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Dinesh Kumar Vannam

In the intricate web of human civilisation, the field of Social Sciences offers profound insights into the dynamics that shape our world. It opens a gateway to understanding the complexities of human societies, cultures, and behaviours and allows unique opportunities to contribute meaningfully to the betterment of our world. Social Sciences encompass a diverse array of disciplines, including Sociology, Anthropology, Psychology, Economics, Political Science, and more, each offering a lens through which to explore and address pressing societal issues.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) emphasises the critical role of Social Sciences in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and highlights the need for interdisciplinary approaches to address complex global challenges. In India, the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) reported that Social Sciences, Humanities, and Arts courses accounted for approximately 23% of all enrollments in higher education institutions.

Foundational knowledge

Characterised by its interdisciplinary nature, Social Sciences fosters critical thinking, research skills, and a deep understanding

of human interactions and societal structures. Whether one is passionate about analysing economic trends, understanding cultural diversity, advocating for social justice, or shaping public policy, there are multiple avenues to make a tangible impact on communities and organisations.

Social Sciences are the bedrock of informed decision-making and policy formulation across various sectors such as governance, public policy, healthcare, education, and business. Through empirical research and theoretical frameworks, social scientists unravel the intricacies of human relationships, societal institutions, and the broader forces that influence human lives. According to a UNESCO report, the Social Sciences and Humanities account for about 26% of all research and development spending worldwide. As per the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2020-21, over 12 million students were enrolled in social science programs across universities and colleges in India.

Moreover, Social Sciences promote understanding of human behaviour within diverse social contexts, fostering empathy, conflict resolution, and harmonious relationships within communities, and play a pivotal role in advocating for social justice by identifying systemic barriers to equality and proposing equitable solutions to uplift marginalised populations.

Shaping human life

The Social Sciences help students leverage knowledge to create positive change and improve the well-being of individuals and communities



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Human-centric approach

In a rapidly changing world characterised by globalisation and technological advancements, the human-centric approach of Social Sciences contributes significantly to economic development and sustaina-

bility by providing insights into economic systems, consumer research, and resource management. This knowledge is instrumental in devising sustainable development strategies, tackling environmental challenges, and ensuring fair distribu-

tion of resources. A career in Social Sciences influences and shapes various critical aspects of human life. Globally, organisations like the United Nations and World Bank rely on social scientists to design and implement development pro-

jects. The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that, by 2030, social science-related occupations will grow by 10-20% worldwide. A study by the Pew Research Center found that 45% of graduates work in education, while 19% are employed in

government and public administration.

One significant area where Social Science professionals make a tangible impact is in public policy and governance. By studying patterns of behaviour, social dynamics, and systemic inequalities, they contribute valuable insights that inform policy-makers and shape the development of inclusive and equitable policies. Through their research and activism, they raise awareness about systemic injustices, discrimination, and human rights violations.

In the realm of international development, social scientists collaborate with governments, NGOs, and international organisations to design and implement programmes that promote economic development, strengthen governance, and improve living conditions in under-served regions. Further, they design and evaluate educational programmes, conduct research on effective teaching methods, and promote lifelong learning initiatives. In the corporate world, they bring valuable insights into consumer behaviour, market trends, and corporate social responsibility and help businesses navigate cultural nuances and societal expectations, ensuring that products and services are tailored to meet the needs and values of diverse populations.

Beyond their specific roles, social scientists contribute to enriching cultural understanding and pre-

serving heritage. In essence, a career in Social Sciences is about leveraging knowledge to create positive change and improve the well-being of individuals and communities. The World Economic Forum identifies social skills (including empathy, communication, and interpersonal skills) as essential for the future workforce, aligning with the core competencies fostered by Social Science education.

In India, the demand for social scientists is on the rise, with an estimated 27% increase in employment opportunities expected by 2026. This burgeoning demand opens up a plethora of career opportunities in research and academia, public policy and governance, human resources and management, international development, market research and analytics, and media and communications.

