

Academic Leadership Framework: A Roadmap for Future-Ready Education

White Paper

Consolidated Outcomes of the Academic Leadership Suite and the Global Educators Summit
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ALIGNED WITH THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



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Consolidated outcomes of the Academic Leadership Suite and Global Educators Summit – July 2026, convened by UNITAR in Geneva, Switzerland, 7–10 July 2026, and developed with participating academic leaders.

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Principle	Guiding Idea
Lead with purpose	Technology should always advance learning, equity and human development.
Lead together	The future of education cannot be built by universities acting alone; partnerships are no longer optional, they are essential.
Build capacity, not dependency	Our responsibility is not simply to introduce AI tools: it is to prepare faculty, students and institutions to use them wisely, ethically and confidently.
Never lose sight of humanity	Education has always been about developing people. AI should amplify human potential, not replace human judgement, creativity, compassion or curiosity.

“The future of education will not be defined by the intelligence of our machines, but by the wisdom of our leadership.”

Prasad Vemala, closing remarks to the Academic Leadership Suite, Geneva, 10 July 2026

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FOREWORD

UNITAR, Academic Leadership and Future-Ready Education

The United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) is the training and capacity-development arm of the United Nations. Its mission is to bridge knowledge and skills gaps through impactful training, research and innovative learning solutions across peace, diplomacy, sustainable development and effective governance.

In that spirit, the Academic Leadership Suite was convened in Geneva from 7 to 10 July 2026 in partnership with Ureka Education Group, bringing academic leaders together around strategic partnerships, applied research, transformational leadership, the Sustainable Development Goals and the implications of artificial intelligence for education. The programme concluded with the Global Educators Summit at the Palais des Nations, where participants examined how education should prepare for an AI-driven world.

This White Paper consolidates the discussions, commitments and contributions generated through that process. It is offered as a first iteration: a shared point of reference for academic institutions and a foundation for continued collaboration on future-ready education.

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How to Use This Paper

For a dean or provost: Section 3 for the shared vocabulary, Sections 4 to 7 for the evidence behind each theme, and Section 10 for a checklist of actions ready to bring to a leadership meeting. For a faculty member or programme director: Section 6 speaks most directly to curriculum and assessment, and the Further Actions table in Section 10 is the fastest route to a specific, adaptable idea. The paper is a synthesis, not a step-by-step guide: it is meant to inspire and orient institutional action, with the detailed how of implementation left to each institution's own context.

1. Executive Summary

Central proposition

Change is inevitable. Shared benefit is not.

Artificial intelligence is changing education faster than most institutions can govern it. The Academic Leadership Suite and the Global Educators Summit 2026 brought academic leaders, educators, diplomats and industry partners together in Geneva to ask a deliberately narrow question: not whether this change is coming, but who it will benefit, and on what terms. [SDG 4: Quality Education · SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals]

This White Paper consolidates that discussion into a single reference document. It is structured around four thematic pillars that framed the Summit's Day 4 breakout groups: AI Governance, Ethics, and Integration; International Collaborations, Partnerships, and Capacity-Building; Future Skills and Employability; and Wellbeing and Human-Centered Learning, set within a common frame of eight leadership principles that recurred across the programme's four days. It is further grounded by written contributions independently submitted by plenary speakers, expanding several chapters beyond the breakout record itself.

Two findings stand out. First, participants converged on a shared vocabulary: legitimacy, shared responsibility, transparency, measurable impact, long-term stewardship, responsible innovation, capability, and portability, even where they disagreed on specifics. Second, every breakout group treated commitments and generic principle statements as necessary but insufficient: each converted its priorities into two named actions with owners, timeframes and a definition of “done”, on the view that an action without an owner will not survive consolidation.

A first concrete outcome is already underway: a free, online AI-literacy course and best-practice-sharing platform for educators, proposed directly by the AI Governance breakout group and now in early development. It is presented in Section 10 as the paper's flagship near-term action, with reach metrics to be reported six to twelve months after launch.

This paper is offered as a first synthesis, not a final position. It is intended to guide institutional collaboration, pilots and policy development beyond the Summit, and to be revisited as the programme's recommendations are tested in practice.

2. Context and Purpose

UNITAR and the Academic Leadership Suite

UNITAR is the training and capacity-development arm of the United Nations, mandated to strengthen the skills of individuals and the capacities of institutions in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Pact for the Future. Its work spans learning and skills development, knowledge platforms, collaborative knowledge exchange, advisory and institutional support, and research. *[SDG 4: Quality Education · SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals]*

The Academic Leadership Suite (ALS) applied that mandate to educational leadership specifically. Convened in Geneva from 7 to 10 July 2026 in partnership with Ureka Education Group, ALS combined expert masterclasses on strategic partnerships, applied research, and transformational leadership with participation in two flagship Geneva AI events, the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) and AI for Good, before concluding with the Global Educators Summit (GES) at the United Nations Office in Geneva, Palais des Nations on 10 July.

Global Educators Summit: Preparing Education for the AI Era

The GES convened academic leaders, educators, international organisations, innovators and industry experts under the theme “Preparing Education in the AI Era”. Its stated objectives were to convene global leaders across sectors; promote strategic dialogue on educational leadership, AI and digital transformation, governance and ethics, and sustainable learning; strengthen multi-stakeholder partnerships; encourage the exchange of evidence-based practice; and generate actionable recommendations for this White Paper.

The day opened with a keynote, “Education 2035: Preparing Learners for an AI-Driven World”, followed by two plenary sessions, Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Learning, and Future-Ready Education: Skills, Wellbeing, and Employability, and closed with four moderated breakout groups, each assigned one thematic pillar, tasked with producing two commitments and two actions with named owners. Group report-backs and a live drafting session fed directly into this paper.

