



## The Next Gen Project: A Global Study on Training, Teaching and Learning Community-Based Research (CBR)

Walter Lepore  
*University of Victoria*

Rajesh Tandon  
*Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA),*

Budd Hall  
*University of Victoria*

### ABSTRACT

*While policies and practices regarding the creation of structures to facilitate community-university research partnerships are emerging and there is a rich literature on methodology of CBR, little research has been done at a global level on the training opportunities for building capacities in CBR within universities and community organisations. This led the UNESCO Chair in CBR and Social Responsibility in Higher Education to undertake the Next Gen project to analyze the current state-of-the-art in pedagogies and strategies for building CBR capacities. This paper synthesizes the main findings of the project and proposes a series of pedagogical principles for the training of CBR.*

### Introduction

The UNESCO Chair in Community Based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education (CBR-SR) was inaugurated in 2012, after the UNESCO World Higher Education Conference held in 2009 called for more attention to aspects of social responsibility within the world of higher education. Co-directed by Drs. Budd Hall (University of Victoria, Canada) and Rajesh Tandon (PRIA, India), the Chair aims to work with other global networks to support capacity building in the fields of CBR and social

responsibility in higher education through South-South and North-South-South partnerships.

One of the first projects that was undertaken by the Chair was an IDRC supported study on 'Mainstreaming Community-University Research Partnerships' that, among other findings, indicated that there is a large appetite for learning about how to do CBR around the world but there were few places where either community or university based researchers could acquire research capacities in a formal, structured way (Hall, Tandon & Tremblay, 2015). This led to the creation of the Next Generation project, funded by the Social Science and Human Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), to find out where and how people in various parts of the world have been learning to do CBR and what recommendations for policy makers and CBR practitioners might be derived from these diverse locations. This paper summarizes and integrates the main findings of this project and proposes a series of pedagogical principles for the training of CBR.

### The Next Gen Project

This initiative aimed to create new interdisciplinary knowledge on pedagogies of learning and teaching CBR in four thematic areas: (i) asset-based community development, (ii) governance and

citizenship, (iii) water governance, and (iv) Indigenous research methodologies. The partnership included international lead organisations respectively working in those areas: the Coady International Institute at SFXU, PRIA (India), the Institute for Resources, Environment and Sustainability (IRES) at UBC, and the Institute for Studies & Innovation in Community-University Engagement (ISICUE) at UVic. This project aims to understand the current state-of-the-art in pedagogies and strategies for building CBR capacities, increase access to high quality training in CBR, and work towards the strengthening of existing training fieldwork and the theoretical and curricular content on participatory research in higher education institutions (HEIs) and civil society organizations (CSOs).

### **Findings from the Next Gen Project**

Three instruments were used in the Next Gen project to collect relevant data on CBR training and describe existing pedagogies and strategies for building capacities: (i) four thematic reviews on training, teaching and learning CBR; (ii) a global web based survey on capacity building in CBR; (iii) 21 institutional case studies of HEIs and/or CSOs providing training in CBR, followed up with a comparative analysis designed to identify good practices and contextual advice.

### ***Systematic Reviews on Training, Teaching and Learning CBR***

From September 2014 to April 2015, research teams associated with the project carried out qualitative systematic literature reviews of training, teaching and learning (TTL) opportunities in the project's four thematic areas of interest (see Cameron, 2016; Santha-Jayanthan & Sing, 2016; Sharp, 2016; Easby, 2016). The searching process was designed to include: i) academic and non-academic literature on TTL within CBR in global and local settings; ii) pedagogies, strategies and materials for building CBR capacities (e.g., curricula, participatory video, photovoice, community theatre, community consultations, etc.); iii) best practices and lessons learned in several pilot studies on training CBR. The key findings obtained from the thematic reports are grouped under the following categories:

terminology; length and type of TTL; content; underlying pedagogies.

#### *Terminology.*

Within each of the thematic areas, a wide range of terminology appeared in the TTL literature to describe, first, CBR approaches across the thematic areas (participatory research, participatory action research, and community based participatory research being the most common) and, second, the thematic area itself. Overall, language varies significantly across all thematic areas in terms of describing and understanding CBR. There are multiple ways of naming CBR and issues related to diversity of languages, contexts and origins. Despite these differences, three core elements are common to the training and teaching practices reviewed: a) learning, b) analysis, c) change/action (i.e., 'social transformation').