In a globalised world, Social Sciences transcend geographical boundaries, addressing challenges such as migration, climate change, and geopolitical tensions. International collaborations and exchange programmes offer enriching experiences and foster a global perspective and cross-cultural competence.

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Raghav Gupta

One of the biggest challenges for colleges in the age of Generative AI (GenAI) is maintaining academic integrity. Concerns have spiralled since ChatGPT exploded, particularly around assessing students and verifying learning. Indian students have embraced GenAI. In a new survey by Deloitte, an overwhelming 93% said they actively use GenAI tools to save time and develop new skills.

The GenAI revolution has come at a time of broader transformation in Indian higher education. Classrooms across India are turning hybrid. The University Grants Commission's provision of 40% of credits, which institutions can offer through appropriate online courses in any category, has opened up new possibilities.

By integrating for-credit online content from global experts, colleges are dynamically upgrading curricula with the latest skills. As students learn online and increasingly engage with AI, maintaining academic integrity will be critical to steer authentic learning and ensure the credibility of online credentials.

Rethink assessments

Several Indian colleges have discouraged or banned the use of ChatGPT. The worry is that, if GenAI can complete their work, students will spend less time learning course content, both online and in physical classrooms. Educators are already struggling to evaluate whether a student's deliverable was crafted from their own thought process, or generated through AI. The challenge in this era will be to ensure authentic assessment of learning. Do grades represent a stu-

Academic integrity in the age of GenAI

How higher education institutions can use GenAI tools to develop new assessment methods and strategies that serve a higher purpose, deter misconduct, and verify learning

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dent's skills? Do student outcomes reflect effort and mastery of course material?

Assessments that gauge a student's thought process would be one way to check this. Traditionally this has been challenging, since live viva exams require significant educator resources. GenAI offers a scalable Socratic approach to detect authenticity through GenAI-powered viva-style exams. Just as an examiner poses questions to a student in the classroom, GenAI can conduct comprehensive verbal exams and generate custom follow-up questions to evaluate comprehension and reasoning.

AI solutions can also strengthen academic integrity across other dimensions. One area is as-

certaining if learners are putting in the effort to master course content. By locking grade-bearing activities, institutions can ensure students don't skip ahead, but progress as they master every one of the modules in the class. AI can enable such self-paced learning that promotes authentic learning habits, with assessments that support mastery goals.

Aids like proctoring and lockdown browsers can help maintain exam integrity by blocking unauthorised resources and detecting unauthorised assistance during high-stakes exams. Setting time and attempt limits can be utilised to control exam attempts, to ensure fairness, discourage trial and error, and limit access to out-

side resources.

GenAI also gives faculty new tools to scale assessment creation and grading. AI-assisted assessments save time. Think of a customised multiple-choice test created in minutes and integrated into assignments. GenAI can be used to create question banks for robust testing. AI-assisted grading will give teachers the cues they need to make informed decisions, with scores suggestions and feedback based on assignment analysis.

Evolving pedagogy

The implications of GenAI go far beyond plagiarism or students cheating. In the future, GenAI will be central to job skills, given the technology's capability to augment human work. Edu-

cators will need to include effective teaching and assessment methods to encourage skills for an AI future. When the World Economic Forum asked companies what skills they would need in the next five years, "teaching workers to exploit AI and big data" came out on top.

Institutions will need to consider how students can be supported for the AI age, while committing to ethical practices and fostering a culture of academic integrity.

GenAI can be used to practice future skills like critical thinking, problem solving and communication. As a learning aid, tools like ChatGPT can tutor students, enabling interactive, tailored learning. With responsible use, the benefits can be enormous.

UNESCO's guidance suggests an approach where the use of GenAI tools should make learning or research more effective than a no-tech or other alternative approach. It cautions, "If not used purposefully to facilitate higher-order thinking or creativity, GenAI tools tend to encourage plagiarism or shallow 'stochastic parrot' outputs."

Evolving pedagogy will need to focus on the development of new assessment methods and strategies that serve a higher purpose, deter misconduct, and verify learning. By fostering an academic environment underpinned by honesty, trust, fairness, and responsibility, colleges can ensure academic integrity runs throughout the learning process. The healthy learning habits developed on campus will continue to serve graduates in the workplace as well.

