Public-Private Partnership in Higher Education: A Case Study of the Geneva Centre for Philanthropy

Prof. Henry Peter, Kinga Zsofia Horvath

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Research questions

- What are the key responsibilities and opportunities of an academic center for philanthropy?

- How can cross-sectoral partnerships be efficiently conceived and managed in that perspective?
Literature Review I.
Philanthropy Research and Education

- **Philanthropy education and research** is essential to:
  - support the enhancement and growth of philanthropy worldwide,
  - strengthen the role of the philanthropic sector as a creator of social capital, and
  - to encourage effective decision-making among donors, NGO leaders and other actors of philanthropy

(Burlingame, 2009; Weber & Witkowski, 2016; Frumkin, 2006; Brown, 2019; Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy, 2018)

- **Philanthropy, being interdisciplinary in nature**, requires a pluri- and interdisciplinary approach to being fully understood and researched, but, due to the traditional university structure, researchers focusing on philanthropy are often challenged

(Turner, 2007; Shier & Handy, 2014, Hatcher, Shaker, & Freeman, 2016; Bronham, Dinnage, & Hua, 2016; Rhoten & Parker, 2004)
Cross-sectoral collaborations and partnerships are essential in order to:

- improve research and higher education teaching,
- mobilize resources for education,
- increase efficiency, and
- set agenda in alignment with the demands of the continuously changing knowledge economy

(Patrinos et al, 2009; Verger, 2010; UNESCO, 2014; European Commission, 2018)

There are possible boundaries of cross-sectoral partnerships:

- commodification of public education,
- lack of accountability and transparency, and
- imbalance in governance and power

(Robertson, 2002; Simons et al, 2013)
Data and Methodology

Single-case study: Geneva Centre for Philanthropy, University of Geneva

I. Semi-structured interviews with 10 stakeholders, including the Rectorate of the University of Geneva, the Canton of Geneva, partner foundations, members of the scientific committee, and key actors of the Swiss philanthropy sector

II. Analysis of internal documents and archival records

III. Participant observation
Why The Geneva Centre for Philanthropy?

- The Geneva Centre for Philanthropy was established in September 2017 at the initiative of the Rectorate of the University of Geneva
- The Centre reports directly to the Rector
- The Centre’s vision is to address philanthropy-related topics in a pluri-disciplinary manner
- The Centre’s missions are:
  - to support the international development and philanthropy through research, teaching, and public events
  - to serve as an interface between practice and research,
- The Centre was founded in collaboration with three private foundations; as of today, the Centre has eight partner foundations
Preliminary Findings I.
Philanthropy Research and Education

1. Overall, the interviewees agreed that philanthropy research and teaching requires a pluri- and interdisciplinary approach as well as cross-sectoral partnerships. While the Centre is relatively young, the stakeholders have welcomed its innovative model.

2. The Centre is expected to continue serving as an intellectual hub, a platform for networking and as a thought leader in philanthropy, building bridges among various stakeholders.

3. The Centre is expected to define and develop expertise in certain domains and focus on their “competitive advantages.” In general, data-driven and high-quality research is as important as the engagement with and representation of different actors of the philanthropic sector.
Preliminary Findings II.
Cross-Sectoral Partnerships

3. As the Centre is a partnership with private foundations, it has an opportunity to create synergies by collaborating with different faculties and practitioners.

4. In general, the processes for accountability is crucial for cross-sectoral partnership models.

5. Finally, research centers are expected to establish a transparent system to ensure that their research are not earmarked by external funding and a strong public outreach to cultivate and strengthen their reputation.
Lessons Learned: The Future of Philanthropy Education and Research Requires Cross-Sectoral Collaboration

There is an increasing demand for philanthropy education and research. Centers on philanthropy need to cultivate cross-sectoral partnerships in order to be resilient and sustainable and to successfully develop and implement research-to-practice approaches.

Philanthropy research and education – as per definition – is interdisciplinary; that should influence our role in developing an enabling environment in that field.
Next Steps:
Comparative (Cross-National) Research

• Second phase of the research project is to conduct a comparative research on academic centers for philanthropy collaborating with centers located in the United States, Chile, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Turkey, India, Australia and South Africa among other countries.

• Simultaneously, the research team aims to organize roundtable discussions with centers for philanthropy to share good practices and develop successful approaches for cross-sectoral partnerships in philanthropy education.
Thank you for your attention!

Any questions?
Key References


Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy, Global Philanthropy Environment Index, 2018a, https://globalindices.iupui.edu/environment/index.html


