingly, ES is created and communicated through teaching (disseminating knowledge and facilitating learning),

research (discovery and development of new knowledge), and service (facilitating sustainable community development), with engaged scholars working within all three functions in teams of scholars and community partners (Denny, 2018; Franz, 2009). Therefore, Hart et al. (2023) described ES as representing the integrative institutionalization of CE, which facilitates scholarship-led transformative societal impact.

Such an approach to scholarship embraces reciprocal sharing of knowledge that emanates from diverse cultural contexts and incorporates this diversity into teaching, learning, and research (September-Brown et al., 2023). It challenges and differs from conventional scholarship (disciplinary, homogeneous, expert-led process) in being driven by mutually beneficial interactions built on core academic functions (Sam et al., 2020; Sandmann, 2008; Sandmann et al., 2008). Therefore, contemporary forms of CE focus on ES as an expression of CE, which represents a participatory, reflexive, and socially accountable knowledge creation and learning process (Kearney, 2015).

Theoretical Framework

This study uses Furco's (2010) conception of the engaged campus as a theoretical framework to understand the CE, ES, and CEL opportunities within the Indian higher education context. Furco established deep connections between the higher education functions and the community. Further scholarship supports the three components of community-engaged scholarship that Furco proposed: teaching, research, and service.

Community-Engaged Teaching

Furco (2010) viewed community-engaged teaching as being built on the premise that community as a rich landscape provides a great opportunity for strengthening students' education and learning outcomes while giving them a chance to serve the community. Interactions emerging from such activities, which are mutually beneficial and based on respectful collaboration, not only address community needs and enhance community well-being, but also deepen students' academic and civic learning, thereby enriching the whole T-L architecture at HEIs (Benneworth et al., 2018). Engaged teaching (which enables engaged learning) denotes academically based CE courses or variations of curricular

or cocurricular T-L strategies, which include service-learning, practice-based learning, experiential learning, and so on (Benneworth et al., 2018; Tandon, 2017).

Such experiences also advance engagement opportunities, paving the way for knowledge transformation rather than a simple transference of information, as happens in traditional teaching practices. These engagement experiences facilitate innovative learning, as they challenge the students to engage in critical reflection on the academic content as well as the real-life situation in the community (Hart et al., 2023). Therefore, engaged teaching denotes a paradigm shift toward a Mode 2 knowledge production approach to curricular T-L for the contextual cocreation of knowledge to solve social challenges, thereby building students' academic competencies as well as enhancing holistic learning, personal values, and a spirit of social responsibility (Hart et al., 2023; Sugawara et al., 2023).

Community-Engaged Research

Engaged research entails transdisciplinary, collaborative research undertaken with the community, who participate as research partners/coresearchers (and not as research subjects) and engage in active knowledge transfer and exchange (Benneworth et al., 2018; Furco, 2010; Sugawara et al., 2023). They also help researchers access hard-to-reach/marginalized populations while securing their trust and buy-in, thereby providing greater legitimacy to research investigations (Furco, 2010). Community-engaged research (CER) is an umbrella term for a wide variety of research-based methods, including community-based research, collaborative research, participatory action research, community-based participatory research (CBPR), and so on (De Santis et al., 2019; Mthembu et al., 2023).

Undertaking such partnership-based research necessitates adopting new pedagogies, learning new competencies, devising new ways of organizing and exploring new knowledge, and recognizing practitioner-based/Indigenous knowledge (FICCI, 2017; Lepore et al., 2021). Accordingly, Bidandi et al. (2021) perceived engaged research as enabling students to become knowledgeable and active citizens in their respective communities, countries, and the world. In this view, engaged research translates into both educational and community development outcomes (Benneworth et al., 2018).

Community-Engaged Service

Community-engaged service includes a range of engagement activities such as community service, community programs, volunteering, and engagement of faculty as expert consultants for providing technical assistance, legal advice, or other discipline-related services for serving community needs (Doberneck et al., 2010, as cited in Benneworth et al., 2018; Furco, 2010). Engaged service involves a collaboration between academic staff and students for providing beneficial services aimed at improving the quality of life of local communities (Cunningham & Smith, 2020; Farnell, 2020). However, such activities may or may not be related to an academic program and are mostly seen as supplementary to core teaching and research activities (Denny, 2018; Farnell, 2020).

Nonetheless, Furco (2010) asserted that despite the extracurricular status of such activities, members of an engaged HEI accord great value to them and take pride in the qualitative contributions that, through engagement, their institution makes in the community. FICCI (2017) viewed the dimension of engaged service as critical to developing in students the attribute of active citizenship, anchored in social learnings and marked by humanistic values of empathy and respect, which help develop the spirit of social consciousness and responsibility. Such “active citizens” seek solutions to contemporary challenges, with the objective of fostering social welfare, thereby emerging as social changemakers (FICCI, 2017).

Methodology

Study Context

Considering the vast Indian higher education sector, comprising 1,168 universities, 45,473 colleges, and 12,002 standalone institutions (Ministry of Education, 2023), the scope of this study was limited to universities and university-level institutions (HEIs). The Indian University Grants Commission (UGC) lists three broad categories of Indian HEIs: (1) *public* HEIs (central and state institutions, run and financed by the central and state governments, respectively), (2) *private* HEIs (funded by private bodies), and (3) *deemed to be* HEIs (accorded the status of universities by the UGC, in recognition of their long-standing academic tradition; UGC, 2024).

We applied three criteria for the selection of HEIs: (1) *History*: Given the nature of the study, only HEIs with a fair history, experience, and understanding of CE were considered for selection; (2) *Category*: At least one HEI was selected from each of the three university categories; and (3) *Geography*: At least one HEI was selected from each of the five geographical zones (north, south, east, west, and center). Finally, eight HEIs (two public, three private, and three deemed-to-be), representing eight different Indian states across five geographical zones, were selected.

Sampling and Recruitment of Participants

The study adopted a nonprobability sampling design, as this methodology would facilitate the discovery of new information to better comprehend the research problem (Johnson et al., 2020). Purposive sampling was used to select participants who could provide rich, quality perspectives on the study topic (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Accordingly, two samples were selected: (1) Sample 1: academics belonging to the executive leadership (EL) at HEIs and (2) Sample 2: faculty members (FM) from different departments/schools. Using this strategy, participants from Sample 1 could provide a holistic view of the overall vision/mission of the HEI with respect to fostering ES and facilitating CEL, and participants from Sample 2 could provide practical insights on the embedment of CE within the academic functions and the emergent CEL outcomes.

