
Workshop Title

Envisioning Tomorrow's University: A Transdisciplinary Dialogue on the Future of Education
Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh | 18 August 2025 | Banaras Hindu University

1. Overview

The National Visioning Conference-Workshop, “Envisioning Tomorrow’s University: A Transdisciplinary Dialogue on the Futures of Education,” held at Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi on 18 August 2025, marked a key milestone in the MIT-WPU (Goa) initiative to reimagine higher education as a catalyst for human development, peace, and planetary well-being. Conceived in association with the UNESCO Chair for Peace, it responded to the disruptions of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, climate change, demographic transitions, and widening inequalities, and positioned higher education institutions as proactive agents of ethical, sustainable, and socially responsive transformation.

The conference brought together thought leaders, academics, policymakers, and practitioners from BHU and other institutions to deliberate on how a developing institution like MIT-WPU (Goa) can foreground transdisciplinary learning, ethical leadership, sustainability, and global cooperation. Building on MIT-WPU’s legacy of peace-oriented, holistic education, it served as a platform to explore innovative pedagogies and institutional models that enhance employability, innovation, social equity, and intercultural understanding.

2. Key Highlights

- The conference emphasized the need to reposition higher education as a driver of social and global transformation, focusing on ethical leadership, sustainability, and intercultural understanding.
- It highlighted the importance of fostering transdisciplinary curricula and pedagogies that integrate disciplines, values, and experiential learning to prepare future-ready graduates. The event stressed leveraging emerging technologies, especially AI, ethically and equitably to enhance teaching, research, governance, and institutional effectiveness.
- Strengthening governance, quality assurance, and international academic partnerships was identified as crucial for building India’s global academic footprint and fostering collaborative ecosystems.
- A consensus emerged that the universities of the future must balance rigour with creativity, accountability with autonomy, and tradition with innovation, to empower students for meaningful lives rooted in peace and planetary well-being.

3. Objectives of the Workshop

- Reposition higher education to meet evolving societal expectations.
- Promote transdisciplinary curricula and pedagogies for future readiness.
- Integrate emerging technologies, especially AI, ethically into academic practices.
- Strengthen governance, quality assurance, and collaborative academic ecosystems.
- Expand India's global academic footprint through international partnerships.

4. Participants & Institutions

Key participants included senior academic leaders, policy experts, institutional representatives and practitioners from:

Banaras Hindu University

Total delegates: 27

5. Thematic Insights

Theme 1: Evolving Higher Education Ecosystem & Stakeholder Expectations

- Universities must strengthen research quality by reintegrating philosophy and epistemology, and prioritize innovative, path-breaking research over repetitive work.
- The corporatization of universities and over-reliance on technology risks undermining academic integrity; institutions should reclaim their role as centers of critical inquiry.
- Implementation of NEP 2020 should be flexible and participatory, with reforms introduced gradually to prepare students for change and ensure their engagement.
- Industry linkages and global collaborations should enrich curricula and research, aligning educational outcomes with both market and societal needs.
- Stakeholder expectations, students, faculty, industry, and society, must be harmonized through inclusive dialogue and responsive policies for holistic higher education.

Theme 2: Transdisciplinary Curriculum Development & Pedagogy

- The future of higher education must be transdisciplinary, dissolving disciplinary boundaries to generate new frameworks of understanding and address complex societal challenges.
- Transdisciplinary education should blend disciplines, real-world problem-solving, and values-driven learning, with emphasis on experiential and vocational pathways.
- Pedagogical approaches should prioritize critical thinking, empathy, and truth-seeking, preparing students for both life and careers.
- Faculty development and capacity-building are essential for successful transdisciplinary pedagogy, ensuring educators are equipped to guide students through boundary-crossing competencies.
- Transdisciplinary models should be cautiously experimented with, especially at the undergraduate level, and outcomes shared for broader academic learning.

Theme 3: Institutional Governance for Transdisciplinary Education

- Governance models should balance centralization and decentralization, encouraging flexibility, inclusivity, and responsiveness to evolving academic needs.
- Universities must strike a balance between accountability and autonomy, ensuring funding supports innovation without compromising academic freedom.
- Equitable funding across disciplines is crucial to nurture well-rounded education and research, with calls for India to invest 6% of GDP in education.
- Pedagogy must remain inclusive and free from communal biases, supporting diversity and openness essential for transdisciplinary learning.
- Faculty senates and student councils should be empowered with greater decision-making roles to enhance transparency, accountability, and responsiveness in governance.

Theme 4: Roadmap for a Global Indian University

- The future university must be learner-centric, treating students as active co-creators of knowledge with individualized, flexible curricula and multiple entry/exit points.
- Pedagogy should be informed by advances in neuroscience and learner psychology, with teachers evolving into facilitators and mentors.
- Lifelong learning and modular pathways will be essential, offering micro-credentials and on-demand learning opportunities for continuous skill development.
- Global access and equity are central, with universities providing inclusive access to learners worldwide while remaining sensitive to local contexts.
- Specialization should be linked with transdisciplinary approaches, ensuring experts are not isolated from broader social, environmental, and ethical challenges.

6. Key Takeaways

- The university of the future must balance rigor with creativity, accountability with autonomy, and tradition with innovation, ensuring transdisciplinary, inclusive, and transformational education.
- Governance reforms are critical, with a need for decentralized, participatory models and equitable funding across disciplines to support holistic growth.
- Transdisciplinary curricula and pedagogies should blend disciplines, real-world problem-solving, and values-driven learning, preparing students for complex global challenges.
- Ethical integration of emerging technologies, especially AI, is essential to enhance teaching, research, and administration without exacerbating divides.
- Strengthening international academic partnerships and fostering lifelong learning pathways will expand India's global academic footprint and ensure continuous relevance.

7. Photo Gallery

