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Fashion beyond fabric

Massimo Casagrande, cultural strategist and Director of Education Istituto Marangoni Paris, on what students need to do to prepare for the future of fashion

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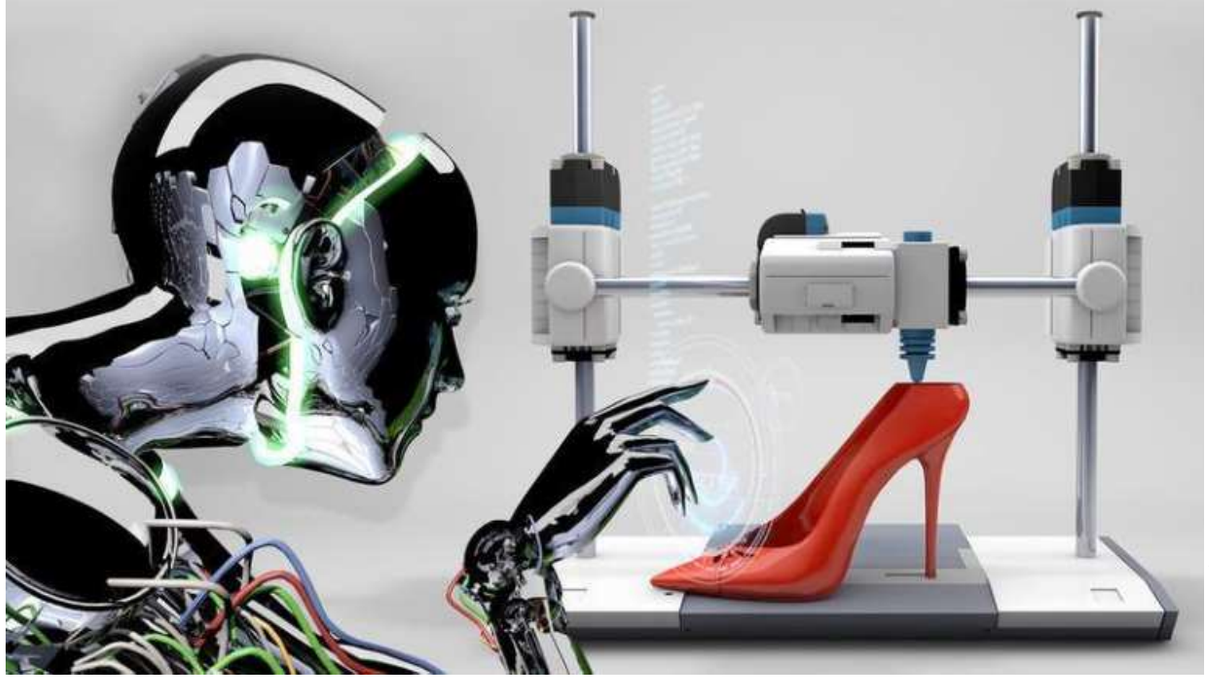
As fashion evolves beyond garments into culture, technology and storytelling, guidance from industry leaders has never been more critical. Massimo Casagrande, fashion educator, creative consultant, and Director of Education at Istituto Marangoni Paris, shares practical insights on building identity, embracing sustainability, and preparing for the future of fashion.



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How should young designers balance cultural identity, storytelling, and global market demands when building their brand or portfolio?

Identity should be a source of clarity, not constraint. I always encourage young designers to begin with an honest understanding of where their visual language comes from: their heritage, their rituals, their personal references. But identity becomes powerful only when it is translated into a narrative that a global audience can understand.

The balance comes from intention. Use your culture as an anchor, not a costume. Select elements that carry meaning and articulate why they matter. At the same time, understand the market you want to enter: its needs, rhythms, sensitivities. When designers learn to position their stories within a broader cultural conversation, their work becomes both locally rooted and globally relevant.

What are the skills that today's students must develop to survive and grow in a competitive and rapidly changing fashion industry?

Curiosity and adaptability are essential. The industry changes faster than any curriculum, so students must cultivate the ability to learn, unlearn, and relearn. Technical skill is important, but mindset is decisive. Designers today need strategic thinking, the confidence to experiment, and the resilience to navigate uncertainty. They must understand materials, digital tools, cultural research, and communication. But, equally, they need emotional intelligence, the ability to collaborate, interpret feedback, and articulate ideas.