The keynote, delivered by Dr. Lisa M. Coleman, President of Adler University, framed the day’s central question historically rather than technologically: the first widely noted AI system, a 1966 program that imitated a psychotherapist, was convincing enough that lonely people confided in it. Six decades later, the address argued, that is still the founding problem this Summit exists to address: not whether AI can imitate human attention, but what happens to institutions built on the assumption that it should. Positioning education inside a broader “renaissance of work and learning”, shaped simultaneously by technological, demographic and economic, and global-wellbeing shifts, the keynote proposed that the future of learning is best defined as meaning-

making, ethical application and human ecosystems, not content delivery, with AI treated throughout as augmentation, never replacement, of professional judgement.

How the Programme Shaped This Paper

Across the four days, several recurring ideas anticipated the Summit's later themes. Sessions on strategic partnerships and institutional positioning emphasised that trust, not visibility, is the currency of durable partnerships. Sessions on applied research and experiential learning pointed to a shift from “grading to guiding” as AI reduces the value of routine assessment. A dedicated session on transformational leadership distinguished technical challenges, which have known solutions, from adaptive challenges, which require new behaviour and mindset, and asked participants directly whether institutions were attempting to solve adaptive problems with technical fixes. A session on multilateral diplomacy offered academic leaders a parallel vocabulary: moving from position to interest, from stakeholders to shareholders, from imposing to reframing, that resurfaces throughout the thematic chapters that follow.

The WSIS and AI for Good sessions grounded the discussion in global evidence: national delegations described digital-skills strategies ranging from Sweden's near-universal fibre access to Poland's concern that children spend up to seven hours a day exposed to engagement-optimised, not education-optimised, recommender systems. The International Telecommunication Union highlighted that over 2.2 billion people remain digitally excluded, that 4G coverage gaps between developed and developing regions remain stark, and that the World Economic Forum estimates over 40 per cent of core skills will be disrupted by AI within the decade, against fewer than one in ten education systems that currently teach AI as part of the curriculum. *[SDG 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure · SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities]*

This White Paper is the consolidated output of that four-day arc. It does not attempt a comprehensive treatment of AI in education; it reflects the themes the Summit addressed, and identifies several, including AI and climate, AI and law, and cross-border data governance, as priorities for future work.

3. Leadership Principles: A Common Frame

Each Day 4 breakout group worked from the same eight governance principles, drafted to be tested against, not simply cited by, the commitments and actions that followed. They recur across the four thematic chapters and are consolidated once more, as a cross-cutting framework, in Section 8.

Principle	What It Means in Practice
Legitimacy by Design	Initiatives should be evidence-based, mission-aligned and socially valuable, anchored in academic credibility, learner needs and public interest, with clear relevance to Education 2035.
Shared Responsibility	Universities, ministries, accrediting bodies, employers, students and technology partners each carry distinct, non-substitutable roles in shaping ethical, inclusive and future-ready education systems.
Transparency and Trust	Stakeholders should be able to understand how decisions are made, how AI is used, and how data, benefits and risks are managed across the institution.
Measurable Impact	Commitments should be accompanied by practical indicators, such as learner outcomes, employability relevance, inclusion, faculty readiness and institutional capacity, not aspiration alone.
Long-Term Stewardship	Governance should outlast individual projects or funding cycles, supported by structures for continuity, institutional memory and adaptation over time.
Responsible Innovation	AI and digital tools should be used ethically, accountably and subject to meaningful human oversight, never as a substitute for professional and pedagogical judgement.
Capability and People	The work should strengthen the skills of educators, researchers, administrators, learners and partners so that they can participate effectively, and by choice, in AI-enabled education ecosystems.
Portability and Proportionality	Frameworks should be globally relevant but adaptable to local systems, capacities, cultures and regulatory contexts, so they can travel across very different education settings.

These principles were reinforced by the programme's leadership-development track. Sessions on transformational leadership distinguished incremental improvement from transformational change, and technical from adaptive challenges, arguing that institutions frequently misdiagnose adaptive, culture-level problems as technical ones solvable by a new tool or policy alone. Resistance to change was reframed as data about legitimate concern, such as loss of autonomy, unclear purpose and misaligned incentives, rather than as opposition to be overcome. Sessions on strategic partnerships added that durable partnerships depend on rebuilding trust as a system, not a slogan, summarised in the Summit's recurring formulation that “to lead is to serve”.

CONTRIBUTION

The DNA of Multilateral Diplomacy: A Vocabulary for Academic Leaders

Contributed by Amr Aljowaily, visiting faculty at UNITAR and the Diplo Foundation

The programme's sessions on strategic leadership in a multilateral world offered academic leaders a working vocabulary drawn from diplomatic practice, organised around a three-phase “DNA” model of multilateral negotiation: Deliberation, Negotiation, and Action, that maps closely onto how academic institutions build consensus around change.

Two transferable disciplines stood out. The first: move from a stated position to the underlying interest behind it before seeking a solution, since positions are hard to reconcile but interests often are not; build coalitions by turning stakeholders into shareholders in a shared outcome, and use reframing, restating the same point from the other side's vantage, to work through deadlock rather than imposing a resolution.

The second is a discipline of communication: effective advocacy for institutional change rests on the same three elements Aristotle identified in persuasive speech: ethos (the credibility of the person making the case), pathos (whether the audience is made to care), and logos (the argument's logic), with three working rules for academic leaders making the case for change: the audience, not the speaker, determines whether a case for change succeeds; emotional resonance moves institutions further than logical argument alone; and a single, simply stated theme travels further than a comprehensive one.

CONTRIBUTION

Breaking Down the Silos: The Case for Academic Integration

Contributed by Dr. Thomas Frankl, Professor at the Geneva Graduate Institute

The world's most consequential problems, AI safety among them, are inherently interdisciplinary, but the institutions meant to solve them remain organised around centuries-old taxonomies of knowledge, and the incentive structure compounds the mismatch: tenure committees reward depth within a discipline, not breadth across them, and peer review is itself siloed, so boundary-crossing work is often rejected for being unfamiliar rather than wrong.

The distinction matters for how the Framework should describe its own ambition: most existing programmes that claim to be interdisciplinary are more accurately transdisciplinary, borrowing a concept from one field for use in another, rather than genuinely interdisciplinary, in the sense of integrating several disciplines into a new level of discourse. Very few executive or post-graduate leadership programmes attempt the latter, though it is what complex, systems-level problems actually require.

