REIMAGINING HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA & UK

Foreword by Prof John Strachan, Eminent Academician, UK

Thinking fast,
thinking slow!

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Praises for author's books

"I wish Mahul's book all the success."

– *Ratan N. Tata*

"Wishing Mahul all the success in all that he endeavours."

– *Amitabh Bachchan*

"This book asks what education should protect at a moment when knowledge has become extraordinarily accessible and generative AI can produce answers almost instantly."

– *Professor John Strachan, Pro Vice Chancellor, Bath Spa University, UK*

"If there is one person who is eminently qualified to write about luxury, it is Mahul."

– *Padma Bhushan Dr Bibek Debroy*

"Let more writings come through the pen of Mahul."

– *Keshari Nath Tripathi, Hon. Governor of West Bengal (Former)*

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"I love the way Mahul deconstructs the mystical world of luxury with his simple, direct, matter-of-fact lucid style of narration.

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About the book

'Reimaging Higher Education in India and UK' explores facets of pedagogy and andragogy in higher education, especially with the advent of a disruptor as generative AI. The author explores the essence of higher education in the UK and in India with a comparative lens, trying to reimagine the best for the future of HE, towards building a future-ready global institutions. When access to knowledge ceases to be a problem, the entire model then becomes dependent on three A's – Accessibility, Accuracy and Authenticity. Accessibility makes higher education a mainstay for fast learning, most of the times at the cost of authenticity and accuracy. Reimagining higher education cannot only be about introducing new technologies and teaching methods. In the habit of fast learning, sometimes meaningful change begins by questioning what has become too familiar to notice. Slow learning is simply an argument for protecting those parts of education that need time: reading carefully, thinking independently, listening to another person, struggling with a difficult idea and occasionally changing one's mind.

Thinking fast, thinking slow!

Let the blessings of Baba Lokenath shower on you.

About the author

Prof Dr Mahul Brahma is an academician and an author of 12 books and editor of two, and winner of Sahityakosh Samman. He is a luxury commentator, TEDx speaker and a columnist. He is a Dean and Professor of School of Media, Bhawanipur Global Campus and former Dean and Professor, Adamas University. He is a Visiting Research Fellow, Bath Business School, UK and a Visiting Professor, National Institute of Design NID. He is Fellow, International Federation for Education Research & Development (IFERD) and life member of Indo British Scholars Association (IBSA).

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His first film was selected and screened at Cannes Film Festival.

Prof Brahma is an avid golfer with 7 handicap.

Foreword by Professor John Strachan

Higher education is remarkably good at accumulating things: knowledge, qualifications, technologies, policies and practices. It is rather less good at deciding on what might usefully be left behind. This is the question at the heart of Professor Mahul Brahma's engaging book, *Reimagining Higher Education in India and UK: Thinking Fast, Thinking Slow!* Refreshingly, this volume does not offer another manifesto for technological disruption. Instead, it asks what education should protect at a moment when knowledge has become extraordinarily accessible and generative AI can produce answers almost instantly. Its answer is to place renewed value on those aspects of learning that cannot simply be accelerated: careful reading, dialogue, reflection, judgement, collaboration and the willingness to change one's mind.

The comparison between India and the United Kingdom is particularly productive because it is not presented as a competition between educational systems. Mahul invites us instead to look at familiar practices afresh, asking what each might learn from the other. Unlearning here means deliberately questioning and, where necessary, setting aside inherited assumptions, habits and ways of thinking that once seemed natural or useful but may no longer serve us. It is not forgetting what we know, but creating the intellectual freedom

to re-examine what we think we know, so that learning can become more critical, imaginative and responsive to a changing world. That is a most valuable concept.



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INTRODUCTION

The Pedagogy of Unlearning: Reimagining What It Means to Learn

Historically, education has been associated with accumulation where a student enters a university to acquire knowledge, develop skills, encounter theories, collect credits, and earn a degree. Progress is generally understood in terms of addition where after three or four years the graduate should know more than the student who first enters the classroom. There is nothing wrong with this assumption. Universities exist to expand knowledge and its scope and yet the changing landscape of higher education in India and the UK suggests that learning may no longer be enough. There are moments when students and institutions must also learn to let go.

They may need to let go of assumptions that once appeared obvious, practices that have become habitual, or ways of thinking that worked reasonably well in another time but no longer respond adequately to the present need. A student may have to unlearn the belief that intelligence means remembering the right answer and a teacher may have to unlearn the assumption that authority comes from speaking for most of the class. A university may have to reconsider the idea that a three-hour summative assessment is always the most reliable evidence of learning. Every discipline may have to reimagine boundaries that once appeared natural and enter the territory of unlearning.

Unlearning does not mean forgetting knowledge or dismissing everything inherited from the past, nor should it become

another fashionable educational term that simply celebrates disruption. Much of what universities have traditionally done remains valuable. Deep disciplinary knowledge, teachers, books, rigour, and examinations are important.

The pedagogy of unlearning asks a rather uncomfortable question, whether we have the courage to examine what we know, how we came to know it and whether it still deserves to remain unquestioned?

Reimagining education cannot only be about introducing new technologies and teaching methods. Sometimes meaningful change begins by questioning what has become too familiar to notice.

Learning Is Comfortable. Unlearning Often Is Not

Learning usually carries a positive emotional association. To learn is to grow, improve and progress. Unlearning can feel very different because it requires admitting that something we believed may have been incomplete, inappropriate or simply wrong and this discomfort is part of the process.

A student who has spent twelve years believing that academic success means memorising textbook material will not automatically become an independent learner because a university introduces project-based education. A lecturer who has built professional identity around expertise may not immediately feel comfortable in a classroom where students can access alternative explanations on their phones while the lecture is taking place. An institution that has used written examinations for decades may hesitate to trust portfolios, projects or reflective assessments.

Familiar practices rarely disappear simply because a policy document announces innovation and this is the reason why educational reform so often changes vocabulary faster than

behaviour. Universities adopt terms such as student-centred learning, experiential pedagogy, interdisciplinarity, digital transformation and critical thinking. Unlearning asks us to look beyond the terminology.

If a teacher says that a classroom is student-centred but continues speaking for ninety minutes, what exactly has changed? If an institution introduces interdisciplinary courses but every department protects its intellectual territory, where is the interdisciplinarity? If students use sophisticated digital technologies merely to reproduce the same old answers more quickly, is that digital transformation? Perhaps the first act of pedagogical change is not doing something new. It is recognising what we are still doing out of habit.

Unlearning the Right Answer

One of the deepest habits created by formal education is the obsession for the correct answer. From an early age, students learn that questions have answers and teachers know them and examinations help reinforce this arrangement. The students who provide expected response receive marks, the students who move too far away from it takes a risk. This model works well for some forms of knowledge. There is little educational value in encouraging multiple imaginative answers to a mathematical calculation that has one correct result. Foundational knowledge matters but many of the problems graduates will encounter are not like this.

Should an organisation use artificial intelligence to replace certain forms of human work? How should a city balance development against environmental sustainability? What constitutes responsible use of personal data? How should a company respond when profitability conflicts with social responsibility? When does technological convenience become

surveillance? These questions contain facts, but facts alone do not answer them as they need judgement.

The pedagogy of unlearning asks students to move beyond the expectation that every problem has a predetermined answer waiting to be discovered. Sometimes the task is to understand why several answers may be possible and what each one might cost.

This is closely connected to design-thinking pedagogy as students need to become comfortable with ambiguity, incomplete information and failed attempts. The university should certainly teach students how to solve problems. But before that, it may need to help them unlearn the expectation that somebody else will always define the problem for them.

Unlearning the Teacher as the Sole Keeper of Knowledge

The teacher has perhaps experienced one of the most profound transformations within contemporary higher education. For centuries, access to knowledge gave teachers a particular kind of authority. Students needed the lecturer because the lecturer possessed knowledge that was otherwise difficult to access. Digital technology has changed this relationship fundamentally and made it more symbiotic.

A student can now check a fact while the teacher is speaking. A lecture on Economics can be supplemented by another from a university on the other side of the world. Artificial intelligence can explain a difficult concept repeatedly without becoming impatient. Does this make the teacher less important? Perhaps it makes the teacher important in a different way.

When information is scarce, the teacher provides access, but when information is abundant, the teacher helps students

navigate that abundance. The educational challenge shifts from finding information to judging its credibility, authenticity and accuracy. The teacher increasingly becomes curator, mentor, facilitator and intellectual provocateur while remaining a disciplinary expert. This requires some unlearning on both sides. Teachers may need to unlearn the idea that admitting uncertainty weakens their authority. Sometimes "I don't know, let us examine it" is a remarkably powerful teaching response. Students also must unlearn the expectation that the teacher will always simplify complexity and provide a final answer. The classroom then becomes less like a place where knowledge is delivered and more like a place where knowledge is examined. That distinction may define much of the reimagined university.

Unlearning Speed

The contemporary university has become extraordinarily fast. Students move through digital resources, recorded lectures, online courses and continuous assessments. AI can generate answers in seconds and efficiency is celebrated, often with good reason. Yet, some forms of understanding resist acceleration and demands slow learning.

A difficult book takes time, changing one's mind takes time and listening carefully to someone with whom one disagrees takes time. So does ethical reflection. The pedagogy of unlearning asks universities to reconsider the assumption that faster is automatically better. A student who reads 20 article summaries may know more conclusions than one who spends an afternoon wrestling with a single important text. But the second student may have developed something different, the ability to follow an argument, recognise its weaknesses and formulate a considered response. Unlearning speed does not mean rejecting technology. It means resisting the temptation to confuse efficiency with education.

Sometimes the most meaningful pedagogical decision may be to give students fewer things to do and ask them to think more deeply about what remains.

Unlearning Disciplinary Walls

Universities are organised through disciplines for good reasons. Disciplines create depth, intellectual traditions and specialised methods of inquiry but the real world outside the university is remarkably indifferent to departmental boundaries. Climate change is simultaneously scientific, economic, political, technological, social and ethical. Artificial intelligence raises questions of computer science, law, philosophy, communication, business and psychology. Public health cannot be understood without considering behaviour, inequality, culture and economics. The challenge is not to abandon disciplines but to unlearn the belief that disciplines are sufficient on their own.

This has particular significance for India. The multidisciplinary ambitions of the National Education Policy 2020 create an opportunity to rethink rigid academic boundaries. But multidisciplinary education cannot simply mean allowing an engineering student to take one course in literature or a business student to choose an elective in psychology. The deeper transformation occurs when different forms of knowledge genuinely meet around a common problem.

UK higher education, with its experience of interdisciplinary programmes, project-based learning and flexible pathways in many institutions, offers useful examples, but it faces its own structural barriers. Departments, funding systems, professional identities and assessment structures can all reinforce academic silos.

Both systems therefore have something to unlearn: the idea that intellectual territory needs permanent fences.

Unlearning Exclusion

Reimagining pedagogy also requires universities to examine an uncomfortable question - for whom was the traditional classroom designed? The imagined student of an earlier university was often relatively homogeneous but contemporary classrooms are not. Students arrive with different languages, cultures, socioeconomic circumstances, disabilities, educational experiences and ways of participating. Equality cannot therefore mean simply treating everyone identically.

A student who remains silent in a seminar may not be disengaged. A student who struggles with conventional written assessment may demonstrate remarkable ability through a project or oral presentation. A first-generation university student may need to learn academic conventions that others have absorbed through social and educational privilege.

Inclusive pedagogy asks universities to unlearn the assumption that difference represents deficiency. This does not mean lowering academic standards. In fact, genuine inclusion demands greater pedagogical sophistication. Teachers need to ask whether the way something is taught or assessed unnecessarily privileges one type of learner.

Both India and the UK face this challenge differently. UK universities operate within highly international and increasingly diverse classrooms. Indian higher education contains extraordinary linguistic, regional, socioeconomic and educational diversity, often within the same institution.

Belonging therefore cannot be produced by policy alone. It is created through everyday pedagogical decisions: whose examples appear in the curriculum, whose voice is heard, whose knowledge is recognised and who feels comfortable enough to ask a question without fearing embarrassment. Sometimes inclusion begins by unlearning who we imagined the 'normal' student to be.

Unlearning What Counts as Success

Higher education has become increasingly connected with employability. Students and families understandably want degrees to lead to meaningful work. Governments and institutions also measure graduate outcomes, placements and economic contribution. These concerns are legitimate. But if employability becomes the only language through which higher education explains its value, something important is lost.

A university should prepare graduates for employment, but it should also prepare them for decisions that cannot be reduced to employment. Graduates will encounter questions of ethics, sustainability, technology and social responsibility long after specific professional skills become outdated.

Green-skills education illustrates this well as sustainability cannot simply become another competency added to a CV. It asks graduates to reconsider assumptions about consumption, growth and responsibility. Similarly, AI literacy cannot mean merely learning to use AI tools more efficiently. It must include knowing when not to use them. Perhaps higher education must unlearn the idea that every valuable educational outcome can be immediately measured in the labour market.

Some outcomes take years to become visible.

India and the UK - Different Histories, Similar Questions

The purpose of comparing India and the UK throughout this book has not been to decide which system has discovered the better pedagogy. Such comparisons easily become superficial.

The relationship between the two educational traditions is historically complicated. Many structures within Indian higher education were shaped through colonial encounters with British education. Yet contemporary India is not simply inheriting those structures; it is actively reconsidering them through expansion, technological transformation and policy reform. The UK, meanwhile, is itself questioning long-established assumptions about teaching, assessment, inclusion, student experience and the purpose of the university.

Both systems are therefore engaged in forms of unlearning.

India has an opportunity to question excessive dependence on rote learning, high-stakes examinations and rigid disciplinary structures while drawing from its own diverse intellectual and educational traditions. The UK can reconsider assumptions created by marketisation, metric-driven academic cultures and increasingly transactional understandings of the student experience. Neither country needs to romanticise its past. Nor should either assume that innovation must come from elsewhere.

The most interesting pedagogical conversation between India and the UK may therefore be one of mutual questioning rather than imitation: What has each system normalised? What deserves to be preserved? What should be reconsidered? What might each learn by seeing familiar practices through another educational culture? Comparison becomes valuable when it makes the familiar strange enough to examine.

AI May Force the Greatest Unlearning of All

For years, universities have assessed students partly through their ability to produce information in the form of essays, reports, summaries, calculations, code and presentations. Generative AI can now assist with all of them. The immediate response has understandably focused on cheating and academic integrity. But the deeper challenge is pedagogical. But if AI can produce the answer, what should the student learn?

