

About the 19th FICCI Higher Education Summit 2024

The 19th FICCI Higher Education Summit (HES), held on October 18-19, 2024, at Dr. Ambedkar International Centre and FICCI Federation House, New Delhi, added another milestone to its two-decade-long legacy. This annual conference has been instrumental in shaping India's higher education landscape, serving as a platform for meaningful discussions on the evolving global education ecosystem. With the theme “**Changing Paradigms of Higher Education in the Global Landscape,**” the summit emphasized key areas such as research collaboration, internationalization, effective governance, faculty development, reimagining the tech-education alliance, sustainability, and benchmarking. The event's Inaugural Session featured Ms. Lindy Cameron CB OBE, British High Commissioner to India, as the chief guest. Other distinguished attendees included Dr. Vidya Yeravdekar, Chair of the FICCI Higher Education Committee, and Smt. Jyoti Vij, Director General of FICCI and Dr Sekar Vishwanathan, Vice President, VIT. The summit attracted a broad spectrum of participants, including policymakers, educators, thought leaders, global academics, and industry experts. With over 800 national and international delegates, 1100+ students and 30 exhibitors from leading institutions and edtech companies, and targeted B2B meetings, it provided a dynamic platform for collaboration, dialogue, and knowledge-sharing. Key highlights of the event included Panel Discussions, Plenary Sessions, VC-CEO Roundtables, Masterclasses, Exhibitions, and the prestigious FICCI Higher Education Excellence Awards. These activities enriched participants with valuable insights and fostered growth, collaboration, and innovation in India's higher education sector.

Summit Overview



Knowledge Reports Released at the Summit

The FICCI EY-Parthenon 2024 report, "**Research in Higher Education: Strategies for a Vibrant Ecosystem**" explores the diverse challenges and opportunities within India's research landscape. It examines the current state of research, various models, and highlights the crucial role of government policies and institutional frameworks in driving progress. Key findings emphasize the need for greater investment in research infrastructure and faculty development, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration, and nurturing a culture of intellectual curiosity. The report also underscores the importance of government policies in ensuring adequate funding, simplifying regulatory frameworks, and incentivizing industry-academia partnerships. With a focused and collaborative approach from all stakeholders, India can position itself as a global leader in innovation and knowledge creation. This report aims to act as a catalyst for action, offering insights and recommendations to guide policymakers, university leaders, researchers, and industry stakeholders in building a dynamic and impactful research ecosystem.

The FICCI-KPMG Knowledge Report, "**Financing Higher Education Ecosystem in India**" offers a detailed analysis of the current landscape, explores innovative initiatives, highlights best practices, and proposes alternative financing models. It underscores the need for a sustainable approach, requiring supportive regulatory frameworks, greater investment in digital infrastructure, and expanded financial aid through scholarships and loan schemes to improve accessibility. The report emphasizes the importance of fostering philanthropy and alumni engagement to strengthen institutional capacities. It also calls for innovative financing models inspired by global best practices, such as the U.S. endowment model and Germany's dual education system, which align education with market needs. India faces challenges like inadequate government spending, disparities between public and private institutions, and limited financial aid coverage. By addressing these issues and adopting new strategies, the report aims to guide policymakers, institutions, and industry leaders toward building an inclusive and future-ready higher education system.

B2B Overview

More than 200 institutions registered to participate in the B2B meetings held on the sidelines of summit. The common themes of these meetings were partnerships and collaborations.

Keynote Speakers

Ms Lindy Cameron CB OBE, British High Commissioner to the Republic of India

In her special address at the 19th FICCI Higher Education Summit, Ms. Lindy Cameron, British High Commissioner to India, highlighted the deepening ties and collaborative potential between the UK and India in the higher education sector. She emphasized three key paradigms shaping this partnership: expanding education access, multi-directional student mobility, and a holistic, collaborative approach to innovation and research.

Ms. Cameron praised India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and its supportive framework, which are driving cross-border educational initiatives and enabling universities to innovate and partner on a global scale. She noted the UK's experience in establishing international branch campuses, which will bring global educational opportunities to Indian students. Similarly, she recognized the expansion of Indian universities abroad, creating a rich, transnational educational ecosystem. She highlighted the ambitious mobility targets set by India, aiming to welcome 500,000 international students by 2035.

Ms. Cameron stressed the importance of promoting multi-directional exchange and announced efforts by the UK to encourage British students to study in India, allowing for meaningful cultural and educational exchanges. The new Young Professionals Visa scheme intendeds to facilitate these objectives and enrich cross-cultural understanding. Ms Cameron also discussed the need of an integrated approach linking research, mobility, and innovation, placing universities at the core of social, technological, and economic advancements.

Ms. Cameron highlighted the enduring “living bridge” between the UK and India, marked by shared ambitions and people-to-people connections, and expressed optimism about the future of UK-India education partnerships. She underscored that collaborative efforts in higher education are crucial for building mutual prosperity and addressing global challenges, with both countries poised to benefit greatly from these strengthened ties.

Shri Sunil K Barnwal, Additional Secretary, Department of Higher Education, Government of India

Shri Sunil K. Barnwal emphasized the transformative phase that India's higher education system is currently undergoing. Shri Barnwal acknowledged that India, with its substantial youth demographic—65% under the age of 35—stands on the threshold of a new era, where education is not just an economic asset but a fundamental driver of national development. Shri Barnwal highlighted the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 as a landmark in educational reform, calling it more than just a policy but a visionary document that encourages interdisciplinary and

multidisciplinary education, fosters innovation, and aims for significant milestones, including increasing the gross enrollment ratio in higher education to 50% by 2035. He emphasized NEP's focus on making education more accessible, equitable, and technologically integrated. To this end, initiatives such as the National Credit Framework and National Higher Education Qualification Framework were cited as key facilitators of flexible and inclusive educational pathways, including multiple entry and exit options and a shift from degree-centric to skill- and knowledge-oriented learning.