Taken together, these contributions support the central proposition of this paper: institutional change driven by AI is close to inevitable, but the distribution of its benefits is a leadership choice,

exercised through the principles above, not a byproduct of the technology itself. *[SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions · SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals]*

4. AI Governance, Ethics, and Integration

The Premise

AI in education is a governance issue, not only a technology choice. For universities, executive educators and other stakeholders, the question is not solely whether AI can improve learning, but how it can be introduced ethically, transparently and in ways that protect learners, educators and institutional trust. That means clear rules for how AI is selected, validated and used in teaching, learning, assessment and administration, with defined human oversight and protection against discrimination and data misuse. [SDG 4: Quality Education · SDG 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure · SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities]

Two Commitments

Commitment 1

Develop a foundational framework that can advise academic institutions on the governance, ethics and integration of AI, spanning the design, development, deployment and use phases of emerging technologies.

Principle served: *Shared responsibility*

Commitment 2

Advance access to understanding how AI systems actually work, including their design, development, deployment and use, as a precondition for informed institutional choice rather than passive adoption.

Principle served: *Transparency and trust*

Grounding From the Programme

The programme's WSIS and AI for Good sessions reinforced why this framework needs to travel internationally rather than assume one context. National delegations described sharply different starting points, from near-universal broadband access in some countries to persistent 4G and skills gaps in others, and cautioned that centres of AI excellence, if not deliberately designed for inclusion, entrench rather than close those gaps. The International Telecommunication Union noted that AI education should be treated as a development issue, not only a technology issue, and that young people are too rarely included in AI governance and policy design despite being its primary subjects.

The GES plenary on Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Learning added a practical governance idea: purposeful AI-free zones within institutions, functioning as protected spaces for mentoring, dialogue and community. It came with a caution that “AI is not here to save” institutions

from more fundamental coordination failures, such as first-generation students who disengage not for lack of ability but for lack of visibility into the support already available to them.

CONTRIBUTION

The Coordination Stack: Reframing AI in Education as a Delivery Problem

Contributed by Damian Clarke, Ph.D., Vice President of Technology Services, Alabama State University, and Founder and CEO, Learnify

The dominant conversation about AI in education asks whether the technology is intelligent enough; this contribution argues that intelligence, and increasingly access, is no longer the binding constraint. The binding constraint is coordination: matching learners to the opportunities, supports and pathways that already exist within their institutions but remain invisible until it is too late. A well-designed AI tutor placed in a classroom and left available changes outcomes for almost no one, because the students who need it least are the ones who seek it out. This is a “five-percent problem”: a coordination failure, not a teaching failure.

The contribution proposes a reference architecture, the Coordination Stack: a shared public-goods layer (common data standards and a live per-learner mastery record, built once and available to all), an orchestration layer of AI agents that hold the whole picture of the learner and route accordingly, and a personalised front end, with auditability running through every layer. Three governance commitments follow: agents, not chatbots, since coordination requires acting across systems, not answering single questions; automate the navigation, never the judgment; and audit as an operating discipline, since a system making matching decisions invisibly and without record is not a coordination engine but a bias engine with better usability.

CASE STUDY. Under opposite constraints, the same disciplines held: at Alabama State University, a public Historically Black institution, a coordination layer built on trust and human-advisor override contributed to a twelve per cent rise in undergraduate enrolment and a jump in retention from roughly sixty to seventy-two per cent between 2023 and 2025; at Learnify, an early-stage venture serving Caribbean and Global South markets, the same disciplines were enforced in code rather than policy, with a scaffolding ladder that cannot skip to a full answer and small models chosen for graceful degradation on intermittent connectivity.

The contribution closes with a question it deliberately leaves open: if a learner's live mastery record is the infrastructure on which equitable, personalised learning depends, should that record be shared public infrastructure that follows the learner across institutions, or a private asset each institution rebuilds and retains? Left to the market alone, the shared layer is likely to be built by the best-resourced institutions and rented to the rest. That risk makes it a strong candidate, alongside a shared benchmark for auditing AI bias in admissions and recruitment tools, for the kind of infrastructure a body like UNITAR is positioned to steward (see Further Actions, Section 10).

CONTRIBUTION

Realigning Incentives: From AI Policy to Assessment Redesign

Contributed by Dr. Anna Zeis, Director of Learning Innovation, WHU – Otto Beisheim School of Management

AI has not entered the classroom; it is already in every seat. The real question is no longer whether students should use it, but what teaching means once an assignment can be completed without the learning it was designed to produce. Business schools have spent two years debating permitted and prohibited uses, when the more useful question is whether the case write-up, financial model, or strategy memo still demonstrates the formation it was built to certify.

The contribution frames this as an incentive-design problem rather than a policy problem, with three recommended shifts: reward teaching innovation on par with research output, giving formal promotion and tenure credit to faculty who redesign assessment for an AI-saturated environment; institutionalize AI pilots as standard curricular infrastructure, with at least one assessment-redesign pilot per core course each year and results reported institution-wide rather than managed quietly; and co-develop skills mapping with employing companies through standing panels that identify which competencies are becoming AI-substitutable and which are becoming more valuable because AI exists, reviewed on a rolling basis rather than a multi-year curriculum cycle.

Acceptable-use policies govern student behaviour; they do not change what faculty are rewarded for producing, so redesign work stays confined to a self-selecting few without a corresponding change in advancement criteria. The recommendation: name assessment redesign as a recognised category in faculty evaluation with real incentives behind it, run a minimum of one documented AI pilot per core course, and convene at least one employer advisory session per programme each year, so that what a diploma certifies keeps pace with what a seat now contains.

Stakeholder Roles

Stakeholder	Role / Responsibility
Academic Institutions	Advisory role in shaping the governance framework; responsible for adopting and adapting it locally.
UNITAR / Ureka Education Group	Coordination of framework development and of the AI-literacy platform described in Section 10.
Students	Advisory role, with explicit representation in framework design rather than consultation after the fact.
Faculty and Staff	Advisory role; frontline implementers whose professional judgement the framework is designed to support, not replace.

