

UNESCO Chairs / UNITWIN Networks Consultation Report Form¹

Under the UNESCO World Higher Education Conference ([WHEC 2022](#))

[Section for Higher Education](#) | Division for Education 2030

Basic information

Date of consultation	[22/02/2022]			
Location of consultation	ZOOM			
Hosting UNESCO Chair or UNITWIN Network (include webpage if available)	Handong Global University, UNITWIN Network on Capacity Building of Sustainable Developing Countries in the Asian Region(764) Website: https://unitwin.handong.edu/en/			
Name and email address of key contact person	Dr. Jinwon Ahn (ahn@handong.edu)			
Complete name, title, and affiliation of moderator(s)	Dr. Jinwon Ahn <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chief Director, Handong Institute for International Development Cooperation • Professor, Handong Global University 			
Language of consultation	English			
Time spent in consultation (minutes)	120 minutes			
Number of participants	10			
Participant profiles (please, briefly describe the composition of the group)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Govinda Tamang, Professor, Tribhuvan University, Nepal • Dr. Sunil Chitrakar, Chairperson, Fair Trade Nepal • Ms. Gantuya Buddorj, Professor, University of Finance and Economics, Mongolia • Dr. Oyuntsetseg Bilguun, Head, Division of Information Database and Marketing, Mongolian Foundation for Science and Technology • Dr. Dexter Balajaida, Professor, University of the Assumption, Philippines • Dr. Rodil Fadri, Professor, Adamson University, Philippines • Dr. Sooyoung Chang, Professor, Pohang University of Science and Technology, Korea • Dr. Jeetendra Dangol, Professor, Tribhuvan University, Nepal • Dr. Byungdeok Kang, Professor, Handong Global University, Korea • Dr. Kee-Seon Yoo, Professor, Handong Global University, Korea 			
Countries represented by participants	Nepal, Mongolia, the Philippines, and the Republic of Korea			
Stakeholder groups (please mark with an “x” as appropriate)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Professors/ Researchers	<input type="checkbox"/> Students/Youth	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Higher education managers/authorities	<input type="checkbox"/> Private sector
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NGOs/civil society	<input type="checkbox"/> International organisations	<input type="checkbox"/> Policy makers/government	<input type="checkbox"/> Others (please, specify):

¹ This template includes some elements used by the consultation developed by [The Futures of Education](#) initiative.

Which theme did you choose for this consultation?

- Theme 1: Impact of COVID-19 on higher education
- Theme 2: Higher education and the SDGs
- Theme 3: Inclusion in higher education
- Theme 4: Quality and relevance of programmes
- Theme 5: Academic mobility in higher education
- Theme 6: Higher education governance
- Theme 7: Financing higher education
- Theme 8: Data and knowledge production
- Theme 9: International cooperation to enhance synergies
- Theme 10: The futures of higher education
- Other (please, specify):

Synthesis of contributions

Kindly provide a summary, synthesising and reflecting the ideas provided by all participants. There is no need to identify participants. Consultation reports should not exceed 1,200 **words**, including the responses to the three questions outlined below (consider a balance of approximately 400 words per response). If necessary, add attachments. Remember that question 1 is general, but questions 2 and 3 should refer to the specific theme you have chosen (see list in **Annex 1**).

Question 1: *What should be the present and future role of higher education to favour the wellbeing of humans and sustainability of societies?*

Education has the power to transform lives, communities, and societies. It empowers individuals and strengthens communities to address sustainable development challenges by increasing their knowledge and skills and changing mindsets. Education is thus the key to promoting civic engagement, ecological integrity, economic security, as well as social wellbeing. Universities, which are at the center of higher education, are catalysts for these changes. As generators of innovation, universities are expected to facilitate economic, social, and environmental development and respond to the needs of society.

Sustainable development challenges are global but also deeply local, and therefore solutions need to be based on the glocal (global-local) perspectives. Universities are in a unique position as they have abilities to translate global perspectives into the local context at the forefront of community action, and vice versa. University-community engagement is an important channel for social innovation where experts in disparate fields gather and engage in pioneering experimentation to catalyze social change in the local settings. Building on the enormous knowledge and resources they have, universities can play a critical role in making sustainable development goals a reality in their communities.

Against this backdrop, universities should incorporate community engagement in teaching and research, which goes beyond community service. Community engagement projects provide students with opportunities for transformative learning, inspiring them to contribute to positive societal change. Students are encouraged to take interdisciplinary and multi-actor approaches when seeking possible solutions to the community needs and social problems. Communities become a living lab, a classroom where students learn by doing and transform textbook knowledge into practical knowledge.

Given the breadth of the nature of social wellbeing and sustainability, universities need to collaborate with local stakeholders to perform educational activities for sustainable community development. One of the important roles of universities is to preserve indigenous knowledge, skills, and resources in local communities, transform them into a 21st-century context, and in turn give them contemporary meaning and significance, which are the key assets for developing

sustainable communities. Universities act as a mediator between academy and communities, generating exchanges in knowledge.

Universities are essential for empowering individuals and communities to acquire a general understanding of sustainable development and make global changes. Universities should go further than providing specific knowledge and skills. They should adopt a holistic perspective and equip people with cross-cutting skills to tackle complex and long-term challenges and values such as respect, empathy, equality, and solidarity.

Question 2: What are the main **challenges/problems/gaps** in relation to developing a sustainable community?