Perhaps students must unlearn the idea that producing content is itself evidence of intelligence. Teachers may have to unlearn assessment practices built around tasks that machines can now perform easily. Institutions may need to reconsider what authorship, originality and independent work mean when humans routinely collaborate with intelligent systems. Yet it is AI that also reminds us what education should protect. Curiosity cannot be outsourced and neither can ethical responsibility. A machine can generate several solutions, but the human being still needs to decide which should be chosen and accept responsibility for that choice. The more capable technology becomes, the more important human judgement may become.

That is not a paradox. It may be the central pedagogical challenge of our time.

The University Must Learn to Unlearn Too

There is a danger in discussing unlearning as something only students need to do as institutions also develop habits over centuries. Universities continue practices because they are familiar, administratively convenient or historically respected. Timetables divide learning into predictable units, departments protect disciplinary boundaries and traditional assessment systems reward certain forms of performance. While some of

these structures are necessary, others may simply have survived because nobody has asked whether they still serve their original purpose. A pedagogy of unlearning therefore requires institutional humility.

Universities need spaces where teachers can experiment without every experiment having to succeed. Students should be able to question how they are taught without being treated merely as consumers demanding satisfaction. Leaders must distinguish between educational traditions worth preserving and routines preserved simply because changing them is inconvenient.

Reimagining pedagogy is not a project with an end date. It is a willingness to remain open to revision.

The Courage to Become a Beginner Again

Perhaps the deepest difficulty with unlearning is that it asks us to become beginners again. Expertise gives confidence and experience creates routines. And thus institutions develop traditions. There is comfort in knowing how things are done and unlearning interrupts that comfort. It asks the experienced professor to reconsider a teaching practice that has worked for 20 years. It asks the high-achieving student to discover that memorising the expected answer may no longer be enough. It asks the university to acknowledge that some of its most familiar practices were designed for a world that has changed.

But unlearning never asks us to discard the past.

The future university still needs scholarship, disciplinary expertise, careful reading, teachers, libraries and intellectual traditions. Reimagining pedagogy is not an argument for permanent disruption. Education cannot reinvent itself every morning.

The challenge is to know what should be carried forward and what should be left behind.

Across the chapters of this book, I have raised that question in different forms. Inclusive pedagogy asks us to reconsider who the classroom was designed for. Green-skills education challenges older assumptions about the relationship between professional competence and environmental responsibility. Design thinking asks students to unlearn their fear of failure and their dependence on predetermined problems. Slow learning questions the worship of speed. AI forces us to reconsider authorship, assessment and the meaning of independent thought.

Together, these shifts suggest that the future of pedagogy will not be created simply by adding new methods to old structures.

Something must occasionally be removed - assumption, habit, boundary, and sometimes even certainty.

For India and the UK, this may be the most meaningful dimension of pedagogical transformation. Their universities operate within different histories, cultures and educational realities, but both confront a world in which knowledge changes quickly and certainty has become increasingly fragile. Graduates will therefore need more than the ability to learn continuously. They will need the intellectual flexibility to recognise when what they once learned is no longer sufficient. The teacher will need that ability and so will the university.

Perhaps this is where reimagining pedagogy ultimately leads. Not towards a perfect new model of education, because no such model will remain perfect for long, but towards an educational culture comfortable enough with knowledge to question it and confident enough in its traditions to revise them.

For centuries, universities have taught students how to learn. The university of the future may have an equally important responsibility to teach them when, why and how to unlearn. And then, with greater curiosity and perhaps a little more humility, to learn again.

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2. Cooperative Learning Strategies: Lessons from the UK higher education
3. Multidisciplinary Pedagogy in UK Higher Education: Why It Matters
4. Gratitude Pedagogy: Lessons in higher education from Guru-Shishya Parampara
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12. Building a Global University: A Vision for the Future

CHAPTER 1

Slow Learning in a Fast Digital University: Reclaiming Reflection in HE

Something rather interesting has happened to the university over the past decade. It has become faster, almost without anyone consciously deciding that speed should become an educational goal. Students can now download readings in seconds, watch recorded lectures at twice the normal speed, search thousands of journal articles without entering a library and submit assignments at the click of a button. A question that might once have required a visit to the library can now be answered during a bus journey. And with generative artificial intelligence becoming part of everyday academic life, even the process of writing, summarising and generating ideas has been dramatically accelerated. A difficult article can be reduced to five points before the student has even begin reading the first paragraph.

There is indeed little educational virtue in making information difficult to access. Digital technologies have opened universities to new possibilities, made learning more flexible and allowed students and teachers to collaborate across geographical boundaries. The experience of the pandemic also demonstrated just how important digital infrastructure can be when the physical classroom is suddenly unavailable. In both India and the UK, technology is now firmly embedded within the daily life of higher education.

There is another side to this story. As the university has become faster, learning itself seems to have been pulled into the same rhythm. Students move from one screen to another,

one assignment to the next and one notification to another. Reading has become scanning and research has become searching. There is always another tab open, another message arriving and another deadline waiting. This raises an uncomfortable question and a concern. Just because technology allows something to happen faster, does it necessarily mean that it should be learned faster?

This is where slow learning becomes important to any serious conversation about reimagining pedagogy in India and the UK. Slow learning is not an argument against technology, nor is it a nostalgic attempt to return to an earlier university of chalkboards, handwritten notes and inaccessible libraries. It is simply an argument for protecting those parts of education that need time: reading carefully, thinking independently, listening to another person, struggling with a difficult idea and occasionally changing one's mind. In a university increasingly fascinated by speed, perhaps the ability to slow down is itself becoming an important academic skill.

Having Information Is Not the Same as Understanding It

For much of its history, the university-controlled access to knowledge. Students came to the institution because the books were there and, importantly, because the people who understood those books were there. The lecturer and the library occupied a very different position from the one they occupy today. That world has considerably changed and now a student sitting in Kolkata, Bengaluru, London or Manchester can now access lectures, books, journals, podcasts, archives and courses from almost anywhere. AI has taken this accessibility further. It can explain a theory in simple language, translate a difficult passage, compare two thinkers or summarise a lengthy article within seconds. This is an extraordinary educational resource, but it also makes one important distinction that

accessing knowledge is not necessarily understanding it. Anyone who has taught knows that understanding can be a strangely slow process. A student reads something and does not quite understand it. The same passage is read again. A discussion in class makes part of it clearer but perhaps introduces another question. A week later, another reading suddenly makes the earlier idea fall into place.

There is no shortcut to every such moment.

Think about encountering a difficult philosophical argument, a complicated economic theory or an unfamiliar sociological concept. The first encounter can be frustrating. A sentence may have to be read three times. Sometimes the reader reaches the end of a page and realises that very little has been absorbed. The natural digital response is increasingly to search for a summary or ask AI to explain it and that can help. But if every intellectual difficulty is immediately removed, students may also lose the experience of working their way towards understanding.

Sometimes struggling with an idea is not evidence that learning has failed. Sometimes the struggle is precisely where learning begins.

What Does Slow Learning Actually Mean?

The expression "slow learning" can easily be misunderstood. It does not mean making a two-year programme take four years. It does not mean rejecting efficiency or forcing students to perform routine tasks manually simply because previous generations had to do so. There is no great intellectual benefit in spending hours formatting references if software can do it accurately. Neither is there much point in searching manually through hundreds of documents when a digital database can locate relevant material in seconds.

Slow learning is about knowing what should be accelerated, and more importantly, what should not.

Technology can save students time in finding information. The time saved might then be used to ask whether that information is reliable. AI might help a student identify arguments within several articles. The important academic work is then to examine the differences between those arguments and decide which is more persuasive.

Seen this way, slow learning is less about physical speed and more about intellectual depth. It creates room for ideas to develop rather than demanding immediate answers. It values drafts and revisions, allows students to say, "I thought this at the beginning, but I no longer think so."

It shows that learning has changed the learner.

What Happened to the Pause?

One of the quieter consequences of digital life is that almost every empty moment can now be filled. Waiting outside a classroom once meant waiting outside a classroom. A bus journey might have provided 20 minutes in which the mind wandered. A student encountering an unfamiliar term in a book sometimes had to continue reading before finding out exactly what it meant. Today there is something available to occupy that space, always. The moment difficulty appears technology offers an immediate route around it. There is nothing inherently wrong with this, but education may have underestimated the value of the pause.

Ideas sometimes need time to settle. A question can remain in the mind after a lecture and return unexpectedly during a conversation later in the day. Not knowing something immediately can create curiosity. While silence in a classroom can feel awkward to a teacher, sometimes students are simply

thinking. Slow pedagogy takes these apparently "unproductive" moments seriously.

A teacher asks a difficult question and does not immediately answer it when the room becomes quiet. Students are given a few minutes to write before a discussion begins. A seminar ends with a question that remains unresolved. None of these techniques is technologically impressive, but they can be pedagogically powerful.

Reimagining pedagogy does not always require adding something new. Sometimes it requires protecting something that is quietly disappearing.

The UK University: Digital Convenience and Intellectual Depth

The UK provides an interesting context for thinking about slow learning. Its universities have embraced virtual learning environments, online libraries, lecture capture, blended learning and increasingly sophisticated digital platforms. Students quite reasonably expect academic resources to be available quickly and flexibly. At the same time, UK higher education retains traditions that are fundamentally slow. The seminar, tutorial, independent reading, dissertation and research supervision all depend upon sustained engagement rather than instant response. At their best, they create spaces in which a student is not simply told what to think but is expected to develop and defend an interpretation.

A good seminar illustrates this beautifully where someone makes an argument, another student disagrees and a third brings in an example that neither had considered. The discussion moves somewhere the teacher may not have entirely anticipated. Students sometimes leave the room with fewer certainties than when they entered and that is not

necessarily a failure of teaching. It may be evidence that genuine thinking has taken place.

Slow learning could strengthen these traditions within UK higher education. A module does not always become more rigorous because the reading list becomes longer. Sometimes two texts read properly can generate more learning than ten texts skimmed before a seminar. Similarly, asking students to return to an earlier piece of writing and reconsider it after several weeks may produce deeper learning than simply giving them another assignment.

There is a bigger issue here as universities operate within cultures of speed. Students move through tightly structured semesters while academics face teaching, administration, research, publication and continuous digital communication. Slow pedagogy therefore cannot simply instruct students to slow down while leaving the institution permanently in a hurry.

India: More Courses, More Skills, But More Reflection?

India faces the same issue within a rather different higher-education landscape as digital education has created remarkable opportunities. Students who might once have been limited by geography can now access courses, lectures and educational resources from leading institutions. Online learning platforms have widened participation and allowed students to develop skills beyond their formal degree programmes. At the same time, there is an unmistakable culture of accumulation. Students are encouraged to acquire more skills, more certificates, more internships and more credentials. A student studying a regular degree might simultaneously complete short courses in AI, digital marketing, entrepreneurship and data analytics, while also

preparing for placements or competitive examinations. The ambition behind this is understandable. The Indian employment market is competitive, and students are conscious that a degree alone may not guarantee opportunity.

But there is a question worth asking: when does more learning become simply more content? A student may complete five online courses and still have had very little time to think about how the ideas within them connect. Information has been accumulated, but does that necessarily imply knowledge has been integrated? This matters particularly in the context of the National Education Policy 2020, with its emphasis on multidisciplinary education, critical thinking, creativity, flexibility and experiential learning. These aspirations cannot be achieved simply by increasing the amount of content available digitally. A multidisciplinary student is not someone who has merely taken courses in several disciplines. The real value lies in making connections between them and connections take time.

India also has intellectual traditions in which reflection, dialogue and contemplation have historically played an important role. The guru-shishya tradition emerged from a very different social and historical setting and should not be romanticised as a ready-made model for the modern university. Yet it reminds us of something easily forgotten in contemporary discussions of educational innovation that learning has not always been understood as the rapid consumption of information.

The future of Indian higher education can be technologically ambitious without assuming that speed is always synonymous with progress.

Can Students Still Read Slowly?

Perhaps nowhere is the tension more visible than in reading. Students today encounter enormous amounts of text, much of it on screens. Faced with several articles, chapters, websites and reports for one module, they understandably develop strategies for skimming through the material quickly. They scan headings, search keywords and look for summaries. Generative AI has made this even easier converting 40 minutes of reading an article to a simplified explanation in 40 seconds. The answer is that sometimes 40 seconds is enough but there are times when it is not. And the key lies in the distinction.

Reading an academic text involves much more than discovering what its author concluded. It involves noticing how an argument is constructed, what evidence has been selected, which assumptions are being made and where weaknesses might lie. A summary gives the destination but omits the journey.

Teachers might therefore need to assign less reading occasionally, but demand more from what is assigned. Instead of asking students to "summarise the article," they could ask: Which part did you disagree with? What assumption is the author making? Which paragraph did you find difficult? What question remained after you finished reading? The classroom then becomes a place where uncertainty is acceptable. There should be more moments in universities when a student can say, "I don't completely understand this yet," without feeling intellectually inadequate.

AI and the Temptation to Skip the Thinking

AI makes slow learning particularly relevant because it can remove friction from academic work. AI can help students understand unfamiliar terminology, explore counterarguments, receive preliminary feedback and approach

difficult material with greater confidence. For students learning in a second language or requiring additional academic support, these possibilities can be especially valuable. The problem is not that AI thinks too quickly, the problem arises when students allow it to think on their behalf.

Consider an essay wherein a student could enter the question into an AI system, request a structure, generate arguments and then edit the resulting material. The final submission might appear perfectly competent, while the student has experienced surprisingly little of the intellectual process behind it. There is another possibility. The student could read first, develop an argument and write an initial position. AI might then be asked to challenge that argument or offer a competing interpretation. The student evaluates the response, rejects some suggestions and revises others.

The technology is the same. The pedagogy is completely different. One principle of slow learning in an AI universe should be for you to think before you key in the prompt.

Bringing Conversations Back

A fast digital university can communicate constantly while having surprisingly few "genuine" conversations. Students and teachers exchange emails, announcements, online posts and messages throughout the day and yet academic conversation has a different rhythm. It requires listening, responding and occasionally allowing another person's argument to alter one's own. This makes seminars, tutorials and peer discussions increasingly valuable.

In both India and the UK, classrooms are becoming more diverse. Students bring different cultural experiences, educational backgrounds and ways of understanding the world. A genuine classroom conversation allows these differences to become educational resources. The teacher does

not always need to resolve the debate. Indeed, one of the most valuable things a teacher can occasionally do is allow a question to remain open so that students can continue thinking about it after they leave the room.

