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Ease the choice overload

Why students struggle with decision fatigue when it comes to choosing careers and how to help them

Sayan Mukherjee

From Engineering aspirants paralysed by a maze of specialisations to Humanities students overwhelmed by an ever-expanding list of interdisciplinary programmes, today's undergraduates face a bewildering array of "right" choices. Although having more choices feels liberating, studies show that an overload of options drains the mental energy needed for clear thinking: an effect researchers call decision fatigue.

Decision fatigue, coined by social psychologist Dr. Roy F. Baumeister and grounded in the Freudian idea of ego depletion, happens when our limited willpower, much like a muscle, wears out after a series of choices, causing us to postpone decisions, avoid options, or settle for less-than-ideal paths. In campus life, this can be seen in situations where students delay course enrollment, abandon application steps, or default to familiar but poorly suited career tracks to escape decision-related stress.

When confronted with too many comparable options, decision-makers experience heightened anxiety and regret, which can ultimately paralyse the ability to choose at all. Research confirms that while a few alternatives can increase satisfaction, an excess leads to confusion and inaction. A meta-analysis by Chernev, Böckenholt, and Goodman (2015) found that excessive options reduce satisfaction and action, supporting the paradox of choice overload.

Indian context

In India, the explosion of programmes: joint degrees in data science, virtual internships, micro-credentials, and more has outpaced the capacity of traditional career counselling. Students frequently face this complexity with little support, prompting snap choices that undermine their academic engagement and create skill mismatches, with far-reaching impacts on individuals and the economy. Some of the factors compounding this are:

High-stakes selection processes: Competitive entrance exams and cut-offs force students to prioritise rapidly under pressure, draining the mental bandwidth needed for thoughtful career planning.

Proliferation of micro-credentials: While intended to personalise learning, micro-credentials and stackable certificates can blur pathways, leaving students uncertain about which combinations best align with industry needs.

Insufficient guidance infrastructure: With India averaging one counsellor per several thousand students, opportunities for tailored advice are limited. Many students resort to heuristics, such as following parental prestige or peer trends, rather than making informed choices.

Digital distractions and "always-on" decision environments: From social media polls to algorithm-driven university recommendations, students are bombarded with daily decisions, depleting their reserves before they even reach formal career choices.

When "making sense" demands too much energy, students gravitate toward familiar majors, budget-friendly options, or the easiest application routes. This self-limitation robs individuals of true satisfaction and stifles society's need for varied skills. In turn, prolonged uncertainty can delay graduation, boost dropout rates, and chip away at self-esteem, taking a toll on mental well-being.

What to do

Tackling decision fatigue requires a multi-pronged approach.

Curated choice architectures: Educational institutions should present a manageable subset of programmes, using guided filters and interest inventories rather than overwhelming catalogues.

Early, scaffolded counselling: From the first year onward, deliver structured career workshops that guide students through step-by-step decision-making. Pair this with a "Know Your Student" initiative harnessing data on each learner's grades, interests, learning styles, and engagement to produce a curated shortlist of majors, electives, and career paths, thereby easing choice overload and strengthening decision confidence.

Peer/alumni mentorship: Alumni/student ambassadors who share real-world experiences can demystify pathways, reducing the burden of individual research.

Policy support for counselling ratios: Systemic investment in trained career counsellors through public funding or private partnerships will ensure students can navigate complex landscapes alone.

Career selection ought to energise rather than drain students as higher education grows to meet a wide range of goals. Viewing decision fatigue as an outcome of cognitive constraints and institutional structures paves the way for a more supportive experience. By offering tailored options, early-stage guidance, and well-timed prompts, we can help learners confidently navigate their choices. Integrating a "Know Your Student" system using academic analytics and interest assessments to drive personalised advising prevents overload by presenting each student with a focused set of pathways aligned to their talents and ambitions.

The writer is Assistant Professor, Production Operations and Decision Sciences, XLRI Delhi-NCR.

A 'NEET' switch

The proposal to hold the NEET exam in online mode has multiple benefits

P.V. Navaneethakrishnan


FREEPIK

According to a reply from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to a query in the Lok Sabha on August 1, there are 115,900 MBBS seats across 780 medical colleges in the country. An update from the National Medical Commission on September 26, 2025 puts the number of seats at 124,825 across 809 medical colleges). This is expected to grow further in the coming years.