Furthermore, since sample composition is more important than sample size in qualitative research (which focuses on information richness rather than representative opinions), small sample sizes are usually suited in such cases (Guetterman, 2015). Accordingly, the sizes selected for the corresponding study samples are detailed in Table 1.

Although the initial planned number of participant recruitments for Samples 1 and 2 were 16 and 24 respectively, the principle of data saturation (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022) was applied to determine the final sample size. Accordingly, recruitments continued until no new or additional issues/insights were identified and the repetition of data was observed. Finally, the sample sizes across all eight HEIs were fixed at 21 for Sample 1 and 29 for Sample 2.

Table 1. Samples and Sample Sizes for a Study of Community Engagement Embedment in Higher Education Institution Functions

Sample number	Participants	HEIs covered	Minimum number of participants recruited per HEI	Initially planned recruitments	Final recruitments
1	Executive leadership	8	$n = 2$	$n = 16$	$n = 21$
2	Faculty members	8	$n = 3$	$n = 24$	$n = 29$
Total			$n = 5$	$n = 40$	$n = 50$

Data Collection

The data was collected through semistructured, in-depth interviews for obtaining rich, descriptive information, and learning/understanding about the participant's experiences on the research topic (Barrett & Twycross, 2018). The interviews were conducted with the help of an interview guide that was designed in alignment with the research questions and provided a structure for the interview, along with the flexibility to pursue probing questions (Durdella, 2019). Some of the questions that guided the interviews were (1) How is CE embedded within the academic functions at your institution? (2) Are there any specific modalities for fostering ES? (3) What kind of CEL opportunities emerges from such embedment, and what is its nature? (4) Are there any facilitative arrangements or practices at the university which support such practices? The data obtained was recorded on an audio-recording device, after obtaining participant consent.

Data Analysis

The analysis of the emergent data was an inductive, iterative, and systematic process, involving a series of steps that included processing and transcribing data, deidentifying and storing data files, segmenting and coding transcribed data, identifying thematized patterns, and developing theorized storylines (Creswell, 2014; Durdella, 2019). The first step consisted of transcribing the interviews verbatim, by converting the data from audio-recorded spoken words into detailed written transcripts (Nieuwenhuis, 2016; Stuckey, 2014). Further, Braun and Clarke's (2006) method of thematic analysis was used for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting the data for emergent patterns. This method included multiple steps: (1)

getting fully familiarized with the data by reading and rereading all the transcripts to get a sense of the entirety of the data, the general emergent ideas, and their tone; (2) generating initial data codes by building on the emergent data impressions, rearranging them into categories, and labeling them "codes"; (3) searching for themes by sorting the narrow codes into broader themes, representing a patterned meaning within the data set; (4) reviewing themes by revisiting the extracted codes to ensure coherence and consistency; (5) defining and naming themes by summarizing the scope and content within each theme, and drawing fair, credible, and accurate analytical conclusions on the final data representation; and (6) weaving the narrative into an objective discussion.

Trustworthiness of Findings

Being a qualitative study, its rigor or trustworthiness was established in the ways in which the study was designed and conducted, thereby conforming to the four-dimensions criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, cited in Forero et al., 2018). The credibility of results was ensured through sustained and quality engagement with the participants, peer debriefing, and reflective journaling; transferability of the data was ascertained through detailed narration of the research study and its event and design. Maintenance of a dedicated audit trail, including detailed description of the research methodology, ensured dependability of the study. To ensure the confirmability of the study and reduce researcher bias, all the information/data obtained from the participants was confirmed and corroborated with them. Further, the selection of two data samples and multiple data sources

(audiotapes, transcripts, field notes, and reflective journals) ensured that the findings were triangulated and mutually supported, adding to the confirmability of the study and its findings. Additionally, data excerpts from the interviews have been included in the Results section to support the themes, to facilitate the reader's assessment of the findings.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance for the study was obtained by the Institutional Research Ethics Committee (IREC), after ensuring that all ethical protocols were put in place. To obtain the ethical approval, gatekeeper letters issued by the appropriate leadership authority were sought from all selected HEIs, allowing the conduct of the study at their respective institutions. Further, due permission and help was obtained by the authorities for recruitment of participants under Samples 1 and 2. Finally, all the selected participants were briefed on the study's objectives and methodology in writing, including the clauses of anonymity and confidentiality, through detailed letters of information; this information was also communicated in person. Any related questions/clarifications with respect to the processing of information and use of emergent data were addressed to the participant's full satisfaction. Participants were also required to fill out an informed consent form before the commencement of interviews.

Results

Thematic analysis of the findings resulted in the emergence of three themes. They are discussed as follows and supported by excerpts from interviews across Sample 1 (ELs numbered 1 to 21) and Sample 2 (FMs numbered 1 to 29) across all eight HEIs (numbered 1 to 8).

Theme 1: Deriving CEL Opportunities by Embedding CE Within the Teaching Function

Interviews with academics revealed three distinctive modalities through which HEIs are embedding CE within the teaching function, thereby fostering ES and CEL. The first modality involves specialized courses; in the second, CE elements are incorporated in traditionally taught courses; the third requires engaged and immersive T-L pedagogies. We examine these modalities in turn.

Specialized Courses

The first modality was the incorporation of specialized courses/programs on CE within the curriculum. Although these courses differed with respect to their nature and design, three commonalities emerged: (a) embedment within the T-L structure, in being credited and contributing to curricular learning objectives; (b) immersion in real-life, experiential learning, thereby broadening students' learning horizons beyond the theoretical domain; and (c) balance between theory and practice, while ensuring active engagement with the communities, where the students applied their theoretical knowledge in practical settings to explore community problems and devise solutions.