Assessment Should Allow Thinking to Develop

Summative or formative assessment also needs to recognise that worthwhile thinking rarely appears perfectly formed. Traditional assessment, especially summative, often rewards the final product. Students submit an essay, project or examination answer and receive a mark, and unfortunately, the messy process through which the work developed largely disappears. Slow learning suggests paying more attention to that process.

A student could submit an early argument and later explain how it changed. A portfolio might demonstrate development across a semester, but reflective writing will document moments when assumptions were challenged. Students could be given opportunities to respond to feedback and improve their work rather than simply receiving comments after the assessment is effectively over. This becomes particularly important in the age of AI. When producing "polished text" is becoming easier, evidence of intellectual development becomes increasingly valuable, and feedback is an essential part of this. Universities spend considerable time producing feedback that students may read once before moving to their next deadline. If students are asked to use feedback to revise something, the feedback becomes part of learning rather than an administrative conclusion to an assignment.

A University Permanently in a Hurry

Students are expected to study, prepare for employment, complete internships, develop extracurricular profiles and

continuously acquire new skills or upskill. Academics face their own cycle of teaching, assessment, publication, meetings, administration and research expectations. Everyone seems to be doing more. At this juncture, it is worth asking whether a university permanently in a hurry can genuinely create the conditions for deep thought.

Slow learning is not a solution to academic workload or student anxiety. But it does challenge the core assumption that educational quality can always be improved by adding more readings, activities, modules, assessments and digital resources. And sometimes good curriculum design requires subtraction. Removing three superficial activities may create space for one meaningful project. Asking students to read one important text carefully may be more demanding than asking them to skim five.

Depth needs room.

Finding the Right Speed for the Reimagined University

The future university should not simply become slower. Some aspects of higher education should become much faster such as access to resources by students as well as administrative processes, and technology should remove unnecessary repetition. AI should be used where it genuinely improves accessibility, exploration and feedback, but other things should remain deliberately slow.

Reading a difficult argument or conducting ethical research or understanding another person's experience or developing an original idea or even just listening carefully to disagreement needs its own time. There is no app that can make these processes instant without changing what they are.

The challenge for higher education in India and the UK is therefore not choosing between fast and slow learning. It is developing the judgement to recognise which speed a particular kind of learning requires.

The Courage Not to Hurry

The digital university will become faster with AI, immersive technologies and personalised learning systems, making information easier to access and academic content increasingly easy to generate. The temptation will be to treat every reduction in time as educational progress. But equating speed with educational progress would be a mistake.

Reimagining pedagogy in India and the UK requires something more thoughtful than digitising the university. The UK can build upon its traditions of seminars, tutorials, independent inquiry and reflective learning while questioning the pressures created by an increasingly accelerated academic culture. India can use the possibilities created by NEP 2020, multidisciplinary education and expanding digital access while ensuring that educational transformation remains fundamentally about learning rather than merely about technology.

The university of the future should certainly teach students how to work with powerful technologies. It should prepare them for professions that will move quickly and change continuously. But perhaps it has another responsibility to create places where students are occasionally allowed not to hurry. Time needed to read something twice or time to listen before responding or even time to be uncertain, none of this sounds particularly revolutionary. Yet in an educational culture increasingly organised around immediacy, efficiency and acceleration, making space for thought may itself become a radical pedagogical choice.

A fast world will continue to reward speed. The reimagined university must also teach something harder: the wisdom to recognise when understanding requires us to slow down.

CHAPTER 2

Cooperative Learning Strategies: Lessons from the UK higher education

What is the real takeaway of a student after a lecture? Is it the theory carefully explained on the board, the slides, or the notes hurriedly taken down before the professor moves to the next topic? Mostly, it may be something much less planned: a question from another student, an argument during a discussion, or a completely unexpected observation that makes the entire class look at an idea from a new perspective. Some of the most meaningful moments in education happen when students begin to learn from one another.

Cooperative learning is a core feature of contemporary UK higher education. Cooperative and collaborative learning strategies have increasingly become part of the teaching environment. Students are encouraged to discuss, question, work through cases, teach one another, conduct research together and solve problems collectively. The principle is that learning does not have to be a private transaction between a teacher and a student. A classroom can become much more interesting when knowledge begins moving laterally from student to student.

Anyone familiar with university classrooms knows that 'group work' does not necessarily mean cooperative learning. Put five students together and a rather predictable pattern can emerge. One becomes the unofficial leader, the other quietly does most of the research. Simply arranging students into groups does not create collaboration.

Meaningful cooperative learning needs to be curated, so students need a problem worth solving, clear responsibilities and enough individual accountability to know that every contribution matters. Roles can also be reversed. The student who presents one week can become the researcher the next. The confident speaker can be asked to listen and summarise, while the quieter student can be encouraged to lead a discussion. Group assessment can be combined with individual reflection and peer feedback. The purpose is not merely to make group projects fairer, it is to teach students how to listen, negotiate, defend an argument, deal with disagreement and sometimes accept that somebody else's idea is better than their own. These abilities cannot be captured in a three-hour summative assessment, but they often determine how effectively graduates function in the real world beyond the university.

In a flipped classroom, instead of encountering all the learning material for the first time during a lecture, students may read an article, watch a video or explore digital resources beforehand. Classroom time can then be used for an evolved discussion, interpretation and application. The underlying question is why use valuable classroom time simply telling students something they could have read or watched before arriving? The classroom can instead become the place where knowledge is tested against problems, assumptions are questioned and students discover that real situations rarely come with a convenient model answer.

The advent of artificial intelligence has made this discussion even more urgent as students can now ask an AI tool to explain a theory, summarise an article, compare concepts or suggest an argument within seconds. Universities may debate the implications, but the fundamental change has already taken place. Information is no longer scarce, and access to explanation is no longer controlled by the classroom. This

does not make teachers irrelevant, on the contrary, it changes the nature of their role. If information is abundant, students need to develop judgement, the ability to recognise weak or even false evidence, question a persuasive-looking answer, identify bias, connect ideas and know when something that sounds convincing may not be so in reality.

For India, this conversation is particularly timely as The National Education Policy 2020 calls for experiential, multidisciplinary, inquiry-based and learner-centred education. Cooperative learning fits naturally within these ambitions because it moves students from passive reception towards active participation. It also creates opportunities to develop communication, teamwork, leadership, critical thinking and adaptability not as additional "soft skills" taught somewhere outside the main curriculum, but as an integral part of learning.

There is, in fact, a curious contradiction in the way higher education prepares students for professional life. For much of their academic journey, success is treated as intensely individual such as individual marks, individual ranks, individual examinations and individual degrees. Then graduates enter organisations where almost nothing important is accomplished entirely alone. They must work with colleagues they did not choose, negotiate with people from other functions, respond to clients who may change their minds and make decisions with incomplete information. There is rarely a model answer at the back of the book. While communication and collaboration are still frequently described as "soft skills", there is nothing particularly soft about persuading five intelligent people with five different opinions to agree on one course of action.

India should resist the temptation to replicate cooperative learning strategies from British universities unchanged.

Educational practices do not always travel neatly across cultures and institutions. Indian higher education operates at an enormous scale. Class sizes can be large, faculty members often manage considerable teaching and administrative workloads, infrastructure varies widely and access to technology remains uneven. Assessment systems in many institutions continue to privilege summative written examinations, which inevitably influences what both teachers and students consider important.

Moreover, there is a cultural and behavioural dimension as many Indian students reach university after years in classrooms where the safest route to academic success was to listen carefully, take notes and reproduce the expected answer in an examination. When such students suddenly encounter a professor asking, "There is no right answer, what is your view?", silence should hardly be surprising. Having an opinion in a classroom, expressing it confidently and allowing somebody else to challenge it are learned behaviours too. Participation cannot simply be written into a course outcome and expected to appear automatically.

Socratic pedagogy may not automatically be implemented and accepted widely.

This is why cooperative learning in India may be more successful as an evolution rather than a revolution and has to begin with small changes, asking students to discuss a question with the person beside them, introducing a ten-minute case exercise, encouraging peer critique or asking groups to defend positions they may not personally agree with. Students can occasionally be asked to explain concepts to one another before the professor intervenes. None of these requires sophisticated technology or major investment. What they require is a teacher willing to give students greater ownership of

classroom time and, occasionally, to surrender a little control over where the conversation goes.

India also has an opportunity to develop a distinctly Indian approach to cooperative and collaborative learning. Its classrooms are surrounded by extraordinary cases waiting to be explored. A management classroom does not always need to travel to Silicon Valley for its examples when a family enterprise in Burrabazar, Surat or Jaipur may offer equally compelling lessons about entrepreneurship, succession, networks and trust. Design students can collaborate on challenges involving Indian crafts, heritage, sustainability and rapidly changing urban spaces. Communication students can analyse fake news, misinformation, public-health campaigns, advertising or the extraordinary social influence of WhatsApp and short-form video. Engineering students can work together on water, waste, mobility, agriculture and affordable technology. When students recognise their own world in the problem placed before them, learning begins to acquire a different kind of relevance.

Technology can certainly support this transition. Shared documents, virtual classrooms, collaborative platforms and AI-enabled tools allow students to work together even when they are physically apart.

Yet technology should not be mistaken for pedagogy because a dull assignment uploaded to an expensive digital platform remains a dull assignment. The difficult work still belongs to the teacher of designing the problem, encouraging the student who rarely speaks, managing the student who speaks too much, creating accountability, navigating disagreement and recognising when a classroom discussion has unexpectedly moved somewhere more interesting than the lesson plan intended.

Perhaps the deeper value of cooperative learning lies in the fact that education can also be about encountering another mind. Students need spaces where they discover that disagreement is not disrespect, listening is not weakness and changing one's mind can sometimes be evidence of learning rather than defeat. While in a digital world increasingly shaped by algorithms that surround people with opinions similar to their own, higher education institutions have an important responsibility to create spaces where young people learn alongside those who may see the world very differently.

The lecture, therefore, does not need to disappear. A gifted teacher standing before a classroom and making an idea come alive remains one of education's most powerful experiences. What needs reconsideration is the assumption that teaching is complete when the teacher finishes speaking.

Reverse mentoring may not always fit neatly into a lesson plan, but it may well be education at its best.

CHAPTER 3

Multidisciplinary Pedagogy in UK Higher Education: Why It Matters

Universities have always liked disciplines because there is a certain logic to it. A student enters university to study economics, engineering, literature, psychology, business or computer science and, over the next few years, develops a reasonably deep understanding of that field. This disciplinary depth matters as nobody wants an engineer who knows engineering only superficially, or a psychologist who has never seriously engaged with psychological theory and research.

The problem begins when students step outside the classroom because the world they encounter is not neatly divided into neat compartments called 'departments'. Climate change is not only a problem for environmental scientists or AI cannot be left entirely to computer scientists and immigration is simultaneously about economics, politics, culture, identity and human aspiration. Sustainability has as much to do with behaviour and consumption as it does with technology. The more closely one looks at most contemporary problems, the more difficult it becomes to place them inside a single academic compartment.

Multidisciplinary pedagogy becomes useful at precisely this point. Disciplines have not become outdated; rather, disciplinary knowledge sometimes needs the company of other ways of seeing.

Depth Before Breadth

There is a temptation to make multidisciplinary education sound fashionable, almost as though the traditional discipline has had its day but that is not correct. Students need a disciplinary home, they need to know how their subject thinks, what counts as evidence within it and what intellectual traditions have shaped it. The interesting part comes afterwards: what happens when that knowledge encounters another way of seeing the same problem, a different perception altogether?

Artificial intelligence provides an obvious example. A computing student may be perfectly capable of developing an AI application. Technically, the system may work. But that does not settle whether it should be used. What happens if the data carry historical biases? Who is responsible when an automated decision harms someone? How much privacy should people surrender for convenience? At what point does personalisation become surveillance? These are no longer purely computing questions. Law enters the discussion, so do sociology, ethics, psychology, public policy and communication. The computer scientist does not suddenly need degrees in all these subjects. All they need is an intellectual humility for recognising that technical efficiency cannot answer every question created by technology.

For example, my favourite discipline 'luxury' needs to be studied through branding, consumer behaviour, marketing, financial performance. But anyone who has spent time examining luxury soon encounters questions that refuse to remain within conventional management theory. Why does provenance matter? Why can craftsmanship create value far beyond utility? Why does an old object sometimes become more desirable while most consumer goods lose value with age? To understand those questions, one begins moving

towards culture, history, sociology, anthropology, aesthetics and design. Luxury makes little sense when reduced entirely to price. Its value is partly economic, but it is also cultural, symbolic and emotional as I have explained in my book 'The Mythic Value of Luxury'.

What This Means for UK Universities

Across UK higher education, there has been a visible movement towards more connected forms of learning. It does not look the same everywhere, nor should it. Students may encounter electives outside their principal subject, combined programmes, collaborative projects, challenge-based learning or assignments that bring different departments together. There is a practical reason for this.

The career awaiting a student entering university today is unlikely to be as predictable as it once appeared. A graduate may move between industries several times. Technologies will change jobs, some familiar occupations will disappear or be substantially redesigned, while new ones will emerge with rather strange titles that universities could hardly have anticipated. So perhaps the question that matters is what can this graduate do when confront with something they do not yet know?

A designer may find herself working with behavioural scientists. A communication professional may need to understand algorithmic bias. An engineer may have to explain a technical proposal to policymakers and residents. A business leader dealing with sustainability cannot simply outsource climate knowledge to somebody else in the organisation. Professional life increasingly requires people to cross intellectual borders, even when their formal qualifications remain firmly located within one discipline.

Start With the Problem

An interesting possibility in multidisciplinary teaching is to reverse the normal classroom logic and begin with a subject and then look for examples, begin with a problem. Explore the idea of a sustainable city and put students of engineering, economics, public health, sociology, architecture and communication around the same table and the differences become apparent quite quickly. The engineer may think about transport systems, energy efficiency and infrastructure. The economist may ask who will pay and whether the model is financially viable. Public-health students might consider pollution, walkability and wellbeing. Architecture students will see questions of space and design. Then somebody may ask a deceptively simple question such as sustainable for whom? And it can disturb an otherwise comfortable discussion.

A beautifully designed green neighbourhood may be environmentally impressive while becoming too expensive for its original residents. A transport policy may reduce emissions, but disadvantage communities poorly served by public transport. Urban regeneration can improve infrastructure and simultaneously accelerate displacement but there is rarely one answer, and students need to experience that difficulty. Education can sometimes give the impression that every problem has been designed to fit the length of an examination question. Real problems are untidier, evidence conflicts, priorities compete and a solution for one group may create difficulties for another. A multidisciplinary classroom can expose students to that uncertainty without asking them to abandon intellectual rigour.