#### *Length and type of training.*

Each thematic report identified a range of training lengths, ranging from 1-3 day workshops, 4 month courses, 2 year degree programs, and online courses. The IRM, water governance and asset-based community development reports all highlighted the importance of long-term relationships between communities and HEIs or CSOs for good CBR. However, the water governance report also noted a discrepancy between this stated importance and many participatory water governance initiatives which lack a long-term agenda.

Generally, there are major differences between the CBR training provided at HEIs and CSOs. In academia, the training is usually a sub-set of research methodology that does not emphasize change orientation, only 'exciting new knowledge creation'. On the contrary, learning to do CBR in practice at CSOs is closely linked to desirable changes being sought with an emphasis on making an impact, not just search for the 'truth'. In addition, HEIs tend to offer longer forms of training in the form of courses up to 4 months, while CSOs tend to offer short term, intensive workshops. HEIs may have an advantage here since training can be incorporated into the delivery of a degree program,

which means that participants/students are able to commit more time to learning. On the other hand, CSOs provide TTL opportunities that are often much more accessible to marginalized communities.

#### *Content.*

Content of TTL opportunities varied both across thematic areas as well as within them. The contents, even within each thematic area, are incredibly diverse because TTL offerings depend on the specific context as well as the needs and desires of students/participants. TTL opportunities across thematic areas featured a wide range of training in specific methods. For example, the governance and citizenship report noted participatory video, visual methodologies and participatory theatre; the water governance report emphasizes participatory mapping, transect walks and conflict resolution; the asset-based community development report highlighted asset mapping, community economic analysis, and skills and capacities inventories; and the IRM report noted storytelling and arts-based inquiry.

In general, current training opportunities generally focus more on specific methods and data collection techniques; while training in theory/philosophy, communication and dissemination of research in academic and non-academic contexts and social skills may be present, it is less articulated. Issues related to ethics, mutuality, partnership, respect, dignity are critical for practitioners of CBR, though rarely focused upon in any formal training.

#### *Underlying pedagogies.*

While the underlying pedagogies of TTL initiatives across the thematic areas differ widely, several common elements can be distilled. These include: i) the use of community engagement as a tool for structural social change; ii) faith in the capacity and motivation of marginalized groups; iii) belief that democratized knowledge production is more socially just and therefore preferable.

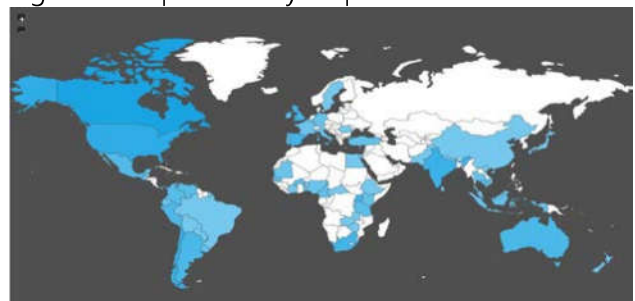
The discourse of 'popular adult education' was used by several institutions featured in the asset-based community development report. The governance and citizenship report noted that pedagogies in this

area are founded on a belief that citizens must find alternative ways to engage the state to demand that their rights are respected and needs met. The IRM report also noted that the marginalization of Indigenous peoples within the nation-state is a huge issue that CBR in this area seeks to redress; as such, the pedagogy of many TTL institutions has been to advocate an 'Indigenization' of knowledge production and a focus on increasing the wellbeing of Indigenous communities with the help of key allies and researchers. These pedagogies are compatible; however subtle differences exist regarding the perceived role of the state in the co-creation of a healthy future.

### **Global Survey on Training CBR**

The questionnaire was designed by the UNESCO Chair in CBR-SR in collaboration with global partners to capture a diverse and broad understanding of concepts, materials, approaches and practices of training and teaching CBR around the world. The web-based survey was undertaken between November 2014 and May 2015. Using a snowball technique, invitation emails were sent to 598 potential participants (response rate: 32.1%) who were asked to forward the invitation to their colleagues and contacts who have experience as learners and/or instructors of CBR. The survey received 413 valid responses from 60 countries (Figure 1). Respondents from the global South represent 56.4% of the sample (71.4% of total responses came from individuals working at HEIs and 17.7% from CSOs and networks). Over 90% of the respondents have had previous experience in CBR.

