Monday, June 30, 2025
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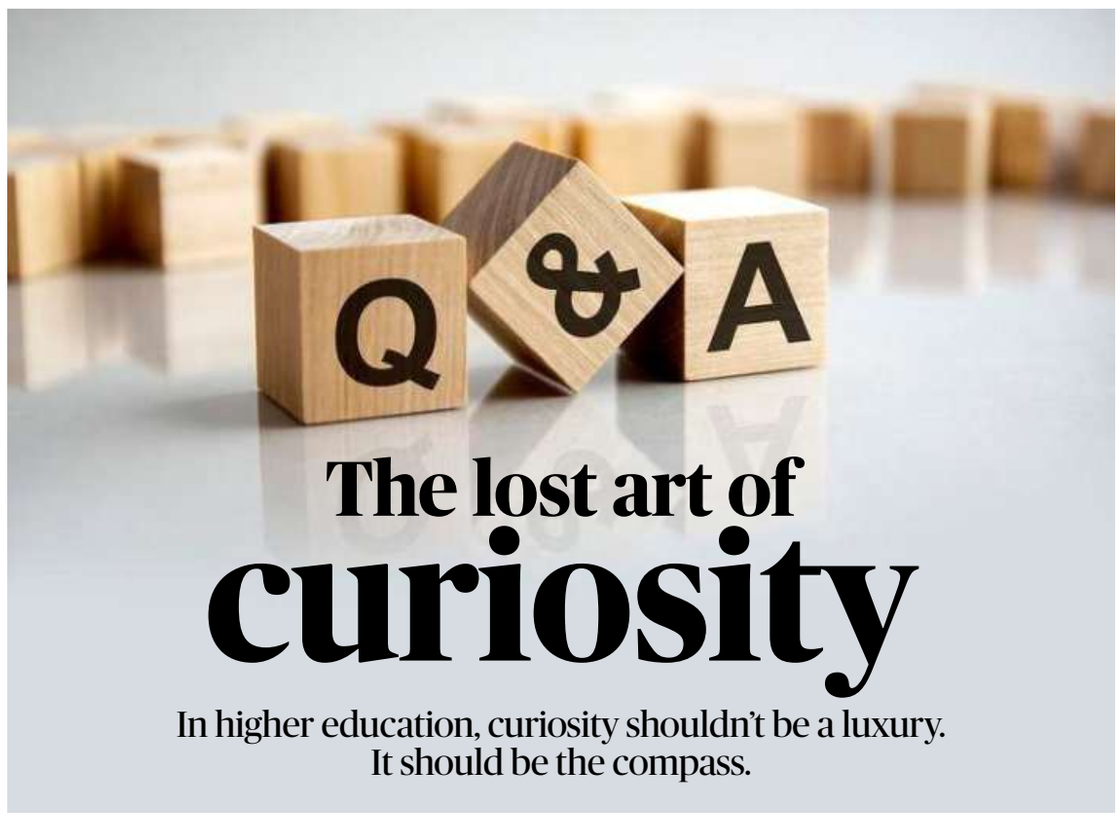

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The lost art of curiosity

In higher education, curiosity shouldn't be a luxury. It should be the compass.

Rutu Mody-Kamdar

During a session on consumer behaviour in an MBA class, the discussion was on the rise of D2C brands in India and the shifts in how young consumers make choices. Midway, a student asked, "Ma'am, what are the top three points I should write if this comes in the exam?"

I paused; not because it was a 'wrong' question but because it was such a narrow one. Here we were, dissecting the complex interplay of aspiration, identity, digital influence, and social currency and the question was reduced to a list. It struck me then how our entire approach to learning had moved from understanding to extracting. From wonder to utility. From "Why is this happening?" to "What should I write?"

We're living in a world of fast answers. Of Google summaries, bullet points, AI-generated notes, and 60-second explainers. Where knowledge is accessible but curiosity is optional. But here's the thing: the smartest people in the room are rarely the ones with the fastest answers. They're the ones asking better questions.