The writer is the Managing Director-India and APAC, Coursera

Build a strong foundation

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

OFF THE EDGE
Nandini Raman

I am pursuing my BBA and want to do an MBA. I cannot afford the top B-Schools. What are the other options? Jaijeet

Dear Jaijeet,

There are many reputed and accredited MBA programmes that provide quality education, valuable skills, and opportunities for growth and advancement at affordable costs such as the Faculty of Management Studies (FMS), University of Delhi; Jamnalal Bajaj Institute of Management Studies (JBIMS), Mumbai; and Symbiosis Institute of Business Management (SIBM), Pune. Some private universities and B-Schools that offer excellent programmes at a reasonable cost are: Xavier School of Management (XLRI), Jamshedpur; SP Jain Institute of Management and Research (SPJIMR), Mumbai; IIMT Ghaziabad; Great Lakes Institute of Management, Chennai; Narsee Monjee Institute of Management Studies (NMIMS), Mumbai; Department of Management, BITS Pilani; T.A. Pai Management Institute, Manipal; and FORE School of Management, New Delhi. Prepare for the entrance exams like CAT, write compelling essays, work on your resume, get good recommendations, and practise for interviews.

I have completed my Master's in Conflict Analysis and Peace Building. Apart from research, what other options do I have? What are my options for further studies in India and abroad? Akshitha

Dear Akshitha,

Have you considered international organisations like the UN agencies, NGOs like Amnesty International, Oxfam, and Human Rights Watch, non-profit organisations such as

International Crisis Group or Search for Common Ground? Government agencies — central and state — also require professionals like you. Have you considered training and capacity-building organisations or teaching at a universities and research institution? In the private sector, you can consider corporate social responsibility (CSR) roles and consulting firms. Are you interested in media and journalism? You can then look at conflict and crisis reporting or making documentaries.

Options for further studies can include a Ph.D. in Peace and Conflict Studies from universities like Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), University of Delhi, or Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) or a M.Phil. in Peace and Conflict Studies. You can also consider programmes in International Relations, Conflict Resolution, Human Rights or Humanitarian Assistance or Peace Studies across universities in Europe, North America, and Asia.

My son wishes to do BBM for his undergraduate studies. Is this a good option? What are the other courses he can choose? Krishna

Dear Krishna,

Bachelor of Business Management (BBM) is a popular undergraduate programme that offers a comprehensive understanding of business management principles, practices, and theories. It provides a solid foundation in marketing, finance, human resource management, operations, and entrepreneurship. It is a good option for students interested in pursuing a career in business and management. Some alternative courses to BBM are Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA), Bachelor of Commerce (B.Com) with specialisations in Accounting and Finance, Marketing, Human Resource Management, B.A. Economics with specialisations in International Economics,

Development Economics, Bachelor of Management Studies (BMS), Bachelor of International Business (BIB), Bachelor of Entrepreneurship (BE), Bachelor of Marketing Management (BMM), Bachelor of Finance and Investment Analysis (BFIA), Bachelor of Retail Management (BRM) and Bachelor of Supply Chain Management (BSCM).

I have finished B.A. Political Science and am interested in social work and policy analysis. What other qualifications do I need? How can I find internships in the field? What other career options do I have? Jeena

Dear Jeena,

You have a strong foundation to pursue a career in the public sector, non-profit organisations, international organisations, and policy research institutions. Consider doing a Master's in Social Work (MSW), Master's in Public Policy (MPP), Master's in International Relations or Development Studies, Postgraduate Diploma in Social Work or Policy Analysis, Certifications in Project Management or Programme Evaluation. Look for Internships on online portals like Internshala and LetsIntern, and network with professionals in the field through LinkedIn. Reach out to non-profit organisations, NGOs, advocacy groups, government agencies, research institutions, think tanks and the university's career services department for opportunities. Some career options are social worker, policy analyst, programme coordinator/manager, human rights advocate, research associate or international development professional.

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