5. International Collaborations, Partnerships, and Capacity-Building

The Premise

Preparing learners for an AI-driven world requires collaboration across institutions, sectors and borders: no single university, ministry, company or organisation can build the necessary capacity alone. This theme concerns how education systems build the partnerships and capabilities needed for responsible AI adoption, faculty development, digital readiness, curriculum innovation and equitable access to learning opportunities, and how international cooperation can narrow gaps in expertise, infrastructure and policy capacity across contexts. *[SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals · SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities]*

Two Commitments

Commitment 1

Educational institutions commit to building international collaborations and partnerships, and the mechanisms needed to sustain them.

Principle served: *Shared responsibility; transparency and trust*

Commitment 2

Prioritise the capacity-building of the members of respective partner organisations, so that partnership is a two-way capability transfer rather than a one-way arrangement.

Principle served: *Capability and people; portability and proportionality*

Grounding From the Programme

The programme's session on strategic partnerships and institutional positioning offered a complementary academic-sector framework, organised loosely around students, regulatory and licensing conditions, systemic critical-thinking capacity, and unconventional partnership types (from research institutes to specialised infrastructure), summarised in the phrase “to lead is to serve”. A separate session on faster specialisation pathways argued that shortening time-to-practice must be paired with explicit safeguards, such as supervision, scope of practice, and transparency about training duration, so that efficiency gains do not come at the cost of public trust.

CASE STUDY

Capacity-Building as National Strategy: Lessons from the Global South

Drawn from the WSIS Leaders' TalkX6 session on inclusive capacity building, Geneva, July 2026

National delegations at WSIS offered a working set of models for capacity-building that treat it as core state strategy rather than a donor programme, several from countries outside the well-resourced Global North that dominate most published case studies in this field. Malaysia's delegation emphasised that meaningful digital transformation depends on investing in people at least as much as in technology, and on reaching smaller communities, not only major cities, so that capacity-building does not stop at the capital.

The United Arab Emirates described treating human-centred capacity-building as a complete lifecycle rather than a single training event, with AI literacy mandated in schools so that workforce readiness begins well before higher education. Nigeria's contribution on women in technology highlighted gender-responsive capacity-building, meeting women where they are and removing structural barriers, as a distinct and necessary strand of any partnership strategy, not an add-on to a general programme. By contrast, Sweden's contribution, that more than 98 per cent of its population now has nearby fibre access following a decade of capacity-building support extended to over 30 other countries, shows what durable, exported capacity-building can look like once basic access is solved.

Read together, these examples suggest that universities designing international partnerships should look for models suited to their own starting conditions, not only to the best-funded examples available, and should treat reach beyond capital cities and gender-responsive design as core partnership criteria, not afterthoughts.

CONTRIBUTION

Leading Adoption: An Institutional Model for Building AI Capability

Contributed by Andreas Hofmann, Senior Solutions Consultant at Hudl

Educational institutions ask how to build AI capability at scale; industry offers a transferable model. Where organisations have moved from talking about AI to using it, adoption has been rapid and low in fear, owing less to the tools than to five leadership choices any institution can copy: sponsorship that is demonstrated, not declared, with leaders visibly using the tools themselves; a distributed network of "AI Champions" carrying discipline-specific context and spreading practice peer-to-peer rather than by central directive; psychological safety, with AI positioned as augmentation and support for the hesitant, so experimentation never feels self-defeating; capability measured as impact, not knowledge, woven into continuous development rather than a one-off course; and currency sustained through industry partnership, open to any institution, not only the elite.

CASE STUDY. Near-complete adoption of core AI tools within a fortnight was achieved through culture and a Champions network rather than mandate, with hesitant staff becoming advocates once it was clear the technology augments rather than replaces them.

The recommendation for institutions: treat AI adoption as a leadership and culture programme, sponsored, championed, measured as impact, and kept current through partnership, rather than a procurement or training exercise.

Stakeholder Roles

Stakeholder	Role / Responsibility
Universities (Students and Faculty)	Drive the educative element: curriculum reform, research capacity, entrepreneurship training, and globally and locally relevant graduate outcomes.
Governments and Accrediting Agencies	Fund reform; support accreditation and infrastructure; signal willingness toward global collaboration and partnership.
Industry	Provide internships, hiring pathways, skills partnerships and corporate sponsorship.
Civil Society	Safeguard inclusivity, accessibility and social and mental wellbeing, while respecting institutional autonomy in the academic ecosystem.

6. Future Skills and Employability

The Premise

Preparing learners for an AI-driven world is not only a matter of digital literacy; it requires education systems to develop the skills, values and adaptability needed for changing forms of work, learning and participation, while keeping human agency, equity and lifelong learning at the centre. This theme concerns which skills matter most, how they should be taught and assessed, and how higher and executive education can support learners through evolving professions. [SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth · SDG 4: Quality Education]

Two Commitments

Commitment 1

Treat future skills and employability as a core question of institutional relevance, connecting academic learning more deliberately to the real problems faced by economies, companies, public and private organisations, public policy, civil society and communities.

Principle served: *Legitimacy by design; shared responsibility; measurable impact*

Commitment 2

Make “learning to learn” a core outcome of future-ready education, so that learners leave institutions with the confidence, methods and resilience to adapt, upskill and reskill throughout their careers.

Principle served: *Capability and people; long-term stewardship; portability and proportionality; responsible innovation*

Grounding From the Programme

The programme's session on applied research and academic leadership offered a direct illustration of this shift already underway: as AI absorbs more routine analytical work, faculty roles move from “grading to guiding”, assessment shifts from measuring output to probing genuine contribution through fieldwork, interviews and reflective accountability, and students are deliberately rotated through unfamiliar roles to break established cognitive patterns.

The GES keynote reinforced the resilience framing directly, describing the future of learning as meaning-making, ethical application and human ecosystems rather than content acquisition alone, and naming AI augmentation, not replacement, as the operative frame for skills development.