Conducting the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test in paper and pencil mode with such numbers is a Herculean task and several things can go wrong. Apart from the need for a huge number of centres, some chronic issues are tackling impersonation, dress code violations, paper leaks and so on. Conversations on the desirability of switching to a computer-based online test have been ongoing and the Ministry of Education is considering this option.

Given the increasing number of candidates, the online tests can be held across different days and even sessions within a day, which will allow a common-free exam. Given that the number of centres will also be fewer, the need for personnel to supervise and maintain the integrity of the process will be less. Leaks of question papers will also not happen, as candidates will not answer the same question paper. The computer will generate alternate papers based on the same level of difficulty.

Another big advantage is that the exam can be held at least twice a year, making it easier for those who miss the first test or want to improve their scores. With the offline exam, this was not possible. But, if the exam moves online, the NEET can be held twice a year.

The writer is former Professor and Director, Entrance Exams and Admission, Anna University, Chennai.

OFF THE EDGE
Nandini Raman

Network strategically

Uncertain about your career options? Low on self-confidence? This column may help

I completed my History (Hons.) degree from DU and am considering taking the CLAT. Should I choose a five-year LLB or a three-year one? I'm interested in international law. Rashmi

Hi Rashmi,

The Five-Year Integrated LLB is primarily for students who have completed Class 12. Applying for this would mean starting a new UG degree, which is not the most efficient path since you have a Bachelor's degree. The three-Year LLB programme is designed for graduates like you. Admission is through entrance exams such as CUET-PG (for DU) or NLSAT-LLB (for NLSIU Bangalore). Some colleges with good placements are Faculty of Law, University of Delhi (DU); National Law School of India University (NLSIU), Bengaluru; ILS Law College, Pune; Symbiosis Law School, Pune; Government Law College, Mumbai; and Jindal Global Law School (JGLS), Sonipat.

Many top universities in India and abroad offer LLM programmes in International Law, Public International Law, International Trade Law, and so on. A specialisation can open job prospects in the Government, international organisations, human rights organisations and law firms that deal with cross border transactions and international arbitration, and in research and academia.

I am a B.Sc. Agriculture graduate. I was preparing for the UPSC exams, but have shifted my focus to banking. I keep changing my goals, leaving me confused about my career path. How can I stay committed to a single direction? Aditya

Dear Aditya,

Why did you choose banking against the UPSC? Make a pros and cons list for both and be honest about why you dropped the UPSC. Speak to people in banking about their work, challenges and career progression. This will help you get a realistic view of the sector.

Acknowledge past matters without judgment and understand why you shifted goals. Is it fear of failure, or external pressure, or just boredom? Identify the triggers so that you can counter them. If you are still confused, meet a career counsellor for an external perspective and to help you structure your thoughts.

Whichever exam you choose to take, understand the syllabus, question pattern, and marking scheme. Set realistic timelines for study and break it down into achievable goals: daily, weekly and monthly. Create a study environment that minimises distractions. Record your mock tests and track your progress. Find partners to study with. Give yourself enough breaks. Don't beat yourself up for past mistakes. Acknowledge them and move on.

I finished Civil Engineering in 2023 and didn't clear the UPSC Prelims. Other exams require different strategies and time. I feel saturated with studying. Should I try government exams or MBA? Tushar

Dear Tushar,

You are feeling burnt-out and jumping into another exam preparation, without addressing this fatigue, will not help. Take a short break and do things you enjoy and rest your mind. Meet a therapist to reflect on your journey. Spend time talking to people who have pursued the paths that excite you now and get real-world insights. Based on your renewed energy and these conversations, make a decision for the next few months and commit to one path.

Reflect on your UPSC prep: your discipline, time management, subject strengths/weaknesses. Why did you take this exam? Have those motivators shifted? What about the Civil Engineering degree? What aspects genuinely interested you during your B.Tech.? Understand why you want to do a new course now and then prepare to excel in it.

If your primary motivation for UPSC was career stability and public impact, other government exams offer easier syllabi. UPSC Engineering Services Examination (ESE / IES) or the GATE will aid in PSU Recruitments. An M.Tech/MS admissions could help specialise in a particular area within Civil Engineering. Consider roles in state and union government departments and other specific organisations. Focus and pick exams where your Civil Engineering knowledge is paramount.