Sustainability is no longer optional. So how can students incorporate responsible design or ethical practices without compromising creativity or commercial appeal?

Responsible design should never be seen as a restriction. When approached thoughtfully, it becomes a source of innovation. I encourage students to begin with questions: What materials am I choosing and why? What value does this garment add to someone's life? How does it honour craft, labour, and longevity? Sustainability isn't only about materials, it's about intention, process, and impact. Students can experiment with modularity, upcycling, digital sampling, and slow design principles without losing aesthetic expression. When responsibility is integrated from the start, creativity expands because it becomes purposeful rather than decorative.

What should design institutes do to prepare students for careers in AI, digital fashion, and cross-disciplinary collaboration?

Digital platforms, AI, and virtual environments will continue to evolve, so the goal is to give students a conceptual framework that allows them to navigate change confidently. We must create environments where designers learn to collaborate with technologists, coders, artisans, writers, and strategists. Fashion now sits at the intersection of culture, technology and communication, so students must become fluent in multiple languages: visual, digital and narrative. The future belongs to creative thinkers who can move seamlessly between physical and digital worlds without losing authorship.

What are the opportunities for young designers and craftspeople on global platforms?

India has something the global industry desperately needs: depth. There is a richness of craft, material intelligence and cultural memory that cannot be replicated. Young Indian designers who work with craft respectfully – not as embellishment but as a design philosophy – have a remarkable opportunity to shape new luxury narratives.

To stand out, they must combine craft with contemporary design thinking. The world is not looking for nostalgic pastiche; it is looking for innovation grounded in authenticity. When Indian designers articulate the story behind the craft and pair it with modern silhouettes, responsible practices and a clear aesthetic point of view, they become incredibly compelling on the international stage.

What distinguishes successful designers from those who struggle after graduation?

The most successful designers are consistent. They show up with curiosity, discipline and a willingness to evolve. They are open to critique, yet confident in their vision. They understand that creativity is a practice, not a moment of inspiration.

Those who struggle often rely solely on talent. Talent is a starting point, but perseverance and professionalism are what sustain a career. Successful designers know how to build relationships, manage time, communicate ideas and adapt without losing their identity.

Any advice for students in India who wish to pursue fashion education abroad.

Look for a school that expands your perspective, not one that simply confirms it. What truly shapes your career is mentorship, diversity of ideas, and real exposure to industry. Choose a programme that gives you space to experiment, access to new technologies, and a community that challenges you to think critically. Studying abroad should broaden your cultural lens and help you grow as a designer, not just change the address of your classroom.

OFF THE EDGE
Nandini Raman

Shortlist your interests

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

I am in my third year B.P.Ed. Can I pursue an M.Sc. or certificate course in Sports Sciences? Which colleges in India or abroad are best for this? Also, is there a way to get an internship with the Sports Authority of India? Jeeva

Dear Jeeva,

B.P.Ed. graduates are eligible for programmes in Sports Science, Exercise Science, Sports Biomechanics, Sports Psychology, Strength and Conditioning, and Sports Coaching. Look up institutes such as the National Sports University (NSU); Lakshmibai National Institute of Physical Education (LNIPE), Gwalior and Guwahati; National Institute of Sports (NIS) Patiala; Manipal Academy of Higher Education (MAHE), Manipal; and Tamil Nadu Physical Education and Sports University. You may need to take an entrance exam for some of them. Foreign universities include Loughborough University, Leeds-Beckett University, and University of Birmingham and University of Bath in the U.K.; University of Queensland, Deakin University and Victoria University in Australia; and University of Toronto, University of British Columbia and University of Alberta in Canada.

Certificate courses to boost your profile include NSCA Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist, the Australian Strength and Conditioning Association Level 1 Certification, Sports Physiotherapy Workshops (Basic), Sports Data or Performance Analysis, and so on.

Shortlist your interests and then build around them. Seek internships at private sports academies such as Inspire Institute of Sport (JSW), Abhinav Bindra Targeting Performance, Olympic Gold Quest (OGQ) and SFA (Sports For All), physiotherapy clinics, and university sports departments. For an internship with SAI, email the regional centre with your CV and a covering letter. Keep an eye on SAI's website and social media pages for notifications on internships, research positions or projects. Try to get an internship through courses at NIS Patiala as this can open doors for observations sessions, shadowing and internships at SAI.