CONTRIBUTION

A Standard for AI-Resilient Assessment

Contributed by Andreas Hofmann, Senior Solutions Consultant at Hudl

If the artefact a student submits can now be produced on demand, assessment should shift from grading products to evidencing learning. A practical standard weights process over final product, using oral defences, “show-your-thinking” tasks, reflective portfolios, and authentic problems AI cannot easily replicate; it builds tasks around reflection over completion and collaboration over competition, and requires disclosure of AI use rather than its prohibition, since detection is unreliable by design.

The ability to fail productively, understood as forming a hypothesis, testing it and learning, should be treated as an assessed competency in its own right, not a deduction: without genuine latitude to experiment and fail gracefully, learners stay afraid of change, the worst possible preparation for a fast-moving field. Because tools turn over every few months, curricula should build the adaptable mindset rather than teach any single tool, since aiming at a moving target never succeeds.

The recommendation: adopt an assessment-redesign standard that weights process over product, expects openness about AI use, makes room for oral examination, and rewards learning from failure, measuring judgement and adaptability rather than a producible artefact.

CASE STUDY

More Graduates, but Less Employability: The Case of India

Contributed by Dr. Suddha Chakravarti, Professor of International Relations at EU Business School, Geneva

India illustrates why access and employability are distinct problems requiring distinct policy responses. With a median age of 29, India's demographic dividend depends on future-ready education, yet the country produces over ten million graduates a year. A sizeable share of them remain unemployed or underemployed, and in some cases face a harder path to work than peers with no formal education at all.

Three explanations recur: a culture of learning still weighted toward rote memorisation over reflection and application, compounded by a post-pandemic decline in foundational reading and numeracy; sharply unequal education outcomes by wealth, caste, geography and gender; and an education system that plans largely in isolation from labour-market need, with limited structural participation from employers and industry.

The recommended path connects rather than replaces existing policy: expand public investment in access, teacher quality and e-learning, while treating skills and employability as inseparable from education policy itself, including stronger apprenticeship and vocational pathways of the kind that

anchor the DACH economies (Germany, Austria, Switzerland). Digital education should be framed as an enabler of this agenda, not a substitute for the underlying reforms. Read alongside the national capacity-building models in Section 5, India's experience reinforces the same point from the employability side: access and infrastructure alone do not guarantee relevance, and both require deliberate design.

Stakeholder Roles

Stakeholder	Role / Responsibility
Universities / Academic Leaders	Own the skills framework; embed practice relevance and learning-to-learn into curricula; ensure assessment reflects future-ready outcomes.
Faculty / Educators	Make transferable skills visible within subject teaching; guide responsible AI use; assess judgement, teamwork and ethical reasoning.
Employers and Professional Bodies	Provide evidence on changing skills needs; co-design authentic challenges; validate skills maps; offer mentoring and placement pathways.
Public Sector, International Organisations, Civil Society	Bring public-policy and societal challenges into the learning experience; keep public value and inclusion part of employability.
Governments / Ministries	Fund lifelong-learning pathways; widen access to skills-based education; support recognition of flexible, non-linear learning routes.
Accreditation and Quality Bodies	Recognise outcomes beyond disciplinary knowledge, such as portfolios, applied projects, AI literacy, and reflective, lifelong-learning capacity.
Technology Partners / AI Centres	Provide accessible tools, guidance and safeguards; help prevent digital divides; support transparency and human oversight.
Learners and Alumni	Co-create learning pathways; provide feedback on relevance; use AI responsibly; contribute to peer and mentoring communities.

7. Wellbeing and Human-Centered Learning

The Premise

In an AI-driven education landscape, wellbeing must remain central to how learning is designed, delivered and experienced. Technology should support human flourishing, not increase pressure, isolation, surveillance or inequality. This theme concerns how education systems create learning environments that are inclusive, supportive and responsive. It covers mental health, digital fatigue, learner safety, accessibility, academic integrity, and the role of educators in sustaining human-centred relationships in increasingly digital settings. [SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being · SDG 4: Quality Education · SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities]

Two Commitments

Commitment 1

Develop critical thinkers (students and educators alike) grounded in well-informed, human-centred knowledge, on the view that convenience which offloads thinking to a tool atrophies the capacity it is meant to support.

Principle served: *Humans remain central to how learning is designed and experienced; critical thinking is the precondition for using any technology in service of human flourishing rather than in its place.*

Commitment 2

Give learners agency as co-owners (“shareholders” rather than stakeholders) of their own lifelong learning trajectory, shaped together with a facilitator rather than delivered to them.

Principle served: *Belonging and connection through ownership; reframes the educator as facilitator rather than transmitter, with responsibility shared rather than assigned.*

Grounding From the Programme

This chapter's emphasis on connection was reinforced by the GES keynote, which located today's questions about AI and wellbeing inside a much longer arc. It noted that the first widely recognised AI system, a 1966 program that imitated a psychotherapist, was convincing enough that lonely people confided in it, and argued that loneliness remains a serious concern today, estimated at a \$200 billion economic gap. That history makes meaning-making and human connection, not content delivery, the right frame for the future of learning.

The keynote illustrated what disciplined augmentation can look like in a licensed profession under training: AI-assisted tools that track digital biomarkers or flag emotionally significant messages can extend clinical attention between sessions, provided a trained professional retains full oversight and final judgement, a model directly transferable to how AI might responsibly support, without displacing, the pastoral and advising relationships this chapter is concerned with.

CONTRIBUTION

Protecting the Human Core: Purposefully AI-Free Learning Zones

Contributed by Dr. Anna Zeis, Director of Learning Innovation, WHU – Otto Beisheim School of Management

If AI is now present in every assignment a student can complete alone, the competencies built only through unmediated human effort need a protected space to be built at all. Some capabilities are not well served by faster completion; they are built by the friction AI is designed to remove.

