Foreword

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Biographical notes: Anuj Kumar is the Head of Research at Rushford Business School, Switzerland. He also leads the Doctoral of Business Administration Program. In addition, he is a research fellow with INTI International University, Malaysia. He has an excellent number of publications in Scopus, ABDC and Web of Science journals. He has an H-Index of 11 in Scopus database with more than 65 articles. He serves as editor of many Scopus, Web of Science and ABDC journals. His modus operandi includes foreign collaborations, organising multi-location conferences, research consultancies and actively working for the growth of fellow academicians and researchers. He has been invited as session chair, resource person, keynote speaker, and judge at various conferences in India and abroad. He has been invited to Guest Lecturer at Vietnam National University, Hanoi; and University College Dublin.

Prabha Kiran is currently Senior Lecturer and the Head of SOBE Business Case Center at Westminster International University in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. She has extensive experience in market research, brand consulting, and leadership development. She has been instrumental in integrating cutting-edge digital strategies into the curriculum. She focuses on real-world business complexities with academic learning. Her centre thrives under a strategic vision that marries rigorous research with practical applications, benefiting both faculty and students. She has nurtured a culture of collaboration, spearheading the development of case studies that not only reflect current market challenges but also drive innovation. She has more than 25 articles in Scopus journals and a number of publications in ABDC and Web of Science journals.

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1 The provenance of this special issue

In this special issue, we publish four articles from the 'Global Conference on Emerging Technologies, Business Economy, Sustainable Innovative Business Practices, and Social Well-Being, held 10th and 11th December 2022. It was organised by the M/S Confab 360 Degree in collaboration with London Churchill College, United Kingdom; Swami Vivekananda Institute of Science and Technology, Kolkata; NEF College, Guwahati; Shri Jairambhai Patel Institute of Business Management & Computer Applications Gujarat; School of Business and Management, Mohan Babu University, Andhra Pradesh; Guru Nanak Institute of Management, Delhi; and ITM University, Raipur.

Established in 2021, Confab 360 Degree connects Indian researchers with foreign universities and global professionals, fostering international collaboration and academic exchanges. Its globally recognised educational and research platform is headquartered in New Delhi.

More than 700 authors participated and a total of 230+ papers were presented. The papers were selected from the conference stream 'Advancement in economics and economics education'. The conveners of the conference were Dr. Nishu Ayedee, Dr. Monika Arora and Dr. Asmat Ara Shaikh. The editorial heads were Dr. Anuj Kumar and Dr. Anoop Pandey.

2 The rationale for the special issue

Overall, these four papers in our special issue metaphorically represent the *IJPEE* throwing its hat into the ring, so to speak, for a more transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary approach to holistically conceptualising our problems in order to successfully redress. As we inexorably transition to a sustainable net zero, the heretofore isolated, independent academic silos that have long characterised economics and related business disciplines such as management and finance are no longer efficacious; in fact, they represent a significant impediment to any successful transition – an albatross if you will.[1] The transition to net zero is a transformational change that requires both interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary thinking,[2]

> "[Achieving] net zero requires operationalisation in varied social, political and economic spheres. There are numerous ethical judgements, social concerns, political interests, fairness dimensions, economic considerations and technology transitions that need to be navigated, and several political, economic, legal and behavioural pitfalls that could derail a successful implementation of net zero. [It will] require large-scale changes in the way

> economies are run, the skills they demand, and the capital assets they require. It will also require input from many disciplines from climate science, biology and geology to anthropology, law, and economics." [Fankhauser et al., (2022), p.16, p.19]

While all stakeholders (e.g., the government, consumers, employers, communities, etc.) must cooperatively work together to achieve net zero, a special responsibility rests with the firm; especially one that "builds knowledge, creates value, and generates progress" [Madden, (2020), p.238]. Of course, within the confines of a well-working economic system powered by transformational thinking. The *IJPEE* will be undertaking a series of articles on the necessity for intradisciplinary and transdisciplinary cooperation revolving around the firm and its relationship with the government, along with its importance in related disciplines such as economics and management. This is not a leisurely exercise in thought but a necessary (but alas, not sufficient) task in saving our planet, our environment, and ourselves.

These four papers represent intellectual feelers, if you will, with more specific papers and even special issues to follow. The *IJPEE* enthusiastically invites like-minded individuals to participate in what looks to be a longstanding endeavour.

3 The contents of the special issue

The first paper 'Assessing pedagogy effectiveness: applying the Solomon experimental design', by Suddhasanta De, Jayanta Banerjee and Keya Das Ghosh, examines, within the framework of pluralist economic education, how video and storytelling as teaching methods impact the development of women's entrepreneurial skills in rural India. The study aligns with pluralist economic education by examining the intersection of pedagogical strategies and economic agency. Using Solomon's four-group design, findings indicate that video-based learning significantly enhances job skills compared to storytelling, underscoring the importance of diverse educational methods in fostering economic empowerment, and highlighting its potential for empowering women through inclusive economic initiatives. This paper contributes to discussions on inclusive economic policies and pluralist approaches to skill development, offering insights for policymakers and educators. The authors write,

> "The study highlights the critical role of economic education in fostering women's financial inclusion and participation in rural economies. By providing evidence-based insights on effective pedagogical interventions, it supports the development of inclusive educational frameworks that align with pluralism in economics. The results also underscore the need for policymakers and educators to adopt diverse and contextually relevant teaching methodologies to achieve sustainable development goals for gender equity and economic empowerment."