Questions matter

In higher education, curiosity shouldn't be a luxury. It should be the compass. Whether you're studying Business, Engineering, Design, or Law, your ability to ask layered, thoughtful, open-ended questions is what takes you from surface-level familiarity to real understanding. A student in a media studies class once asked, "Why do Indian news channels use red tickers and dramatic music? Do viewers prefer that?" That opened up a conversation on psychology, sensationalism, visual communication, and public trust. It wasn't in the syllabus. But it was education at its best.

Good questions expand the conversation. They don't just clarify; they open windows. But not all questions are equal. The ones that truly sharpen thinking and signal a keen mind fall into a few key types:

Bridge Questions: "How does this connect to something I already know?" For example, in a sociology class, "Is the way we view marriage today shaped more by Bollywood or tradition?"

Lens-Shifting Questions: "Who's missing from this narrative?" For example, in a course on development economics: "What would this data look like if we asked women in rural India instead of urban youth?"

What-if Questions: "What changes if one factor is flipped?" For example, in a history class: "What if the printing press had never been invented? How would power have shifted?"

Uncomfortable Questions: "Is this idea as neutral as it seems?" For example, in a branding lecture: "Are luxury brands truly aspirational? Or do they thrive on social inequality?"

Questions like these show independent thinking. They show that the student is not just absorbing information, but playing with it. Part of the problem is systemic. We've been conditioned to chase grades, not growth. To optimise for output, not exploration. Even the classroom rewards memorisation over meaning. Part of it is cultural too. In a hyper-connected, hyper-competitive world, there's pressure to sound smart, not curious. We are afraid of asking a question that makes us look like we don't know.

Ask away

But the truth is that every breakthrough, every innovation, every deep insight begins with not knowing. The willingness to ask is a quiet form of courage. So how do you rebuild the curiosity muscle? Here are a few simple practices:

Begin a Questions Log: After each lecture, note one question that wasn't answered. Doesn't matter how random. Track it over a semester; you'll be amazed.

Teach It backwards: Imagine you have to explain today's topic to your younger sibling. What questions would you ask to help them get there?

Slow the scroll: Next time you see a trending topic, don't just read the summary. Ask yourself: "What's the larger issue here that no one's talking about?"

Sit With Confusion: Instead of rushing to Google for every doubt, give yourself five minutes to think. Mull. Doodle. Let your brain try first.

Years from now, when you're working on a business plan, crafting a policy, designing a product, or making a big life choice, what will matter is not whether you remembered every framework or formula. It's whether you knew how to ask: "What's going on here?", "Who does this impact the most?" "What am I not seeing yet?" Because that's what smart looks like. Not fast. But curious.

The writer is the founder of Jigsaw Brand Consultants.

SCHOLARSHIPS

G.P. Birla Scholarship
An initiative of the G. P. Birla Educational Foundation
Eligibility: Students domiciled in West Bengal and Jharkhand who passed the class 12 exam in 2025 with minimum 85% in the state board or 90% in ISC/CBSE and have an annual family income of less than ₹300,000.
Rewards: Up to ₹50,000 per annum and other benefits.
Application: Offline to G.P. Birla Educational Foundation, 78, Syed Amir Ali Avenue, Kolkata 700019
Deadline: July 15
www.b4s.in/edge/GBES4

JMS Trust Merit Scholarships
Offered by the JM Sethia Charitable Trust
Eligibility: Students who have passed their last qualifying exam in 2025 and are currently in school (Classes 9, 10, 11, 12), UG or PG or a professional course after having secured specified marks in the respective level of study.
Rewards: ₹1,000 monthly
Application: Offline to JM Sethia Charitable Trust, 133, Biplabi Rash Behari Basu Road, third floor, room no. 15, Kolkata - 700 001
Deadline: July 31
www.b4s.in/edge/JMST1

Dr. Reddy's Foundation Sashakt Scholarship
An initiative of Dr. Reddy's Foundation (NGO)
Eligibility: Female Indian students who have passed Class 12 from a recognised Board who have a strong academic record and are willing to pursue a B.Tech in Natural/ Pure Sciences, MBBS, or BSc. programme in a specified institutions across India.
Rewards: ₹80,000 per annum
Application: Online
Deadline: October 30
www.b4s.in/edge/RFTS4

Courtesy: Buddy4study.com

InnoVent hackathon

Tata Technologies has launched the 3rd edition of InnoVent, its engineering innovation hackathon, in collaboration with Amazon Web Services (AWS).