The recommendation is to designate a defined share of the curriculum as AI-free by design, not by prohibition, since a ban inside an otherwise AI-permeated course is easily circumvented while a purpose-built format changes the task itself so the tool has nothing useful to do. These zones should target competencies demonstrably degraded by offloading, including team building, creativity, resilience, communication, pragmatic judgement and responsible decision-making under uncertainty, the differentiators employers most often cite among similarly credentialed candidates.

Work should be created live, through case competitions, oral argumentation, negotiation simulations and team-based crisis exercises, with faculty evaluating how a team forms, disagrees and recovers from failure, not only the polish of a final deliverable, which in turn requires investment in facilitation and behavioural-observation training for faculty. The contribution proposes a starting benchmark of 15 to 20 per cent of programme credit hours delivered through clearly labelled AI-free formats, with annual reporting on which competencies each zone targets and what evidence supports its effectiveness.

CONTRIBUTION

Building Future-Ready Schools Through Equity, STEM, and Research-Informed Educational Leadership

Contributed by Dr. Yazmín Torres, Principal, Clement C. Moore School

Future-ready education must extend beyond academic achievement to encompass holistic development, preparing students for the complexities of a rapidly evolving world. Educational systems should deliberately promote multilingualism, digital literacy, critical thinking, collaboration, social-emotional wellbeing and global citizenship, alongside equitable access to high-quality learning. In an interconnected world, linguistic and cultural diversity should be treated as a strength that prepares learners for higher education, meaningful employment and civic engagement, not as a challenge to be accommodated.

This contribution draws on the author's doctoral research into STEM efficacy among English Language Learners, which found that ELL students who develop strong confidence in STEM subjects are significantly more likely to enrol in advanced STEM coursework and graduate from high school than peers with lower STEM confidence. The research identified the conditions that build that efficacy: early exposure to STEM learning, access to mentors and role models in STEM fields, language-development strategies integrated directly into STEM instruction, and culturally relevant curricula. Schools that implement these practices deliberately close opportunity gaps and open postsecondary STEM pathways for multilingual learners.

Four policy recommendations follow. First, treat multilingual education as a strategic investment in human capital and workforce development, not a compensatory service; proficiency in multiple languages builds communication, cognitive flexibility and intercultural competence that the global economy already rewards. Second, invest in ongoing professional learning that equips educators for culturally responsive, linguistically inclusive, technology-rich instruction, prioritising instructional leadership and innovation over compliance. Third, make leadership development central to reform, since school leaders need the specific skills to build inclusive environments, support educator growth and use data to improve outcomes for diverse learners. Fourth, broaden accountability systems beyond test scores to include student wellbeing, multilingual learner achievement, equitable access to advanced coursework, family engagement and career readiness.

Emerging technologies, including AI, carry real potential to personalise learning and prepare students for future careers, but that potential is not self-executing. Equitable implementation depends on deliberate policy, ethical leadership and sustained investment in educator preparation, the same conditions this contribution argues are already needed to close opportunity gaps for multilingual learners today.

Stakeholder Roles

Stakeholder	Role / Responsibility
Government	Align curriculum change across primary, secondary, higher and postgraduate levels; fund the transition.
Heads Of Institutions	Support and empower educators through curriculum transition.
Educationalists	Apply current evidence from educational science to guide curriculum redesign.
Teachers	Actively redesign learning tasks, materials and assessment.
Students	Co-construct curriculum change as active participants, not recipients.

8. Cross-Cutting Governance and Integrity Framework

The preceding four themes are interconnected: a governance failure in one typically surfaces as a credibility failure in another. AI adopted without a partnership strategy will lack the resourcing to reach under-served institutions; skills reform pursued without wellbeing safeguards will simply relocate pressure from curriculum to learner. The task for academic leaders is therefore to align the four themes under a single, cross-cutting framework: the same eight principles introduced in Section 3, restated here as governance commitments rather than descriptive statements.

Legitimacy by design. Education initiatives, AI-enabled or otherwise, should be designed with credible evidence, clear academic purpose and demonstrable public value, not adopted because a tool exists.

Shared responsibility. Governments, institutions, accreditors, employers, students and technology partners should understand and accept their distinct, non-interchangeable responsibilities.

Transparency and trust. Stakeholders should be able to understand how decisions are made and how data, benefits and risks are managed, including the right to ask whether a technology is being used at all.

Measurable impact. Commitments should carry proportionate indicators and follow-up mechanisms, not aspiration alone; an action without an owner and a success signal should not survive consolidation.

Long-term stewardship. Governance structures should outlast individual funding cycles, programme leaders or technology vendors.

Responsible innovation. AI and digital tools should be fair, accountable and subject to meaningful human oversight wherever impacts on learners are significant, and subject to the explicit possibility of institutional non-adoption.

Capability and people. Sustainable practice depends on developing the skills of those who teach, lead and govern, including AI literacy for decision-makers, not only end-users.

Portability and proportionality. Frameworks should be globally relevant but locally adaptable, responsive to different regulatory, cultural and resource contexts.

CONTRIBUTION

A Personal Perspective on Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Learning

Contributed by David Kwesi Watts, PhD, Director of the Davis Institute for Artificial Intelligence, Colby College

The current acceleration of artificial intelligence has revealed a systemic flaw: siloed technical development, optimised for delivery rather than for responsibility, risks producing solutions that are not human-centered. Technology developers frequently express hesitation about AI's risks but lack the broad-based perspective needed to pivot toward more comprehensive products. The contribution

argues that the primary issues facing the field are less technical than interdisciplinary, and that Colby College's Davis Institute for Artificial Intelligence, the first AI institute at a liberal arts college, is testing a shift from isolated technical development toward a "full spectrum" approach to AI literacy.

This argument draws on a career spanning technology innovation at Motorola's Advanced Products Research and Development Labs, entrepreneurship in Silicon Valley, and vice-president roles in both research and business strategy at IBM. Across that career, success traced more consistently to interdisciplinary critical thinking developed in undergraduate liberal arts than to technical expertise acquired afterward. Technical expertise remains necessary, but alone it traps developers in rigid silos, leaving them less able to pivot when disruptive technologies emerge, a risk sharpened considerably by the rapid rise of generative AI. Comprehensive innovation in the AI era requires merging disparate fields, such as philosophy, computer vision and the performing arts to deepen understanding of human learning, or computer science and psychology to address complex problems in mental and behavioural health.