The term "communities," as understood by most interviewees, comprised a diverse, heterogeneous group, which differed primarily on four parameters: (1) geography (rural, urban, slum, semirural/urban), (2) gender (men, women), (3) age (elders, middle-aged, youth), and (4) sociocultural characteristics (ethnicity, linguistics, etc.). Spanning these divisions, the focus was primarily on marginalized and deprived communities facing social inequities, who also assumed the core of the community-engaged courses taught at HEIs. Speaking on one such course on "Community Action Learning" (CAL), an interviewee shared,

This 2-credit course integrates academics with social issues, where the student identifies a pressing social problem and devises a solution, by using their knowledge and working with communities, and in the bargain, they learn technical skills, communication skills and also life lessons and values. (FM3, HEI1)

Sharing similar views regarding a different program at a different HEI, another interviewee commented,

Live-in-Labs is a credit based, multidisciplinary experiential learning program, which is conducted in 6 phases. The program alternates between campus and village communities, where students explore rural challenges in diverse areas of water, education, health, etc. and co-design potential solutions along with the communities. (FM14, HEI5)

It was found that reflection and learning from the field experiences formed an important component of such courses, where academic learning and social development were found to be mutually reinforcing. Academic knowledge facilitated progress toward social development objectives, which in turn enriched academic learning through real-life, engaged experiences. Corroborating these ideas, an interviewee shared about the design of a multidisciplinary service-learning course: "The students apply the principles of service-learning to serve community needs in real-time, and here, they learn from the community through active and critical reflection and develop skills to work with diverse community groups" (FM7, HEI2). Community-engaged courses also included part-time/add-on courses, such as one on folk medicine, about which an interviewee elucidated: "Built on CE principles, this course focuses on Indigenous knowledge systems and co-construction of theoretical and Indigenous knowledge for enriching student learning" (FM18, HEI6). Such an engagement with communities enhanced the students' understanding of social issues, appreciation for multiple epistemologies, and grasp of the contextual value of curricular content.

Integrating CE in Traditional Courses

The second modality was the integration of CE elements in the curriculum of traditionally taught courses, for further advancing ES and enriching CEL outcomes for students. Sharing about an institution-wide program, which involved a uniform academic intervention adopted across all disciplines, an interviewee shared,

Concept to Practice (C2P) is integrated in all disciplines, right from the first to the final semester. Here, the skills of the students are slowly built in the first two semesters, such as observation with empathy, identifying the problems, and then in the third and fourth semester, they go on to propose a solution. The objective of C2P is to enhance the problem-solving skills of the students. (EL9, HEI6)

This focus on advancing the competencies and learning outcomes of the students emerged as the driving factor and natural outcome of making the courses community engaged. This connection became evident while interviewing another academic, who mentioned,

Our founders felt that the current curricula lacked real-world relevance. So, our syllabus is designed in a way which focuses on action learning in and with the community. So, all courses have a theory, practice, and project component. The core idea is to develop critical competencies for serving the society. (EL3, HEI1)

Hence, such embedment of CE not only utilized academic learning to further social development agendas, but also provided a contemporary/real-world relevance to the existing curriculum, through CEL. Students thereby gained competencies like working collaboratively with the community, engaging in systematic need assessments, carrying out community-focused interventions, and developing leadership and communication skills.

Further, the rationale and modality for embedding CE varied depending on the institutional contexts and/or the respective academic disciplines. With respect to the former, an interviewee remarked,

Considering the vast tribal context of surrounding population in and around the university, most academic disciplines are adding a bit of tribal context in their syllabus. This is through varied forms of engagement with the tribal communities, for addressing their concerns and working for their welfare. (FM23, HEI7)

Discipline-related variation in CE embedment modalities was elaborated by another interviewee, who recounted,

Working in the communities is integrated into the departmental curriculum in one way or the other. It may be a social responsibility project in Business Administration; or teaching in slums, government schools/college students in English; service-learning projects in Engineering; Architecture also has some rural interventions. (EL5, HEI2)

These aspects significantly enriched the traditional curriculum and advanced the students' understanding of community and real-time social issues. The core idea was to ensure the best possible use of academic disciplines to effect engagement in a way

that was mutually beneficial and resulted in continued and impactful CEL.

Using Engaged and Immersive Pedagogies

The third modality was the adoption of engaged and immersive pedagogies in the T-L processes, for diversifying and advancing CEL opportunities. Adoption of these pedagogies was premised on the concept of experiential learning, based on action and reflection, for effecting improved student learning outcomes. While action facilitated community development, reflection aided academic learning. Accordingly, an interviewee remarked, “We believe that learning needs to be experienced and transformed into knowledge, wisdom, and action. This includes critical thinking, reflective learning” (EL14, HEI5). Another interviewee emphasized the criticality of engaged pedagogies in connecting the abstractness of academic theory with real-world relevance, as he noted,

Our teaching methodology incorporates an innovative pedagogy called Labs on Land. It focuses on working in collaboration with community owned real-life systems, and co-learning with communities. This collaboration makes the university a part of communities and its social development process through the application of academic theories for social advancement. This methodology is being used in the areas of renewable energy, dairy technology, creation of smart villages, etc. (EL20, HEI8)

Interviewees also provided an account of other specialized and creative pedagogical tools employed in the T-L processes for working with communities, which aided CEL in meaningful ways. Here, an interviewee shared, “In the Agricultural discipline, instead of Participatory Rural Appraisal, we are now using Participatory Learning & Action, as it is more holistic and involves deeper community-based learning” (FM2, HEI1). Further, art-based techniques also contributed to advancing CEL opportunities, as elucidated below:

In our teaching-learning processes, we focus a lot on art-integration, which results in more organic and natural learning. So, music, painting, storytelling, theatre, are some of the methodologies we employ

when working with the communities or during the community-based internships that our students do. (FM28, HEI8)

Aligned with the contemporary advancements in CEL, another novel pedagogy adopted was human-centered design methodologies, built on the tenets of design thinking, which aided CEL while facilitating unlearning and relearning when working with the community. Reflecting on the same, an interviewee shared, “Getting trained in and using participatory methodologies like human centred designs, students are able to better understand and reflect on the community context, its resources, opportunities, challenges, etc.” (FM14, HEI5). These insights provide fair evidence that engaged pedagogies facilitate deeper connections with communities, ease the process of rapport development, and advance the understanding of communities and their contexts. This process includes unlearning of prior conceptions or misconceptions about the community and their issues and approaching them from an open-minded perspective. While aiding colearning from, in, and with the communities, such exercises also help develop an empathetic approach in the students.