An MBA is a strong option if you want to move into management, consulting, finance, marketing, operations, or even project management within the construction/infrastructure sector. Prepare for CAT/GMAT, identify B-Schools based on their placements and relevant specialisations.

I am an MBA (Finance and HR) student and also work as a freelance graphic designer. Are there any career paths that can combine my MBA background with graphic design with good income potential? Arun

Dear Arun,

Companies are increasingly realising the importance of strategic design and human-centric approaches. There are several career options combining your two paths such as Design Strategist or Design Thinking Consultant that use design thinking methodologies to solve business challenges; a Service Designer to design end-to-end service experiences for a physical product, a digital platform, or a customer service interaction; Product Management and User Experience (UX) roles, Brand and Marketing Roles, Creative or Art Director, Digital Marketing Manager, Design Management and so on.

You might need to reposition yourself. Refine your portfolio by showcasing not only your design work but also curated projects that demonstrate problem-solving, strategic thinking, and an understanding of business objectives. Develop a "Design Business" mindset by talking about design contributes to business goals. Network strategically and upskill if needed. Target companies known for being design-led or customer-centric such as tech companies, consumer goods brands, design agencies, consulting firms with design practices) and highlight the HR and finance knowledge that sets you apart from the rest.

Disclaimer: This column is merely a guiding voice and provides advice and suggestions on education and careers.

The writer is a practising counsellor and a trainer. Send your questions to eduplus.thehindu@gmail.com with the subject line Off the Edge


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Make those connections

We need the kind of college education that allows a student to develop depth with range and be more aware of both the world around and their inner self

Swathi Priya D.

"Feeling torn between disparate disciplines is the best possible thing. It is a mark of genuine liveliness and curiosity." This quote, embodying assurance, affection, and comfort, found me at a time when I was lost and bereft, resisting the education system that precipitated a vacant experience. Yet, I endured it with the lessons on resilience and grit from my training in social work and psychology.

I seized control of my higher education trajectory, initially shaped by parental expectations. From a Bachelor's in Commerce to pursuing a Ph.D. in higher education, this journey has been steered by a compelling personal need to voice the silent, isolated mental health experiences of students, which often remain hidden within the complexity and crisis of education. This defines the character of my research in liberal arts. Academic research in higher education, I have come to realise, is a meta-discipline capturing knowledge specialised across disciplines.

Multiple perspectives

The nature of disciplines is to reflect the interconnectedness of the real world. The multiplicity of perspectives that emerge from this confluence finds its resonance in Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, which Saikat Majumdar explores in *College: Pathways of Possibility*, from which the opening quote is taken.

Majumdar argues that these intelligences (e.g., bodily-kinaesthetic, personal, spatial) both outline the entire spectrum of human potential and provide a scaffolding of the academic disciplines. My decision to pursue a Ph.D. in Higher Education stems from my yearning to experience the gliding and commingling promiscuity of disciplines, seeking knowledge in unusual and unnoticed intersections. This allows me to explore multiple truths.

When a psychology student engages with Amrita Pritam's novel *Pinjar*, exploring the erasure of the protagonist Puro's identity during the Indo-Pak partition, they uncover deep psychosocial perspectives and geopolitical tensions that are beyond the scope of pure psychology. Neither is this belief in interdisciplinarity purely theoretical. My 10 years as a counsellor and experience as a psychology educator allowed me to observe undergraduate students' struggles to relate to knowledge. Their cry to move beyond the canon of information prompted me to reflect upon the systems and structures that drive the Indian education system.

Driven by an aversion to solely memory-based learning and an aspiration to foster a better learning experience, I attempted to incorporate the liberal arts framework of 'teaching questions' and 'research questions' outlined by Majumdar into my social psychology lessons.

For instance, a student investigated the research question 'How does intergenerational trauma contribute to cognitive dissonance?', as part of her social psychology assignment. She observed, "Studying a subject in isolation leads to incomplete understanding. Depth emerged only when we made interdisciplinary connections"

Metacognition

Undergraduates today live in what Byung-Chul Han calls "the achievement society", characterised by excessive positivity and coercive optimism of 'You can, you must'. Social compulsion coupled with self-imposed drive leads to pathological outcomes such as burnout, disconnect, void, and other similar psychological phenomena. Yet, through these practices, students demonstrated increased self-efficacy, confidence, and most pertinently, metacognition as evidenced in their reflection. Metacognition helps learners, as Flavell (1979) argues, transcend the cognitive goal of merely improving knowledge to achieving the metacognitive experience of asking oneself about it and laying the foundations for critical inquiry.

