

Response to the 2019 evaluation of the Prince Claus Chair in Development and Equity

Introduction

In 2019, the Curatorium engaged the Rathenau Institute to conduct an evaluation of the Prince Claus Chair with a view to putting the Curatorium in a position whereby it can take timely and informed measures to ensure the Chair's sustainability over the coming years. The Curatorium is proud to note that the evaluation concludes that the Prince Claus Chair continues to achieve its main aim of making a contribution to research that is relevant both to the host institutions (ISS/EUR and the University of Utrecht) and to Development and Equity and that the academic quality of the chairholders consistently meets the high standard needed to this end.

The findings and the way ahead

Vision and contribution to discourse on development

The evaluation identifies a shift in the way Development and Equity has been interpreted by the Chair in recent years. The diversity of research themes chosen has broadened beyond the academic field of Development Studies. The approach of the past few years has been to view Development and Equity as a cross-cutting theme applicable across the full academic range. The Curatorium has appointed a working party consisting of two professors from each of the host universities to look more deeply into this aspect of the Chair and to provide guidance for the Curatorium in determining whether the sustainability of the Chair can best be served by pursuing the wider approach of recent years, or whether a narrowing of the scope would offer better guarantees of a sustainable future. In drawing up its proposal for the vision that should guide the Chair over the coming decade, the working group will also address the issue of how the Chair can best add to the current discourse on development and equity and pay attention to the need for mechanisms to preserve and further enhance the cohesiveness of the Chair as a whole.

Career development

The Curatorium is happy to note that the Chair serves as a means to provide a career boost to the researchers who occupy the Chair. The link to the royal household is highly valued by the chairholders.

Postdoctoral fellow

The Curatorium is very grateful for the support to the Chair that has been offered by WOTRO since 2009. This support has enabled each of the recent Chairs to be supported by a postdoctoral fellow. The postdoctoral fellow performs a crucial role in ensuring broad cooperation with other universities in The Netherlands. The evaluation concludes that this support has been of great value and the Curatorium hopes that the important partnership with WOTRO will continue.

Networks and sustainable cooperation

The importance of sustainable network building is highlighted in the evaluation. The Curatorium notes that there is a natural tendency for chairholders to maintain personal links with their host institutions after their term has ended and intends to draw up a plan whereby the Chair will facilitate a (digital) community of chairholders and their postdocs in order to make sustainable long-term networking easier. This plan will encompass proposals for a role for the home institutions of the

chairholders in the broader network. The issue of how best to engage with the home institutions of the chairholders will also be addressed in this plan.

Inspiration and outreach

The type and extent of outreach and impact achieved varies widely, as it is strongly dependent both on the research topic in question and the personality of the individual chairholder. The Curatorium notes and shares the view that students are an important audience for the chairholder and will make this aspect of the Chair's work more prominent in the future.

Practical suggestions

The evaluation makes many useful practical suggestions as to how to ensure the robustness and sustainability of the Chair going forward. The host institutions will look at these carefully, with particular emphasis on the need for greater digital visibility. The suggestion to connect the Chair to the Prince Claus Fund will not be followed up, since the aims and objectives of the two entities differ too much for cooperation to be fruitful. Continued attention will be paid to ensuring that the Chair reaches out to, and provides added value for, the Dutch university community as a whole.

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