I graduated in Electronics and Communication and worked in a manufacturing company. Since school, I have aspired to work in the marine industry. I am preparing to become an Electro-technical officer in the Merchant Navy. How do I proceed? Gangatharan

Dear Gangatharan,

This is a strong path for someone with an ECE degree. To join the Merchant Navy as an ETO, you must complete the Pre-Sea Training Course from a DG Shipping-approved institutes such as The Great Eastern Institute of Maritime Studies (GEIMS), Lonavala; Marine Engineering and Research Institute (MERI); Indian Maritime University (IMU), Chennai, Kochi, and Kolkata; Samundra Institute, IMS Goa among others. Most have a written test covering basic electrical engineering, electronics control systems, English and aptitude. This will be followed by an interview and a medical examination.

I completed BBA and LLB and attempted the UPSC exams once and failed. Should I continue with UPSC prep or opt for legal practice? Umair Abdulla

Dear Umair,

What will align with your temperament, lifestyle preference, current life situation and long-term stability? Are you willing to study full-time for a couple of years? What about your finances? Do you have the discipline UPSC preparation requires? If the answer is no, then move to legal practice. Explore law-related careers while keeping UPSC as a Plan B.

You can consider joining a reputed chamber and building a specialisation over the next couple of years. Look at roles in the legal departments of corporates or PSUs, legal think tanks or policy consulting firms. Another option is to take the exams for state judicial services.

I am preparing for CLAT and confused about whether to pursue B.A., B.Com. or BBA. What opportunities does each offer? Anna

Dear Anna,

All three degrees lead to the same law degree and give you the same core legal career opportunities. The difference is in the specialisation, type of subjects, career comfort, and your core interests. BA LL.B is a popular choice for Public Law and UPSC. Political Science, Sociology, History, Economics, Psychology or Constitutional Law will give a strong foundation and also work for litigation and courtroom practice research, policy advocacy and so on.

B.Com LL.B is best for taxation, banking, finance and corporate law. You will study Accounting, Taxation, Business Law, Corporate Finance, Auditing, and Economics. It is well-suited for legal departments of companies, banks, finance companies and to be a CA or Company Secretary.

BBA LL.B is best for corporate, HR, tech law, and entrepreneurship. You will study Business Management, Marketing, HR, Organisational Behaviour, Business Strategy, and Entrepreneurship. Job roles will open in corporate law firms, legal start-ups, IPR and advisory roles in MNCs.

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

FREEPIK

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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The AI imperative

Building AI-ready institutions is essential for increasing economic competitiveness, student employability and technological innovations.

Rohin Kapoor

According to the World Economic Forum (WEF), AI-related roles dominate the list of fastest-growing job categories and will change employability skills by nearly 70% over the next five years. With education emerging as one of the most-impacted sectors, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 the need to integrate technology in learning. The University Grants Commission (UGC) and the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) have already begun laying the policy framework for integrating AI courses within existing programmes and offering stand-alone AI courses. Public announcements have also been made regarding the establishment of universities dedicated to AI. While all this is welcome, it cannot fully be leveraged unless foundational digital infrastructure required to support and scale AI readiness is built by higher education institutions.

This is crucial because it has a direct bearing on student placements and long-term employability. As per various reports, the demand for graduates with AI skills is rising faster than the number of students currently being trained in AI. This widening gap presents HEIs with an opportunity to build a skilled AI workforce for the world but challenges related to plagiarism, unethical use of AI, data privacy, cyber security and other risks must also be addressed effectively.

Crucial impact

AI can play a pivotal role for HEIs in two broad areas. On the innovation front, students equipped with AI knowledge can secure premium corporate jobs and spearhead digital/AI entrepreneurship. With close to 50 million students enrolled across India's higher education ecosystem, the country has the potential to fill the global demand-supply gap for skilled manpower in addition to becoming a research and innovation hub delivering solutions to some of the most pressing problems, including those created by AI. Second, AI can transform how HEIs deliver their services, conduct trainings and improve operations, enable personalised learning, streamline routine administrative work, prepare teachers to deliver AI courses, enable automated assessments and ensure integrity.

All this requires purpose-built digital infrastructure, such as high-speed networks capable of large-scale data transfers, robust data storage systems and learning management systems integrated with AI tools. A pressing need is to develop an interconnected ecosystem, which clearly defines the role of each stakeholder. Government schemes such as AI Workforce Acceleration Plan, Multidisciplinary Education and Research Improvement in Technical Education (MERITE) aimed at digital upgrades, smart classrooms, teaching-learning labs and faculty development have been rolled out. The industry can articulate skill requirements, offer internships/apprenticeships and partner with HEIs to offer curated courses suited to their needs and future plans.