Counselling students over the years has revealed that their problems – stemming from interconnected sources such as their educational experiences, familial bonding, economic conditions, and relationship building – ask two deep yet overarching questions: What is my purpose in life? What is the meaning of my life?

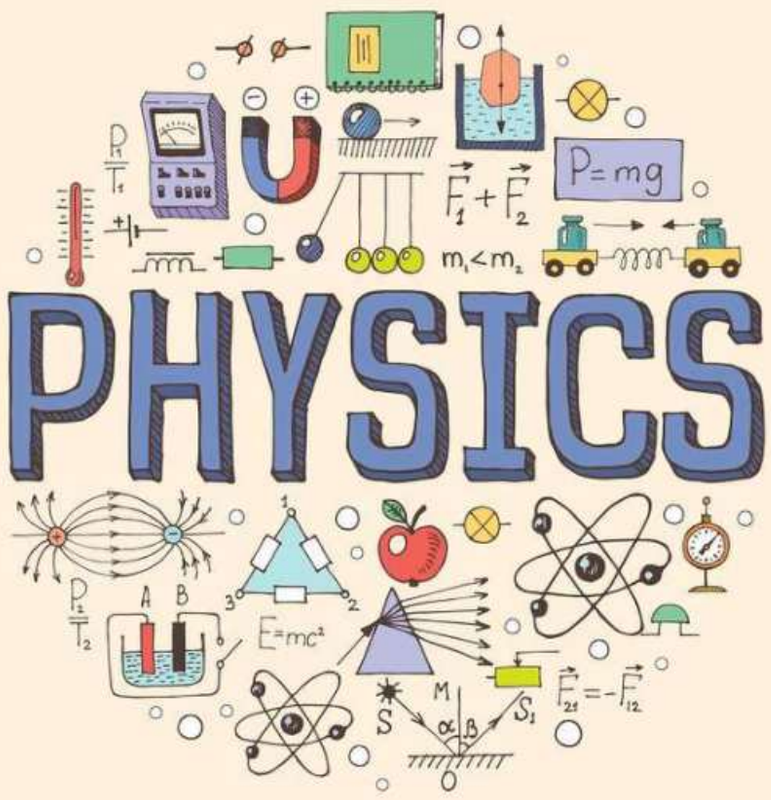
Mental health struggles are multidimensional. So are real-world scenarios. Shouldn't knowledge that the education system drives them towards be seamlessly multidimensional?

What we need is the kind of college education where the I-shaped student of vertical depth produced by an older system can emerge as a T-shaped student who combines depth with range and is more aware, through their enhanced metacognitive ability, not only of the world at large, but their own personal wellness as they seek out adventurous places within that place.

The writer is a Ph.D. scholar at the International Institute of Higher Education Research and Capacity Building, O.P. Jindal Global University.

Wonder of why

With the right mindset, resources, and strategy, you can make learning Physics enjoyable.



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Mahesh Gour

Physics is a subject that many students find both interesting and difficult. But it can become an enjoyable one, provided you approach it correctly. In addition to making learning more enjoyable, developing a passion for Physics also helps you do better on tests. Here are some tips for establishing a genuine connection with the subject.

Understand, don't memorise: The study of Physics is intellectual and logical. Pay attention to the causes of events rather than just the results. Make an effort to see waves, motions, fields, and forces as actual occurrences in your environment. The "how" becomes simpler to manage once you get the "why" behind the idea.

Relate Physics to real life: Physics is used in everything from turning a fan on to seeing a cricket ball sail through the air. Creating connections with real-world situations helps solidify your learning. Newton's laws, for example, become more realistic when you watch someone pushing an automobile. This transforms Physics from a scholarly discipline into a potent instrument for comprehending life.

Start with the right study material: Your understanding of Physics is greatly influenced by how the subject is introduced to you. Begin with study materials that focus on building a strong foundation in basic concepts. Once you're comfortable with the fundamentals, gradually move on to more advanced problem-solving. Avoid the temptation to jump directly into complex questions without first mastering the basics.

Make learning visual and interactive: Physics becomes more engaging and easier to grasp when concepts are presented visually. Incorporate diagrams, animations, and simulations into your study routine. Online educational videos and interactive platforms can be excellent tools to help visualise and reinforce difficult theories.