Teacher Cannot Know Everything

There is another consequence that deserves attention. Multidisciplinary education can be uncomfortable for teachers too as academics are trained to become experts and expertise carries authority. But when several disciplines enter the same classroom, no lecturer can reasonably claim mastery over all of them. That changes the teaching relationship in subtle ways. The lecturer still brings expertise, but may sometimes have to say, in effect, "That question needs another perspective." There is nothing intellectually weak about this, quite the opposite as knowing where one's expertise ends is itself part of scholarship.

Co-teaching becomes valuable here with practitioners, communities and colleagues from other disciplines. A sociologist and an engineer discussing the same urban problem in front of students can reveal something that a textbook cannot as educated people can examine the same evidence and still begin from very different assumptions. Assessment also needs to be more imaginative. Essays and summative assessments remain useful, but they need not carry the entire burden of evaluating learning. A policy brief asks students to be concise. A podcast forces them to make an argument understandable without hiding behind academic vocabulary. A community project confronts them with people who may not care about disciplinary conventions at all. A research proposal makes them explain not only what interests them, but why somebody should consider the question worth investigating.

Multidisciplinary learning can also go wrong. Anyone who has watched an unsuccessful group project will recognise the danger. Put five students from different backgrounds together, call the exercise multidisciplinary, and very little integration may occur. The economist writes the economics section, the designer prepares the visuals, somebody else does the research,

and everything is assembled shortly before submission. Five disciplines may be present on the cover page while barely speaking to one another inside the work. That is not multidisciplinary learning but mere division of labour.

For the approach to work, the problem itself must require different perspectives. Students need opportunities to disagree, revise assumptions and understand why another discipline approaches evidence differently. Assessment should reward integration and not the accumulation of several viewpoints.

Universities need to confront a less glamorous reality as their administrative structures are usually disciplinary even when their educational ambitions are not. Departments have budgets, courses have ownership, academics have workloads and timetables collide. Genuine collaboration across these boundaries requires effort and institutional willingness. These practical issues matter because multidisciplinary education should not become another attractive phrase in university brochures. If it is worth doing, it is worth designing properly.

This makes 'what should a university graduate know' a wrong question. A university graduate should certainly know something and know it well, but higher education has never been only about accumulating information. At its best, it changes how a person approaches uncertainty. Multidisciplinary pedagogy contributes to this because it reminds students of something scholarship occasionally allows people to forget that every discipline illuminates certain parts of reality more clearly than others.

The economist sees something the designer may miss and vice versa. The sociologist asks whose interests are represented and the engineer asks whether the idea will work. None of these questions is sufficient independently. The future university therefore does not need to choose between disciplinary depth and multidisciplinary breadth as students need both. They

should graduate with the confidence that comes from knowing a subject properly, but not with the arrogance of believing that their subject contains every answer. There is a considerable difference between the two.

Perhaps one of the most useful things a university can teach a student is to sit across the table from someone who sees the world differently and become curious rather than defensive. That may not fit neatly into a module descriptor but it is education.

CHAPTER 4

Gratitude Pedagogy: Lessons in Higher Education from Guru-Shishya Parampara

When the student is ready, the teacher appears.

When the student is truly ready, the teacher disappears.

A small contradiction has arisen at the heart of education. Never have students had so much knowledge within such easy reach. A question that once meant going to the library, searching through shelves and spending an afternoon with books can now be answered before one has finished typing it. Lectures now travel across continents, books patiently sit inside smartphones, and AI can explain, summarise and reorganise information instantly even before a faculty could even start speaking in a class. All of this is extraordinary and sometimes overwhelming. And yet, as education becomes faster and more efficient, one wonders whether we are slowly losing something that cannot be downloaded, a sense of gratitude for how knowledge reaches us in the first place.

Gratitude may sound like a misfit beside pedagogy as it can easily be labelled 'sentimental'. It can also be misunderstood as the expectation that students must be thankful to their teachers simply because they are teachers. That is not the argument here. 'Gratitude Pedagogy' is less about saying "thank you" and more about recognising that "education is rarely an individual achievement". Behind almost every learner stands a rather crowded landscape of people and institutions such as parents, teachers, friends, books, libraries,

scholarships, public infrastructure, communities and sometimes complete strangers whose work made a particular opportunity possible.

The guru-shishya parampara or tradition had imagined education primarily as a relationship, long before universities began speaking about mentoring, experiential learning, learner engagement and holistic education. It was never simply about the transfer of information from someone who knew to someone who did not. At its best, it represented a journey in which knowledge was accompanied by discipline, questioning, observation and reflection where the guru was a guide while the shishya was an engaged and inquisitive learner, an argumentative Indian.

Rethinking Guru Dakshina

What can possibly be a modern guru dakshina? It can be an acknowledgement to the genesis of one's ideas or even citing another scholar instead of quietly 'borrowing' an argument or helping a junior student, sharing knowledge with a community or remembering the people whose encouragement made an academic journey possible. A researcher who acknowledges the intellectual debt owed to earlier scholars or a student who gives a classmate credit for an idea during a group project, is practising a form of gratitude.

Hard work matters but very few people reach anywhere entirely by themselves. Someone usually opened a door, paid a fee, recommended a book, offered criticism, provided a scholarship, made a phone call or simply said, at the right moment, "You can do this." Education could occasionally nudge students to remember these contributions. One must also remember that gratitude cannot flow only from student to teacher, teachers owe something to their students as well.

A classroom also changes a teacher. Students ask awkward questions, they disagree, they misunderstand things in unexpected ways and, occasionally, understand them better than the teacher expected. A student may offer an interpretation of a familiar text that makes a professor who has taught it for over a decade look at it differently. These reverse mentoring moments are part of teaching, although they rarely appear in faculty appraisal forms.

This is why a contemporary interpretation of guru-shishya cannot be built around unquestioned hierarchy and reverse mentoring needs to be taken into consideration. The teacher may possess greater experience in a discipline, but students bring experiences that the teacher does not possess. They come from different cities, languages, professions, social realities and increasingly different digital worlds. A good classroom allows these worlds to meet where the teacher guides the student, but the student also keeps the teacher intellectually alive. That reciprocity matters as it prevents gratitude from becoming a demand for reverence.

What Happens When AI Enters the Classroom?

AI gives knowledge an appearance of effortlessness, making accessibility a walk in the park. When you type a question and an answer pops up, what disappears is the long human history behind that answer. Someone conducted the research, someone developed the theory, someone challenged it, someone wrote the book, someone translated it, someone preserved the archive, and someone taught the next generation. Knowledge has an ancestry, and gratitude pedagogy can help students recognise it.

A teacher never was a mere supplier of information. The value of a teacher will increasingly rely more on Socratic Pedagogy, in helping students judge information, question it, connect it

with experience and think about its consequences. AI may provide twenty answers to a question, but education still needs to help a learner decide which answer deserves attention and why. That requires judgement, and judgement develops through human relationships as much as through information.

In this sense, the ancient guru and the AI-enabled classroom are not as far apart as they initially appear. The technologies are radically different, but one fundamental educational question remains unanswered, what should a person do with knowledge once it has been acquired?

Recognition, Reflection and Reciprocity

The challenge is to prevent gratitude pedagogy from becoming another attractive concept that appears in conferences and curriculum documents but rarely enters the classroom. One modest experiment could be a four-week 'Recognition, Reflection and Reciprocity' exercise within a foundation course, professional-practice paper or community-engagement programme. It does not need another summative assessment. In fact, the moment students are asked to memorise the "three principles of gratitude pedagogy" for a 10-mark question, much of the point has probably been lost.

Students could begin with recognition by mapping the people and systems that made a particular piece of learning possible. Parents and teachers may appear first, but then the list might become more interesting. Can be a librarian, a friend who shared notes, a scholarship, an inexpensive internet connection, or even the person who challenged an idea and forced the student to rethink it.

The exercise can then move towards reflection. A student might choose one of these relationships or systems and question what difference it made? Someone reflecting on a scholarship may start thinking about why another equally

capable student did not have the same opportunity. Someone writing about a parent may recognise forms of labour and sacrifice that remain invisible in the final degree certificate. At that point gratitude becomes more than a pleasant emotion, it becomes an understanding of interdependence.

Then comes reciprocity. If others made one's learning possible, what does one do with that recognition? A senior student might spend an hour helping someone in the first semester. A researcher might explain the findings of a project in language that the community involved can understand. Students conducting fieldwork might make sure that community participants receive proper acknowledgement rather than becoming anonymous "subjects" in an academic report. The gesture does not have to be dramatic. Often the smallest acts are the most believable.

This may be a useful contemporary interpretation of guru dakshina. Instead of returning something to the person from whom knowledge was received, the learner passes something forward and then knowledge begins to flow.

CHAPTER 5

Andragogy and AI in Higher Education: The way forward for Global Universities

AI has prompted countless conversations about the future of higher education. Most of them revolve around technology in terms of what AI can do, how quickly it is evolving, and whether universities are keeping pace. Yet the more one observes these discussions, the more one returns to a simpler question of what, after all, is the purpose of a university? While it is indeed an old question, but perhaps it has never been more relevant.

Universities have never existed merely to distribute information as information has always been abundant in one form or another. Their real purpose has been to cultivate judgement, curiosity, intellectual integrity, and the confidence to question what appears to be certain. Every major technological shift, such as from the printing press to the internet, has forced institutions to rethink how they teach without abandoning why they exist. Artificial Intelligence is simply the latest chapter in that long history.

What makes this moment different is that AI is no longer merely a tool at the edge of learning, it has become an active participant in it. It can explain concepts, generate ideas, analyse data, summarise literature, and even hold conversations that resemble thoughtful dialogue. It performs many of the visible tasks associated with learning and yet learning itself remains something altogether different. While machines process information, humans interpret experience

and that distinction becomes particularly important when we think about adult learners.

Unlike school students, adults do not enter classrooms waiting to be filled with knowledge. They arrive carrying careers, responsibilities, failures, achievements, and deeply personal experiences. Every lecture is filtered through memories of workplaces, families, communities, and ambitions that have already shaped them. Malcolm Knowles recognised this when he developed the principles of andragogy. Adult learning succeeds not because information is delivered efficiently but because it becomes relevant to lived experience. Reflection matters as much as instruction.

In many respects, AI complements this philosophy remarkably well. It allows learning to happen at a pace chosen by the learner rather than imposed by the institution. It can explain the same concept in several different ways, provide immediate feedback, and make education more accessible to those balancing professional and personal commitments. For a working executive studying late at night or a researcher venturing into an unfamiliar discipline, AI can remove obstacles that once made lifelong learning difficult.

Yet education has never been defined by how quickly answers arrive.

The real purpose of higher education is not simply to produce informed graduates but thoughtful ones. AI can produce persuasive responses within seconds, but it cannot decide whether those responses are ethically sound, socially responsible, or appropriate within a particular cultural context. It can identify patterns without understanding consequences, it can imitate reasoning without possessing wisdom as these remain profoundly human capacities. This is where universities face their greatest challenge.

Preparing students for an AI-enabled world cannot stop at teaching them how to write effective prompts or use sophisticated digital tools. They must also learn how to question machine-generated outputs, evaluate evidence critically, identify bias, acknowledge intellectual ownership, and recognise the limits of algorithmic reasoning. Digital literacy is important but critical literacy is indispensable. With accessibility it is critical to assess the accuracy and authenticity of the response and this requires educators.

For generations, teaching often meant being the principal source of knowledge but such a model is becoming increasingly difficult to sustain when information is available almost instantly. The educator's value now lies in asking better questions, designing richer learning experiences, encouraging dialogue, nurturing curiosity, and helping students make sense of complexity. Teaching becomes less about delivering content and more about cultivating understanding and this transition is most visible in the way universities assess learning.

If AI can produce a technically competent essay within minutes, then conventional assignments alone can no longer reveal what students genuinely understand. Assessment needs to move closer to authentic practice such as reflective journals, design portfolios, oral examinations, collaborative projects, field-based research, community engagement, and problem-solving in real-world settings offer richer evidence of learning. They reveal how individuals think, adapt, collaborate, and exercise judgement when certainty is impossible.

There is also an important question of equity that deserves greater attention. AI promises to democratise education, but technology does not automatically create inclusion. Access to advanced digital tools, reliable connectivity, and the confidence to use them remains uneven across communities and countries. Without deliberate institutional support,

technological innovation risks widening existing educational inequalities rather than reducing them. Universities, therefore, have an ethical responsibility to ensure that digital transformation expands opportunity for everyone, not merely for those already privileged.

Ultimately, the debate about Artificial Intelligence is not really about machines, it is about the kind of society universities hope to shape. It is about whether higher education continues to produce reflective citizens capable of independent thought or simply graduates who know how to generate polished outputs. It is about ensuring that technological progress remains anchored in values that machines cannot possess such as empathy, integrity, responsibility, and most importantly, wisdom.

The universities that will matter most in the coming decades may not be those with the most sophisticated AI infrastructure. They are more likely to be the institutions that understand how technology can enrich, rather than diminish, the human experience of learning. They will use AI to deepen curiosity instead of replacing it, to widen access instead of reinforcing inequality, and to strengthen critical thinking rather than encourage intellectual dependence.

Artificial Intelligence will undoubtedly reshape classrooms, research, and assessment. It will influence almost every aspect of higher education. Yet the central purpose of a university remains remarkably constant. Its enduring responsibility is not merely to help people know more, but to help them become wiser.

'Natural wisdom', despite artificial intelligence, remains one of humanity's most irreplaceable qualities.

CHAPTER 6

Socratic Pedagogy in UK: Why Dialogue, Experience & AI Must Work Together

Once upon a time the student used to come to the university to look for answers. Cut to today, within a fraction of a second, artificial intelligence, especially generative AI, can explain to you Plato, summarise a journal article, construct an argument, prepare an essay plan and even polish the language. It is impressive and convenient, but leaves higher education with a rather uncomfortable question such as if answers are becoming so easy to produce, what exactly are universities teaching students to do? Perhaps the answer lies, somewhat ironically, in going backwards before going forward.

For many centuries, the Socratic tradition of pedagogy has reminded education that learning does not begin with the answer. It begins with the question. Oxford tutorials and Cambridge supervisions have preserved something of this tradition through close intellectual dialogue where the student reads, writes, thinks and then encounters an academic who asks the troublesome 'Why'? In the age of AI, that little word may be more valuable than ever.