Another set of interviewees emphasized that evaluation of such engaged courses needs to be based on innovative techniques (rather than traditional academic assessments) to truly gauge CEL outcomes. Accordingly, an interviewee shared,

The evaluation rubrics under the service-learning course involves multiple things, like it can be done on the basis of a project; or a video that students prepare, based on their field learnings; or it may also be by way of self-reflections. Academic assessments happen in a very rigid manner. We wanted to change this, so our evaluation is purely innovation and creativity based. (FM7, HEI2)

Therefore, evaluation in engaged courses involved appreciating the individuality and creativity of learners and giving them the flexibility to present their learnings in a multitude of ways. Another creative approach to evaluation involved including the community themselves as assessors of the students’ performance, as one

interviewee elucidated: "In our Community Action Learning program, one part of the assessment is done by the community itself, and the next part is the academic assessment, which we do" (FM3, HEI1). Similarly, another interviewee shared, "In service-learning projects in the engineering department, we take evaluation from the community partners also. So, 30% evaluation comes from the community partners and 70% evaluation is done by faculty members" (FM5, HEI2). With communities and community partnerships forming the core of the CE processes, providing community evaluation of engaged courses made the CEL process more authentic, while also being true to the CE spirit.

An overview of some such CEL courses is presented in the Appendix.

Theme 2: Harnessing CEL Opportunities by Embedding CE Within the Research Function

Interviewees viewed the research function as providing valuable opportunities for CEL when CE was embedded in it, thereby fostering community-engaged research (CER) approaches. We found the most popular manifestation of CER to be community-based participatory research (CBPR), which is coordinated by specialized CBPR hubs established at half of the HEIs sampled and embedded in the curriculum as short-term courses and projects. The difference between traditional research and CER/CBPR is reflected in their values, design, and emergent outcomes. Traditional research is chiefly centered on a researcher-led agenda, whereas CER/CBPR stems from local community needs, emphasizes collaboration and participation, and is driven by the overarching objective of social action and social change (Hall & Tandon, 2017). Corroborating these ideas, an interviewee remarked,

Our research problem is defined by the community, so this sets our pathway. This is also kind of obligatory for us that each research question which is outlined, must be useful for the society. So, all our research practices are guided by the values of service and social welfare. (EL13, HEI5)

Another interviewee elaborated on this approach:

Our community partnership research model is carried out in collaboration

with the community. It is completely based on their needs, which we identify through a systematic need assessment. So whatever project we design, it considers the social impact and community benefits, and these social outcomes are outlined in the research proposal stage itself. (EL21, HEI8)

In terms of such CER approaches and the discussions under Theme 1, two relational parallels can be drawn, regarding the emergent CEL opportunities. Essentially, in CER, researchers apply knowledge *for* the community, and they find solutions *with* the community.

Researchers Apply Their Knowledge for the Community

First, similar to engaged teaching and experiential learning approaches, HEIs are using CER as a medium through which researchers can apply their knowledge, skills, and expertise for deriving positive and socially beneficial outcomes for the community. This process of addressing social challenges and devising solutions provides crucial opportunities for CEL, as it involves practical, real-time learning in the communities. Commenting on these aspects, an interviewee noted,

The university's focus is on projects which benefits the communities and addresses its most pertinent and immediate needs and problems, through the application of its expertise, technology, and infrastructure in real time. The methodology of CBPR is being specially used for this purpose. (FM13, HEI4)

Further, in such research approaches too, classroom theory is coupled with field-based action and complemented with critical reflection to further consolidate, enrich, and advance CEL. Or, as an interviewee shared,

Our research plan is always an interplay between theoretical knowledge and field engagement. So, the implementation is very much supported with lectures. This is to ensure that the researchers in the field are in a better position to deal with real-life situations and derive valuable learnings from the process, as part of reflective exercises in the classroom. (EL14, HEI5)

Researchers Find Solutions With the Community

Second, similar to the participatory pedagogies discussed in the preceding theme, the basic design of CBPR also involves devising solutions in collaboration with the community, through arranging impactful and mutually beneficial community partnerships. This practice enables colearning with the communities, resulting in meaningful cocreation of knowledge. Accordingly, an interviewee elucidated,

The main purpose of CBPR is understanding the community's problem, and solving them together, along with the communities, who are co-researchers in the process. They participate in the entire process, including data collection, so the learning happens together. Based on that, local solutions are devised which are suited to the community's needs and are also useful for them. (EL19, HEI7)

Recounting an experience involving such coconstruction of knowledge, an interviewee shared:

Co-construction of knowledge between universities and communities is based on areas of shared social concern. For example, the university neighbourhoods have farms, where there was a huge problem of crop destruction by birds, which troubled the farmers. On the other hand, the university faculty housing was grappling with the problem of dust storms. This issue was then taken up in one of the studio exercises of the architecture students studying landscape, in collaboration with the communities. It was mutually decided to develop a local food garden, where the students shared their knowledge in landscape design, and the farmers shared their experiences in age-old farming systems and crop selection. Therefore, through colearning, the problem was mutually resolved. (EL11, HEI4)

Community collaboration was thus viewed as valuable for harnessing local knowledge. This form of colearning facilitated devising solutions from the community's standpoint and utility, thereby guaranteeing its usefulness and sustainability, while also

enhancing the students' cognitive capacities, practical skills, and social attributes. Further, considering that participation of communities as coresearchers in the process lies at the heart of CER approaches, the interviews revealed that the data collection processes adopted were also creative and innovative. In particular, these processes facilitated mutual learning by appreciating and incorporating the diverse and multiple epistemologies of community knowledge(s).

Accordingly, art-based methods found much popularity in such research approaches, which not only contributed to rapport development, but also helped communities share their viewpoints and knowledge more expressively, thereby facilitating smoother knowledge exchange and CEL. Elaborating on this result, an interviewee shared,

In one of our projects on domestic waste management, we adopted arts-based methods, because it was the best means to communicate with communities. The people responded and gelled in well. We used pictures, drawings, visual representations. Students learn a lot from such unconventional processes. (FM13, HEI4)

Another interviewee added, "In CBPR projects, we use storytelling, *nukkad nataks* or street plays, in various aspects like education, sustainable livelihoods, etc." (FM24, HEI7).