Solve problems actively: In Physics, practice is everything. Don't just read solutions; solve them yourself. Begin with simple problems and gradually increase difficulty. While practising, write each step, note down where you get stuck, and revisit concepts when needed. This active engagement will develop problem-solving stamina and boost your confidence.

Make a formula sheet: Keep a dedicated notebook or sheet where you write down all important formulas, laws, and shortcuts. Revise this regularly. Group formulas topic-wise and note any special conditions or limitations for each. But remember, understanding comes before memorisation.

Stay curious: Ask questions; even if they are weird! Why do satellites stay in orbit? Why does your mobile heat up when used for a long time? The more questions you ask, the deeper your curiosity grows, and curiosity is the foundation of passion for any subject.

Study in small, consistent bursts: Break your study sessions into one to two hour blocks with specific goals, like "complete 10 questions on SHM" or "revise Newton's Third Law." This focused approach makes learning manageable and keeps you motivated.

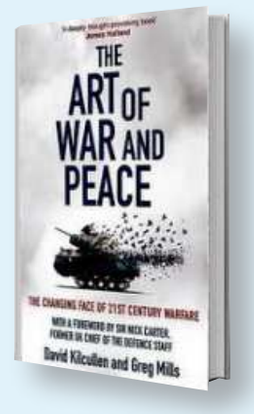
Learn from mistakes: Every time you get a problem wrong, treat it as a learning opportunity. Analyse your mistakes. Was it a conceptual error? A calculation slip? Misunderstanding the question? This reflection helps you avoid repeating the same errors.

Discuss and teach: Explaining concepts to friends or even to yourself is a great way to internalise them. Join a peer group or online community where you can discuss doubts, quiz each other, or share tricks.

Physics is not just about numbers and equations; it's the language of the universe. Understanding Physics means appreciating the beauty in motion, energy, and the forces that shape everything around us.

The writer is Founder, EduQuik.

ON THE SHELF



The Art of War and Peace

As tensions and terrorism rise around the world, the question arises: can peace, mutual respect and democracy survive? This book analyses the nature of modern war, investigates how technology can be a leveller for small powers and the role of leadership, diplomacy and economic assistance.

Authors: David Kilcullen and Greg Mills
Publisher: Hachette
Price: ₹699

When words won't flow

How to tackle writer's block

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THINK
Aruna Sankaranarayanan

Ironically, as I type these words on writer's block, I hem and haw. Will I be able to write on this topic? Will it be interesting? Should I pick another theme? As my mind doesn't generate any fresh ideas, I am tempted to stop. To take a break. Perhaps, start again when inspiration strikes. But the trick is to ignore these thoughts and hammer on. To keep churning out text, however bad or banal it is. In fact, most writers experience writer's block on a daily basis. Even experienced writers can be stymied when they sit down to write.

When we read a piece of well-written text, we assume that the words just poured forth from the writer's fingers. A polished piece of published prose does not reveal the effort that went into crafting it. In his book, *Ordinary Magic*, psychologist Gregory Walton writes that students at Stanford University have coined a name for this phenomenon. The "duck syndrome" refers to the appearance of everyone else "gliding smoothly across the lake" when in fact every person is "paddling frantically under the surface."

Walton likens the act of producing a first draft to "swimming through some especially thick liquid." To gain a sense of forward momentum is a Herculean task as "every inch" is a struggle. Creating a first draft is one of the hardest and most frustrating steps of the writing process, which explains why many people give up in the initial stages itself.

Priyanka Carr, a student of Walton, called the first draft a "vomit draft." Though distasteful, the term allows you to literally "throw up" any ideas and tangential connections a topic evokes. In the early stages of writing, you may put down every idea that pops up in your head, without necessarily filtering or even bothering to assess their relevance or quality. You don't even need to be mindful of writing conventions. It's okay if words are misspelled or misused. Your ideas need not even be presented in coherent sentences. Words, phrases, run-on sentences, anything is acceptable. Your only goal is to generate a predetermined quantity of words.

Express yourself

In an essay in *The New Yorker*, aptly titled Draft No. 4, author John McPhee avers that writer's block is part of a "writer's normal routine." Those who continue to tap out words, despite the misgivings in their heads, are the ones who end up as writers. If you don't know what to write on, start by writing a letter to your mother telling her about your predicament. Describe your frustrations and your inability to produce a first draft. Whether you rave, rant or ruminate, just put down your thoughts.