The real challenge before the UK higher education is not simply to stop students from using AI as that battle would be both unrealistic and intellectually limiting. The real challenge is to design education in which students cannot outsource the responsibility of thinking, where they must explain what they believe, defend it, doubt it, occasionally abandon it and, importantly, learn from the process.

The Courage to Say 'I Don't Know'

Socratic pedagogy is always presented as a sophisticated philosophical method. However, it is wonderfully simple. One person asks another person a good question and then actually listens to the answer. Anyone who has spent enough time inside a classroom knows the moment that sometimes follows. A student begins answering confidently, stops halfway and says, almost apologetically, "Actually, I'm not sure." That is not a bad moment. It may be one of the best moments in education.

Today, higher education has become very good at rewarding certainty. Students are expected to submit answers, meet learning outcomes, obtain credits and eventually collect degrees. Yet serious learning frequently begins with uncertainty.

There is another difficulty. Students today operate within a highly structured academic economy of deadlines, credits, marks and employability. It is hardly surprising that they ask legitimate practical questions. But somewhere between the rubric and the deadline, universities must preserve another one, 'what do you think'? And then perhaps the even harder follow-up question 'Why'?

What Oxbridge Teaches, Really

Oxford tutorials and Cambridge supervisions are often admired for their small size. But size alone can hardly explain their educational value. A small classroom can be just as intellectually sleepy as a lecture theatre so what matters is the academic encounter. The student arrives after reading independently and preparing an essay or solving a problem and then the written work is discussed and is questioned, sometimes dismantled. Imagine spending several days constructing an argument only to have a tutor ask, within

minutes, 'But what makes you think this is true?' There is nowhere for the student to hide. Not behind elegant prose or behind multiple references and surely, not behind AI. The student needs to have an original thought, needs to own the argument.

Students learn that disagreement is, not necessarily, disrespect and they learn to defend a position without becoming defensive. They discover that saying 'I was wrong' does not diminish intelligence but sometimes demonstrates it. These are not merely academic qualities. The ability to listen, question assumptions, change one's mind and make decisions under uncertainty matters in leadership, business, journalism, public policy and almost every profession where human judgement still counts.

But Oxford and Cambridge need not be romanticised as their systems emerged from particular histories and resources. Most universities cannot provide intensive tutorials to every student every week, nor should they necessarily try. The tutorial can also be intimidating, particularly for students who come from educational cultures where questioning teachers is unfamiliar. The focus needs to be on recreating intellectual encounter rather than recreating Oxford or Cambridge. A university does not need medieval buildings or centuries of tradition to ask a student, 'Tell me why you believe that?' With the advent of AI, a student can now produce an impressive-looking argument without necessarily understanding all of it. While the grammar, the structure or even the confidence can be flawless and absolute, the answer can still be wrong. And this is where higher education needs to be careful.

So simply ask the student, 'What did you do after AI gave you the answer?' Suppose students ask an AI tool, 'whether artificial intelligence will make education more equal'. Within seconds, it produces a confident response about democratising

knowledge, personalised learning and accessibility. The core question now is 'equal for whom'? Does the answer assume that every learner owns a suitable device or has internet connectivity or network? Would a student in rural India experience this supposed democratisation in the same way as a student sitting inside a well-resourced British university? Suddenly, the AI response looks less like an answer and more like an argument waiting to be interrogated. AI should not always be the cleverest voice in the classroom. Sometimes it should simply be the next text students are taught to question.

The Student Is Not an Empty Vessel

University students bring professional experiences, cultural memories, languages, ambitions, anxieties, family responsibilities and very different relationships with technology. A student who has worked for 10 years before entering university will not encounter a management theory in quite the same way as an 18-year-old. This is why andragogy matters as one size never fit all in adult learning.

Adult learning recognises that students are participants in their education. They need to understand not only what they are learning but why it matters, where it connects with experience and how it might be applied beyond the classroom. This experiential learning does not make the teacher redundant. It is quite the contrary. The academic mentor helps the learner distinguish information from knowledge, knowledge from understanding and understanding from judgement. AI can help along the way. It can explain a difficult concept differently, generate practice questions, compare approaches or help someone rehearse a presentation. There is no reason to fear these uses.

There must remain a point at which the student says, 'this is my judgement, and I can explain how I reached it'.

Assessment Should Ask: How Did You Get Here?

AI has exposed something higher education in the UK as well as in India has avoided discussing for too long, the limitations of assessing only the finished product. A student submits a polished 3,000-word report, the lecturer marks it and a grade appears. But when did the learning happen? Perhaps the student began with a terrible idea and a conversation changed it. Perhaps a source contradicted everything they originally believed. Perhaps AI produced a brilliant paragraph with completely fabricated references. Perhaps the student discovered the problem, checked the sources and rebuilt the argument. That intellectual journey matters.

A quick viva after an essay can reveal more about understanding than another thousand words. Maintaining a research diary can reveal how thinking changed and an annotated bibliography can reveal how evidence was judged. Presentations, demonstrations, reflective commentaries and live projects can show whether knowledge survives outside carefully edited prose. This is not an argument against essays as writing remains fundamental to scholarship, forcing ideas into some kind of order. But perhaps universities have asked the essay to do too much. The root assessment question of the AI age may therefore be, 'how did your thinking arrive here?'

Learning Remains Human

The great lesson from Oxford and Cambridge is ultimately not about Oxford or Cambridge, it is about attention. A teacher pays enough attention to notice the weak assumption hiding underneath an elegant argument. A student listens carefully enough to realise that a classmate has seen something they missed. A learner looks at an AI-generated answer and feels that tiny but important discomfort. These moments of academic enquiry do not require ancient colleges as they can

happen in seminars, laboratories, project meetings, online classrooms, design studios and corridors after lectures.

AI will undoubtedly become more powerful as it will write better, analyse faster and probably become increasingly difficult to distinguish from human-generated work. But that makes the human parts of education more valuable, not less are some traits such as curiosity, doubt, experience, empathy, responsibility, and the willingness to listen. The sheer courage to change one's mind.

Socratic pedagogy, andragogy, experiential learning and critical AI literacy are therefore not separate educational fashions. Together, they point towards a university where technology supports learning without becoming a substitute for thought.

The student of tomorrow may carry millions of answers in a pocket. The true purpose of an academic institution will be to teach that student which answer deserves to be trusted, which one deserves to be challenged, and which one deserves another question.

When answers become cheap, questions become priceless.

CHAPTER 7

Critical Thinking in Higher Education: Lessons from UK universities

The purpose of a university education cannot be explained conventional indicators such as degrees, employability, research output, rankings and professional preparedness. Higher education should help students understand a complex inter- and multi-disciplinary world and develop the judgement to act responsibly within it. A graduate may possess considerable subject knowledge and still struggle when evidence is contradictory, when a familiar theory does not fit a real situation, or when an AI-generated answer sounds convincing but cannot be easily verified. Students need to be encouraged to question claims, examine evidence, recognise assumptions, consider different perspectives and arrive at conclusions they can defend. Critical thinking is essentially the discipline of asking better questions, while remaining intellectually open enough to change one's perspective when stronger evidence emerges.

The problem today is no longer access to information as students live with search engines, social media, digital platforms and generative AI. They are encountering news, advertising, political messages, influencer opinions, research summaries and AI-generated content without any break. Some of this information is credible, some incomplete and some deliberately persuasive and agenda driven. Universities must therefore move beyond teaching students how to find information and help them decide what can be trusted. Critical thinking is now closely connected with digital and AI literacy. The future graduate may not be distinguished by knowing

more than others, because information is increasingly available to everyone. The distinction will lie in knowing how to interpret it, question it and use it responsibly.

One needs to look beyond the comfort of the 'right answer'. Memorisation remains necessary because students cannot critically engage with a discipline without first knowing its foundation, but the issue begins when remembering becomes the destination rather than the starting point. For example, a journalism student should look beyond a persuasive headline to critically examine sources and framing for any possible bias. Critical thinking helps move learning from 'what do I know' towards more fundamental queries such as 'why does this matter, where does it apply, and what are its limitations'.

UK higher education offers a useful reference for integrating this approach into curriculum design. The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) uses Subject Benchmark Statements as reference points for designing and reviewing programmes, linking disciplinary learning with broader intellectual capabilities. Rather than prescribing a universal model, this approach allows critical thinking to take forms appropriate to different disciplines.

At Bath Spa University where I am a Visiting Research Fellow it identifies its graduates as critical and reflective thinkers and embeds critical thinking within its graduate attributes. The important lesson is that critical thinking works best when it is embedded rather than appended. Critical thinking need not be an additional subject. Students need to encounter it progressively through source evaluation, theoretical debate, research critique, open-ended problems, dissertations and capstone projects.

Faculty as a Facilitator

Faculty members remain central to making this transformation towards embedding critical thinking in curriculum. A curriculum cannot alone produce critical thinkers if the classroom culture rewards silence, reproduction and memorisation. Teachers can change this by asking deceptively simple questions following Socratic Pedagogy, inviting students to think rather than merely respond. Faculty development is therefore equally important. In the UK, Advance HE has emphasised approaches to developing critical and analytical thinking through teaching and curriculum practice. Teachers themselves need opportunities to explore inquiry-based learning, case studies, structured debate, research critique and meaningful feedback. Only telling students to be 'more analytical' is not enough and they need to be shown how to build an argument, assess evidence, recognise limitations and consider counterarguments.

Critical thinking must also become part of the wider institutional ecosystem. Assessment is particularly powerful because students quickly understand what a university values by observing what gets them grades. If examinations reward reproduction, students will memorise and if assessments involve case analyses, research critiques, simulations, reflective portfolios and live industry problems, students will investigate and question. Libraries, multi- and inter-disciplinary forums and academic-support units can further develop information literacy, source verification, ethical and responsible usage of AI.

The connection with industry is also critical. Employers need industry-ready graduates who can do more than simply follow established formulas. A student working with customer data, for example, should be able to ask whether the data is representative, whether privacy has been considered and

whether the conclusions are justified. Industry engagement through live briefs, internships and collaborative projects can therefore become laboratories for critical thinking rather than simply exercises in employability.

Higher education should not treat critical thinking as just another skill. It should create an environment in which students repeatedly have to think critically, in classrooms, assessments, research and professional situations. The enduring value of academics lies in preparing graduates who know how to question before accepting, examine before acting and remain open enough to continue learning.

CHAPTER 8

The Inclusive Classroom: Pedagogy for Diversity, Equity and Belonging

The idea of an inclusive classroom is often discussed through the language of diversity with universities celebrating multicultural campuses, widening participation, rising international student population and greater representation of historically marginalised communities. Yet, the reverse is not necessarily true because diversity by itself does not necessarily create inclusion. A classroom may contain students from different countries, social classes, genders, languages, abilities and cultural backgrounds and still leave some of them feeling that they are standing at its margins. Inclusion begins when diversity is not simply visible in the classroom but becomes part of the way learning itself is designed.

This distinction has become increasingly important in contemporary higher education as students today arrive at universities with very different educational journeys. Some come from highly resourced schools and are already comfortable with academic discussion, presentations and independent learning. Others may be the first in their families to enter higher education. International students may be learning disciplinary knowledge while simultaneously negotiating an unfamiliar academic culture. Students may also differ in language proficiency, disability, neurodiversity, economic circumstances, gender identity, age and professional experience. The inclusive classroom begins with a relatively simple recognition that students do not necessarily enter it from the same starting point.

Pedagogy for diversity, equity and belonging asks educators to respond to these differences without lowering academic expectations, without making it easier. In fact, inclusion is about making meaningful learning possible. The responsibility of the educator is therefore not merely to deliver knowledge but to create conditions in which different learners can participate, question, experiment, disagree and develop confidence. This requires a movement from equality, where everybody is offered the same thing, towards equity, where barriers to meaningful participation are recognised and addressed.

Diversity Changes the Classroom

For a long time, higher education was built around an imagined 'typical student'. Teaching practices, assessment systems, classroom conversations and even reading lists frequently reflected assumptions about who that student was, what knowledge they already possessed and how they were expected to communicate. Massification and internationalisation have made that assumption increasingly difficult to sustain as there is no longer a single university learner, if indeed there ever was one.

Diversity consequently needs to be understood more broadly than mere demographic representation because it includes diversity of knowledge and experience. A student who has worked for 10 years before returning to university brings something different to a discussion from an 18-year-old entering directly from school. A student from rural India may interpret a discussion about development differently from someone educated in metropolitan London. A first-generation learner may approach institutional authority differently from someone whose family has attended universities for generations. These differences are not problems that education

must somehow neutralise. Properly engaged, they become intellectual resources.

An inclusive teacher therefore does not ask students to leave their identities outside the classroom. Instead, the classroom becomes a space where different experiences can enter into a conversation with disciplinary knowledge. This is particularly valuable in subjects such as media, management, communication, design, sociology and the humanities, where interpretation is inseparable from cultural and social context. Even in science and technology, diversity can influence the questions researchers ask, the problems designers prioritise and the communities for whom innovations are developed.

From Equality to Equity

Equality and equity are sometimes used interchangeably, but pedagogically they represent very different ideas. Equality suggests that every learner receives identical opportunities and resources while equity recognises that identical treatment does not always produce fair opportunities. Consider something as commonplace as classroom participation, a teacher may believe that every student has an equal opportunity because anyone can raise a hand and speak. Technically, this is true but in practice, participation is shaped by confidence, language, personality, previous educational experience and cultural attitudes towards authority. The student who speaks quickly and confidently may dominate the conversation, while another student with an equally valuable perspective remains silent because they need more time to formulate a response.

Inclusive pedagogy changes the structure rather than blaming the learner. A teacher might provide a question in advance, allow students a few minutes to write before discussion, use small-group conversations before opening the discussion to

the entire class, or invite responses through digital platforms. The academic standard remains the same; the route into participation becomes wider.

The same principle applies to assessments, for example, if every module depends exclusively on timed examinations or formal presentations, particular forms of academic performance are privileged. A more inclusive approach can incorporate essays, projects, reflective writing, collaborative assignments, portfolios, case analyses and presentations while maintaining rigorous learning outcomes.

The need of the hour is a thoughtful pedagogical design.

This is where Universal Design for Learning offers a useful framework. Rather than waiting until students experience difficulty and then introducing individual adjustments, educators can design learning environments from the beginning with different learners in mind. Multiple ways of engaging with material, demonstrating learning and accessing information can make classrooms more flexible without sacrificing intellectual depth.