Another variation of a CER approach providing CEL opportunities has been the various applied research interventions carried out by different academic departments or institutional research centers. These approaches (while being different from "ideal" CER/CBPR approaches) emerged as important institutional mechanisms for effecting socially relevant research, having both academic and social implications. These approaches are used to carry out research projects of diverse nature, aimed at social benefit, and situate HEIs as valuable knowledge partners, effecting socially relevant knowledge exchange and transfer. Narrating an example of this, an interviewee shared,

Every department has their own area of expertise, and they do some form of applied research, which has a community or a social relevance. They identify a set of social challenges which has implications for

the community, the institution and for the government and then come up with solutions and recommendations. (FM29, HEI8)

A more detailed example was shared by another interviewee, as below:

Under the student start up and innovation policy, a funded initiative of the state government; students (undergraduate, post-graduate) are called on to draft research proposals on socially important issues. The policy ensures that innovation processes link academia with society and small & medium enterprises. Here, the students and faculty solve social challenges and create entrepreneurial opportunities. This gives students a valuable learning opportunity, where they can apply their knowledge in practice, by way of research projects. (FM10, HEI3)

Consequently, while the faculty members and students get an opportunity to acquire real-time and research-based learnings on social issues, the communities benefit through the development of solutions/models for addressing challenges in their daily lives. Depending on the nature of projects, the governments and local institutions also emerge as stakeholders who benefit from the process. In some cases, these applied research projects also involve an active interplay of different disciplines, with multiple individuals applying their knowledge, skills, and expertise to achieve the desired CEL and social development outcomes. Here, while sharing an example of an institutional research center, an interviewee posited,

We have a Centre for Integrated Tribal Studies, which works for improving the quality of lives of tribals in the areas of education, health, and economic development through action-oriented research activities. Different departments are involved here, and this connects university and socially relevant issues, and learning on the ground happens. (FM23, HEI7)

However, when viewed from the CE dimension, considerable differences were evident, as most of such applied research initiatives were HEI driven, so research-

ers led and coordinated the entire process, with limited participation by the communities. Therefore, although such projects were mostly community-placed, rather than community-based, the emergent learning opportunities were evident. Transforming these efforts into truly engaged ones would ensure complementarity/mutuality of benefits and authentic learning for all stakeholders.

Theme 3: Drawing CEL Opportunities by Embedding CE Within the Service Function

Exploration of the ways in which CE is embedded within the service function of HEIs—particularly those that offer opportunities for CEL—resulted in the emergence of three exclusive mechanisms: delivering specific, targeted interventions; acting through diverse avenues of institutional outreach; and collaborating with external partners.

Specific, Targeted Interventions for Communities

The first mechanism included designing and delivering specific, targeted interventions for bringing positive, tangible, and qualitative changes in the lives of the communities. These activities were aimed at addressing the immediate community needs/concerns in a way that eased their lives on a day-to-day basis. Similar to the experiential learning opportunities within the teaching and research functions, these service-based activities also gave the students a platform for new, real-time, and social learnings. Accordingly, an interviewee shared,

We carry out different tasks in our adopted villages. Like in one of the villages, the civil engineering students came across various ground water related problems, because of severe water scarcity, especially in summers. Here, they conducted activities such as recharging of water pits, basic surveys to know more about the landscape, and took remedial actions accordingly. (FM10, HEI3)

Recounting a similar experience in the discipline of paramedical and allied health sciences, another interviewee shared,

The department provides health related services to the local community, like blood tests, through the community diagnostics

centre. These services are offered at a subsidized rate at their doorstep and forms a part of the curriculum. If anyone is not able to come, the collection of blood samples is organized at their homes. (EL2, HEI1)

The reflections from these excerpts point to three aspects of this mechanism. First, these activities also entail judicious application of the university's expertise and resources for providing effective solutions and serving the community. Here, the students get another opportunity to derive practical learnings, anchored in theoretical knowledge. Second, the actions described by interviewees illustrate the growing instances of CEL in diverse disciplines, particularly natural/pure sciences, which have traditionally been viewed as nonengaged. Curricular inclusion of such activities further enhanced the validity and authenticity of such practices. And third, these activities encourage the development of civic and social responsibility in students, which is crucial, given that these are the core values that drive the spirit of any ES intervention.

Diverse Institutional Outreach Structures

The second mechanism for advancing CEL by making the service function more engaged was the diverse institutional community outreach structures, driven by the overarching mandate of securing community welfare. Narrating about one such structure, an interviewee shared:

We have a Culture, Sports & Responsibility (CSR) forum. It is an integral part of our academic structure, where students have to spend 124 hours per year. It is a cosmopolitan group, where several schools work together in collaboration. Like, if agriculture or management students while working in the community, find that the farmers need some technical assistance in farming, then the engineering department can chip in and demonstrate the use of drones for spraying of fertilizers. So, it is a very integrated model of community engagement, and involves lot of useful learnings for students. (FM2, HEI1)

Experience of another institutional community outreach structure at a different HEI was shared by an interviewee as follows:

Our Centre for Social Action (CSA) links community partners and academics and undertakes development projects in and with 4 urban communities and 122 rural communities spread across the 5 states of Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Telangana, Maharashtra and Kerala. Every department has a representative in CSA, and we are also planning to make it a credited program soon. (EL7, HEI2)

Another EL from the same HEI also reflected on the CSA, as he added,

Here, the students apply their classroom knowledge (of various disciplines) towards solving socially relevant problems. These problems are taken up as projects with an ideal tenure of a semester and can also be in the form of research of a social nature. Through these projects, students learn about social issues and work towards a better tomorrow. (EL5, HEI2)

In addition to real-time application of disciplinary learning, these structures offered advantages by way of having student representation from different disciplines across the institution. This wide representation, combined with their curricular inclusion, demonstrates immense potential for advancing and diversifying CEL options and opportunities. In being institutionally recognized establishments, these structures enjoyed great visibility and popularity institution-wide, which could be leveraged to further advance CEL uniformly across the institution and its departments.

Collaboration With External Partners

The first two mechanisms for embedding CE within the service function, thereby contributing toward the creation of CEL opportunities, focused on in-house efforts; the third mechanism involves the collaborative efforts undertaken by HEIs with external partners. Commenting on one such partnership with a governmental institution, an interviewee shared,

In collaboration with the Rajkot Municipal Corporation, we have undertaken a project to make Rajkot a Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aware city. Here, we work on local SDG issues, where the students

go to different wards of municipal corporation and create awareness. We are also preparing a policy document on SDGs in action, in the local language. (EL8, HEI3)

Another interviewee reflected on a similar partnership with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), as she shared,

A lot of our CE activities, projects are undertaken in partnership with NGOs. They already have projects running in the community, so the people know them, which makes our access to communities easy. There is a lot to learn from them as well, as they have immense grassroot [sic] knowledge of communities and their local context. (EL11, HEI4)

These excerpts reinforce the importance of fostering diverse external partnerships and considering the range of opportunities, expertise, resources, and skills that the partners bring, which not only aids CE implementation, but also contributes toward facilitating CEL for the students. Within this mechanism, government partnerships enable CEL on policy issues and their implementation; NGO partnerships facilitate CEL in communities, supported by their vast network in the communities and their in-depth knowledge of the latter's context. Participation in such partnerships is important, considering that the first step toward ensuring CEL is entering the communities, which is not easy, especially for HEIs, because they are often viewed as "outsiders" and regarded with fear and apprehension. NGO partnerships play an important role in dispelling this notion, thus providing access and opportunities for CEL, resulting in the achievement of both academic and social development outcomes.