"First drafts are slow and develop clumsily," writes McPhee. However, take heart in knowing that the subsequent stages of writing are easier as you pick apart, tear down, add, reimagine and rewrite your narrative. For McPhee, the first draft typically takes four times longer than later ones.

Short articles, like this one, require fewer drafts than longer texts. But even with a piece like this, I might tinker with a word here, a comma there, till I end up submitting it. As McPhee says, "The way to do a piece of writing is three or four times over, never once."

I also find that taking a break after churning out a predetermined number of words helps. But don't take one before you reach your word count. McPhee compares the first draft to a "sort of nucleus" that you can then reshape and refashion.

Additionally, the act of writing the first draft, however, bland or bad, kindles your neurons. After you put your deplorable draft aside, an idea related to your writing may pop into your head as you are exercising or doing the dishes. But as McPhee reminds us, without the "drafted version," these thoughts won't arise in your head. So, tap away.

The writer is visiting faculty at the School of Education, Azim Premji University, Bengaluru, and the co-author of Bee-Witched.

Business in a VUCA world

Business schools cannot turn a blind eye to borders, politics, and power equations and must equip students to work in such environments

N. Barnabas

In 2022, Dutch technology giant ASML faced a dilemma: should it provide cutting-edge chip making machinery to China, threatening to alienate the U.S., and break international sanctions? The issue wasn't market share or margins; it was geopolitics. Such, once peripheral and exceptional, are now a daily affair. Yet top business schools neglect this crucial aspect of strategy.

The sweeping tariffs and sanctions issued by the U.S. in recent times have sent shockwaves through industries and shredded carefully laid out delivery networks. The 2020 ban on apps such as Tik Tok for national security reasons affected thousands of Indian content creators, marketers and tech entrepreneurs. These are not one-off events. They are reminders that political risk isn't an abstract variable in today's world but a fundamental driver of business outcomes.

According to Condoleezza Rice, former U.S. Secretary of State, uncertainty about the source of the next geopolitical risk is no excuse for unpreparedness. Mastery over risk management and their ability to respond to crises can turn geopolitical volatility into a strategic advantage for prepared firms. Hence, "country risk analysis" is a talent that recruiters look for. Top IT companies now hire geopolitical analysts. Investment funds are now shaped as much by regulatory actions in Washington or Brussels as they are by the Indian government's monetary policy. Prices in the stock and commodity markets move, anticipating global geopolitical developments.

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Way forward

So what should B-schools do? If companies are operating in a politically risky world, then B-schools have to equip students to prepare for, understand, and respond in such environments. The first step is to include geopolitics in their general curriculum as an essential part of business strategy and not as a specialist elective. Students need to know how sanctions, treaties, and global institutions influence corporate decision-making. Second, the learning process must incorporate actual case studies of political richness, not sanitised ideal-case scenarios. Coping with corporate decision dilemmas in times of trade wars, embargoes, or transborder regulatory crises can lead to learning by experience. Third, business schools must work in tandem with schools of policy and international relations. Joint courses, guest lecturers, and interdisciplinary learning can provide insights into how global power dynamics influence economic environments. Another method could include role-playing real-world geopolitical crises. By employing war games, sanction response exercises, and crisis management workshops, students can be taught to lead not only in spreadsheets but also in uncertainty.

Today, navies patrol shipping routes, cyber legislation provokes trade disputes, and a single vote in the UN Security Council can determine the future of an entire industry. B-Schools cannot turn a blind eye to borders, politics, and power in such an environment. A B-school curriculum committee needs to look beyond "will this get our students placed?" and ask "will this equip them to lead when geopolitics is changing the ground beneath their feet?" Today, geopolitics is no longer an elective. It is a survival skill.

The writer is Professor, School of Business, SVKM's NMIMS University.