Theme: Innovating the future of Smart Mobility involves harnessing AI, Generative AI, Agentic AI, IoT, Embedded Software, Cloud Computing, Digital Twins and AR/VR to develop impactful solutions for pressing challenges in the mobility sector.

Eligibility: Third- and fourth-year engineering students across India.

The evaluation process will consist of three stages: initial reviews, virtual Proof of Concept (PoC) presentations, and final demonstrations.

Rewards: Cumulative cash prizes worth ₹4.5 lakhs, paid internship opportunities at Tata Technologies, and special recognition awards for the most creative projects and innovative physical prototypes.

Deadline: July 30

For more information and to apply, visit https://t.ly/JaiWs

Upgrade your skills

OFF THE EDGE
Nandini Raman

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

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I am 26 and have completed B.Sc., M.Sc. and B.Ed. and am preparing for the UPSC. I've always been a meritorious student but am struggling to find a job. My parents insist I do an MBA. Please guide me. Name withheld

While you are feeling vulnerable and overwhelmed right now, remember you have a solid academic background. Allow yourself time to process your emotions without judgment. Consider consulting a career counsellor who can help you identify your core strengths and interests and offer objective advice and help you make an informed decision. Reassess your career aspirations and goals. Are you still passionate about public service? If yes, consider alternative paths within the government sector. If not, explore other career options such as teaching or research, content creation/writing, or the state-level civil services, which are less competitive. Regarding the MBA, have an honest conversation with your parents and explain that an MBA might not be the right fit for your interests or career goals. Identify any skill gaps and take steps to address them by taking online courses, workshops, or volunteer opportunities to gain practical experience. Develop transferable skills, such as communication, problem-solving, and critical thinking. Above all, take care of your mental health.

My sister is a first-year MBBS student in Tajikistan and wishes to retake the NEET. Can she do so while currently enrolled in an MBBS programme abroad? If she qualifies, will this score be valid to do a PG course or practise medicine in India after completing MBBS? Also, can she take the exam in a GCC country? Deva

Dear Deva,

She can retake the NEET while enrolled in an MBBS course abroad as long as she fulfils the eligibility criteria. She will need to manage her time effectively and balance her MBBS studies with NEET preparation. NEET-UG is for admission to the MBBS course in India. NEET-PG is for MD/MS in India. To be eligible for NEET-PG, she will need to have an MBBS degree recognised by the National Medical Commission (NMC) of India. An MBBS degree from a foreign university needs to be validated by the NMC through the Foreign Medical Graduate Examination (FMGE) or the National Exit Test (NEXT) (which will replace FMGE). Passing the FMGE/NEXT is mandatory for foreign medical graduates.

To practise medicine in India, she needs to have an MBBS degree recognised by the NMC and be registered with the State Medical Council. In recent years, the National Testing Agency (NTA) has established exam centres, especially in the Gulf countries, due to the large number of Indian students residing there and wanting to apply for the NEET exam. However, refer to the official NTA website for the most current information regarding the NEET exams and schedule.

To take the exam in a GCC country, she needs to ensure that the NTA conducts the exam in that specific country and that she meets the requirements of the exam centre selection and application procedures.

I am doing B.A. (History, Political Science and Public Administration) and also attending UPSC coaching classes. Is it all right to attempt the government exams with just a B.A.? Or should I do an M.A. first? Darshita

Dear Darshita,

Your B.A. combination of History, Political Science, and Public Administration provides a strong foundation to attempt the UPSC and other government exams. In addition to the UPSC, explore other government exams that align with your interests and qualifications. If you have an interest in research or academia, an M.A. and potentially a Ph.D. would be necessary. An M.A. would provide a deeper, enhanced knowledge and specialisation in your chosen subjects, which would be beneficial for the optional papers in the UPSC exam or for specialised government roles. Identify your areas of strength and weakness in the syllabus and work on improving the weak areas. Prioritise your UPSC coaching and exam preparation, practise answering the papers and take mock tests regularly.