Further, most such activities represented the core ethos of the HEIs' ideologies and beliefs in terms of achieving community empowerment and sustainable social change, which they deeply valued. Advancement of real-time CEL opportunities for students emerged as a positive and natural outcome of external partnerships.

Discussion

The findings from this study answer the research question by highlighting the different ways in which CE is embedded within

the academic functions at HEIs, fostering ES and resulting in diverse CEL opportunities. In doing so, the findings position ES as an important mechanism for fostering rich CEL experiences, thereby providing a unique conceptualization of CEL. In particular, the interviews explored the nature, design, and depth of such CEL opportunities, which contributed to (1) enhanced knowledge through the combination of theory and practice; (2) development of social awareness and consciousness; and (3) acquiring of competencies such as active reflection, communication, problem-solving, and critical thinking. In balancing classroom and immersive field experiences, CEL experiences also resulted in the development of cognitive capabilities (head), affective values (heart), and psychomotor skills (hand).

These findings reinforce the existing literature that emphasizes the importance of engaging the intellect, emotion, and application/action in engaged T-L processes, which are at the center of community building (Watt, 2013). This synthesis can help students engage in strong relationships not only with the communities, but also with themselves (Pasquesi, 2020; Rendon, 2009). Learning along these experiential dimensions results in the development of professional, personal, and civic competencies, creative and design thinking capabilities, and collaborative skills (Lake et al., 2022; McLaughlin et al., 2022; Peng & Kueh, 2022). Such an orientation shapes learning in a way that helps students address community problems that are messy and require application of multiple viewpoints across various disciplines, through adoption of myriad techniques (Dube & Hendricks, 2023; Houston & Lange, 2018).

The analysis also expands our understanding of related issues by detailing the conditions for fostering ES-aided CEL and its associated implications. The study therefore highlights three key lessons emerging from the preceding discussion: the importance of adopting a transformative and socially relevant approach; the centrality of cocreating knowledge through dialogic, collaborative engagement; and the utility of offering whole-institution support via existing infrastructure.

Transformative and Socially Relevant Approach

First, the study underscores the importance of adopting a dynamic and innovative ap-

proach to scholarship (Dickens et al., 2023; Hart et al., 2023; Quillinan et al., 2018). This process entails devising a transformative and socially relevant curriculum, built on creative and innovative approaches to T-L and evaluation (Groulx et al., 2020; Nkonki-Mandleni, 2023). Such approaches link the curriculum with local/contextual realities, thereby creating opportunities for CEL and resulting in the achievement of academic and social development outcomes. This connection with real-life scenarios enhances the relevance of the curriculum, which in turn enables more effective CEL outcomes in students, compared to outcomes emerging from traditional classroom-based approaches (Bhagwan et al., 2022; Molosi-France & Dipholo, 2022). Therefore, to foster meaningful CEL, T-L processes need to be conceived, designed, and executed unconventionally, and from a community-engaged perspective.

Cocreation of Knowledge Through Dialogic Engagement

Second, as CE builds on the cocreation of knowledge(s) between academia and community, the emergent CEL challenges the dominant paradigms of knowledge production and focuses on colearning from, in, and with the communities (Bidandi et al., 2021; Saidi, 2023). CEL thus emerges from dialogic and collaborative engagement between academic stakeholders and communities/community partners, indicating that the learning is interactive (rather than linear) and the resulting knowledge is co-constructed (rather than delivered; Kelly & Given, 2023; Lounsbury & Pollack, 2001). These results also evidence the importance of strong and sustainable community partnerships for achieving CEL, given the diverse knowledge(s), expertise, and experience of the communities/community partners (Osborne et al., 2021; Sibhensana & Maistry, 2023). Amalgamation of community knowledge with theoretical expertise enriches the latter, making CEL more holistic, contextually pertinent, and socially relevant.

Offering Institution-wide Support Through Existing Infrastructure

Third, in revealing specific institutional mechanisms for fostering CE, ES, and CEL, the study also discloses two significant implications for institutional policy.

First, ensuring holistic CEL experiences requires a whole-institution approach, which

calls for the institutionalization of ES practices. It emerged that HEIs that were able to successfully adopt such approaches had the requisite support at all levels within the institution, including enabling policies, facilitative practices, and supportive personnel (Kelly & Given, 2023; McGeough et al., 2022). To further bolster the adoption of such engaged practices, there is also a need for strong and continued commitment from institutional leadership (September-Brown et al., 2023). This support is necessary because, as some of our interviewees mentioned in their reflections on these aspects, challenges remain in adopting such approaches, given that the dominant educational paradigm in India continues to prioritize traditional approaches to education. The support of institutional leadership therefore is critical to facilitating ES.

The second policy implication relates to leveraging the existing institutional infrastructure to create opportunities for ES and CEL. Such infrastructure may include research centers, CBPR hubs, community outreach centers, and so on. Enjoying the advantages of good institutional visibility and recognition, human resources, and a vast social network and community connections, these structures can emerge as strong aids for HEIs looking to strengthen the engagement dimension of scholarship for creating CEL opportunities (Jose & Sahu, 2023; Venugopal et al., 2023). HEIs can equip themselves to realize the true spirit of CE by creating an inventory of such platforms and exploring the different ways in which they can enable CEL.

Emerging within the Indian context, these insights have valuable implications for HEIs (in both the Global North and Global South) who are interested in deepening ES and creating CEL opportunities. In leveraging the Indian experiences and learning in this context, the authors propose a conceptual model (Figure 1) as a practical tool to help such HEIs implement CE initiatives, create ES opportunities, and derive CEL outcomes. This model provides a detailed and interlinked three-step process, while also demonstrating a hierarchical representation of the embedment of CE in the three HEI functions.