A strategic collaboration between government, industry, and financial institutions is required to fund massive investments in building infrastructure, sponsoring research, designing courses, training teachers, and fuelling entrepreneurship. A robust policy framework to govern and regulate AI is also needed, especially in the backdrop of the recent data privacy rules. The role and necessity of a regulator to catalyse growth, audit institutional readiness and distribute standardised toolkits for AI digital infrastructure should also be discussed.

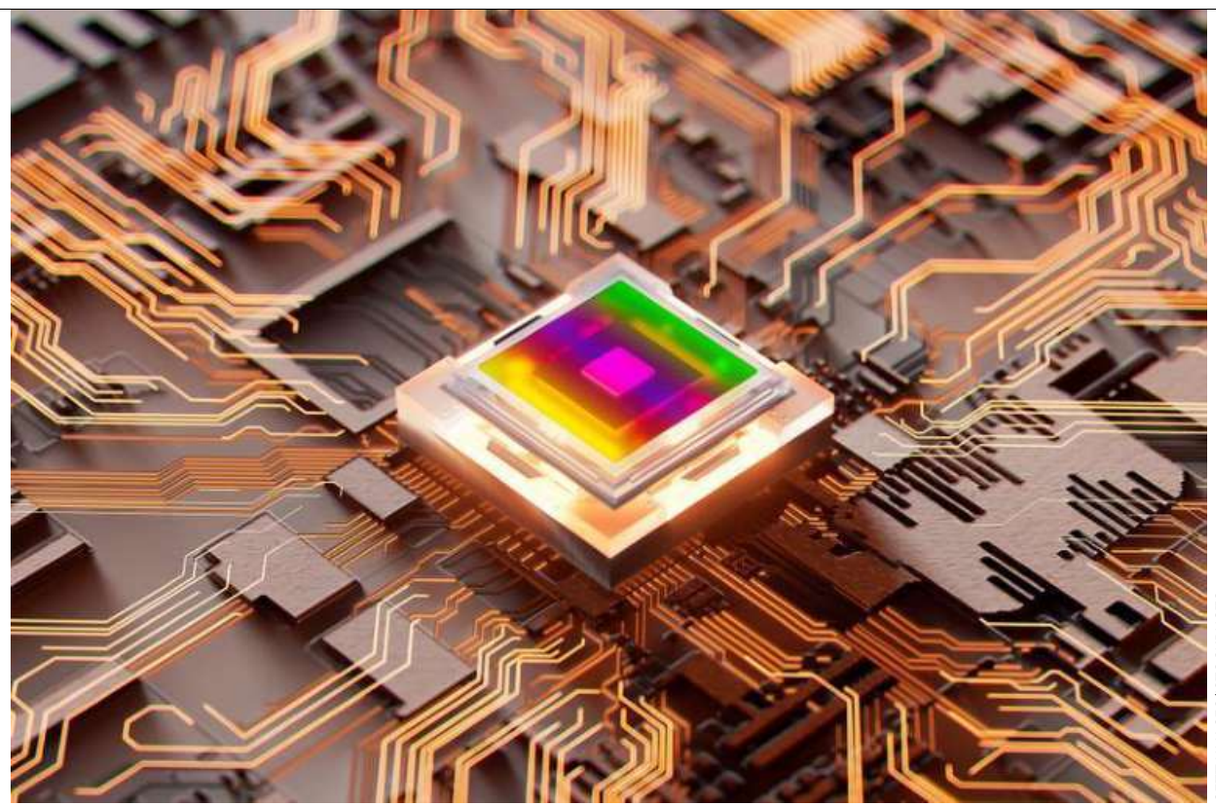
Centres of excellence

HEIs, on their part, can function as centres of excellence and innovation to conduct extensive research on AI, develop ethical and sustainable solutions, train workforces and mutually beneficial building partnerships with the industry. The U.S. has been a first-mover in spearheading such partnerships between the government, industry and HEIs for AI readiness. For example, Arizona State has partnered with OpenAI to integrate AI across its curriculum, research, and operations. Additionally, the Stargate Initiative plans to invest $500 billion in AI infrastructure by 2029 on high-performance GPUs, AI accelerators, cooling systems and high-bandwidth networks.