I am doing an M.A. in Environmental Studies. I don't have any tech skills and am not familiar with coding. I am giving the Civil Services Exam, but am worried about what to do if I do not clear it. Sandeep

Dear Sandeep,

Your Master's equips you with knowledge of environmental issues, policy, and sustainability and will have developed research, analytical, and communication skills, that are transferable to many fields. Focus on your strengths. Other career options include working with NGOs or non-profits in the environment sector, roles in the government apart from the UPSC in policy implementation, environmental monitoring, or public awareness campaigns, education and communication, sustainability and CSR, research and academia, environmental writing and so on. Consider upgrading your skillset in areas such as Geographic Information Systems, Data Analysis, Project Management and so on.

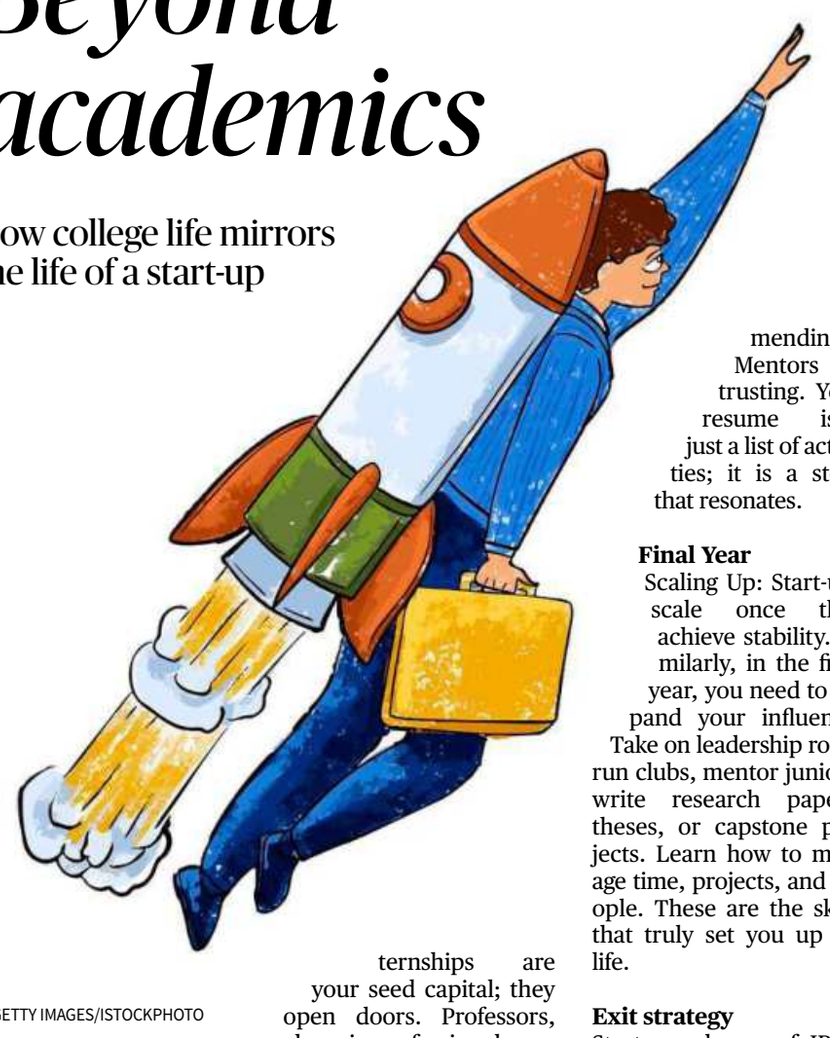
Disclaimer: This column is merely a guiding voice and provides advice and suggestions on education and careers.

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

Beyond academics

How college life mirrors the life of a start-up

Priyanka Paani



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A cocoon splits, and the butterfly's wings unfold for the first time. It doesn't know how far it can fly or where the wind will take it, but it chooses to trust the sky. So is any 3.00 a.m. thought that dares to emerge as a start-up idea. A butterfly that never leaves the cocoon will never taste nectar; an idea that never leaves the mind will never be called a start-up.