1. **Service.** Service is transformed to engaged service through diverse community-based interventions, departmental projects, initiatives undertaken by institutional outreach centers, and channeling external partnerships

(governmental organizations/NGOs). In addition to providing opportunities for learning and serving simultaneously, engaged service also fosters active engagement with communities, while inculcating social and civic sensibilities.

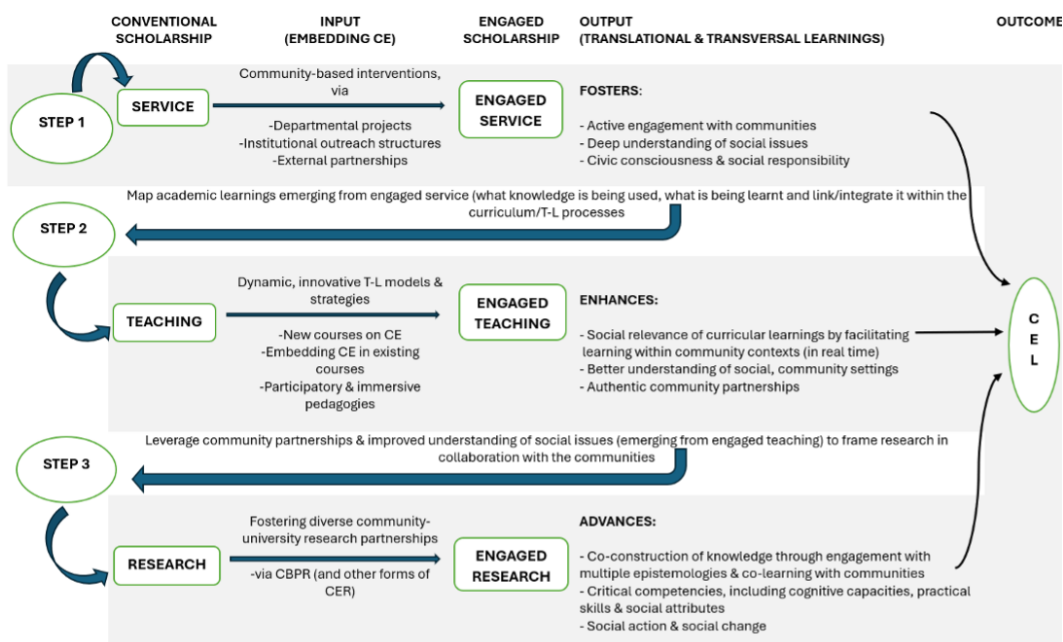
2. **Teaching.** The learnings emerging from engaged service are mapped and integrated into T-L functions to implement dynamic T-L models via new courses in CE, embedment of CE in existing courses/curriculum, and incorporating participatory, immersive pedagogies into T-L practice. These efforts facilitate engaged T-L opportunities, thereby enabling both academic learning outcomes and an improved understanding of the social contexts/issues. These efforts not only foster, but also strengthen, community–university partnerships.
3. **Research.** Community–university partnerships are leveraged to jointly explore/research social challenges and their potential solutions, which are locally usable, feasible, and can be co-owned and managed by communities. Adopting such an approach to research transforms traditional research initiatives into CER/CBPR interventions. The emergent benefits include the coconstruction of knowledge for developing sustainable solutions to social challenges and building 21st-

century competencies in the researchers. Developing such an aptitude is also critical for the development of a self-directed learner, capable of taking responsible, judicious, and collective actions toward safe and sustainable future(s).

This model demonstrates how the embedment of CE in the HEI functions (of teaching, research, and service) transforms them into ES practices, resulting in the creation of CEL opportunities. In order to make this conceptualization more explicit, the authors draw on the study's insights to present operational definitions for CE, ES, and CEL, to make this representation and the relations between these terms more precise and pragmatic.

In this context, CE can be defined as an umbrella term, which envisages transformative approaches to diverse and reciprocal community–university partnerships, where both stakeholders undertake joint activities as equal allies. This engagement channels the specialized knowledge and expertise of academia and the practical wisdom of communities to address multiple societal needs and challenges. This collaborative approach to the coconstruction of knowledge is built on a mutually beneficial premise, resulting in enhanced student learning outcomes while driving social change and sustainable development.

Figure 1. Conceptual Model of the Embedment of CE in HEI Functions



The intersection of CE with academic scholarship forms the basic premise of ES, which can be defined as the set of diverse approaches to engaged teaching (contextually relevant courses and curricula, encompassing pedagogies like service-learning, project/practice-based learning, experiential learning, etc.), engaged research (CBPR and other forms of CER), and engaged service (community service, social outreach, etc.) that combine CE with conventional scholarship. Adopting these approaches creates transformative and contextual learning opportunities for students by connecting theory/classroom with practice/real-world scenarios.

Such impactful learning opportunities emerging from ES constitutes the core of CEL, which can be defined as translational and transversal learnings that emerge when a team of students, teachers, faculty mentors, and communities/community partners work together to explore and address situated, contextual social problems, while also delivering an educational intervention and building student competencies (on critical thinking, reflection, collaborative problem solving, etc.). Consequently, CEL emerges out of a mutually beneficial, collaborative learning ecosystem, and results in the achievement of academic objectives and social development outcomes.

This connection between CE, ES, and CEL provides practical and apposite insights, which serve as a valuable conceptual guidance framework for HEIs seeking to leverage CE and ES to create diverse and effective CEL opportunities within their academic framework. Such efforts by HEIs represent their commitment toward transformative ES practices, aimed at nurturing knowledgeable, informed, and socially responsible citizens, capable of responding to and successfully addressing multiple social challenges.

Conclusion

This study on the exploration of CE, ES, and CEL opportunities at Indian HEIs addresses a significant gap in the literature, particularly with respect to the conspicuous absence of voices and perspectives on CEL from the Global South, and India in particular. Based on the data from 50 interviews, this study sought to develop a nuanced understanding of the different modalities of CE embedment within the academic functions, the diverse manifestations of ES, and the

emergent CEL outcomes. CE embedment is manifested through designing engaged, socially relevant courses and the adoption of engaged and immersive pedagogies therein, which facilitates colearning, indicating engaged teaching practices. Further, while engaged research sought coconstruction of knowledge for community welfare through approaches like CBPR, engaged service interventions anchored in field-based practical learnings were directed toward achieving holistic and sustainable social development.