Shri Barnwal pointed out that initiatives like SWAYAM and the SWAYAM Plus platform play a crucial role in democratizing education by making courses accessible across socio-economic backgrounds and geographic locations, including remote areas.

Shri Barnwal said that the establishment of the Anusandhan National Research Foundation and the creation of Centers of Excellence in artificial intelligence for agriculture, healthcare, and sustainable cities are among the key steps aimed at fostering research that directly benefits India's critical sectors. Internationalization was another crucial aspect of his address where he highlighted India's readiness to become a global education hub, with institutions increasingly attracting foreign students and setting up campuses abroad. Regulations are also in place to invite foreign universities to establish campuses in India, reflecting the policy's encouragement of educational exchange and cooperation on a global scale.

Smt. (Dr) Neeta Prasad, Joint Secretary, Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, Government of India

Smt. (Dr). Neeta Prasad highlighted the growing significance of interconnectedness of education and the need for internationalization, driven by the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. She explained that internationalization in India has evolved from being sporadic to a more systematic and integrated approach, aligning with broader economic reforms. She further added that the government was focusing on improving educational offerings, developing a supportive policy framework, and ensuring the collaboration of all stakeholders to ensure sustainability in global partnerships. Dr. Prasad also discussed measures to attract foreign students to India through initiatives like the Study in India program, which aims to ease entry and provide a smooth experience for international students. Furthermore, she shared policies for enabling foreign universities to set up campuses in India, fostering academic exchange and enhancing the quality of education in the country.

Shri Govind Jaiswal, Joint Secretary, Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, Government of India

Shri Govind Jaiswal shared insights about the government's work in the field of digital education. He highlighted the evolving nature of communication in education, noting that traditional offline methods have been the norm for centuries. The use of digital platforms to share knowledge, however, is a relatively new phenomenon, emerging strongly in the last decade. He emphasized the challenges that educational institutions face when adopting digital tools to convey knowledge effectively. Mr Jaiswal pointed out that while online platforms offer great potential, they are not yet able to replicate the same level of engagement and knowledge transfer as traditional classrooms. The maturity of knowledge delivered through these platforms remains a concern. Furthermore, he noted the need for improved tools and pedagogies to make online education as effective as in-person learning. Although there have been significant advancements, including initiatives like the SWAYAM platform, there are still barriers such as technical challenges in certain subjects and the need for better integration with real-world applications like internships. Mr Jaiswal also mentioned the importance of increasing awareness and acceptance of online learning, which requires a shift in mindset at all levels of education.

Dr Vidya Yeravdekar, Chair-HE Committee & Pro Chancellor-Symbiosis International University

Dr. Vidya Yeravdekar addressed the evolving landscape of higher education, focusing on global interconnectedness, collaboration, and innovation. She emphasized the importance of internationalization, highlighting the growing partnerships between Indian and foreign universities in areas like joint research, dual-degree programs, and the establishment of campuses abroad and in India. This expansion of collaborative efforts reflects the increasingly integrated global education system.

The adoption of technology, especially following the 2020 pandemic, has transformed educational practices at both individual and institutional levels. In her speech, Dr. Yeravdekar underscored the essential role of research and innovation, noting that collaborations with global partners have positioned India as a "laboratory" for developing practical solutions. Recognizing the financial challenges in higher education, she also advocated for alternative financing models to reduce the heavy reliance on tuition fees, particularly in the private sector, to expand access and enhance quality.

Dr. Yeravdekar further called for stronger industry-academia partnerships, not only for internships and placements but also to build research infrastructure including setting up labs in university campuses. She also highlighted the role of universities in shaping responsible global citizens, aiming to make India a "Vishwaguru"/ global leader in education, underscoring the broader societal impact of higher education institutions.

Dr. Nicolas Patrici, Director, OBREAL – Global

Dr. Nicolas Patrici stressed on the transformative role of inter-regional partnerships in higher education. Moving beyond the traditional concept of globalization, Dr. Patrici emphasized the need for “inter-regionality” as a more effective approach for universities worldwide. By focusing on inter-regional connections, he argued, educational institutions can meet specific regional needs while benefiting from shared global resources, fostering a more balanced and inclusive model of collaboration.

Dr. Patrici mentioned that global education should not be measured solely by the flow of students across borders or the establishment of international campuses. Instead, he urged institutions to build partnerships that respect and integrate the distinct linguistic, cultural, and educational values of each region. These inter-regional partnerships, he suggested, could address pressing issues like sustainability, inclusivity, and gender equality, particularly in the Global South.

Through OBREAL’s initiatives, Dr. Patrici highlighted how regions worldwide encounter similar educational and developmental challenges. He emphasized the potential for universities to advance solutions in areas like digital access, multilingualism, and support for marginalized groups, thereby becoming proactive agents of regional development. His vision for a “global mental landscape” encouraged institutions to bridge regional diversity while addressing both local and global needs.

Dr. Patrici urged universities in the Global South to champion their own development agendas by forming alliances that honor regional identities. He advocated for a redefined model of international cooperation that positions higher education as a driver of inclusive and sustainable growth on a global scale.

Prof. K K Aggarwal, President, South Asian University

Prof. K.K. Aggarwal in his remarks highlighted the complexities of funding in higher education and the need for a balanced approach. He stressed that while innovative funding models are essential, they should not be used as an excuse to cut necessary state funding. He underscored that higher education serves as both a public and private good—enhancing individual lives while benefiting society.