The cosmos and beyond

Planetary Science and Geophysics are two disciplines that explore different aspects of the cosmos but also have much in common

Vinita Sharat

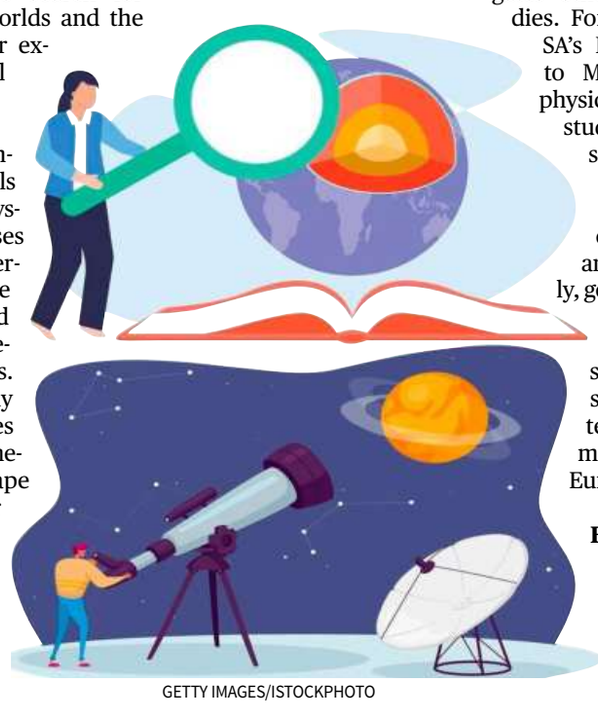
Many students possess an innate drive to know about the world around them. For example, the dramatic exploration of challenges such as the impact of an asteroid leading to tsunamis, the creation of lakes, ponds, and global climate disruption. fuels an unquenchable thirst for scientific knowledge. Among the many branches of Space Science and Earth Science, Planetary Science and Geophysics are two fascinating disciplines that explore different aspects of the cosmos. Despite being two distinct courses, they often have much in common. Let's explore the two areas and delve into their specific focus, educational trajectories and career opportunities.

Focus areas

Planetary Science, also known as planetology, is an interdisciplinary field that focuses on studying planets, moons, asteroids, comets, and other celestial bodies. It thrives on space exploration, primarily relying on data from spacecraft, telescopes, and advanced remote sensing technologies. These tools provide invaluable insights into the history and dynamics of celestial bodies. For example, India's Mars Orbiter Mission (MOM) or Mangalyaan (2013) successfully orbited Mars and provided valuable data on Martian surface features.

This science further examines the formation, composition, evolution, and interactions of celestial bodies within solar systems, extending its scope from our solar system to distant exoplanets that revolve around stars beyond our galaxy. The study also includes the search for habitable worlds and the potential for extraterrestrial life.

Geophysics, in contrast, deals with the physical processes and properties of the Earth and other planetary bodies. It's the study of the forces and phenomena that shape the interior of a planet's surface and its atmosphere. While Planetary Science gazes outward into the cosmos, Geophysics delves inward, scrutinising seismic activity, magnetic fields, tectonic movements, and gravitational forces. It primarily explores the properties and activities of the Earth, including earthquakes, the molten outer core, the magnetic field, tectonic movement, and volcanic eruptions, through tools such as seismic imaging, magnetic surveys, and satellite information. All this offers a deeper understanding of Earth's processes and provide practical applications, such as predicting natural disasters, identifying mineral resources, and managing environmental changes.



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Geophysics also investigates other celestial bodies. For example, NASA's InSight mission to Mars used geophysical methods to study the planet's seismic activity, providing crucial data on its crust, mantle, and core. Similarly, geophysical techniques are vital to understanding the structure and interior of icy moons like Europa.

Educational path

For students aspiring for a career in Planetary Science, a Bachelor's degree in Physics, Astronomy, or Astrophysics is an excellent foundation. Many European countries (such as Germany) and the U.S. offer dedicated Master's degrees in Planetary Science. Opportunities for undergraduate internships and research are available at leading institutions such as ISRO and NASA. Career opportunities are available in space agencies, aerospace engineering firms, or in science communication, research, and data science.

For those interested in Geophysics, a graduate degree in Geophysics, Geology, Earth Science, or even Physics can be a strong starting point. Graduates can pursue Master's degrees and conduct advanced research at specialised institutes. Career opportunities span the energy sector (oil and gas), government agencies (geological surveys), geotechnical investigations for dam and infrastructure projects, disaster management, and various research areas.

By combining the unique strengths of these disciplines, one can push the boundaries of human knowledge, fostering curiosity and innovation in our quest to comprehend the universe, both within and beyond our planet.

The writer is Head of STEAM, Shiv Nadar School.