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Thematic Track 1: Creating New Societal Visions in Higher Education: Values for Living Together

ABSTRACT

Towards Inclusiveness through Knowledge and Compassion

Higher Education Institutes as Change makers

The world is at the cross roads where there is a need to design a new meaning of the word- 'together'. We have closed and sealed our borders, shut our doors and yet suddenly we are all connected more than ever through technology. With minimum disturbance to our lives we are adjusting to the work from home mode and exerting all innovative and creative energy in the pursuit of fixing the technical glitches towards this new togetherness. Is this then the new meaning of togetherness and are we all to sit in a contended and complacent manner that all is well!

The ethical dilemma to address here is to question how many are included in this 'WE'. Inequality in all forms is the biggest hurdle towards achieving the value of togetherness. Inequality of resource distribution due to circumstances (the world political order) and due to distinctions of race and culture are the predominant factors acting as divisive forces.

Traditionally Institutes of Higher education were established as systems where knowledge is being disseminated to the ones who seek them. With modern system of education it has become a place to seek specialized knowledge (professional courses) which skill you and train you to earn your livelihood. Now is the time to bring in a change.

All the stakeholders now should have the society into focus and skill and train learners to become change makers in their own areas of expertise. All stakeholders are to be focused towards using knowledge and skill to find solutions to the world's problems.

The first step would be to bring in changes in the course design, like a course on mechanical engineering should not concentrate on existing machines only, rather expose the students to the ground reality of their country and provide immediate solutions to their problems. The second step would be to encourage research at the grass-root level using local resource, like using jute for improved packaging .The third step would be to build awareness about the differences amongst us and develop empathy and compassion to embrace everybody and include all in our lives.

Key words: Togetherness, Inclusiveness, Compassion, Change-Makers

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