Building AI-ready institutions is essential for increasing economic competitiveness, student employability and technological innovations. By focusing on purpose-built AI infrastructure, learning from international models and building robust partnerships, India can transform its higher education system into a global powerhouse of AI innovation.

Views are personal

The writer is a Partner, Education and Skilling, Management Consulting, BDO India



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A quantum change

Why knowledge of quantum computing is essential across disciplines

S.P. Manikandan

As quantum computing progresses from theoretical exploration to technological reality, its capacity to transform global industries from cybersecurity and financial modelling to logistics, materials science, and artificial intelligence, is undeniable. Yet the significance of this transformation extends well beyond the boundaries of Science and Engineering. Universities now face the pressing question of how to cultivate quantum literacy not only among future technologists but also among students in Business, Law, and the Arts that will increasingly operate within a quantum-influenced world.

Historically, quantum computing has been taught almost exclusively within Physics and Computer Science departments. While these programmes are essential to train experts who will design and build quantum systems, they represent only one facet of the broader educational challenge. As was the case with the digital revolution of the late 20th century, the implications of quantum technologies will ripple across society, influencing economics, governance, ethics, and culture.

Quantum literacy, therefore, must be conceived as a foundational element of general education. What is required is an informed awareness of what quantum computing is, what it can and cannot do, and how it may reshape existing systems of power, knowledge, and communication. Such literacy equips graduates to interpret and respond to technological disruption with insight and ethical awareness rather than passive adaptation.

In Business education

Business leaders will soon confront the strategic consequences of quantum-enabled computation. Quantum algorithms capable of solving optimisation and simulation problems far faster than classical computers could redefine competitive advantage across finance, logistics, and manufacturing. A quantum-literate manager will be better prepared to evaluate emerging technologies, assess risks, and guide investment decisions.

Business schools can integrate quantum awareness into courses on data analytics, operations management, and strategic innovation. Students might explore case studies on how quantum computing could transform financial forecasting or supply chain design. Moreover, courses in business ethics can address the uneven global access to quantum infrastructure, raising questions about technological inequality and digital sovereignty in the quantum era.

In law

In the legal domain, practical quantum computing presents profound challenges to established norms of cybersecurity and privacy. The ability of quantum algorithms to break classical encryption threatens the foundations of digital security, prompting governments and corporations alike to prepare for a "post-quantum" legal environment.

Law schools can embed quantum literacy within courses on technology law, intellectual property, and international regulation. Students should be encouraged to analyse hypothetical cases involving quantum hacking, algorithmic accountability, and the ownership of quantum-generated intellectual property. Such exercises prepare future legal professionals to shape a regulatory framework that balances innovation with public protection and ethical integrity.

In the arts

The Arts and Humanities also have a crucial role in mediating society's understanding of quantum phenomena. Artists, writers, and designers can translate abstract scientific principles into tangible forms that make quantum ideas accessible and meaningful. Meanwhile, philosophers and cultural theorists may reconsider concepts of causality, randomness, and perception in light of quantum theory's challenge to classical determinism.

Courses in Media Studies, Digital Arts, and Philosophy can thus explore the intersection of quantum science and human creativity. By engaging with these ideas, the arts contribute to a richer cultural discourse about uncertainty, knowledge, and the boundaries of human understanding.

Embedding quantum literacy across disciplines requires a structural reimagining of foundational university courses. Logic, ethics, and systems thinking must evolve to reflect a world increasingly defined by probabilistic reasoning and computational complexity. Courses on critical thinking could introduce quantum logic as a new framework for understanding uncertainty, while ethics classes might explore the societal implications of quantum technologies: who gains, who is excluded, and how equity can be maintained in an era of accelerating innovation.

Quantum computing represents not merely a technological breakthrough but a paradigm shift in how humanity processes information and approaches complexity. Preparing students for this shift demands that higher education move beyond the confines of specialised instruction and embrace a holistic model of quantum literacy. Only then can society we that the immense power of quantum computation is guided by human insight, responsibility, and shared understanding.

The writer is the Deputy Director of the School of Engineering and Technology ,CMR University, Bengaluru.

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Make it count

Here are five elements that can help make your college applications stand out

CAREER CUES
Richa Dwivedi Saklani

You are in Class 11 and exams are looming in February and March. College applications are on the horizon. If you are wondering how to make the most of the next six months, here is how to make this time count.