The recommendation for institutions: train the next generation of leaders to value collaboration across disciplines at least as highly as technical content, and to build in responsible-AI considerations from the start, in both educational and industry settings. Davis AI's own practice illustrates what this looks like: faculty and students in the Art Department tracking the carbon footprint of AI queries while designing adaptive AI-assisted learning tools; undergraduate researchers publishing in top-tier journals; student-led AI societies collaborating across disciplines; and the Summer Bridges programme, an eight-week intensive that teaches AI fundamentals, including AI ethics, to students across a wide range of majors, class years and institutions, then challenges cross-disciplinary teams to build AI ventures grounded in rigorous critical thinking. The aim throughout is to move students from being users of AI to becoming its creators, and the future of education, in this view, depends on what institutions learn from, and improve on, examples like these.

How This Framework is Meant to be Used

As a working test, not a fixed checklist: an institution applying these eight principles to a specific initiative, such as an AI tutoring pilot, a partnership agreement, or a curriculum reform, should be able to point to how each principle is satisfied, or explain why it does not yet apply. [SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions]

9. Stakeholder Roles

The four breakout groups converged, independently, on a broadly consistent map of who needs to do what. The consolidated version below merges those four accounts into a single reference table. *[SDG 4: Quality Education · SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals]*

Stakeholder	Role / Responsibility
Academic Institutions and Leadership	Own governance frameworks and curriculum reform; embed practice relevance, AI literacy and learning-to-learn into programmes; ensure assessment and quality assurance reflect future-ready outcomes; retain the explicit choice not to adopt a given technology.
Faculty and Educators	Make transferable skills and critical thinking visible within subject teaching; guide responsible AI use; redesign assessment toward judgement, communication and ethical reasoning; shift from senders of content to facilitators of learning.
Students, Learners and Alumni	Co-design learning pathways and curriculum change as advisors and co-owners, not only recipients; provide feedback on relevance; contribute to peer and mentoring communities; hold institutions accountable for genuine representation.
Governments and Ministries	Fund reform, accreditation and infrastructure; align curriculum change across education levels; support lifelong-learning pathways; signal willingness toward international collaboration.
Accreditation and Quality Bodies	Recognise outcomes beyond disciplinary knowledge, such as portfolios, applied projects, AI literacy, and reflective, lifelong-learning capacity.
Employers, Industry and Professional Bodies	Provide evidence on changing skills needs; co-design authentic challenges; validate skills maps; offer internships, mentoring and placement pathways; fund partnerships.
Technology and AI Partners	Provide accessible tools, guidance and safeguards; support transparency, human oversight and data protection; help prevent digital divides rather than widen them.
Civil Society, NGOs And Communities	Safeguard inclusivity, accessibility and wellbeing; bring public-value and societal considerations into design; respect institutional autonomy over adoption decisions.
UNITAR and Ureka Education Group	Coordinate cross-institutional work, including the AI-literacy platform in Section 10; convene continued dialogue beyond the Summit; steward this White Paper as a living document.

10. Action Framework: Outputs, Outcomes and Impact

Principles and commitments must be distinguished from delivery. Of the actions distilled from the four breakout groups and the written contributions that followed, several overlapped in substance, an assessment pilot here, an assessment redesign there, and are consolidated below into four flagship actions: priorities chosen because they are implementable by most institutions regardless of size, resourcing or region, and because they were independently proposed, in some form, by more than one breakout group or contributor. Four further, more context-specific actions follow in summary form.

Each flagship action is presented across three tiers: the immediate, controllable output; the outcome it is intended to produce over the following months; and the longer-term impact against which it should ultimately be judged. Reporting against all three tiers, rather than output alone, is the paper's central accountability recommendation.

Flagship Action 1 · AI-Literacy Platform and Course for Educators	
Action	Launch a free, online AI-literacy course and best-practice-sharing platform for educators, open to institutions worldwide, building directly on the AI Governance breakout's proposal and already in early development.
Related Principle	Transparency and trust; capability and people; legitimacy by design
Output	A live, freely accessible online platform and course, published and open for enrolment.
Outcome	Educators across participating and partner institutions complete the course and begin applying shared best practice locally.
Impact (6–18 mo.)	Number of educators and institutions reached, reported six to twelve months after launch, alongside qualitative feedback on classroom application.
Key Stakeholders	UNITAR, Ureka Education Group, participating academic institutions, students.
SDG Alignment	SDG 4: Quality Education Specific SDGs Indicators: 4.5 By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations. 4.c: By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing States.

Flagship Action 2 · AI Governance, Ethics and Integration Advisory Framework	
Action	Produce a framework advising academic institutions on the governance, ethics and integration of AI systems, addressing the design, development, deployment and use phases of emerging technology, including guidance on the right to limit or decline adoption.
Related Principle	Shared responsibility
Output	A published advisory framework and accompanying guidance note.
Outcome	Institutions reference the framework when making AI-adoption and governance decisions.
Impact (6–18 mo.)	Adoption or citation of the framework by participating institutions, tracked at 9–18 months.
Key stakeholders	Education institutions and experts, students.
SDG Alignment	SDG 4: Quality Education · SDG 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure · SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions Specific SDGs Indicators: 4.71 By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development. Extent to which (i) global citizenship education and (ii) education for sustainable development are mainstreamed in (a) national education policies; (b) curricula; (c) teacher education; and (d) student assessment. 9.5 Enhance scientific research, upgrade the technological capabilities of industrial sectors in all countries, in particular developing countries, including, by 2030, encouraging innovation and substantially increasing the number of research and development workers per 1 million people and public and private research and development spending. 16.6 Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels.