What if you were told that college life is no different from launching a start-up? It begins with choosing a degree. You might have a vague idea of what interests you but are unsure whether it aligns with your dreams, your family's expectations, or whether you can handle the academics, the social life, or learn something valuable. But, just like a start-up founder taking the leap to build something from scratch, you decide, "Enough of thinking. Let me face it!" Thus begins the building of your personal brand – your start-up – through college life.

Surprisingly, a start-up's life cycle mirrors a student's college journey. Let's see how.

Year One

Market Research: A start-up begins by studying its market. Likewise, in your first year, you explore academics, student communities, societies, and fests. You attend seminars, join clubs, take up roles ... It's all trial and error. Reading 100 books can't teach you what your experiences will. You'll soon hit that "aha!" moment: "This is what I love. This is what I want to do."

Minimum Viable Product: An MVP is a start-up's basic product tested in the real world. For you, it's how you introduce yourself. What do you stand for? Your academic presence, social media, and extracurriculars shape this early version of you. It's raw, it's growing, and it's enough to start.

Year Two

Experiment and Validate: It's time to test your MVP. Internships, projects, and competitions are your prototypes. Feedback from professors and peers? That's customer feedback. You'll learn what works for you and what doesn't. If something fails, pivot. Just like start-ups tweak their product, you too must be open to change. Maybe your dream internship disappoints. Maybe your major doesn't excite you. Pivoting is a strategy. It's how you move closer to who you're meant to become.

Resources = Funding: Start-ups need funding to grow. For students, internships, mentors, and networks are that funding. Internships are your seed capital; they open doors. Professors, alumni, professionals are your investors. Their belief in your potential is priceless. How well you utilise these resources determines how far you go.

Year Three

Product-Market Fit: Start-ups reach Product-Market Fit when customers love the product. Students reach Career-Market Fit when their skills align with industry needs. Suddenly, recruiters are noticing. Professors are recommending. Mentors are trusting. Your resume isn't just a list of activities; it is a story that resonates.

Just as start-ups must evolve post-IPO, your journey doesn't end at graduation. True success includes the experiences, values, and relationships you've built.

Final Year

Scaling Up: Start-ups scale once they achieve stability. Similarly, in the final year, you need to expand your influence. Take on leadership roles: run clubs, mentor juniors, write research papers, theses, or capstone projects. Learn how to manage time, projects, and people. These are the skills that truly set you up for life.

Exit strategy

Start-ups dream of IPOs. Students prepare for graduation. Whether it's getting placed in a top firm or securing a dream admit, that's your public debut. But just as start-ups must evolve post-IPO, your journey doesn't end at graduation. True success includes the experiences, values, and relationships you've built.

College isn't just about academics. It's your start-up incubator. You ideate. Experiment. Fail. Pivot. Grow. Launch. Not everyone's start-up will look the same. Not every journey will be smooth. But take ownership of your path, stay curious, and remain open to change. Then you will graduate with more than a degree.

The writer is a Class of 2025 B.Com. (Hons.) student from O.P. Jindal Global University, Delhi NCR.

A CH-CHE

For a just future

Human rights education is not a narrow path but an expansive, interdisciplinary field for those who want to make change that matters.

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Pavithra M.B.

When most people think of human rights, they envision courtrooms, treaties, and lawyers in crisp suits. But look closer, and you'll find activists, caregivers, economists, teachers, and even coders ... all shaping what it means to live with dignity today. In an era marked by AI-driven surveillance, digital privacy concerns, and global conflicts, the necessity of human rights education has become undeniable. Youth today are navigating through a complex global environment that demands both human rights awareness and action. Embedding human rights education into the mainstream is not an optional enhancement; it is an educational necessity in a rapidly evolving world.

One of the greatest strengths of human rights education lies in its ability to connect across disciplines. In science and technology, it addresses issues like AI surveillance, data privacy, and environmental justice and prepares students to design systems that uphold dignity and fairness. In medicine, it is connected with ethical care, reproductive rights, mental health, and access to treatment. In business and commerce, it guides people on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), labour rights, inclusive growth, and ethical leadership. Humanities and Social Sciences explore the roots of inequality, gender dynamics, and conflict through a rights-based lens. Arts and media use storytelling and visual expression to shape public discourse and policy. Each field offers a unique entry point, and together, they enrich our understanding of rights. The future lies in collaboration, not silos.