Prof. Aggarwal also pointed out that the pursuit of quality in education is often misguided, with institutions prioritizing rankings and accreditation over genuine educational quality. He emphasized that quality should naturally result in accreditation, not the other way around. The fixation on standardized processes, he argued, would stifle innovation and individuality among institutions.

Prof. Aggarwal called for a shift from mere procedural goals toward meaningful quality, sustainability, and accessible education.

Dr Aleks Subic, Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive, Aston University

Dr. Aleks Subic presented "University 4.0," a concept addressing the university's role amid rapid technological change, often referred to as the Fourth Industrial Revolution. He noted that digital transformation, already reshaping industry, has accelerated since the COVID-19 pandemic, demanding universities rethink traditional educational models to align with industry and societal needs. This shift required to focus on digital skills, data-driven learning, and closer industry partnerships to keep pace with workforce demands.

Dr. Subic emphasized that past industrial revolutions created societal gaps when education failed to evolve alongside technology. To avoid similar issues today, he advocated for universities to adopt flexible, digitally-integrated approaches, promoting lifelong learning and credentials that enhance employability. He highlighted trends like digital credentials, work-integrated learning, and borderless competition, underscoring the need for "Omni-channel learning" that allows learners worldwide to access education anytime and anywhere. Dr. Subic called for educational innovation that fosters agility and lifelong skill acquisition to meet the dynamic demands of a digitalized world, thus bridging the gap between university output and the rapidly evolving workplace.

Ms Jyoti Vij, Director General, FICCI

Ms. Jyoti Vij while emphasizing on the summit's theme, "Changing Paradigms of Higher Education in the Global Landscape," highlighted the critical role of education as both a tool for personal development and a driver of societal and economic growth, particularly in today's rapidly transforming global education landscape.

Reflecting on the significant rise in students seeking tertiary education worldwide, Ms. Vij noted that India is actively positioned as a key player in global education. She underscored the pivotal work of FICCI's Higher Education Committee, which has been working for two decades to establish India as a global education and research hub. She said that through domestic reforms, international partnerships, and the ambitious goals of the National Education Policy 2020, FICCI aims to prepare India for the future, focusing on sectors like AI, clean energy, and biotechnology.

She encouraged the need to embrace digital transformation and innovation, noting initiatives such as the National Digital University and the e-Vidya program, which help expand educational access across India. She urged policymakers, educators, and industry leaders to use the summit as a platform for collaboration and innovative thinking, envisioning an education system that is inclusive, future-ready, and globally connected.

10th FICCI Higher Education Excellence Awards

The FICCI Higher Education Excellence (HEE) Awards honor institutions and individuals who demonstrate outstanding achievements in higher education across India. These awards celebrate innovation, academic leadership, research, and industry partnerships, highlighting practices that elevate educational standards nationwide. Winning an HEE Award signifies an institution's commitment to excellence, positioning it as a model for quality education and societal impact.

The 10th FICCI Higher Education Excellence Awards, held on October 18, 2024, reflect FICCI's dedication to advancing excellence in higher education. Open to both public and private institutions, the awards encourage knowledge sharing and collaboration, fostering a culture of continuous improvement and innovation within India's higher education system.

Individual Awards

1. **Legendary Institution Builder Award**

Mr. Azim Premji, Founder Chairman, Wipro Limited and Chancellor, Azim Premji University

2. **Lifetime Achievement Award**

Prof. (Dr.) Anil Gupta, Professor, IIM-Ahmedabad and IIT-Bombay

3. **Personality of the Year 2024**

Prof. (Dr.) Manjul Bhargava, Professor of Mathematics, Princeton University

Institutional Awards

Excellence in Creating Employment

1. Public – National Institute of Technology Meghalaya
2. Private – New Delhi Institute Of Management

Excellence in Globalisation of Education

3. Private – Amity University Uttar Pradesh

Excellence in Institutional Social Responsibility

4. Public – Gondwana University, Gadchiroli
5. Private – Datta Meghe Institute Of Higher Education And Research

Excellence in Research, Innovation & Entrepreneurship

6. Public – Anand Agricultural University
7. Private – Vellore Institute Of Technology, Vellore

University of the Year - Emerging

8. Public – Central University of Haryana
9. Private – Shiv Nadar University

University of the Year - Established

10. Public – Mahatma Phule Krishi Vidyapeeth, Rahuri
11. Private – Manipal Academy of Higher Education, Manipal

Special Jury Recognition

Excellence in Creating Employment

12. Private – Vishwakarma Institute of Information Technology

Excellence in Globalisation of Education

13. Private – Parul University

Excellence in Research, Innovation & Entrepreneurship

14. Public – Indira Gandhi Krishi Vishwavidyalaya

Special Jury Recognition University of the Year - Emerging

15. Public – Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Petroleum Technology

Jury List

Grand Jury

1. **Dr. R. A. Mashelkar**, Jury Chair, FICCI Higher Education Excellence Awards & Former Director General, Council of Scientific & Industrial Research, Government of India
2. **Mr. Sudheesh Venkatesh**, Jury Co-Chair, FICCI Higher Education Excellence Awards Chief Communications Officer & Managing Editor, Azim Premji Foundation
3. **Mr. Ayush Gupta**, Director-HR, GAIL India
4. **Ms. Veena Swarup**, Former Director (HR), Engineers India Limited
5. **Mr. Ajay Bohora**, Co-founder, HDFC Credila
6. **Ms. Pervin Malhotra**, Director, Career Guidance India (CARING)