Figure 1. Map of survey responses



What follows are three key insights from the survey; the full report that includes all the tables and

infographics is available at the UNESCO Chair CBR-SR website (Lepore, 2015).

- i. Most respondents have not had any formal training experience in CBR. The predominant ways of acquiring CBR capabilities are autodidactic, self-directed learning and on-the-job/workplace training. Among the formal opportunities, the training offering is mainly dominated by workshops (1 to 10 days' duration) and university courses.
- ii. Over 60% of respondents consider that the most effective training approach to CBR is participating in community actions, and almost half (47.9%) valued performing art-based activities (e.g., music, theatre, storytelling) as very or extremely useful for building capacities in CBR. However, over a third of students enrolled in HEIs (36.8%) have never taken community actions or performed art-based activities as part of their training in CBR.
- iii. 9 out of 10 respondents manifested their interest in building capacities and receiving more training in CBR. Almost a third (31.8%) of respondents have considered intense short-term programs, such as workshops, as the preferred learning modality. However, there are particular preferences for training modalities across geographical regions. For instance, in Africa there is a stronger interest in short-term courses of 2 to 10 weeks duration, in Asian respondents expressed a much higher interest in workshops, while in Latin America there is a much higher demand for university courses and online training programs than in the rest of the world.

### Case Studies on Training, Teaching and Learning Community Based Research

Based on the findings of thematic reviews and the global survey, 21 institutions across the globe were selected as case studies for in-depth analysis. The sample consists of 12 CSOs and 9 HEIs from 14

countries: Canada (4), India (3), New Zealand (2), U.K. (2), and in Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador, U.S.A., Italy, Egypt, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Philippines and Indonesia (Table 1). The selected institutions show the diversity of training in both university and extra-university settings, accounting for the variety of approaches, regional differences, learners and training needs.

Table 1. Case studies

Type	Name	Country
HEI	Coady International Institute (SFXU)	Canada
	The National Islamic University	Indonesia
	Te Kotahi Research Institute (Waikato University)	New Zealand
	National University of Ireland	Ireland
	FOIST laboratory (University of Sassari)	Italy
	York University	Canada
	Durham University	UK
	First Nations University of Canada	Canada
CSO	Public Science Project (CUNY)	USA
	Training and Research Support Centre (TARSC)	Zimbabwe
	International Institute for Rural Reconstruction (IIRR)	Philippines
	Artic Institute of Community-Based Research (AICBR)	Canada
	Centre for Development Service (CDS)	Egypt
	Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA)	India
	PRAXIS	India
	PUKAR	India
	Umphilo waManzi	South Africa
	Ceiba Foundation	Ecuador
Centro Experimental de la Vivienda Económica (CEVE)	Argentina	
Katoa Ltd	New Zealand	
COEP	Brazil	

Some key findings of the comparative case study analysis are presented as follows. First, while some institutions have displayed a strong commitment towards training researchers in ethics and values, others have not shown a similar degree of advocacy. Various institutions are seen as promoting research ethics in training via a separate set of guidelines, exclusive modules on the same, specialised orientation sessions, etc. The provision of a country-wide code of conduct with respect to research ethics (like in Canada and New Zealand) helps in evolving an environment which emphasises respect for ethics and values.

Second, as CBR essentially involves a collaborative process, the case studies show that an understanding of the existing power equations and respect for the asymmetries between communities and researchers is critical before embarking on working together towards common goals. The training practices and programs reviewed mostly emphasize 'building partnerships/relationships with

the community' through field exposure. Delving into the details of power structures and corresponding inequalities/differentials is, however, an aspect which has not been paid much attention.

Third, there are a number of examples of institutions investing resources in developing cognitive/active/affective modes of data collection capabilities for community-based researcher. Affective dimensions involve processes such as role-plays, story-telling, photovoice, photography, simulations, theatre, visual art, etc. By building skills in diverse data collection methods and exploring multiple modes of generating knowledge, institutions enable researchers to adapt to circumstances and not be limited by situational constraints.

Fourth, most of the case studies invest sufficiently on transforming the researcher into a 'facilitator'. This involves the refinement of inter-personal skills of communication, thereby enabling them to listen, analyze, reflect and understand a particular situation. This approach treats the researchers not only as participants, but as active resource persons during the entire process of training and learning. The researcher-facilitators are seen as 'catalysts', 'change agents' who do not operate from a teaching position of dominance, but rather are meant to learn from and with local people and help them learning for themselves.