Flagship Action 3 · Assessment Redesign for an AI Era: From Product to Process	
Action	Consolidating proposals from the Future Skills and Wellbeing breakouts with a plenary contribution on AI-resilient assessment, redesign assessment away from graded products and toward evidenced process: oral defence, reflective portfolios, authentic practice-based challenges, with disclosure of AI use required rather than its prohibition, and productive failure treated as an assessed competency rather than a deduction.

Related Principle	Responsible innovation; capability and people; legitimacy by design
Output	A published assessment-redesign standard and at least one assessed pilot with a clear rubric, launched against a real organisational or public-policy challenge.
Outcome	Learners are assessed on judgement, communication, ethical reasoning and adaptability; faculty and practice partners report evidence of genuine contribution rather than a producible artefact alone.
Impact (6–18 mo.)	Evidence of employability relevance, learner confidence and improved critical-thinking outcomes, gathered at 9–18 months across participating programmes.
Key Stakeholders	Universities and programme teams; external practice partners; employers; accreditors; educationalists; learners and alumni.
SDG Alignment	SDG 4: Quality Education · SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth Specific SDG Indicators: 4.4 By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship 4.4.1 Proportion of youth and adults with information and communications technology (ICT) skills, by type of skill 4.7 By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development 4.7.1 Extent to which (i) global citizenship education and (ii) education for sustainable development are mainstreamed in (a) national education policies; (b) curricula; (c) teacher education; and (d) student assessment 8.2 Achieve higher levels of economic productivity through diversification, technological upgrading and innovation, including through a focus on high-value added and labour-intensive sectors 8.3 Promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encourage the formalization and growth of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, including through access to financial services

Flagship Action 4 · AI Capability and Culture-Building Programme for Faculty and Staff	
Action	Consolidating the Partnerships breakout's capacity-building proposal with a plenary contribution on institutional AI adoption, treat AI capability as a leadership and culture programme rather than a training event: visible sponsorship from leadership, a distributed network of discipline-specific "AI Champions" spreading practice peer-to-peer, and capability measured as impact on practice, not knowledge, sustained through ongoing industry partnership.

Related Principle	Capability and people
Output	A finalised set of training modules and a named Champions network active across participating faculties.
Outcome	Faculty and staff readiness, confidence and reported use of AI in teaching and administration measurably improve.
Impact (6–18 mo.)	Participation and readiness indicators, and evidence of sustained (not one-off) adoption, tracked at 3–9 months.
Key Stakeholders	Heads of institutions; vice-presidents, deans, registrars, heads of department; industry partners.
SDG Alignment	SDG 4: Quality Education · SDG 17: Partnership for the Goal Specific SDG Indicators: 4.4 By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship 4.4.1 Proportion of youth and adults with information and communications technology (ICT) skills, by type of skill 4.7 By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development 4.7.1 Extent to which (i) global citizenship education and (ii) education for sustainable development are mainstreamed in (a) national education policies; (b) curricula; (c) teacher education; and (d) student assessment 17.17 Encourage and promote effective public, public private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships

Further Actions

Four further actions, more specific to institutional or national context, remain part of the Framework and are summarised below rather than elaborated in full.

Action	Summary	Theme	Relevant Sustainable Development Goals
Cross-Border Curriculum and Mobility Reform	Ease cross-border mobility: industry experience, guest lectures, internships, multiple entry/exit, credit transfer, through	Partnerships & Capacity-Building	SDG 4 SDG 8 SDG 17

Action	Summary	Theme	Relevant Sustainable Development Goals
	curriculum reform and inter-institutional MoUs.		
Future-Relevance and Skills Map	Map the transferable skills embedded in priority programmes against real-world contexts, assessment evidence and gaps, validated with employers and alumni.	Future Skills & Employability	SDG 4 SDG 8 SDG 9
Competency-Based, Active-Learning Curricula	Develop curricula that stimulate active, competency-based learning, with educators facilitating rather than transmitting, drawing on established educational-science guidance.	Wellbeing & Human-Centered Learning	SDG 3 SDG 4 SDG 8 SDG 10
Shared AI-Bias Benchmark and Mastery-Record Governance Study	Convene a cross-institutional study, with relevant UN bodies, to scope an openly published benchmark for auditing AI bias in admissions and recruitment tools, and the open governance question of who should own a learner's live mastery record.	AI Governance, Ethics & Integration	SDG 9 SDG 10 SDG 16 SDG 17

11. Conclusion and Call to Action

Change is inevitable. Shared benefit is not. That proposition, offered at the outset of this paper, is also its conclusion. Artificial intelligence will continue to reshape teaching, assessment, research and administration whether or not institutions govern that process deliberately. The Academic Leadership Suite and Global Educators Summit 2026 were convened on the premise that the direction and distribution of that change remain, for now, a matter of institutional leadership, exercised through the eight principles set out in Section 3, tested against the four thematic pillars in Sections 4 through 7, and made deliverable through the stakeholder roles and action framework in Sections 9 and 10.

Where breakout groups converged, on the need for named owners and success signals, on capacity-building as a two-way exchange, on relevance and resilience as the real test of future skills, and on critical thinking and learner agency as the foundation of human-centered learning, this paper states that convergence plainly. The written contributions subsequently submitted by several plenary speakers have extended that convergence further, translating the Summit's principles into concrete architectures, standards and institutional models that institutions can act on directly.

A first test is already under way: the AI-literacy platform proposed by the Summit's AI Governance breakout group is in early development, with reach and application to be reported within the next six to twelve months. Subsequent editions of this paper are expected to report against that action, and the seven others in Section 10, on the same basis: output delivered, outcome observed, impact assessed.

This White Paper is offered as a first iteration of a continuing process, to be carried forward through further dialogue, refinement and future convenings, not as a final word on how education should meet an AI-driven world, but as a working answer to the question the Summit set out to ask. *[SDG 4: Quality Education · SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals]*

In the end, the charge that closed the Suite still holds, and it is one that UNITAR, Ureka Education Group, and Dr. Vemala carry forward together: lead with purpose, lead together, build capacity rather than dependency, and never lose sight of humanity.