7. **Dr. Mahesh Verma**, Vice Chancellor, Indraprastha University
8. **Mr Ameya Vanjari**, COO, TATA Strive
9. **Mr Gabriel Bordado**, Regional Skills and Employability Specialist, International Labour Organization

Interim Jury

10. **Mr. Lokesh Mehra**, Head AWS Academy-South Asia, AWS
11. **Mr. Nishit Jain**, Special Advisor, Asia, EFMD
12. **Ms. Shabda Birfani Bedi**, Domain Expert-Teacher Education, Azim Premji Foundation
13. **Dr. Pallab Saha**, General Manager (India), The Open Group
14. **Mr Hersh Shah**, CEO, IRM India Affiliate
15. **Mr. Asim Kumar**, Director, Cerebrus Consulting
16. **Mr Sumit Kumar**, Chief Strategy Officer, TeamLease Services Limited
17. **Mr Abhishek Pandit**, Director, Eduvantage
18. **Mr Gaurav Kapoor**, Director, Government Relations, India, CFA Institute
19. **Mr. Viplav Baxi**, Chief Product Officer, Knimbus

VCs-CEOs Roundtable

On the sidelines of the 19th FICCI Higher Education Summit 2024, a Vice Chancellors-CEOs (VC-CEO) Roundtable Discussion was organized on the theme 'Integrating advanced technologies in Education'.

This insightful discussion brought together 40+ leaders from academia and industry, focusing on the transformative role of technologies like AI, AR/VR, blockchain, and data analytics. The roundtable aimed to set a foundation for fruitful partnerships between traditional universities and technology companies, ultimately benefiting students, faculty, administrators, and the education sector as a whole.

Key insights from the roundtable:

1. Institutions should leverage technologies like AR and VR to create immersive learning experiences that make education more interactive and engaging.
2. Universities and colleges should be encouraged to digitize laboratories to transform traditional learning methods and offer more immersive, hands-on experiences.

3. EduTech startups and educational institutions should use predictive analytics to monitor student behavior and mental health, enabling personalized support throughout their academic journey.
4. Flexible examination models should be adopted to cater to individual student needs, allowing for on-demand assessments.
5. Universities must rethink teaching and research approaches to remain relevant in an era shaped by AI advancements.
6. Introducing ethical considerations around AI at an early stage is vital to help students responsibly manage the risks associated with emerging technologies.
7. Institutions need to implement robust risk management strategies to address challenges posed by deepfake technologies and other AI-driven threats.
8. Encouraging curiosity-driven learning and fostering peer interaction is essential for preparing students to thrive in an AI-dominated future.
9. Establishing unified data standards at a national level is critical for effectively harnessing AI and other advanced technologies in higher education.

Masterclass Overview

Masterclass on **"International Office Professionalization** provided valuable insights into the evolving role of international offices in shaping the global landscape of higher education.

The session highlighted the critical importance of international offices in fostering global partnerships, enhancing academic mobility, and promoting student diversity. Discussions focused on pivotal themes, including dual and twinning programs, international research collaborations, student exchange initiatives, and creating inclusive campus environments.

One of the key segments addressed the opportunities and challenges of dual and twinning degree programs, emphasizing their potential to provide students with global academic exposure. Speakers underscored the importance of curriculum alignment, cultural adaptation, and cross-border academic recognition as vital elements for the success of such programs. Strategies were shared to navigate these complexities, illustrating how collaborative programs can enrich student experiences while strengthening institutional reputations.

International research collaborations emerged as another critical area of discussion. Case studies from leading Indian universities and their foreign counterparts illustrated both the benefits and challenges of global research initiatives. The masterclass emphasized the

importance of trust, transparent communication, and adaptability in building successful partnerships that generate impactful outcomes.

Student exchange and study-abroad programs were also highlighted for their transformative role in offering students global exposure. Speakers shared best practices for designing and managing these programs effectively, with a focus on deepening cultural understanding and fostering global competencies among students.

The Masterclass provided actionable insights into overcoming regulatory, financial, and infrastructural challenges that often hinder internationalization efforts. Participants left with a deeper understanding of how to build globally competitive institutions that are prepared to thrive in an interconnected world.

Panel Discussions

Panel Discussion 1: Research Collaboration and Harmonious Innovation for Global Thought Leadership

In an increasingly interconnected world, research collaborations hold the potential to drive innovation and address challenges that transcend national boundaries. The need for such global partnerships stems from the recognition that the most pressing issues—climate change, healthcare, technology ethics, and sustainable development—require diverse perspectives and interdisciplinary solutions. Institutions worldwide are exploring ways to harmonize their efforts, breaking traditional academic silos to engage in translational research that connects theoretical knowledge with real-world applications.

However, achieving this vision demands navigating complexities like regulatory constraints and policy frameworks that sometimes hinder creative exploration. While compliance is essential, the pursuit of research excellence requires a culture of curiosity and passion that transcends these limitations. By fostering collaboration across disciplines and regions, academic communities can develop innovative solutions that not only address local challenges but resonate globally, ultimately creating knowledge ecosystems that serve humanity at large.

Recommendations to Government:

- Substantial funds should be allocated to support cutting-edge interdisciplinary research, including AI-driven citizen science and 3D construction printing, ensuring societal challenges are addressed effectively.
- Inclusive policies should be developed to facilitate stronger partnerships between academia, industry, and government, with a focus on national and international stakeholders.
- There is a need to encourage international collaborations by adapting policies, such as resuming academic exchange programs and easing regulatory constraints.
- Government must prioritize translational research by establishing frameworks that address real-world problems and ensure impactful outcomes at the societal level.
- Government should provide incentives for research in advanced domains like artificial intelligence and defense technologies, fostering their adoption across sectors.

