

CHAPTER 6

Democratizing Knowledge: Higher Education and Good Governance

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Higher education can generate and disseminate knowledge deemed to be essential for development. However, since educational institutions generally reflect their cultural and political surroundings, in countries where civil and political rights are denied and where 'disciplines at risk' are suppressed, higher education cannot thrive, and development falters. To promote higher education, and to democratize ownership of knowledge throughout communities, the promotion of good governance for democratic and sustainable development is required.

This is the ground that the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) has been working since its creation by Parliament in 1970. The Centre's support of development research has always been rooted in its founding principle that knowledge can free people in their communities to shape their own futures, and fulfil their own lives. For more than thirty years, IDRC has counted institutions of higher education among its most important partners – in Canada and throughout the developing world.

IDRC seeks to create linkages among institutions of higher education in the industrial, transitional, and developing countries. To that end, a necessary prior condition is securing the connection between higher education in any society and the exercise of civil and political rights in that society.

There is a close and inescapable relationship between the quality of higher learning and scholarship, on the one hand, and the quality of effective and democratic governance, on the other. Any successful promotion of development must recognize the intimate interaction between