Courses

Human rights education today is offered by institutions worldwide – from short-term certificates to full-fledged degree programmes. Globally, universities like Oxford, Harvard, and LSE offer interdisciplinary programmes, while the EMA in Venice brings together scholars from over 40 institutions. In the Global South, universities in South Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia emphasise postcolonial and indigenous rights perspectives.

In India, JNU, Delhi University, TISS, and IIHR offer specialised postgraduate and diploma courses. In Tamil Nadu, the University of Madras, Annamalai University, Bharathidasan University, IGNOU, TNOU and Dr. Ambedkar Law University offer Certificate courses, Diploma, PG Diploma, UG and PG courses in Human Rights through distance education. Research degrees in interdisciplinary streams are also available.

Globally, institutions like Open Society Foundations, Fulbright, DAAD (Germany), and Erasmus Mundus (EU) offer graduate and postgraduate fellowships focused on rights, peace, and justice. Universities such as Harvard, Columbia, Essex, and Geneva provide institutional grants and postdoctoral opportunities, while organisations like Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the UN Human Rights Office (OHCHR) offer research collaborations and stipends. In India, support is expanding through the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), ICSSR, and UGC. National and State commissions, BPRD, and legal institutions also regularly call for research proposals. Many universities internally fund projects on justice, digital rights, caste, and LGBTQ+ issues. A growing trend is cross-disciplinary funding, where proposals in tech, education, or disaster response must include a rights-based lens. Think tanks, NGOs, media, and CSR foundations also offer paid research roles, which are vital stepping stones for young scholars.

Choosing human rights education today is both hopeful and strategic. It's not just about activism; it's a gateway to diverse, meaningful careers. Human rights professionals are now shaping ESG strategies in corporate, influencing policy in governments, and designing ethical AI in tech firms. NGOs, think tanks, and international bodies need graduates trained in rights-based thinking for research, advocacy, and implementation. From journalism to public health, digital governance to development, human rights graduates are finding their place.

It's not a narrow path; it's an expansive, interdisciplinary field for those who want to make change that matters. After all, the world doesn't need more techies or investment bankers quoting Gandhi, Ambedkar or Abdul Kalam. It needs professionals who can actually *be* them.

The writer is Associate Professor, PG Department of Human Rights and Duties Education, Ethiraj College for Women, Chennai.

A fair grade?

How can assessments in creative fields be done in a just manner when everyone's taste is as different as their Netflix watchlist?

Rebecca Johns

Creativity is like a spark that ignites a universe of ideas. The deeper you dive into a creative field, the more you realise that the possibilities here are as vast and endless as the ocean. Each individual has such unique experiences that mould the way they perceive the world, infusing their creative work with this distinctiveness.

That's what makes creative subjects so diverse, and yet so specific in terms of perspective. No single person can fully grasp the countless viewpoints that vary from one individual to another. This individuality creates a vivid, almost magical world of endless ideas. Yet, from a technical and academic perspective, this raises a critical question. How do you fairly grade or evaluate work in such subjective fields when everyone's taste is as different as their Netflix watchlist?

No norms

In technical subjects, grading is simple: answers are right or wrong, and grades reflect that simplicity. But what happens when the subject isn't quite so black-and-white? In arts, design, and architecture, where opinions vary and creativity rules, grading is a fuzzy business. There is no norm, no set rubric– only the professor's perception of your work.

Imagine this: a mark on your report card can make or break your career. Your work could be dismissed with no more than a shrug and a "not good enough." No reason, no appeal; just the teacher's decision. A teacher may favour a pet student, punish an intractable one, or let personal preferences dictate outcomes.

This is the reality of institutions that teach subjective courses. They have no clearly defined, defendable standards. You might think this matter is petty. In a world full of problems, who cares about a couple of Bs or Cs? Students will survive and get over it! That's not true. We are a numbers-based society. These grades – prove one's worth and work ethic. A bad grade doesn't just hurt; it can change a life.

Creative process

So the question is, in institutions where subjectivity reigns, who keeps instructors in line? A student – eager to learn and build a future – can be bruised by an unfair grade. Can we demand accountability? Is there a solution that ensures fairness, clarity, and support for students while still valuing the unique nature of creativity?