Recommendations to Academia and Industry:

- Substantial efforts must be directed by industry to establish joint research initiatives that focus on solving industry-relevant problems and ensure practical applications of academic research.
- HEIs should create specialized centers for interdisciplinary research, such as applied AI and 3D construction printing, to foster collaboration across academic and industry boundaries.
- There is a need to encourage integration of practical and theoretical learning by designing programs that solve real-world challenges in partnership with industry.
- Industry must support global networking by expanding collaborations with international institutions to share expertise, resources, and advancements.
- HEIs should promote citizen science initiatives by involving communities in research and addressing grassroots-level issues, ensuring inclusivity in scientific advancements.
- Substantial emphasis should be placed on leveraging alternative funding mechanisms like crowdfunding for academic and industry projects to reduce reliance on CSR funds.



L to R

Dr. Avantika Tomar, Partner, EY-Parthenon | **Dr. Satish Modh**, Pro Vice Chancellor , Somaiya Vidyavihar University | **Dr. Rajkumar Singh**, Head, Research & Development, Bharat Forge | **Shri Sunil K Barnwal**, Additional Secretary, Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, Government of India | **Dr. S. Sundar Manoharan**, Director General, Pandit Deendayal Energy University | **Prof. Varvara Nazrova**, Head & Associate Professor, St. Petersburg School of Economics and Management, HSE University | **Dr. Ketan Kotecha**, Dean, Faculty of Engineering, Symbiosis International University | **Dr. Rajesh Goyal**, Director, NICMAR Delhi NCR

Panel Discussion 2: Internationalization of Higher Education to Build Global Linkages

The internationalization of higher education is reshaping global academic landscapes, creating opportunities for cross-border collaborations and expanding the reach of educational institutions. By embracing international partnerships, establishing branch campuses, and fostering student and

faculty exchanges, institutions are becoming more globally integrated, fostering innovation, and enhancing their global competitiveness.

In India, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has been pivotal in driving a systematic approach to internationalization, moving beyond isolated efforts to make global engagement a core component of academic reform. This vision emphasizes enhancing the quality of education, establishing a supportive policy framework, and expanding collaborations between institutions. India's vast educational infrastructure positions it to become a global hub for higher education, offering international students diverse academic opportunities. Expanding international campuses and increasing the intake of foreign students further strengthens India's role in the global higher education ecosystem, enriching both local and global educational experiences.

Recommendations to Government:

- Substantial investments should be allocated to support the establishment of foreign university campuses in India, ensuring quick approval processes and regulatory frameworks that promote ease of entry while maintaining academic quality.
- Inclusive education policies should be developed to facilitate student mobility by addressing visa challenges through streamlined platforms like the 'Study in India' portal.
- There is a need to encourage collaboration with foreign universities and governments to promote joint research initiatives, dual degree programs, and faculty exchange schemes.
- Policies must prioritize the development of globally aligned curricula that include flexibility in course selection, multidisciplinary approaches, and credit-based academic structures.
- Government must create enabling environments for foreign institutions to set up campuses by providing incentives and simplifying compliance requirements, as seen in GIFT City.

Recommendations to Academia and Industry:

- HEIs should establish frameworks for co-designing and delivering globally recognized curricula in partnership with international universities.
- There is a need to encourage collaborations with industry for work-integrated learning opportunities to enhance student employability and skill relevance in global job markets.
- Industry must create internship and work experience pathways for international students studying in India, integrating these experiences into academic programs.

- Substantial efforts must focus on setting up international offices within universities to streamline student onboarding processes, offering personalized support for cultural and academic adaptation.
- HEIs should invest in digital and physical infrastructure to support Omni-channel learning, enabling students to combine on-campus and online education effectively.



L to R

Dr. Andrew Atherton, VP International and Engagement, University of Southampton | **Prof. Francis Ewusie Nunoo**, Deputy Director General, Ghana Tertiary Education Commission | **Dr Aleks Subic**, Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive, Aston University | **Dr. Vidya Yeravdekar**, Chair, FICCI Higher Education Committee & Pro-chancellor, Symbiosis International University | **Smt. Neeta Prasad**, Joint Secretary, Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, Government of India | **Prof. Raghunathan Rengaswamy**, Dean, Global Engagement, IIT Madras | **Dr. B Chandrasekar**, Executive Director, EdCIL | **Prof. Vimal Chandra Srivastava**, Dean of International Relations, IIT Roorkee

Panel 3: Building a Thriving Higher Education Ecosystem with Effective Governance & Faculty

The success of higher education institutions depends on two critical pillars: effective governance and exceptional faculty. These elements are essential for creating a thriving academic ecosystem that fosters innovation, quality learning, and continuous improvement. As the educational landscape evolves, institutions face growing demands for work-ready graduates, changes in student demographics, and an increasing reliance on technology to enhance learning experiences.

Governance plays a pivotal role in shaping the institutional framework for collaboration and accountability, while faculty development ensures educators are well-equipped to guide and inspire students. Additionally, adopting a participatory governance approach—where faculty and students are involved in decision-making processes—can foster a culture of transparency and ethical conduct. Institutions must also focus on diversity and inclusion within faculty and governance structures to bring diverse perspectives that enrich decision-making and drive institutional progress. Together, these elements create a dynamic and responsive higher education ecosystem that can meet the needs of an evolving global society.