### **Discussion**

Five common themes—what we call here pedagogical principles—emerge from the synthesis of the findings of the Next Gen project. The following principles tend to underpin the pedagogy of CBR across disciplines, institutional settings and geographically, politically and culturally diverse contexts, and appear relevant to be included in future training of community-based researchers:

#### **1. An Orientation Towards Research Ethics and Values**

There is a discrepancy between the emphases on ethics in the CBR literature and the lack of explicit mention in CBR training offerings. The ethical considerations in conducting CBR are not merely

about the quality and rigour in research process, but also focus on the nature of relationship between the researcher and others involved in the research process. Most training programs tend to ignore examining this relationship. Ethical considerations emerge in a host of different ways in the practice of CBR: confidentiality of data, protection of respondent identity, leveraging community knowledge with macro studies, use of findings, control over research process and resources, etc. Teaching CBR thus require exploring ethical dilemmas and value conflicts as an integral part of building participatory research capacities.

#### **2. The Development of a Deep Understanding of Power and Partnerships**

As a collaborative process between communities and researchers, the co-construction of knowledge by using CBR methodology implies a redefinition of power relations between research funders, research team leaders, research assistants and the participating communities. Building relationships of mutual trust before initiating a CBR project is an essential enabling condition for co-construction of knowledge. Explorations of power dynamics and its relevance to partnerships needs to be an integral part of the pedagogy of CBR.

#### **3. The Incorporation of Multiple Modes of Enquiry**

CBR is not a single method calling for a single means of co-creating knowledge. The challenges of complex societal issues call for an openness to many forms of knowledge creation, knowledge analysis and knowledge dissemination. The epistemology of CBR in this perspective entails multiple modes of knowing—thinking, acting and feeling—and, therefore, learning to design, use and conduct research also needs to be learnt in a diversity of modes. Preparing a broad repertoire of competencies amongst researchers will enable them to feel equipped in diversity of methods and tools of research. Action and affective based modes of data collection (e.g.. art-based activities) should be therefore treated at par with other cognitive methods.

#### **4. Participation in Learning CBR and Balance between Classroom/Theory and Field/Practice**

Teacher-centric teaching will need to be replaced with learner-centric pedagogy in CBR. CBR training processes need to be participatory, with the researchers engaging in the learning process as much as the trainees. This principle calls for a balance of classroom sessions and field activities in a way that the trainees participate as active stakeholders. Field immersion, rather than field exposure, is necessary to understand the researcher's own values, attitudes, motivations and hang-ups, and his/her relationship with the involved participants.

#### 5. The Role of the Researcher as CBR Facilitator

The fifth principle goes beyond building individual research capacities and skills sets. It talks about moulding the mind of the researcher in a way such that he/she develops a deeper understanding of his/her existence. In order to listen to practical knowledge, to enable understanding different points-of-views, to integrate diversity of meanings and to build relationships of trusts, community-based researchers have to become facilitators. Learning social skills of communication, listening, respecting, enabling, sharing and synthesising, training of researchers must therefore include a range of social and inter-personal skills that are essential in any process of co-construction of knowledge.

#### Conclusion

The Next Gen project provides evidence that there is a high demand for training and learning about doing CBR around the globe, but formal, structured training opportunities are scarce. It also shows that training in CBR provided at HEIs usually offers little practical exposure to real life experience and community problems, while the community training is weak on reflection and theory. Overall, more training is needed not only on participatory research methodologies and theories, but also on knowledge mobilization and dissemination, consultation and community engagement, research ethics and equity in interdisciplinary partnerships.

In the context of the absence of clear and systematized information on how to teach and learn CBR, this papers suggests five pedagogical

principles to lend some coherence to the commonalities that exist within the sets of practices, commitments, priorities and agendas which make up the pedagogy of CBR. In a field of research where terms are often debated (see Etmanski et al., 2014) and the relationship between them is often unclear, identifying common elements of the pedagogy of CBR seems to be helpful. Furthermore, the proposed principles have the potential to enrich the pedagogy of CBR by inviting discussion and reflection among practitioners and potential learners looking to refine their training and teaching practices in CBR.

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