The study also contributes to the literature on conceptualizing international CEL by offering an analytical frame (conceptual model) for global scholars to conceptualize CE, ES, and CEL within their respective institutional context, along with presenting operational definitions of these concepts. Additionally, it provides a practical blueprint for identifying existing institutional opportunities to aid ES and leverage external support (partnerships) for it. Further, the study's findings bolster arguments for multiple and multilevel approaches for fostering CE, ES, and CEL. These approaches include efforts at the institutional level (policy), at the faculty level (designing an engaged curriculum), and at the level of community/community partners (external partnerships). Such multilevel approaches are essential given the need for the stakeholders to interact and function in unison and coherence, to ensure that the ensuing CE, ES, and CEL outcomes are effective, impactful, and transformational.

However, since CE is still an emerging trend in Indian higher education and not many HEIs have adopted it, the study remained limited to eight HEIs. Although these institutions represented all major geographical zones of India, HEIs from northeastern India could not be represented. Therefore, future researchers can address these gaps by exploring and analyzing CEL practices at more HEIs, as increasing numbers of institutions begin to align with the engagement framework, backed by a supportive NEP 2020. Here, they may also choose to undertake dedicated regional studies for exploring the diverse nature and dimensions of CE and CEL practices, and how they vary from one region to another. Further, at an institutional level, research studies in India and globally can use tools like the TEFCE (Towards a European Framework for Community Engagement of Higher Education) toolbox or some of its underlying

features to prepare an institutional CE heatmap, to better understand the application of CE within the higher education functions and the emergent CEL outcomes (O'Brien et al., 2022). This analysis can provide an authentic and empirical evidence base of institutional CE and CEL practices, while also evidencing their impact and sustainability potential.



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Declaration of Interest

We have no conflict of interest to disclose.

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Appendix. An Overview of the CEL Courses Referred to for This Study

Course/program name & positioning	Purpose	CEL activities	Pedagogies (P) used & Communities (C) engaged
1. Community Action Learning (HEI1) Included in the curriculum in the School of Vocational Education & Training (compulsory).	Integrating academics with societal issues, where students draw on the principle of "learning by doing" to identify community problems, explore solutions in collaboration, take community feedback on the same, and propose a feasible solution.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Projects: involves the triple components of <i>community engagement</i> (for identifying problems), <i>collaborative action</i> (for exploring and devising solutions), and <i>situated learnings</i> (relating to academic theory & beyond) Skill drill: focused on real-life problem-solving in areas of technical concern faced by the communities, while learning to apply theory in practice and developing interpersonal competencies. Champions of Change: focused on devising a socially relevant innovation for addressing pressing community issues in diverse areas such as waste management & environment conservation. 	P: Experiential/ applied learning, project-based learning. C: Rural, tribal (Indigenous), semirural communities (men, women).
2. Live in Labs (HEI5) Included in the curriculum of faculties of Engineering, Management, Science, Arts & Science, & Medicine (compulsory).	Using academic knowledge and resources to address pressing rural challenges in diverse areas of development and design sustainable solutions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In-campus training on immersive, engaged pedagogies. Village immersion (leveraging engaged pedagogies to understand the social context/ challenges and identify the problem in collaboration with the communities). Developing theoretically sound and socially relevant base propositions, for the problems identified during village immersion (on campus). Fieldwork involving codesign of solutions, in collaboration with the communities. Developing prototype of codesigned solutions (on campus). Testing and implementation of prototype/solutions in the field and training the communities in the case of technical solutions. 	P: Human-centered development, design thinking, participatory rural appraisal, experiential learning. C: Rural communities (men, women, elders, youth).

Course/program name & positioning	Purpose	CEL activities	Pedagogies (P) used & Communities (C) engaged
<p>3. Service-learning (HEI2)</p> <p>Included in the curriculum of departments of Sociology and Social Work, Psychology, Media Studies, Mathematics, Economics, Commerce, Business and Management, English and Cultural Studies, Computer Science, Education, Law & Engineering (compulsory).</p>	<p>Learning about the significance and fundamental characteristics of service-learning while applying these concepts to community needs in real time. The course nurtures students as social change agents, capable of working with and learning from the community while engaging in action and critical reflection.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community need assessment (while aligning needs with curricular learning goals). • Project plan development (embedding the tenets of community engagement and mutuality of benefits). • Effective resource utilization (while engaging in meaningful community-based activities for drawing maximum impact). • Critical and structured reflection (for deepening learning across cognitive, psychomotor, and affective domains). 	<p>P: Inquiry-based learning, project-based learning.</p> <p>C: Urban, rural, semiurban communities in villages, towns, cities (men, women, youth).</p>
<p>4. Folk medicine (HEI6)</p> <p>Part time/add-on course offered by an institutional center for excellence, aimed at bridging the disconnection between HEIs and society (optional).</p>	<p>Engaging with rural women in real-life settings, where the students learn from them various nuances of rural life. The students also derive learnings on ancient, traditional, and extremely effective health-care techniques, which remain inaccessible for want of documentation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning with the community: Indian women in general and rural women in particular are recognized as an unparalleled source of knowledge in areas such as energy management, herbal medicines, and home remedies. Students imbibe such learnings when they engage with them in real-life situations. Conversely, through this engagement, the women become acquainted with modern ideas on simple, effective, and sustainable livelihoods. • Creation of new knowledge with the community: Students also conduct community-based research projects for exploring, analyzing, and documenting the traditional medicinal knowledge available from rural women, which is then produced as academic literature. 	<p>P: Project-based learning, participatory learning, & action.</p> <p>C: Predominantly rural women.</p>

Course/program name & positioning	Purpose	CEL activities	Pedagogies (P) used & Communities (C) engaged
<p>5. Concept 2 Practice (HEI3)</p> <p>Introduced as a systematic academic intervention in all disciplines (compulsory).</p>	<p>Centered on a transformative and interdisciplinary education model, the program's objective is to enhance creativity, innovation, problem-solving, & critical thinking skills in students.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empathetic observation (understanding the problem from the perspective of the people facing the problem through active engagement with them). • Identification of problem (in partnership with the community), for which potential, feasible solutions can be developed within a reasonable period of time. • Development of a list of potential solutions and selecting the one which fares best, given the available resources, easy usability, and uptake. • Prototype preparation (converting the solution into a mini model, which can be replicated and scaled). 	<p>P: Design thinking, andragogy (emphasizing self-directed learning), heutagogy (encouraging the learner to go beyond problem solving and draw on reflections, experiences, and interactions to take appropriate action).</p> <p>C: Rural, urban, semiurban communities (men, women, youth).</p>