Recommendations to Government:

- Substantial funds should be allocated to enable the adoption of AI, cloud-based learning, and other advanced technologies across public and private universities, bridging gaps in access and quality.
- Inclusive education policies should be developed to address the digital divide, ensuring equitable access to digital resources and infrastructure for students from all demographics.
- There is a need to encourage governance frameworks that mandate transparency, ethics, and stakeholder engagement in decision-making processes for institutions.
- Policies must support faculty development programs through funding and incentives, ensuring faculty stay updated with modern pedagogies and technology use.
- Government should incentivize institutions to integrate holistic education models, focusing on mental health, emotional intelligence (EQ), and spiritual quotient (SQ) alongside academic learning.

Recommendations to Academia and Industry:

- HEIs should prioritize experiential, project-led, and outcome-based education to make classroom learning engaging and relevant to today's students.

- There is a need to encourage faculty to adopt innovative pedagogies and integrate hands-on, practical experiences in their teaching methods.
- Industry must create partnerships with universities to co-develop curriculum content, focusing on AI, machine learning, and domain-specific skills for evolving job markets.
- HEIs should establish faculty development programs, such as foundational and advanced pedagogy training, to empower educators in meeting modern learning demands.
- Substantial efforts must be made by HEIs to focus on mental health support for students and faculty, implementing wellness initiatives like meditation, yoga, and reflective practices.
- Industry and academia should collaborate to train faculty and students for Industry 4.0 and beyond, ensuring they are equipped with the skills required for future workplaces.
- HEIs must integrate governance practices that emphasize shared decision-making, allowing faculty to contribute meaningfully to institutional strategies and policies.



L to R

Dr Balakrishnan Shankar, Dean, Engineering, Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham | **Prof. Basuthkar Jagdeeshwar Rao**, Vice Chancellor, University of Hyderabad | **Prof. Rajita Kulkarni**, President, Sri Sri University | **Dr. Sekar Viswanathan**, Vice President , Vellore Institute of Technology | **Dr Rajan Saxena**, Advisor, FICCI HE Committee & Former VC, NMIMS (Deemed University) and Strategic Advisor, Aditya Group of Institutions | **Prof. Ajay Batish**, Dean Partnerships and Accreditation, and Deputy Director, Thapar Institute of Engineering & Technology | **Dr. Janette Muir**, Vice Provost – Academic Affairs, George Mason University

Panel 4: Reimagining Learning Through the Tech-Edu Alliance

The rapid integration of digital technologies into education is reshaping how learning is delivered and accessed. While traditional educational institutions have long been the primary sources of knowledge, technology-enabled platforms are now offering innovative and flexible learning opportunities. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated this digital transformation, highlighting the potential of online learning platforms to democratize education, particularly for students in remote areas.

Despite the growing discussion around digital technologies, their adoption in education has been slower compared to industries like finance or aviation, mainly due to regulatory barriers. However, platforms like Coursera are already enabling Indian students to earn academic credits through online courses, facilitated by reforms like the National Credit Framework. Moving forward, the key lies in fostering collaboration between traditional universities and tech companies. This partnership can combine established academic expertise with the innovation and accessibility of digital platforms, creating an ecosystem that meets the evolving needs of learners in the digital age.

Recommendations to Government:

- Substantial investments should be allocated to develop scalable platforms for virtual labs, enabling access to advanced simulations and practical learning tools for students in underserved areas.
- Inclusive policies should be developed to integrate hybrid learning models that combine online and offline elements, providing flexibility and access to diverse educational content for all learners.

- There is a need to encourage regulatory frameworks that facilitate partnerships between edtech companies and educational institutions, ensuring quality assurance and alignment with academic goals.
- Government must prioritize bridging the digital divide by funding infrastructure projects to provide high-speed internet and technological access in rural and remote areas.
- Policies should support language localization for digital content, using AI-powered tools to translate and adapt educational materials into regional languages for broader accessibility.

Recommendations to Academia and Industry:

- HEIs should integrate personalized AI-driven tools into their curricula to provide tailored learning experiences and improve student outcomes.
- There is a need to encourage collaboration between academia and industry to co-create instructional design tools and content that address practical and theoretical learning gaps.
- Industry must create AI-powered mock interview and mentorship tools, enabling students to prepare effectively for job roles across diverse sectors.
- HEIs should leverage virtual lab technologies to provide experiential learning opportunities, ensuring students gain hands-on skills without relying on expensive physical infrastructure.
- Substantial efforts should focus on developing blended learning programs that combine online theory modules with in-person case studies and collaborative exercises, catering to different learning preferences.
- Industry and academia should collaborate to enhance the adoption of technology in pedagogy, focusing on interactive, learner-centric methods that foster engagement and comprehension.



L to R

Mr. Anuj Vishwakarma, President - Higher-ed Programs, upGrad | **Mr. Hemant Sahal**, Founder & CEO, Digi | **Shri Govind Jaiswal**, Joint Secretary, Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, Government of India | **Mr. Raghav Gupta**, MD India & Asia Pacific, Coursera | **Mr. Nitin Kukreja**, Co-Chair, FICCI New Education Providers Sub-Committee & CEO, Allen Career Institute | **Mr. Varun Dhamija**, Chief Digital Strategy Officer, TimesPro

Panel 5: One Planet, Shared Future: Role of Universities

As the world grapples with climate change, resource depletion, and a growing population, the urgency for sustainable solutions has never been more critical. These interconnected global challenges demand international collaboration and a collective commitment to creating a more sustainable future. Universities, with their vast knowledge resources and innovative capabilities, are uniquely positioned to drive this change.

Beyond traditional roles, higher education institutions must actively engage in promoting sustainability through research, curriculum, and operational practices. Universities can foster partnerships with governments, private sectors, and civil society to tackle environmental and social challenges. By embedding sustainability principles in academic programs and campus operations, universities can equip students with the knowledge and skills necessary to lead in a rapidly evolving world. This approach can help universities contribute meaningfully to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and guide future generations toward a more sustainable, equitable global future.