Maintain grade levels: Obvious but critical. As cliched as this is it, grades are the most important when it comes to college applications. Make a schedule, follow it, put phones away when studying, and find techniques that work for you.

Summer programmes: These are a great way to further explore your academic or extracurricular interests because you can go beyond your school curriculum and explore university style academics. In India, there is the Ashoka Young Scholars Programme, Young Tech Scholars at Plaksha, Young Leaders for Active Citizenship, and summer school at UCL India, Indian School of Innovation and Design and FLAME University. If you're looking for a competitive programme that adds value to your application, consider Lodha Genius in India or SUMAC Stanford, M&TSI at Wharton or the Yale Young Global Scholars.

Internships: These give you the opportunity to work in a real-world environment allowing you to see what your future work would look like. However, if you're in school and below 18, it's hard to get a formal internship. It is more likely that you will get an observer role, which is more informal and involves shadowing someone at work. But take this opportunity, as internships not only look great on college applications but also allow you to gain exposure, develop practical skills and help you gain clarity on what you like and don't like.

Testing: Standardised tests are another important aspect of the application process, and understanding which tests you need early can save you stress later. Depending on where you're applying, this could include exams such as the SAT or ACT, English proficiency tests such as IELTS, AP exams, the U.K.-specific admissions tests, or entrance exams for private colleges in India. These test scores don't define you, but play a role in how colleges assess readiness for university-level academics. The key is planning; knowing which tests are required for your target universities, preparing consistently, and giving yourself enough time for retakes if needed. When approached strategically, testing becomes a manageable part of your application rather than a last-minute hurdle. Get the SAT/ ACT done in Class 11 so you can focus on Class 12.

Self-led projects: This will show the college who you really are beyond school and grades. Self-led projects show initiative, curiosity, and a desire to learn beyond the curriculum. These can take different forms such as:

Development-oriented projects allow you to explore subjects you're genuinely interested in, whether that's building a skill, studying a topic in depth, or applying classroom learning to real-world questions. Examples include writing a blog on a topic of your interest, hosting a podcast for students, designing and developing a basic app to solve a problem, starting a book club or hosting classes/ workshops for kids/ elderly.

Academic projects such as participating in essay competitions like the John Locke Essay Competition or the Harvard Economics Essay Competition or the Queen's Commonwealth Essay Competition, which are competitive and prestigious. You could also write a research paper on a topic that deeply interests you. Research papers are complex and highly academic; so you must really want to take on that workload. Whether the paper gets published or not does not matter but the fact that you worked on one adds great value.

Community-focused projects are a popular choice with Indian students. Remember, this is not an item to be checked off on a to-do list. Your intent, consistency and passion about a cause matter the most when it comes to community service. This can involve teaching underprivileged students (not necessarily academic subjects; even art, music or digital literacy skills), or fundraising and more. It is crucial to find what speaks to you and stick with it.

A strong application takes time, consistent effort, and planning. While grades may be the foundation, how you use your time outside the classroom is what brings your application to life.

With inputs from Kritika Malhotra

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Separate science from speculation

Demystifying some common claims about learning styles that are said to be based on neuroscience

Vivek K Singh

While neuroscience and brain research has opened doors to enhance teaching methods, help students with learning difficulties and polish educational technologies, there are many misconceptions and incorrect interpretations that can mislead teachers, policymakers and curriculum designers. A neuro-myth is a misconception about brain functioning, which is the result of authentic scientific findings but often applied falsely to teaching and learning. Either oversimplified or over-generalised, they sound convincing, offer quick solutions to complex problems, and are frequently promoted in teacher training materials or commercial "brain-based" learning workshops. Let's take a look at some of the most common neuro-myths that help shape educational thinking.

Myth 1: Students are either left-brained or right-brained learners.

This popular belief suggests that the ones who are "left-brained" are more logical, analytical, and detail-orientated while "right-brained" individuals are often creative, intuitive, and imaginative. Teachers are encouraged to tailor lessons on the basis of these divisions.

Fact: According to neuroscience, the brain's hemispheres are highly interconnected and communicate through complex neural networks. Cognitive tasks such as reading, problem-solving, and creativity involve both hemispheres working together. Brain imagining studies say that there is no "left-brained" or "right-brained" learners. Such myths exist only because they provide a tidy explanation of personality differences, but it oversimplifies the brain's remarkable complexity.