Representation Matters, but it is Not Enough

One of the most visible dimensions of inclusive education is curriculum representation because students notice whose voices appear on reading lists, whose histories are treated as important and whose knowledge is presented as authoritative. A curriculum in which the same geographical, cultural or intellectual traditions consistently occupy the centre can unintentionally communicate that other experiences belong at the periphery.

Diversifying a curriculum requires much more than merely adding a few authors from underrepresented groups. Inclusion becomes superficial if an Indian scholar, an African case study

or a woman theorist is inserted into an otherwise unchanged curriculum simply to demonstrate diversity. The more meaningful question is whether students are exposed to different ways of producing and interpreting knowledge.

A management classroom, for example, can examine leadership not only through American and European corporations but also through Indian family businesses, African enterprises, Japanese organisational cultures and indigenous models of collective decision-making. Media students studying global communication can examine Bollywood, K-POP culture, Nigerian cinema and regional digital cultures alongside Hollywood. Design students can question whether supposedly universal principles of user behaviour are culturally situated in reality. Such approaches do more than improve representation as they strengthen critical thinking. Students begin to recognise that knowledge has contexts, histories and assumptions. They learn to ask, 'Where did this theory come from, whose experience does it represent and where might its explanatory power become limited'?

Belonging - The Emotional Architecture of Learning

A student may be formally admitted to a university, attend lectures and complete assessments while never developing the feeling that they truly belong there. The least tangible but most important dimension of an inclusive classroom is belonging. This matters because learning is not purely cognitive. Students participate more freely when they believe both their presence and contribution are legitimate.

Belonging is created through seemingly small pedagogical practices and learning students' names or pronouncing those names correctly makes a lot of difference. Explaining academic conventions rather than assuming everybody understands

them matters so does providing constructive feedback. It is important to acknowledge that asking for clarification is part of learning rather than evidence of intellectual weakness.

The first few weeks of university are particularly significant as academic language can be intimidating. Terms such as 'critical analysis', 'methodology', 'literature review' and 'theoretical framework' may be perfectly familiar to academics but entirely new to students. When universities assume such knowledge rather than teach it, they inadvertently reward those who already understand the codes of higher education. An inclusive classroom makes these invisible rules visible. It tells students what good academic work looks like, demonstrates how arguments are constructed and allows them to practise before high-stakes assessment. Such transparency benefits everyone, but it can be transformative for students without inherited familiarity with university culture.

The Teacher as Facilitator of Inclusive Dialogue

Inclusive pedagogy also changes the role of the teacher while authority remains important, expertise cannot simply disappear in the name of participation. But authority can be exercised in ways that invite intellectual contribution rather than silence it. That makes all the difference.

Classroom dialogue is particularly important when subjects involve identity, inequality, culture, politics or social conflict. Inclusion does not mean creating classrooms in which disagreement disappears. On the contrary, universities should remain places where difficult questions can be examined critically. The challenge is to distinguish disagreement with an argument from disrespect towards a person.

Teachers therefore need to establish expectations around discussion and so students should be encouraged to question ideas, including the teacher's ideas, while learning how to

support their claims with evidence and listen seriously to alternative perspectives. The goal is neither compulsory consensus nor unrestricted confrontation, it is a disciplined disagreement. Inclusive teaching requires the teacher to notice subtle participatory patterns rather than assume that silence automatically represents lack of interest.

Technology - Inclusion and its Contradictions

With Recorded lectures, captions, screen readers, digital learning environments, asynchronous discussion and flexible access to resources, digital technology has created important opportunities for inclusive learning. AI is adding another layer by enabling personalised explanations, vernacular language assistance and adaptive learning support.

With digital inequality remaining real, technology should not automatically be equated with inclusion. Students do not have equal access to devices, high-speed connectivity, quiet study spaces or paid digital platforms, nor do they possess identical levels of digital literacy. An educational strategy that assumes constant connectivity can reproduce precisely the inequalities it intends to solve.

AI can present an added challenge as when used thoughtfully generative AI can help students explore concepts, receive formative feedback or overcome certain linguistic barriers. But when used uncritically, it may reinforce biases embedded within data and disadvantage students who have less sophisticated access to technology. Inclusive digital pedagogy therefore requires critical digital literacy alongside technological adoption.

Inclusion is also about the Educator

Inclusive education requires educators to examine themselves. Every teacher enters the classroom with assumptions shaped

by culture, disciplinary training and personal experience. Reflective teaching therefore becomes essential as educators can ask uncomfortable but productive questions. Do they unconsciously associate fluency in English with intelligence? Are confident students receiving more attention?

This does not require teachers to become experts in every identity or culture represented in their classrooms. Such an expectation would be unrealistic. It requires intellectual humility, teachers must remain willing to learn from students, revise assumptions and recognise when established pedagogical practices exclude unintentionally.

The Need for Inclusive Institutions

Individual teachers can make substantial differences, but a genuinely inclusive classroom needs an inclusive institution around it. Admissions, orientation, assessment regulations, disability support, counselling, digital infrastructure, library resources, faculty development and student services all shape whether learners experience belonging.

Universities need to move beyond celebrating diversity through brochures and institutional statements, representation at the point of admission can only be the beginning. Institutions should examine progression, attainment, retention and student experience across diverse groups. If students are entering universities but particular groups are consistently performing less well or dropping out, the question should not immediately be 'What is wrong with these students?' A more productive question is 'What barriers within the institution might be producing these outcomes?'

Faculty development and sensitivity is especially important. Academics are often appointed because of disciplinary expertise rather than pedagogical training. Expecting teachers automatically to understand inclusive assessment,

accessibility, intercultural communication and neurodiverse learning is unrealistic. Inclusive education therefore needs to become part of professional development rather than an optional personal interest.

Inclusion as Everyday Pedagogy

The inclusive classroom is not created through one policy, workshop or diversity statement. It is built slowly through everyday decisions such as the examples a teacher chooses, the voices represented in a reading list, the way a question is asked, the student who is encouraged to speak, the feedback written on an assignment and the flexibility built into assessment.

Diversity brings different people into the university, but equity asks whether they have meaningful opportunities to succeed. Inclusion ensures that they can participate but belonging goes further, it allows students to feel that the university is also a place for them. This is a critical pedagogical shift. The question is no longer simply whether students are ready for university, universities must also ask whether they are ready for the students who now enter their classrooms. Contemporary higher education cannot invite diversity through its admissions systems and then expect uniformity inside its classrooms.

An inclusive classroom does not erase the difference but makes difference an integral part of learning. It does not abandon academic standards but asks whether unnecessary barriers have become confused with standards. And it does not promise a classroom without disagreement or discomfort. Education, after all, should challenge students. The task is to ensure that the challenge comes from encountering difficult ideas rather than from having to prove repeatedly that one belongs.

When students experience that kind of classroom, inclusion ceases to be an institutional slogan and becomes what

pedagogy should always have been, the deliberate creation of spaces where different people can think, question, contribute and grow together.

CHAPTER 9

Green Skills Framework in UK and India

For a long time, sustainability in higher education was treated largely as an environmental concern and universities spoke about saving electricity, reducing plastic, planting trees, recycling waste or making campuses greener. These initiatives were important, but they often remained outside the mainstream academic experience. A student could graduate from business, media, engineering, design or economics without seriously engaging with sustainability as part of professional learning.

That position is becoming increasingly difficult to sustain.

Climate change, resource scarcity, biodiversity loss and the transition towards low-carbon economies are changing the nature of work itself and organisations are increasingly being asked to rethink supply chains, energy use, investment, technology, manufacturing, mobility and consumption. Sustainability thus is no longer relevant only to environmental scientists but becomes multi-disciplinary. A marketing professional may have to understand greenwashing, an architect must think about energy-efficient buildings, a finance graduate may encounter ESG and climate-risk reporting, an engineer may work with renewable technologies, and a communication professional increasingly needs to understand how environmental claims are communicated responsibly.

This is where the idea of green skills acquires significance. Green skills can be understood as the combination of knowledge, competencies, values and practical abilities that

enable individuals to contribute meaningfully to environmentally sustainable economies and societies. Importantly, these are not merely technical skills associated with solar panels, electric vehicles or waste-management systems as they also include systems thinking, ethical judgement, collaboration, critical thinking, innovation, responsible consumption and the ability to understand the social consequences of environmental decisions.

For universities in both the United Kingdom and India, the challenge is therefore larger than creating a few new sustainability programmes with the real question being whether sustainability can become part of the way graduates learn to think.

Shift from Green Jobs to Green Skills

The distinction between a 'green job' and a 'green skill' becomes relevant in the current scenario. A green job may exist specifically within renewable energy, environmental management, conservation or sustainable construction. Green skills, however, can operate across occupations. Consider a management student entering a conventional manufacturing company. The organisation may not describe the position as a green job, yet the graduate may eventually have to make decisions concerning energy efficiency, responsible sourcing, waste reduction and sustainable supply chains. Similarly, a fashion-design graduate needs to understand materials, circularity and ethical production even when working for a mainstream fashion brand. Sustainability is gradually becoming embedded within ordinary professional decision-making.

A meaningful Green Skills Framework for higher education should therefore operate at several interconnected levels: environmental literacy, discipline-specific knowledge,

practical capabilities, transversal competencies such as systems thinking and collaboration, and values related to responsibility and intergenerational equity.

This broader understanding is particularly important because sustainability problems are rarely neatly disciplinary. Climate change involves science, economics, technology, politics, behaviour, culture and ethics simultaneously. Universities organised around separate academic departments therefore face an interesting paradox: the problems graduates must solve are increasingly interconnected while their education can remain fragmented.

UK Approach of Sustainability Across Curriculum

The UK higher education system offers an instructive example of the gradual movement from environmental awareness towards Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA), working with Advance HE, has developed guidance to support universities in embedding ESD into curriculum design, teaching, learning and assessment. The framework views sustainable development not simply as subject knowledge but as a combination of competencies, attributes and values that students should be able to connect with their disciplinary learning.

This is an important conceptual shift as it suggests that sustainability should not necessarily become another compulsory subject added to an already crowded curriculum and thus universities can ask a more productive question, 'What does sustainability mean within this discipline?'

For an engineering student, the answer may involve renewable energy, life-cycle analysis, sustainable materials and low-carbon technologies. For business students, it may involve responsible leadership, sustainable finance, ESG, circular

business models and supply-chain resilience. Design students can examine circular design and material innovation. Journalism and media students can investigate climate communication, misinformation and representations of environmental crises. Students of public policy can study environmental justice and the politics of transition.

The QAA approach is valuable because it recognises that ESD should reach students across academic disciplines rather than remain the responsibility of specialists in environmental studies. It also emphasises the role of curriculum design and appropriate teaching and assessment practices.

This changes pedagogy as sustainability is difficult to teach effectively through lectures alone because the issues involved contain ambiguity, competing interests and consequences that unfold over long periods. Case studies, simulations, interdisciplinary projects, community engagement and problem-based learning can therefore become particularly useful. A class might examine whether a company should replace an established supply chain with a greener but more expensive alternative. Students would then have to negotiate economics, ethics, consumer expectations and environmental impact simultaneously and such an exercise does more than teach sustainability terminology. It develops judgement.

And judgement may ultimately be one of the most important green skills.

India - Scale, Development and the Green Transition

India approaches the green-skills challenge from a different starting point. Its higher education system must respond simultaneously to sustainability, employability, economic development and the aspirations of a very large young population. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020

provides an enabling context through its emphasis on multidisciplinary education, vocational learning, skills, experiential education and flexible academic pathways. More recent UGC institutional-development guidance explicitly places the NEP, the Sustainable Development Goals and skill-based education among the anchors for transforming higher education.

The opportunity is significant because India's transition towards renewable energy, electric mobility, sustainable infrastructure, circular production and climate-responsive development will require graduates who can connect disciplinary expertise with sustainability thinking.

There is also a growing institutional dimension. UGC's Institutional Development Plan (IDP) guidelines encourage HEIs to adopt green-campus strategies involving ecological preservation, reduced carbon footprints, water and resource conservation, environmental awareness, sustainable infrastructure, mobility and alternative energy technologies. The guidelines also encourage multidisciplinary integration and the embedding of vocational education, training and skilling within general education. The more recent Sustainable Alternative Towards Affordable Transportation (SATAT) framework further signals the movement towards environmentally sustainable and resource-efficient campuses in Indian higher education.

And yet green campuses alone cannot create green graduates. A university may install solar panels, ban single-use plastic and harvest rainwater while its students remain academically disconnected from these interventions. The next stage should therefore be to turn the campus itself into a living laboratory. Engineering students could examine campus energy consumption. Management students could calculate the financial viability of renewable-energy interventions. Design

students could redesign waste-segregation systems. Communication students could study whether sustainability campaigns actually influence behaviour. Data-science students could analyse electricity or water-consumption patterns. Students from social sciences could investigate how environmental policies affect different communities.

The infrastructure would then become part of pedagogy.

Towards a Green Skills Framework for Universities

A useful framework for both UK and Indian higher education can be imagined around five connected dimensions.

Green Literacy should provide every graduate with a basic understanding of climate change, biodiversity, resource use, carbon emissions, circularity and sustainable development.

Green Application should translate this understanding into disciplinary contexts. Sustainability means something different to an architect, journalist, economist, designer, computer scientist or hospitality professional. Curriculum design must recognise those differences.

Green Thinking should develop systems thinking, critical thinking, futures thinking and problem-solving. Students need to understand relationships rather than isolated problems. An electric vehicle, for example, cannot be understood only as a cleaner car. Questions of battery production, mineral extraction, electricity generation, recycling, affordability and labour conditions belong to the same sustainability conversation.

Green Practice should take learning beyond the classroom through internships, industry projects, fieldwork, laboratories and community engagement. India's UGC framework already

stresses stronger industry alliances and community engagement as elements of institutional development, providing useful foundations for this approach.

Finally, **Green Values** must address responsibility, ethics and justice. Sustainability cannot be reduced to efficiency. Students must also ask who benefits from environmental transitions, who bears their costs and whose voices are missing from decision-making.

Together, these dimensions can be remembered as Literacy-Application-Thinking-Practice-Values. The sequence is important. Knowing about sustainability is only the beginning; the graduate must eventually be able to apply that knowledge responsibly.

What the UK and India Can Learn from Each Other

The comparison between the UK and India should not become a simplistic exercise in identifying which system is ahead. The two systems operate at different scales and within different developmental realities. The UK experience demonstrates the value of systematically embedding Education for Sustainable Development within curriculum design and academic quality conversations. Its emphasis on competencies and learning across disciplines provides a useful lesson for Indian institutions seeking to move beyond stand-alone environmental courses.