Each student goes through multiple chains of thought to arrive at the final result. Creative processes differ for each individual, involving multiple trials and errors. In many ways, this journey is full of unexpected twists, emotional highs and lows, dramatic breakthroughs. So, it's time that the rules were tailored to fit the creative mind, not restrict it. A system that can't recognise the journey behind the work needs a rewrite. The journey and the destination should be given equal priority, if not more. There should be clarity and transparency in terms of how the marks are distributed. The process of conceptualisation and ideation should get significant weightage, as it reflects originality of thought. This will also discourage plagiarism and push students to denounce the known and think outside the box.

Important evaluations should have a panel of jurors with at least two being external. Alumni could also be a part of the panel to expand and diversify the points of view. They bring in the unique advantage of having walked both sides of the corridor: as students and now as professionals. Their insight can bridge the gap between academic expectations and real-world relevance. A range of viewpoints can provide constructive feedback with no pre-conceived bias about the student.

In my opinion, the ideal solution would be to have third-party organisations for each type of institution. This body should be a reliable and neutral platform that focuses on improving the educational experience and provide a safe space for students to voice concerns and seek justice. The conversation about improving the system for creative subjects has only just begun. It's time to rethink the rules and the way we approach education in these fields.

(Views are personal)

The writer is a final-year B.Arch. Student at the University of Mysore, Karnataka

Building futures

With the growth of technology integration, green building planning, affordable housing, and smart cities, a career in real estate is multidisciplinary

Gaurav Mavi

The Indian real estate sector is being driven by fast-growing urbanisation, increasing foreign capital, and the need for smart cities. Formerly a broker- and developer-led sector, it has transformed into an organised, multi-professional sector, offering challenging careers to the youth.

Increasing prospects

In India, the sector is expected to achieve a market size of $1 trillion by 2030, according to a joint report by NAREDCO and Knight Frank. Real estate has four significant segments: residential, commercial, retail, and industrial. The Real Estate Regulation and Development Act (RERA) has brought more transparency and credibility. In addition, government programmes such as 'Housing for All', 'Smart Cities Mission', and 'Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY)' have boosted real-estate development across the nation, which also means more demand for professionalism in project management, legal environments, sales, and asset management.

Among the various options in the private and government sectors are:

- **Real estate analyst:** Analyses properties, markets, and investment projections.
- **Property/facility manager:** Manages day-to-day operations of commercial or residential properties.
- **Leasing manager:** Manages rental leases management, interaction with tenants, and occupancy scheduling.
- **Project manager:** Schedules budgeting, and manages real estate projects.
- **Urban planner:** Plans and coordinates with government agencies and zoning regulation control.
- **Marketing manager:** Plans and directs sales campaigns, internet marketing, and brand management.
- **Valuation specialist:** Determines values of property and land for taxation, legal, and investment purposes.
- **Asset and investment manager:** Administering portfolios of high-net-worth individual (HNI) or investment company realty. Opportunities are available among developers, real estate consultancies, banks, NBFCs, facility management organisations, and investment firms such as JLL, CBRE, Cushman and Wakefield, Godrej Properties, DLF, HDFC Realty, Knight Frank, and Anarock.

Formal education and professional certification are significant as they equip learners with knowledge of property law, valuation, urban planning, construction management, finance, and marketing. Some leading institutions in this area are:

- **RICS School of Built Environment, Amity University (Noida and Mumbai):** Offers MBA courses in Urban Infrastructure and Real Estate.
- **National Institute of Construction Management and Research (NICMAR), Pune:** Offers PG courses in Advanced Construction Management and Urban Infrastructure and Real Estate Management.
- **Institute of Real Estate and Finance (IREF), Pune:** Offers diploma and PG Diploma in Finance and Real Estate Management.
- **IIM-Ahmedabad:** Provides executive education courses in real estate and urban infrastructure.
- **Symbiosis School of Banking and Finance (SSBF), Pune:** Has MBA courses with specialisation in real estate finance.
- **MIT-World Peace University, Pune:** Offers BBA and MBA in Real Estate Management.

