

Section 1: Template

Workshop Title

Envisioning Tomorrow's University: A Transdisciplinary Dialogue on the Future of Education
 Chennai, Tamil Nadu | 13/09/2025 | IIITDM Kancheepuram

1. Overview

The Chennai workshop examined how higher-education institutions can meet evolving societal needs through future-ready, transdisciplinary, and technology-enhanced learning. It also aims to strengthen governance, quality assurance, and collaborative ecosystems for sustained academic transformation. The workshop comprised 8 delegates with diverse backgrounds viz., academicians, dietician, corporate leader and entrepreneur. These delegates are associated with institutions like IIT madras, IIITDM Kancheepuram, CIPET, Chennai. Table 1 indicates approaches for the purpose of illustrating the value addition that each approach brings in, whilst gradually progressing in difficulty too.

Table 1 Cross-disciplinary approaches nudge higher education further

	People	Knowledge	Problem solving perspective
Intradisciplinary	within discipline only	of and hence within discipline	even if outside discipline, problem will be solved as if solution exists within the discipline
Multidisciplinary	People from several and different disciplines work together, each drawing on their disciplinary knowledge.	draws on knowledge from different disciplines but staying within their disciplined boundaries	assumes that problem nature can be neatly separated into disciplinary problems. Only such problems and tame problems that need only project managers get solved this way
Interdisciplinary	experts in more than one discipline being able to see where their knowledge is shared and linked	Analogously views disciplinary from the perspective of another discipline. Analyzes, synthesizes and harmonizes links between disciplines into a coordinated and coherent whole	acknowledges that problem nature cannot always be separated into disciplinary problems and avoids a disciplinary view of the problem foremost. All tame problems and some complex problems get solved this way
Transdisciplinary	experts who are capable of taking this unified view plan the involvement of all stakeholders to progress on resolving problems involving their disciplinary knowledge in silos, coherently and integratively	In addition to interdisciplinary approach, trans-disciplinarity takes a completely outsider perspective wherein revisiting paradigms and worldviews is also made possible. Embraces naïve realism and integrates knowledge from all stakeholders for the systemic benefit of all in long-term	recognizes the real nature of complex problems and attempts to transcend disciplinary boundaries to integrate knowledges required. This approach goes beyond co-ordinating between the linkages between disciplinary knowledge and acknowledges that real problems can only be resolved temporarily and that when situational contexts change, new problems created therein require further resolutions.

2. Key Highlights

- The trend is toward flexible, holistic, purpose-driven, and transdisciplinary education that values students as whole people and prepares them for a rapidly changing world.
- The focus is moving away from knowledge delivery toward life skills, curiosity, and purpose-driven learning.
- Students are not passive recipients but active agents, whole persons whose health, aspirations, and creativity are integral to learning.
- Education must be reimagined as a living system - adaptive, humane, and transdisciplinary - not a rigid pipeline.
- Health, psychology, arts, ethics, and philosophy are becoming as essential as technical and professional training.
- Curricula must keep pace with global knowledge while remaining rooted in community, well-being, and cultural relevance.

3. Objectives of the Workshop

Standard across all workshops:

- Reposition higher education for evolving societal expectations
- Advance transdisciplinary curriculum and pedagogy
- Integrate technology & AI for academic transformation
- Strengthen governance and academic ecosystems
- Expand India's global academic footprint

4. Participants & Institutions

Key participants included:

- Dr Dharini Krishnan, Former Chairperson of the Registered Dietitian Board (R.D.) of the Indian Dietetic Association
- Mr. Sriram Ayer, Director / Social Entrepreneur, Nalandaway Foundations
- Mr. Chandru Ganeson, Manager, Hubbell India
- Prof. Ilaksh Adlakha, Professor, Indian Institute of Technology, Madras
- Dr Arunachalam M, Assistant Professor, Indian Institute of Information Technology, Design and Manufacturing, Kancheepuram
- Dr Rajnish Mallik, Assistant Professor, Indian Institute of Information Technology, Design and Manufacturing, Kancheepuram
- Dr. Monisha. M, Assistant Professor, Indian Institute of Information Technology, Design and Manufacturing, Kancheepuram

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- Dr Radhashyam Giri, Vice Principal, Central Institute of Petroleum and Engineering Technology, Guindy, Chennai
 - Convener: Dr. Suman Devadula and Dr. Urvashi Makkar

Total delegates: 10

5. Thematic Insights

4 Themes – Standard Across Website

Theme 1: Evolving Higher Education Ecosystem & Stakeholder Expectations

- Integrate industry mindsets early by embedding real-world competencies and productization directly into learning.
- Build future-ready, transdisciplinary curricula co-designed with stakeholders and aligned with emerging technologies, including AI.
- Center students as key stakeholders by recognizing them as whole individuals and agents of change with diverse aspirations.
- Prioritize student well-being as a critical foundation for meaningful learning and employability.

Theme 2: Transdisciplinary Curriculum Development & Pedagogy

- Transdisciplinary education must be purposefully designed, using models like the Design Spine and frequent curriculum updates informed by alumni to stay relevant and real-world aligned.
- Student well-being and holistic growth are essential, requiring integration of health, psychology, life skills, and the arts while avoiding overly rigid, stressful curricula.
- Higher education must enable flexible, meaningful learning, offering modular pathways, nurturing curiosity, and treating education as a design challenge centered on student agency and purpose.

Theme 3: Institutional Governance for Transdisciplinary Education

- Governance should be locally responsive and community-informed, engaging regional authorities and addressing social and environmental needs in program design.
- Flexible affiliations and industry-integrated vocational models add relevance, demonstrated by CIPET's multi-level structure and hands-on "mini-industry" approach.
- Stronger shared governance and faculty training are essential, supported by student participation, regular industry dialogue, and centers that prepare faculty for transdisciplinary teaching.

Theme 4: Roadmap for a Global Indian University

- Global expansion must be strategic and culturally aware, guided by market analysis, cross-cultural competence, and long-term global readiness rather than short-term impact.
- Health and sustainability form the foundation for global aspirations, with universities needing to strengthen student well-being and lead environmentally responsible practices before scaling internationally.
- Indian institutions should globalize their local strengths, creating diverse, reflective learning environments and showcasing innovations with worldwide relevance.

6. Key Takeaways

- Stakeholder expectations shape curriculum and pedagogy.
- Governance frameworks enable transdisciplinary models. Together, they align with future skills for 2030 and the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020).
- Beyond employability, education must also foster sustainability, well-being, and global solidarity.
- Convening academics, policymakers, innovators, and institutional leaders across India.
- Aim: Shape an inclusive, future-ready academic ecosystem.

Outcomes / Action Points

- Build proactive employability ecosystems, integrate health and student agency, leverage banks and industry as partners, and scale transdisciplinary models into holistic, future-ready education.
- Scale transdisciplinary models, embed health & life skills, enable flexible pathways, reimagine assessments, and restore curiosity, arts, and purpose at the heart of higher education.

- Build hybrid governance frameworks, diversify funding, strengthen faculty ecosystems, and create structured, participatory models integrating community, industry, and students
- Build global EdTech-enabled classrooms, position India as a sustainability education hub, leverage local innovations globally, and design structured cross-cultural & reflective learning pathways.

7. Photo Gallery (Optional)



Figure 1 : Participating dignitaries at the start of the session



Figure 2 Dr Devadula briefing participants about the MIT WPU Ethos



Figure 3 Dr Urvashi Makkar briefing the participants about the themes and objectives of the conference