India, however, offers something equally important, the possibility of connecting sustainability with development at extraordinary scale. Indian universities operate close to some of the world's most complex sustainability challenges such as urbanisation, water stress, waste, agriculture, mobility, energy access and unequal development. These should not be seen

merely as problems surrounding the university. They are powerful educational contexts.

A college located near an agricultural region could work with communities on water management. An urban university could study public transport, air pollution or waste. An institution in a coastal area could investigate climate resilience. Sustainability education becomes considerably more meaningful when students encounter the people and places affected by the problems they study.

This is where Indian higher education can make green skills deeply contextual rather than merely imported from international frameworks.

The Teacher Remains Central

No green-skills framework will succeed simply because it appears in a policy document. Its success will depend substantially on faculty. A professor of finance may understand finance exceptionally well but may never have been trained in climate finance. A communication teacher may need exposure to sustainability communication and greenwashing. Engineering faculty may need greater familiarity with emerging clean technologies. Faculty development must therefore accompany curriculum reform.

Multidisciplinary teaching will also matter. A sustainability problem rarely belongs to one department, and sometimes the most valuable learning occurs when an economist, designer, engineer and sociologist examine the same problem differently. Universities will consequently have to reconsider not only what they teach but also how academic knowledge is organised.

From Employability to Responsibility

Green skills are sometimes discussed primarily through employability, the green economy is growing, new jobs will emerge and universities must prepare students for them. That argument is valid, but incomplete. Higher education has never been only about producing employees, it prepares people to make informed choices in circumstances where there may be no simple answers.

The transition towards sustainable societies will demand precisely this ability. Graduates will face difficult questions involving growth and conservation, technology and ethics, consumption and responsibility, development and environmental justice. They will need technical knowledge, certainly, but they will also need imagination, empathy, criticality and judgement.

The UK experience shows how sustainability competencies can be woven into curriculum and pedagogy rather than confined to specialist environmental education. India, through NEP-inspired multidisciplinary reforms, UGC frameworks and its enormous developmental landscape, has the opportunity to take this further by making campuses, communities and industries part of the learning ecosystem.

The most meaningful Green Skills Framework, therefore, may not be one that produces students who can simply define sustainability. It will produce graduates who instinctively consider sustainability when they design a product, approve an investment, construct a building, communicate a brand promise, develop an algorithm or frame public policy. When that happens, green skills will cease to be an additional skill set. They will become part of what it means to be an educated professional in the twenty-first century.

CHAPTER 10

Assessment After AI: Is the Traditional Examination Still Relevant?

For generations, the examination hall has been one of the most recognisable symbols of university education. Students enter at a fixed time, sit at separate desks, surrender their phones, open a question paper and attempt to demonstrate what they have learned within two or three hours. The arrangement is familiar, orderly and administratively convenient. More importantly, universities have trusted it. The examination has traditionally been regarded as a reasonably controlled way of establishing whether the work submitted belongs to the student.

Artificial Intelligence has unsettled this centuries'-old comfortable arrangement.

Generative AI has made it possible to produce essays, summaries, arguments, computer code, presentations and solutions within seconds. A student can ask an AI system to explain a difficult theory, critique an argument, suggest references, improve writing or generate an entire response. This creates obvious concerns about academic integrity, but it also raises a much larger educational question. If machines can increasingly generate the kind of answers universities have traditionally asked students to produce, should universities continue asking the same questions? The debate, therefore, should not simply be about detecting AI-generated work but should be about reconsidering what assessment is meant to achieve.

This does not mean that examinations have suddenly become obsolete, nor does it mean that every assessment should become an AI-enabled project. The more interesting possibility lies somewhere between these extremes. Generative AI provides higher education with an opportunity to reconsider assessment itself such as what universities assess, why they assess it, and whether existing methods of summative assessment demonstrate learning.

Examination Designed to Measure

The traditional examination emerged within an educational environment shaped by scarcity of information. Knowledge was confined to books, libraries, classrooms and the expertise of teachers. Students were expected to acquire that knowledge, understand it and reproduce or apply it under controlled conditions. Memory therefore had considerable academic value.

The contemporary student inhabits a very different information environment. Search engines already weakened the idea that education should primarily reward information recall. Generative AI takes the disruption further because students can now access not merely information but apparently organised explanations and arguments. This makes a distinction between knowing something and knowing what to do with what one knows increasingly important.

Consider two scenarios where a student may memorise definitions of leadership, sustainability or media ethics and reproduce them perfectly in an examination. Another student may remember fewer textbook sentences but be considerably better at applying those ideas to a complicated organisational problem. Which student has learned more? There is no simple answer because disciplinary contexts differ. A medical student must remember important knowledge. An engineer cannot

outsource every fundamental calculation. Language learning requires vocabulary. Lawyers need command over legal principles. Foundational knowledge remains essential because critical thinking cannot take place in an intellectual vacuum.

The problem arises when recall becomes a substitute for understanding. AI exposes this weakness rather dramatically. If an assessment can be completed satisfactorily by asking a machine a generic question, perhaps the problem is not only the machine. Perhaps the assessment was asking too little of the student in the first place.

From Academic Integrity to Assessment Integrity

Much of the initial institutional response to generative AI understandably focused on plagiarism and cheating and universities are naturally worried about students submitting AI-generated essays as their own work. Detection technologies appeared, policies were revised and faculty members began looking for unusual changes in writing style. These responses address a genuine problem, but policing cannot become the educational philosophy of the AI-era university.

The more sustainable approach is assessment integrity, designing assessment so that students have to demonstrate thinking, process, application and judgement rather than merely submit a polished final product. Consider the conventional essay where a student receives a question, goes away for three weeks and submits 2,000 words. The lecturer sees the final answer but very little of the intellectual journey that produced it. Generative AI makes this vulnerability more visible. The same assignment could instead involve a research proposal, annotated sources, a short classroom discussion, a draft, the final submission and a brief viva. Suddenly,

assessment captures the student's process as well as the product.

This does not eliminate inappropriate AI use, but it changes the economics of cheating. More importantly, it improves the educational value of the assessment.

The Examination Is Not Dead

It would be tempting to announce the death of the traditional examination both summative and formative, but that would be premature. Controlled examinations still serve important purposes. They can test foundational knowledge, individual capability and the ability to think under pressure. In professional programmes where graduates will carry substantial responsibility, universities also need confidence that individuals possess certain competencies without technological assistance.

The problem is not the examination itself but its dominance as no single assessment method, summative and formative, can capture the full complexity of learning. A three-hour summative assessment may measure recall, conceptual understanding and rapid analysis, but it may tell us little about collaboration, creativity, research ability, communication, persistence or the capacity to solve an ambiguous problem over time. The future is therefore unlikely to be examination versus no examination, it is more likely to involve assessment diversity.

Universities could combine controlled examinations with projects, portfolios, simulations, presentations, reflective work, field assignments, oral examinations and collaborative problem-solving. Assessment would become an ecosystem rather than an event.

Authentic Assessment - Bringing the World into the Classroom

One of the strongest responses to AI is authentic assessment is asking students to perform tasks that resemble the intellectual and professional challenges they are likely to encounter beyond university. A marketing student might develop a strategy for an actual small business. Journalism students could investigate a local issue and produce a multimedia story. Engineering students could design an intervention around campus energy consumption. Business students might evaluate the sustainability claims of a company. Communication students could develop a crisis-response strategy for an organisation facing reputational damage. Such assessments are difficult precisely because real life is difficult and complex. The information is incomplete, stakeholders disagree and there may be several defensible answers.

AI can actually become useful within this environment and students might be permitted to use generative AI to generate preliminary ideas or interrogate information, but they would then have to evaluate its output, identify errors, explain their decisions and improve upon what the technology produced. The question changes from 'Can the student produce an answer without AI?' to 'Can the student exercise better judgement because they understand when and how AI should be used?'

That is a much more demanding educational objective.

Assessment in UK Higher Education

The UK higher-education sector has increasingly approached generative AI as an issue requiring changes in assessment practice rather than simply prohibition. The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) has highlighted the implications of generative AI for academic standards and assessment, while

sector organisations such as Jisc have explored how AI is changing teaching, learning and assessment.

This sits comfortably with established UK practices around formative assessment, independent learning, reflective practice, portfolios and authentic assessment. However, the scale and speed of generative AI make the challenge different. Universities must now decide not simply whether AI is allowed but what constitutes legitimate AI-assisted learning within individual disciplines. Assessment briefs therefore need greater clarity. Students should know whether AI may be used for brainstorming, language support, coding, research assistance or drafting. Equally important is the ability to explain and critically evaluate such use.

This may lead to greater use of oral defence as a brief conversation, following an assignment, can reveal surprisingly quickly whether a student understands the argument submitted under their name. The traditional viva, once associated primarily with doctoral education, may find a new role across undergraduate and postgraduate assessment.

The Indian Context - Scale Meets Transformation

For Indian higher education, the challenge is simultaneously similar and different. India has a vast and diverse higher-education system, ranging from globally competitive institutions to universities and colleges operating with substantial resource constraints. Traditional examinations remain deeply embedded because they provide a scalable mechanism for evaluating large numbers of students.

At the same time, the National Education Policy 2020 advocates movement away from rote learning towards conceptual understanding, critical thinking, multidisciplinary education, competency and experiential learning. In this sense, AI has arrived at an interesting moment. It does not create the

need for assessment reform in India; it makes that need more urgent.

Indian universities have an opportunity to move gradually from an examination-heavy culture towards continuous and multidimensional assessment. This need not mean importing assessment models from elsewhere. India requires approaches that recognise class sizes, faculty workload, linguistic diversity, uneven digital access and institutional differences. A practical model might retain end-semester examinations for foundational knowledge while allocating significant assessment weight to projects, presentations, field studies, portfolios and viva voce examinations.

Technology should assist this transition rather than dictate it.

The Return of the Viva

Ironically, one of the oldest assessment practices may become one of the most useful in the age of AI. The oral examination makes thinking visible. Students must explain why they made particular choices, defend an interpretation and respond to unexpected questions. Memorised or generated responses become harder to sustain when the examiner asks, "Why?"

This does not require a 30-minute viva for every assignment. Even five-minute structured conversations randomly allocated oral checks or group presentations followed by individual questioning can strengthen assessment integrity. There is something pedagogically valuable here as well. Education should develop the confidence to articulate an idea, defend it respectfully and revise it when challenged. These are capabilities that written examinations often struggle to capture.

Assessing the Process, Not Just the Product

Perhaps the most important transformation after AI will be the recognition that learning leaves traces. Students research, make mistakes, revise assumptions, reject ideas, seek feedback and gradually develop an argument. Traditional assessment often sees only the final polished submission. Future assessment should capture more of this journey.

A design student could submit sketches and rejected prototypes alongside the final solution. A researcher could maintain a reflective research diary. A business student could explain why one strategy was selected over another. A student using AI could maintain an AI-use statement showing prompts, outputs, corrections and reflections. This creates a culture in which intellectual development matters as much as presentation.

It also allows failure to return to education in a productive way. Students should sometimes be able to attempt something, discover that it does not work and explain what they learned. An assessment culture obsessed with the perfect final answer can unintentionally discourage experimentation.

What Should Universities Assess After AI?

The emergence of AI suggests a relatively simple principle that universities should assess those capabilities that become more valuable, rather than less valuable, when intelligent technologies such as Gen AI are widely accessible. These include critical thinking, judgement, creativity, ethical reasoning, problem-solving, collaboration, communication, information literacy and the ability to distinguish credible knowledge from plausible nonsense.

AI literacy itself must also become an educational capability. Students need to understand what generative systems can do,

where they fail, how bias enters outputs, how sources should be verified and when human judgement must override technological convenience. A graduate who simply knows how to prompt an AI system is not necessarily AI literate. The genuinely capable graduate knows when not to trust it.

The Question After the Answer

The traditional examination will probably survive AI. In many contexts, it should. There will continue to be value in asking students to demonstrate independent knowledge under controlled conditions. What should disappear is the assumption that the examination represents the highest or most reliable form of learning. Generative AI has exposed something universities perhaps already knew that producing an answer cannot be the same as understanding a problem. Education becomes meaningful in the movement between the two.

For UK universities, the challenge is to build on existing traditions of authentic, formative and reflective assessment while establishing clearer principles around AI use. For India, the opportunity is particularly significant. The reform ambitions of NEP 2020 can be connected with assessment models that gradually move students beyond rote reproduction towards application, creativity, criticality and judgement. The examination hall, therefore, does not need to disappear. But it should no longer stand alone as the defining symbol of academic achievement.

Perhaps the university of the AI age needs a different question. Instead of asking only, 'What does the student know?', assessment must increasingly ask, 'What can this student understand, question, create, apply and defend?'

AI can generate an answer but the enduring responsibility of higher education is to develop the human being who knows what to do with it.

CHAPTER 11

Design Thinking as Pedagogy: Creating Problem-Solvers, Not Just Graduates

There is a sense of reassurance in the traditional classrooms. The teacher knows what is to be taught, students know what they are expected to learn, and eventually an examination decides how successfully that transaction has taken place. And for a long time, this model served universities reasonably well. But the world outside the classroom has changed rather dramatically and the problems graduates now encounter rarely arrive with clearly stated questions, four possible answers or even an assurance that a correct answer exists.

Climate change is one such problem. Artificial intelligence is another. So are inequality, misinformation, sustainable development, migration, public health and the changing nature of work. These are not problems that belong comfortably to one discipline. Neither can they be solved simply by remembering what was taught in a lecture. They demand an ability to understand people, connect ideas, question assumptions and sometimes try something without knowing whether it will work.

Design thinking becomes pedagogically useful at precisely this point.

Design thinking is often associated with designers, start-ups and innovation workshops. Mention it in a classroom and one immediately imagines colourful sticky notes, brainstorming sessions and prototypes. But beneath these visible techniques

lies a much more interesting educational idea. Design thinking asks people to understand a problem before rushing to solve it. It encourages them to look at the problem through the experiences of those affected by it, imagine several possible responses, test those responses and accept that the first solution may not necessarily be the best one.

For higher education in India and the UK, this offers an interesting possibility. What if universities were to teach students not simply to become knowledgeable graduates but to become thoughtful problem-solvers?

Learning to Find the Problem

Education usually rewards students for finding answers. Design thinking begins one stage earlier as it asks whether we have understood the problem correctly. Take something as ordinary as plastic waste on a university campus. A conventional project might ask students to propose ways of reducing plastic consumption. The temptation would be to begin with solutions such as banning plastic bottles, introducing recycling bins or launching an awareness campaign.