Recommendations to Government:

- Substantial investments should be allocated to promote research initiatives addressing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through university collaborations, ensuring tangible outcomes in areas like healthcare, women's empowerment, and climate action.
- Inclusive policies should be developed to encourage public-private partnerships between universities and industries, enabling resource sharing for projects aligned with societal challenges.
- There is a need to encourage government-backed funding for interdisciplinary research centers, focusing on community development, women's health, and environmental sustainability.
- Governments must create frameworks to support universities in adopting clean energy solutions, such as solar rooftops and electronic systems, contributing to reduced carbon footprints.
- Policy reforms should prioritize incentives for universities to integrate SDGs into curricula, fostering research and community programs that address local and global challenges.

Recommendations to Academia and Industry:

- HEIs should implement interdisciplinary courses and live-in labs that allow students to work within communities, co-identify problems, and co-create solutions, fostering empathy and actionable outcomes.
- There is a need to encourage faculty and student involvement in SDG-aligned research projects, ensuring relevance to pressing global and regional issues.

- Industry must create robust internship and employment pathways focusing on sustainability, allowing students to develop practical skills in green technologies and ethical practices.
- HEIs should prioritize embedding compassion and empathy into education, encouraging students to address societal challenges through an integrated approach to knowledge and action.
- Substantial emphasis must be placed on fostering international collaboration through global platforms, allowing students and researchers to share insights and develop innovative, scalable solutions.
- Industry and academia must collaborate to enhance focus on soft skills like ambiguity management, self-discipline, and resilience, preparing students for dynamic global challenges.



L to R

Dr. Veronica Donahue, Associate Dean, Advanced Academic Programs, Johns Hopkins University | **Prof. Bhavani Rao R**, Dean, School of Social and Behavioral Sciences, Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham | **Mr. Pradeep Rang**, Certified Fellow of IRM (Level 5) and Chief Risk

Officer, Airtel Payments Bank | **Ms. Alison Barrett MBE**, Country Director, British Council India | **Mr. Nick Booker**, Co-Founder, IndoGenius | **Dr. Nicolas Patrici**, Director, OBREAL – Global | **Prof. Ananya Mukherjee**, Vice Chancellor, Shiv Nadar University | **Ms. Deepti Vij**, Director, Talent Acquisition and Diversity, Honeywell | **Dr Narayana Sabhahit**, Pro Vice Chancellor, Technology & Science, Manipal Academy of Higher Education | **Ms. Joyce Poan**, Chief, Education Sector, UNESCO

Panel 6: Co-Creating a Competitive and Collaborative Higher Education Ecosystem through Industry-Academia Engagement

In an era marked by rapid technological advancement and changing job market demands, fostering stronger industry-academia collaborations is essential for shaping a competitive and innovative higher education ecosystem. Historically, the relationship between academia and industry has often been fragmented, limiting opportunities for growth and innovation. However, the increasing need for practical skills and real-world applications has created an imperative for deeper partnerships.

These collaborations should extend beyond traditional roles such as internships and placements. By co-creating laboratories, engaging in joint research projects, and aligning curricula with industry needs, universities can ensure that students are equipped with the relevant skills and knowledge. This partnership model also offers industry the opportunity to shape research initiatives that directly address emerging challenges. Expanding such collaborations beyond urban centers to rural and underserved areas is crucial for fostering inclusive growth and ensuring the benefits of these partnerships reach all regions, thereby contributing to a more robust and equitable educational landscape.

Recommendations to Government:

- Substantial funds should be allocated to support collaborative initiatives such as centers of excellence, ensuring a strong linkage between universities and industries in sectors like biotechnology, engineering, and information technology.
- Inclusive policies should be developed to mandate industry representation on academic boards and encourage industries to actively participate in shaping curricula and training programs.
- There is a need to encourage the adoption of a national framework for industry-academia collaboration, focusing on alignment with market requirements and fostering innovation in education and employability.
- Governments must incentivize investments by industries in creating labs, training centers, and finishing schools within academic institutions to enhance student employability.

- Policies should prioritize initiatives to improve the employability of graduates through mandatory internship programs, sector-specific certifications, and vocational training aligned with evolving industry needs.

Recommendations to Academia and Industry:

- HEIs should integrate micro-level engagements by involving industry professionals in teaching sessions, bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application.
- There is a need to encourage domain-specific centers for excellence, focusing on areas like generics research or AI applications, which can drive innovation and sector-specific growth.
- Industry must create robust finishing school programs and invest in training educators, ensuring that faculty members are equipped to train students in skills demanded by the industry.
- HEIs should promote partnerships for joint research and consulting projects, enabling faster adoption of real-world solutions and enhancing the academic ecosystem's relevance.
- Substantial emphasis must be placed on equipping students with process knowledge and regulatory insights, ensuring they are ready to contribute to industry processes immediately after graduation.
- Industry and academia should collaborate to establish sector-specific goals and align research and development efforts, promoting sustained engagement and innovation.



L to R

Dr. Rachna Chaturvedi, Director, Research and Project, Rabindranath Tagore University | **Dr. Devashis Rath**, Professor of Practice, Aditya School of Business Management | **Dr. Ramakrishnan Raman**, Vice Chancellor, Symbiosis International University | **Prof. Ravindra Kumar Sinha**, Vice Chancellor, Gautam Buddha University | **Mr. Salavadi Easwaran**, Academic Dean, Biocon Academy

Panel Discussion 7: Innovative Funding Framework: Imperative for Higher Education Expansion

As demand for quality higher education continues to grow in India, traditional funding models are proving inadequate, creating significant financial barriers for many prospective students. With state funding limited and educational infrastructure requiring substantial investment, the need for innovative financing solutions has become crucial. Education, being a long-term investment in both individuals and society, demands creative funding mechanisms that can keep pace with expanding needs while maintaining quality.