Multidisciplinary

With the growth of technology integration (PropTech), green building planning, affordable housing developments, and smart city development, the real estate sector has become multidisciplinary and incorporates sustainability consultants, data analytics-backed asset managers, or real estate services providers. Internationally recognised certificates such as MRICS or CCIm will allow Indian professionals to work in West Asia, Southeast Asia and the U.K.

With a professional degree, industry certification, and effective networking, aspirants can position themselves to contribute towards shaping the future of our cities and towns.

The writer is co-founder at BOP.in

A culture of integrity

Why academicians need to take intellectual property issues seriously

Andrews Samraj

In today's knowledge-driven academic ecosystem, intellectual property (IP) cannot be neglected. As universities and research institutions compete for global recognition, metrics such as research publications, patents, and innovation outputs have become central to institutional rankings, funding opportunities, and overall prestige. Frameworks like the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) in India explicitly assign considerable weight to research and IP-related outputs, pushing academicians to increase their scholarly contributions. While this emphasis has propelled research activities across disciplines, it has also inadvertently fostered a culture of pressure that sometimes encourages shortcuts, compromises, and unethical practices. It is in this context that academicians must urgently recognise the importance of taking IP issues seriously.

IP laws exist to protect the original creations of individuals and institutions, ensuring that authors, artists, inventors, and researchers receive due credit and control over their work. For academicians, IP is closely tied to their professional identity. A research paper, a patented invention, or even an unique dataset or teaching method constitutes a form of intellectual property that carries both academic and economic value. When managed ethically, IP contributes to a scholar's reputation, opens avenues for collaboration, and even attracts funding or commercial interest.

However, the race to publish and gain recognition has led to increased instances of IP-related violations. These range from blatant plagiarism to more nuanced forms of misconduct such as improper attribution, unauthorised use of images or data, and inclusion of undeserving authors. Such violations not only inflict legal scourge but also damage the integrity of academicians and their institutions. Misuse of IP – be it written work, images, music, or data – can invite lawsuits, damage reputation, and lead to professional setbacks.

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Growing concern

The most common IP-related problem in academia is plagiarism. With the maturation of multiple online content resources, it has become simpler than ever to copy content – knowingly or unknowingly – without attribution. Even the content from generative software are not immune to plagiarism. Detecting plagiarism is only on part of the problem. Institutions must focus on cultivating a culture where originality is valued and ethical writing is taught from the undergraduate level.

Authorship disputes are another form of academic misconduct that undermines intellectual integrity. In many cases, faculty members insist on including their names on the work of students or junior researcher without making substantial contributions. Conversely, students or research assistants are sometimes left out of publications to which they have made significant inputs. This not only distorts the academic record but also breeds mistrust and resentment within research teams.

Role of institutions

Institutions play a pivotal role in promoting IP awareness and ethical research practices. Universities must integrate IP education into the curriculum, particularly for postgraduate and doctoral students. Workshops, seminars, and orientation sessions should be held regularly to familiarise scholars with copyright laws, patent procedures, plagiarism detection tools, and the ethical implications of authorship.

Faculty members must lead by example and ensure that their own work adheres to IP laws and mentor students on responsible conduct. Encouraging original thinking, teaching proper citation techniques, and actively discouraging shortcuts can go a long way in fostering a culture of respect for intellectual property.

Taking IP issues earnestly is not merely a legal necessity; it is a positive ethical character to be inculcated in the academic community. By upholding IP rights, academicians protect their own reputation and career, enhance their institutions' credibility, and contribute to a culture of integrity and long lasting excellence in education.

In a world overflowing with information but lacking in originality, academicians must uphold the highest standards of intellectual honesty. They must remind themselves and their students that the true reward of research lies not in the number of publications or patents, but in the integrity and impact of their contributions. The future of academia depends on it.

The writer is Professor, Department of Computer Science and Engineering, School of Engineering and Technology, CMR University, Bengaluru.

ON THE SHELF

India's Finance Ministers Vol 3

The third volume in a series that captures India's economic policies through the lens of the Union Government's budget initiatives since 1947. This volume covers 16 years that saw just four finance ministers present budgets and steer their government's economic policies.

Author: A.K. Bhattacharya
Publisher: Penguin
Price: ₹999