Design thinking would slow the process down.

Why are students using so much plastic in the first place? Where is the waste being generated? What do campus vendors think? Are affordable alternatives available? Do students understand the recycling system? Are the bins conveniently located? What happens to the waste after it leaves the campus? A problem that initially looked straightforward suddenly becomes connected with behaviour, economics, communication, infrastructure and institutional policy.

That moment of uncertainty is important because it is akin to real life.

Design thinking is commonly described through stages such as empathising, defining, ideating, prototyping and testing. In a classroom, however, these stages should not become another five-point formula students memorise for an examination. Their real value lies in encouraging a different habit of mind. Students learn to observe before deciding, ask before assuming and test before becoming too attached to their own ideas. More importantly, they also learn something universities do not always teach particularly well, how to be wrong.

Our assessment systems have traditionally made students cautious about failure as a wrong answer loses marks. An unsuccessful experiment may be viewed as poor performance. Design thinking offers a rather different interpretation. A prototype that fails can still be valuable because it tells the learner why an idea did not work. Students return to the problem, reconsider their assumptions and try again. Failure becomes part of the learning process rather than its opposite.

Empathy Is Not a Soft Skill

One of the most powerful aspects of design thinking is its emphasis on empathy. This can sometimes sound rather soft in an academic environment, particularly one accustomed to valuing evidence, analysis and objectivity. Yet in design thinking, empathy is not simply about being compassionate. It is about understanding how another person experiences a problem.

Imagine a group of students being asked to improve accessibility on their university campus. They could read regulations, examine architectural plans and study institutional policies and all of this would be useful. But the nature of their understanding changes when they speak to a student with a mobility impairment who explains why a particular ramp is difficult to use, or to a visually impaired

student who describes navigating a poorly marked building. Suddenly, accessibility is no longer an abstract policy requirement. It becomes a lived experience.

This matters particularly when discussing pedagogy in India and the UK. Universities in both countries are becoming more diverse, although that diversity manifests itself differently. Students enter higher education from different social, economic, linguistic, cultural and educational backgrounds. Internationalisation has added another dimension, particularly within UK higher education. Indian classrooms can contain enormous differences in language, schooling, geography and socioeconomic experience.

A graduate who learns to ask, 'How might another person experience this differently?' is acquiring more than a design skill. It is a professional and civic capability.

The UK – Moving Beyond the Lecture

There are aspects of UK higher education that provide fertile ground for design-thinking pedagogy. Problem-based learning, independent study, project work, reflective practice and industry-linked assignments already have an established presence across many institutions and disciplines. Students are often encouraged to move beyond the textbook and engage with cases where the answer is not immediately obvious.

Design thinking can deepen this approach.

A business class, for example, could work with a local enterprise struggling to attract younger customers. Instead of being handed a case study containing all the relevant information, students might have to speak with customers, observe behaviour and understand the organisation before recommending anything. Journalism students could investigate how misinformation circulates within a particular

community and then experiment with alternative forms of public-interest communication. Education students might redesign part of the learning experience around students who feel excluded from conventional classroom participation.

What changes here is not simply the assignment. The relationship between teacher and learner also begins to transform.

The lecturer cannot always know what the students will discover nor should every group necessarily arrive at the same conclusion. The academic provides theoretical foundations and intellectual rigour but also becomes someone who questions assumptions and guides inquiry. Instead of saying, 'Here is the solution,' the teacher might ask, 'What makes you believe this is the problem?'

That is a very different classroom conversation.

India - Turning the World Outside into a Classroom

The possibilities are equally compelling in India, perhaps for different reasons. Indian higher education operates within an environment of enormous social, economic, cultural and technological diversity. The problems surrounding universities are often precisely the kinds of problems design thinking is suited to exploring.

The National Education Policy 2020 has already opened an important conversation around multidisciplinary learning, critical thinking, creativity, experiential education and connections between knowledge and practice. The difficulty, as always, is translating policy aspirations into everyday classroom experiences.

Design thinking can help make some of these ideas tangible.

An Indian university does not necessarily require an expensive innovation centre to begin. Students could study waste management in a nearby market, water use in their own campus, digital literacy among older citizens, public transportation used by students or the challenges faced by a small local business. A project on urban waste could bring together students from environmental science, communication, business, sociology and design. Each would see the same problem differently.

This is where multidisciplinary education stops being an attractive phrase in a policy document and begins to become a lived academic experience.

India also has a long culture of improvisation under constraints, popularly described through the idea of *jugaad*. Design thinking should not simply be equated with *jugaad*, because the two are not identical. Yet there is something worth recognising in the ability to work creatively with limited resources. Innovation does not always require sophisticated technology or enormous budgets. Sometimes it begins with observing an everyday difficulty closely enough to see an opportunity everyone else has learned to ignore.

What happens when the Classroom Becomes a Studio

Perhaps design-thinking pedagogy becomes easier to understand if one stops imagining the classroom only as a lecture hall and begins imagining it as a studio. The studio is not necessarily a room filled with equipment, it is a learning culture. People make things, discuss them, disagree, receive criticism, discard ideas and begin again, there is movement between theory and practice.

The teacher still teaches and theory remains important. In fact, without disciplinary knowledge, design thinking can easily

deteriorate into enthusiastic brainstorming without intellectual substance. But knowledge is no longer treated as the final destination. Students are expected to use it as a fuel.

A sustainability project provides a good example. Engineering students may understand energy systems, business students may calculate financial viability, communication students may consider behavioural change, and designers may focus on how people interact with a proposed intervention. None of them possesses the entire solution.

That is precisely the point.

The problems defining the twenty-first century sit between disciplines, while universities are still largely organised within them. Design thinking offers one way of building bridges across these academic boundaries.

Assessment Cannot Remain Untouched

There is an obvious contradiction in asking students to experiment, collaborate and solve real problems throughout a semester and then judging everything they have learned through a three-hour written examination. If pedagogy changes, assessment needs to follow.

Design-thinking projects lend themselves naturally to portfolios, prototypes, presentations, reflective journals, field reports and oral defence. More importantly, the assessment should recognise the journey rather than merely celebrate the final solution. A failed prototype may demonstrate more learning than a successful one. Students who can explain why their original assumptions were wrong, what they discovered from users and how they redesigned their intervention are demonstrating reflection and intellectual maturity.

This becomes even more relevant with generative AI. AI can produce polished reports and attractive presentations

remarkably quickly. What remains harder to manufacture is an authentic account of inquiry: whom the student spoke to, what surprised them, why an idea was abandoned and how evidence changed their thinking. Design-thinking pedagogy therefore makes the process of learning visible.

The Teacher Has to Change Too

It is easy to say that students should become problem-solvers. It is more difficult to acknowledge what this asks of teachers. An academic accustomed to lectures, prescribed readings and predictable examinations may initially find an open-ended classroom uncomfortable. Student projects take unexpected directions, groups fail, community partners change their minds, and sometimes an exercise simply does not work.

The teacher must become comfortable with a certain amount of uncertainty. This does not diminish academic authority but changes how that authority is exercised. The teacher becomes the person who asks the uncomfortable questions. Faculty development is therefore essential in both India and the UK. Universities cannot reimagine pedagogy merely by redesigning course documents. Teachers need time, institutional support and freedom to experiment themselves.

Creating Agency, Not Simply Employability

Design thinking is often promoted because employers want problem-solving, creativity, communication and collaboration. That is certainly true, and employability matters. But there is a danger in reducing higher education entirely to the requirements of the labour market.

The deeper contribution of design-thinking pedagogy is agency.

A student begins to realise that existing systems are not necessarily permanent. An inaccessible campus can be redesigned. An unsustainable business practice can be challenged. A confusing public service can be simplified. A communication campaign that nobody understands can be reconsidered. Knowledge then acquires purpose.

This is perhaps where design thinking fits most naturally into the larger project of reimagining pedagogy in India and the UK. The university should not simply prepare students to enter the world as it exists. It should give them some capacity to imagine how that world might be improved.

Creating Graduates Who Ask Better Questions

Universities will continue to teach knowledge as they must as critical thinking without knowledge quickly becomes opinion and creativity without disciplinary understanding can become superficial. But in an age when information is available instantly and artificial intelligence can generate convincing answers within seconds, possessing information alone can no longer define an educated person. What matters increasingly is what someone does with knowledge.

Design thinking provides one possible response. It encourages students to look closely, listen carefully, question assumptions, work with people unlike themselves, experiment without being paralysed by the possibility of failure and return to a problem when the first answer proves inadequate.

The UK and India will naturally approach this differently. UK higher education can build upon traditions of problem-based, independent and experiential learning. India can connect design thinking with the multidisciplinary and experiential ambitions of NEP 2020 while drawing upon the extraordinary diversity of problems, communities and contexts surrounding its universities. There is little value in one system simply

copying the other. The more interesting possibility is for each to rethink what problem-solving means within its own educational culture.

Ultimately, design thinking in higher education is not about turning every graduate into a designer. It is about cultivating something of the designer's mind with curiosity before certainty, empathy before intervention and the willingness to ask whether things could be done differently. For years, universities have trained students to answer questions set by someone else.

Perhaps reimagining pedagogy begins when students learn to ask their own.

CHAPTER 12

Building a Global University: A Vision for the Future

A global university, in the fullest sense, is more than a centre of learning. It is a place where academic ambition, international exchange, social responsibility and institutional purpose meet. A true global institution is a place where knowledge transcends borders, where the next generation of leaders is shaped, and where the commitment to a sustainable and equitable future is embedded in every classroom, every research project, and every policy.

1. Excellence in Academics & Innovation in Curriculum

At the core of any great university is academic excellence, but in a global institution, this means more than just top rankings and accreditations, it means creating an ecosystem that nurtures curiosity, interdisciplinary thinking, and real-world problem-solving.

- Best-in-class faculty drawn from diverse academic and industry backgrounds globally, bringing research and practical expertise together.
- A research ecosystem that fosters innovation across disciplines, ensuring that knowledge is not bound by invisible silos.
- Vertical as well as horizontal curriculum allowing students to build strong foundations while exploring interdisciplinary and experiential learning.

- Adherence to Global ranking for ensuring the university meets the highest standards of academic rigour and impact.
- Collaborative learning models that go beyond textbooks with an integration of project-based learning and industry mentorship.

2. Internationalization & Global Reach

True globalization in education means fostering an exchange of ideas, cultures, and perspectives that prepare students for a connected world.

- Student and faculty exchange programs with premier institutions worldwide.
- Research collaborations that address global challenges such as climate change, public health, and AI ethics across geographies.
- A diverse student body with inclusive admissions policies, ensuring access for under-represented groups.
- Global accreditation and recognition of degrees to enhance employability internationally.
- Opportunities for Multilingual learning fostering a truly interconnected academic experience.

3. Digital Transformation & Innovation

Technology is no longer a mere enabler - it is a defining force shaping the future of education. A global university must embrace this transformation.

- Smart campuses that enable integration of AI, IoT, and big data to enhance learning and operational efficiency.

- Online and Hybrid learning models ensuring accessibility beyond physical borders.
- Personalized learning powered by AI allowing students to carve their own academic journeys.
- State-of-the-art research labs focused on emerging fields like artificial intelligence, biotechnology, and sustainable energy.
- Robust digital ethics policies and cybersecurity ensuring the responsible use of technology in education.

4. Green Initiative & Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

A global university must not just teach sustainability - it must embody it. Aligning with the United Nation's 17 SDGs, it must integrate sustainability into every aspect of its operations.

A: Sustainability in Academics & Research

- An SDG-aligned curriculum that ensures sustainability, climate action, and social responsibility are core to education.
- Sustainability-focused research centers in fields like renewable energy, biodiversity, and urban planning.
- Circular economy promoting innovations that promote responsible production and consumption.

B: Green Campus with Operational Sustainability

Carbon neutrality to transform to renewable energy sources and reduce the university's environmental footprint.

- Green buildings with focus on infrastructure that meets energy-efficiency standards.

- Effective water conservation including rainwater harvesting and efficient irrigation.
- Zero-waste policies for a sustainable approach towards consumption and waste management.

C: Community & Global Engagement for SDGs

- Service-learning programs where students can work on sustainability projects with NGOs as well as communities.
- Public-private partnerships PPPs to drive large-scale environmental and social impact initiatives.
- Assessment of sustainability impact to measure and enhance the university's contributions to global goals.

5. Diversity and Inclusion (D&I)

A truly global university must champion inclusivity as a core value, not as a compliance measure.

A: Student & Faculty Diversity

- Inclusive admissions and scholarship programs ensuring access for all deserving students, regardless of background.
- A global D&I hiring strategy to bring in faculty from diverse cultural, academic, and industry experiences.
- Faculty training programs to foster (D&I) teaching practices.

B: Equitable Learning & Accessibility

Infrastructure designed for accessibility ensuring that students/PwDs have full participation.

- Policies promoting gender inclusivity for providing equal opportunities and leadership roles for women and under-represented groups.

- LGBTQ+ inclusion initiatives fostering a culture of respect and representation.

C: Inclusive Curriculum & Governance

A decolonized syllabus incorporating global perspectives, indigenous knowledge such as the Indian Knowledge System IKS, and underrepresented narratives.

- Cross-cultural communication and competency training preparing students for diverse workplaces and global leadership roles.
- D&I performance tracking ensuring measurable progress in equity, representation, and institutional policies.

6. Entrepreneurship & Industry Collaboration

A global university is not just a knowledge hub - it is a launchpad for innovation, entrepreneurship, and industry transformation.

- Incubators and accelerators for Startups providing mentorship, funding, and infrastructure to student entrepreneurs.
- An industry-focused curriculum co-curated with corporate leaders to ensure relevance in a rapidly evolving job market.
- Internship and placement programs bridging the gap between academia and industry.
- University-led research collaborations fostering innovation in partnership with leading corporations.
- A robust alumni networks ensuring a lifelong connection between the university and its graduates.

A global university cannot be judged only by rankings or cutting-edge research. Its more enduring measure is impact. It

is about shaping the minds that will re-define industries even sectors, influence policies, change the game, and lead the change. It is about ensuring that knowledge is not limited by geographies, backgrounds, or biases. A global university that weaves academic excellence, sustainability, technological advancement, international collaboration, and inclusive governance into its DNA is one that will shape the future.

By embedding the SDGs within an equitable learning ecosystem, such an institution can produce not only capable graduates but responsible global citizens.