Universities are often faced with criticism that they become the “ivory tower,” alienating themselves from tackling real world-challenges in partnership with other actors in society. Building a sustainable community requires its community members to take collective action and generate solutions to common problems. However, while local communities are struggling with complex challenges – poverty, access to clean water and sanitation, especially in developing countries, they fail to utilize the knowledge, skills, and resources of universities effectively, which are an essential part of the community.

In many cases, universities are disconnected from the local communities they are in and playing a limited role in sustainable community development even if they can play a greater role in creating innovative initiatives and empowering people to mobilize their talents and resources to make changes in their local communities. As a result, local communities tend to look for and depend on external resources in the pursuit of economic security, social wellbeing, and ecological integrity. It hinders ownership, commitment, and accountability of community members, inhibiting endogenous development.

As a host university of the UNESCO UNITWIN program, since 2007, Handong Global University (HGU) has been working with partner universities in Nepal, Mongolia, the Philippines, and some more countries to promote capacity-building of sustainable development in developing countries. In partnership with HGU, the universities have been implementing sustainable development-focused courses and master’s degree programs that are locally rooted, globally connected. The initiatives aim to solve social problems in the context of local communities, and HGU professors come from various academic disciplines and co-host these programs. Despite the efforts, it also presented new challenges to the universities.

As the universities need to go beyond traditional approaches of teaching, learning, and community engagement to support these new educational activities, they are struggling to figure out how they operate in new settings and cooperate with partners across the sectors. They opined that there is a need to find more models, identify key partners, and build roadmaps that suit their contexts. Some faculty members remain not motivated to join the new sustainable development-focused curriculum, largely due to the lack of leadership, knowledge of how to implement new activities, and innovative vision.

In terms of the interdisciplinary approach, universities should consider enrollment credits, faculty load, the position of the inter-disciplinary courses within the degree plans, and silos that hinder effective collaboration across disciplines. Also, it is not easy to find appropriate local

stakeholders and involve multi-actors, which is different from traditional university-firm partnerships.

Question 3: *What needs to **change** or be **created** to face these challenges **within** and/or **outside** of higher education institutions?*

In order to address the challenges above, university leadership should make a decision to transform the structure of the university by making a university-level commitment to incorporating the SDGs in its vision, mission, and value, breaking down silos between departments. To this end, universities should establish a cross-university working group that encompasses all key areas and stakeholders within the university to develop a strategic roadmap and steer the process. It is critical to share a clear vision of a sustainable community among university administration, faculty, university staff, and students.

Professors who have genuine hearts for communities are critical assets for sustainable community development. Universities should provide incentives for professors to bring their expertise and participate in sustainable development-focused curricula. Professors are at the center of achieving the vision, fulfilling responsibilities, and making changes. As one cannot give what he does not have, professors cannot teach students about community development without true interests in communities. Professors need to develop the necessary knowledge and teaching methods and connect and reinforce research with sustainable community development.

Like a marathon, sustainable community development takes a long time, and thus it is important to build long-term relationships with local stakeholders. Universities should share their vision with community members, communicate with them, and align their roadmaps with local resources. These activities should mobilize the talents and resources of local stakeholders and harness the power of local culture to solve problems in the communities. Furthermore, it is crucial to foster champion community leaders who can play a significant role in building consensus and solidarity among local community members.

Given the mission to promote sustainable development capacity building in developing countries, Handong Global University should help the partner universities strengthen their institutional capacities to incorporate sustainable development in all areas of their works in close collaboration with local stakeholders. It should provide opportunities for mutual sharing and learning about the practicalities of building a sustainable community by organizing conferences and case study collections.

As students who were from local communities will go back to local communities, it is essential to equip them with knowledge, skills, mindsets, and values for sustainable community development. A whole university should play a part in achieving sustainable development goals in local communities. Ultimately, universities must take action to build sustainable communities because they themselves are part of the communities and the world.

Which Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were particularly emphasised during this consultation?

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Goal 1: No poverty | <input type="checkbox"/> Goal 7: Affordable and clean energy | <input type="checkbox"/> Goal 12: Responsible consumption and production |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Goal 2: Zero hunger | <input type="checkbox"/> Goal 8: Decent work and economic growth | <input type="checkbox"/> Goal 13: Climate action |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Goal 3: Good health and well-being | <input type="checkbox"/> Goal 9: Industry, innovation, and infrastructure | <input type="checkbox"/> Goal 14: Life below water |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Goal 4: Quality education | <input type="checkbox"/> Goal 10: Reduced inequality | <input type="checkbox"/> Goal 15: Life on land |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Goal 5: Gender equality | <input type="checkbox"/> Goal 11: Sustainable cities and communities | <input type="checkbox"/> Goal 16: Peace and justice strong institutions |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Goal 6: Clean water and sanitation | | <input type="checkbox"/> Goal 17: Partnerships to achieve the goals. |

You may provide additional feedback...

Are there any other issues that should be considered in relation to higher education challenges and options in your community, your region, the world?

Is there any other comment you wish to share with UNESCO or the organisers of the WHEC2022?

List of participants

[Please, include the moderator (s)]

Mr./ Mrs.	First name	Last name	Title/organisation	Nationality	Email address (if the participant wishes to receive information about the WHEC2022)	Indicate with a "NO" if the participant DOES NOT want to be publicly identified as a participant in this consultation.
Mr.	Jinwon	Ahn	Professor/ Handong Global University	The Republic of Korea	ahn@handong.edu	
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