Myth 2: We only use 10% of our brain.

This suggests that the larger part of the brain is not in use and is waiting to be "activated" through special techniques or exercise.

Fact: Modern neuroimaging research has continuously disapproved this claim. A human uses nearly all parts of their brain. Even the simplest tasks such as reading a sentence or recalling a memory engages multiple regions. While this myth caters to the idea of untapped potential, it misinterprets the efficiency of brain operations.

Myth 3: Learning styles (visual, auditory, kinaesthetic) determine how students learn best.

According to this, aligning the instruction to a student's preferred "learning style" leads to better outcomes. For example, teaching visually to a visual learner.

Fact: Effective learning relies on content and cognitive engagement, not on catering to a fixed sensory preference. Even though students have individual strengths, the human brain processes information with the help of multiple channels.

Myth 4: Brain-based training programmes can increase intelligence.

Fact: Several brain-training apps and programmes claim to enhance memory, concentration, or IQ through daily exercise. However, there is a little proof that this carries over to other aspects of life. The human brain is adaptable, but being good at a memory game does not necessarily make you better at remembering in real life.

While our brains are flexible and capable of learning, companies sometimes misuse the term neuroplasticity to sound more scientific. True brain development arises from rich learning experiences, critical thinking, and sustained intellectual challenges. Neuroscience has a seductive power that makes these myths powerful and acceptable. Research says that viewers are more likely to believe claims when accompanied by brain scan images; even if the claims are illogical. For example, an FMRI scan may project brain activities while performing a task, but it doesn't predict how learning actually occurs or why it distinguishes among individuals. Neuroscience is a valuable research field, but it must be handled with care, context and collaboration.

As neuroscience continues to inform education, it is essential to separate science from speculation. Neuro-myths generalise the brain's complexities and can misdirect teaching practices, wasting time, potential, and resources. If used responsibly, neuroscience can enhance how humans learn best, but only when its tools are interpreted in the right context and not in isolation.

The writer is the Chairman and CEO, SNVA Edutech.

FREEPIK

In an age of uncertainty

Beyond ensuring that their academic profile is good, students also need to consider financial planning when planning to study abroad

Nikhil Mudgal

Are geopolitical tensions and revised immigration policies forcing Indian students to look beyond the U.K. and the U.S. when it comes to higher studies abroad? There is no single answer to this. A report in the Economic Times says that, the U.K.'s latest immigration white paper having made seeking higher education in the country more challenging, there has been a 16% rise in applications. Similarly, despite the long wait for visa interviews, Indian students continue to apply to universities in the U.S.

Other shores

At the same time, reports in various Indian media suggest that students are looking towards Europe as well. Germany, which is known for its STEM education, has seen a 35% jump in applications. In the last academic year, there were 42,000 Indian students in that country.

France is also attracting international talent. An NDTV Education report states that international students in France will be 200% higher by 2030. Luis Vassy, Director of Sciences Po, Paris, expects a 30% increase in international applications to the university and expects that the dual programmes will see a larger exchange of students between India and France.

Indian students are also applying to countries like the Netherlands, Japan, South Korea, Singapore, Malaysia, and the UAE which offer affordable tuition and living and post-study opportunities.

What to do

However, much like the U.S. and the U.K., the competition for top universities in these countries will also become steep. This requires meticulous planning both in terms of one's profile and finances. A single study-abroad destination is not a viable plan even for those with a solid CV. Beyond ensuring that their academic profile is good, students also need to consider financial planning. They should look for lenders who offer not just attractive interest rates but also allow adjustments to loan amount and currency. Given the recent geopolitical churn, creating a substantial cushion has also become more urgent to offset rise in living costs and to take care of expenses in case there is a gap between completion of course and landing a job.

With the new application strategy involving more universities across geographies than before, the to-do list has also expanded. Students may need to compose several admissions essays and SOPs, tailored to the format each university prescribes and the discipline being applied for. Navigating the complications of visas, flexible and borrower-friendly foreign education loans, admissions essays, SOPs, and language proficiency tests, among others, can be rather daunting for learners who are already juggling the workload of their courses in India.

The new foreign policies, trade wars, and a shifting geopolitical landscape don't mean that the door is shut for Indians aiming for a foreign education. The new world belongs to those who have made the effort to prepare.

The writer is Founder and CEO of Lorien Finance.