Higher Education and Changing World

What is the issue?

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Higher education across the globe is failing to keep up with the changing demands of an unpredictable world.

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What are the global issues in human development?

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- In recent times humans and machines are coming together at a cognitive level, the boundaries between the two are getting blurred.
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- The quality of air, water and soil is teetering at the edge of habitability.
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- These inflexion points are deeply inter-connected and constantly changing.
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- For developing countries a massive job creation challenge is further complicated by the fact that machines are replacing human jobs.
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How future generations should be prepared?

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- By necessity, a new vision for education would have to represent the coming together of technology, humanities and ethics.
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- It would weave together thought with action, left brain with right brain, arts with sciences and ultimately, the learnings of the past and present with preparedness for the future.
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- This model of interwoven learning would represent a departure from other models of education anywhere in the world.
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- Learning must equip graduates to learn to learn, but this is not enough either, Thus higher education should prepare students for life, not just a career.
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- In a world of shortening attention spans and transactional relationships, students need to be given an opportunity to look deep inside to discover their sense of purpose.
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- At the same time, individuals need to be cognisant of the role they play in society, and how their thoughts and actions impact the world.
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- Finally, and most significantly, students need to learn to deal with the inevitable ethical challenges they will face.
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How can an institution deliver these critical outcomes?

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- Undergraduate experience needs to be split into modules, the **Foundation module** would introduce students to ways of thought and expression in the social sciences, natural sciences, humanities, arts and literature.
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- The **Core skills module** would help students develop a set of life skills, including ethical reasoning, data science, design thinking and effective communication.
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- The **Concentration module** would permit them to deep dive into a chosen discipline, not merely for the sake of accumulating knowledge in that discipline, but to develop a deep sense of inquiry and to learn to solve problems.
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- To be able to deliver all this, an institution would need to build porous boundaries between itself and the real world, where theoretical learnings from coursework are woven together with real-life situations and problems.
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What measures Indian institutions must take in this regard?

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- The Government of India's initiative to select Institutes of Eminence (IoE) is a step in the right direction.
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- And these IoEs need to think beyond the current mandate of breaking into the top 500 global rankings within 10 years.
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- Further, the intent must be to provide a flexible regulatory environment so that, with or without the tag of "eminence", institutes are encouraged to experiment.
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Source: Indian Express

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