Collaboration between the government, private sector, and other stakeholders is essential to develop new funding channels that can support the growth of institutions, enhance research capabilities, and bridge the affordability gap. By adopting innovative financing options, the higher education sector can continue to evolve and expand, ensuring that students from all backgrounds can access the education they deserve.

Recommendations to Government:

- Substantial funds should be allocated to support the expansion of higher education infrastructure, including the creation of additional seats to meet the ambitious target of a 50% Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER).
- Inclusive policies should be developed to incentivize philanthropic contributions, such as tax exemptions for donors and endowment funds, encouraging sustainable funding for public and private universities.
- There is a need to encourage innovative financing mechanisms like government-guaranteed bonds, social impact bonds, and education-specific green bonds to diversify funding sources.
- Policies must promote the establishment of frameworks for public-private partnerships (PPPs) to bridge gaps in funding and ensure the efficient use of resources.
- Government should prioritize reforms in foreign direct investment (FDI) policies to allow private educational institutions to attract global funding for infrastructure and research.

Recommendations to Academia and Industry:

- HEIs should implement outcome-based financing models that link investments to measurable educational achievements and skill development.
- There is a need to encourage collaborative investments between academia and industry, such as co-developing research facilities and supporting revenue-generating campus innovations.
- Industry must create incubation and innovation centers on campus to foster research and development, bridging the gap between academic knowledge and practical applications.
- HEIs should establish sustainable funding mechanisms, including subscription-based education models that allow alumni to retool and upskill over their careers.

- Substantial efforts should focus on leveraging existing assets, such as campus land, to generate revenue through partnerships for housing, convention centers, or sports facilities.
- Academia and industry should collaborate to enhance employability by integrating real-world industry challenges into the curriculum, making students job-ready upon graduation.



L to R

Mr. Arup Chakraborty, Certified Member (Level 4) of Institute of Risk Management and Seasoned Risk Expert | **Ms. Amrita Sadarangani**, Senior Director and Head - Global Research Alliances, Ashoka University | **Mr Narayanan Ramaswamy**, National Leader - Education and Skill Development, Government and Public Services, KPMG in India | **Prof. K K Aggarwal**, President, South Asian University | **Mr. Ajay Bohora**, Co-Founder, HDFC Credila | **Prof. Vasudev Murthy**, Executive Director, Rishihood University | **Prof. Lakshmi Kumar**, Dean, Business School, Krea University

Panel Discussion 8: Regulation and Benchmarking: Catalyst for Future of Education

In the rapidly evolving global landscape, the role of regulation and benchmarking has become central to shaping the future of higher education. As nations strive for a competitive edge, it is increasingly recognized that robust regulatory frameworks are not obstacles but catalysts for fostering innovation and ensuring quality. These frameworks help balance the need for institutional autonomy with accountability, creating an environment conducive to global competitiveness.

While regulatory challenges often draw criticism for potentially stifling progress, the world's leading nations have leveraged regulations as tools for driving educational excellence. In this context, regulation serves as a foundation for consistency, transparency, and continuous improvement. The discussion on the importance of regulation and benchmarking will explore how these tools can support the advancement of higher education, ensuring that institutions maintain high standards while also encouraging innovation and adaptability in a rapidly changing world.

Recommendations to Government:

- Substantial investments should be allocated to strengthen regulatory frameworks, ensuring uniformity in quality benchmarks across public and private educational institutions.
- Inclusive policies should be developed to support the integration of global benchmarking standards, enabling Indian institutions to compete at international levels.
- Governments must ensure a mechanism that pushes institutions to adopt accreditation framework.
- Policy reforms should prioritize the establishment of a unified national digital framework for monitoring the progress and quality of higher education institutions.

Recommendations to Academia and Industry:

- HEIs should implement benchmarking practices aligned with global standards, focusing on employability, research output, and community impact.
- There is a need to encourage collaboration with international accreditation bodies to build credibility and attract global partnerships.
- Industry must create tools and platforms for real-time feedback on the skills and knowledge gaps of graduates, enabling academic institutions to adapt curriculums dynamically.
- Substantial emphasis must be placed on the creation of interdisciplinary programs that combine technical expertise with soft skills, ensuring holistic student development.

- Industry and academia should collaborate to establish shared responsibility in maintaining and improving the quality of education, fostering innovation through joint research initiatives.



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Prof. P B Sharma, Vice Chancellor, Amity University, Manesar | **Dr Rajan Saxena**, Advisor, FICCI HE Committee & Former VC, NMIMS (Deemed University) and Strategic Advisor, Aditya Group of Institutions) | **Ms. Rittika Chanda Parruck MBE**, Director Education, British Council India| **Dr Sandeep Sancheti**, Vice President - Research Relations & Academic Advisory, Elsevier (India) | **Dr Pallab Saha**, General Manager (India), The Open Group

Contact Us

Mr. Ankit Mohanto
Senior Assistant Director, FICCI
Email: ankit.mohanto@ficci.com
M – +91 88604 24691

Mr. Mr Pooja Uniyal
Senior Assistant Director, FICCI
Email: pooja.uniyal@ficci.com
M – +91 88603 05195

Mr. Tejas Kahandal
Assistant Director, FICCI
Email: tejas.kahandal@ficci.com
M –+91 7378697114

Web - www.ficci-hes.com

Address - FICCI, Federation House, 1 Tansen Marg, New Delhi - 110001
011 2348 7614/246/275

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