The second paper 'The socio-economic marginalisation of the depressed in Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance*: an analytical study', by Sri Sakuntala Sanagavarapu, Mutyala Suresh, Rajani H. Pillai, A. Ibemcha Chanu and Sidar Atalay Şimşek, examines how Rohinton Mistry's novel, *A Fine Balance*, depicts the socio-economic marginalisation of Dalits in India, revealing the intersections of caste oppression, economic exploitation, government policy, and political tyranny. Through the lens of cultural materialism, this paper highlights the brutal realities faced by Dalits, including

violence, rights deprivation, and systemic discrimination. It evidences how social marginalisation and economic marginalisation victimising the oppressed are dialectically related. This paper contributes to the *IJPEE*'s longstanding objective to use the arts, i.e., music, film, opera, poetry, and especially fiction, to elucidate reality and as a pedagogical device,[3]

> "Properly taught, fiction can explain the myriad forms of behaviour and human predicaments as good as, or even better, than any individual academic discipline… If the goal of economics is to understand the provisioning process and help the world become a better place, then fiction and pluralism are natural allies. While fiction is obviously not history, quite often fiction's apt descriptions and careful dialogue are more evocative and stick in one's memory far longer than any historical description, and thus are instrumentally more efficacious" [Reardon, (2015), p.101]

This paper proudly contributes to a long tradition.

The third paper 'Indian primary schools and pluralism education – a qualitative view', by Anuj Kumar, Sweta Leena Hota, Arya Kumar and Sablu Khan investigates how pluralistic education in Indian primary schools fosters social harmony by promoting acceptance of religious and cultural diversity. Focusing on schools in Odisha, it uses qualitative methods to assess teaching practices, curricula, and policies. The study finds that government efforts since 1999 have improved inclusive education, showing that pluralism helps preserve cultural identity and develops student intercultural competence. And more specifically: pluralist education promotes a harmonious society that is tolerant of religious and cultural diversity.

This article demonstrates that preserving cultural and religious identity is possible through an inclusive educational curriculum. The authors explain,

> "Pluralism is the recognition and acceptance of diversity, including different perspectives, beliefs, cultures, and values. By teaching pluralism at an early age, we can lay the foundation for a more inclusive and harmonious society. Starting early in primary schools is crucial because children are at a formative stage of their development, and their beliefs and attitudes are still shaping. By exposing them to diverse ideas and perspectives, we can help them develop empathy, tolerance, and an appreciation for different cultures and backgrounds. Connecting primary school pluralism with university pluralism is important because it ensures continuity in the development of an individual's worldview. If students are only exposed to pluralism in higher education (and not before), they may not have the necessary foundation to engage with diverse perspectives effectively. Starting early allows for a gradual and progressive understanding of pluralism, building upon prior knowledge and experiences. This early exposure can foster an understanding that differences should be respected and celebrated, rather than feared or ignored."

The final paper, 'Transforming how we construct gig work in the sustainable digital economy: a suggested cooperative framework between the disciplines of economics and human resource management', by Swapna Hulimavu Ramaswamy, Sanjeet Singh, Geetika Madaan and Amrinder Singh examines the variables influencing the use of gig workers in long-term digital platforms. Focusing on India, it envisions what and how the gig economy can evolve, and how it can comport with sustainable development The study envisions a future for gig work that would allow autonomy and sustainable employment. Finally, the paper jumpstarts a much-needed cooperation between the disciplines of economics and human resource management. The authors explain,

> "Economists should examine the evolution of managing gig work from a macro perspective, investigating the confluence of innovation, income distribution, regulatory frameworks, skill development, environmental sustainability, and labour market dynamics to draw conclusions about the impact on economic and social welfare. Economists can better understand the gig economy by analysing its key drivers, such as technological advancements, labour market flexibility, and evolving worker preferences. This can best happen with active cooperation from the discipline of human resource management. Helpful would be investigating income volatility, job security, and worker rights to evaluate the economic implications. Examining the gig economy's role in employment generation, its impact on traditional industries, and regulatory challenges is essential. Data-driven approaches, including platform analytics and worker surveys, can provide deeper insights. In addition, collaboration with sociologists and policymakers can offer a holistic view of its social and economic impact. This endeavour… is truly interdisciplinary."

Indeed, this endeavour is interdisciplinary, as all future studies need to be.

4 Learning from this special issue: a note

We so enjoyed this process (from start to finish) that we encourage all authors to at least think about being editors for a special issue. Working on this special issue revealed the tremendous amount of work from start and finish; so much so that we cannot but help admire the final product.

Conferences are a great opportunity to connect academicians from diverse fields, collaborate, get constructive feedback, and improve analytical skills. A conference-based SI presents the opportunity to extend the network and vitality of a conference beyond its narrow temporal confines. Once the SI begins, authors should be ready for multiple iterations of the papers. Patience is key. We are living in an era of antravation.[4] Daily, new things are developing so each paper should match the expectation of journals and the readers. A good editorial team can help effectuate a paper to its actual destination along with its thematic place in a SI. It is important to understand the journey of publication process, which one should ultimately enjoy rather than assuming as a psychological and emotional burden.

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Notes

1 For a discussion of the broad themes of net zero along with its rationale [see Reardon, (2025), pp.426–437].

2 As Lemstra explains, "multidisciplinary is cooperation between different disciplines aimed at the same business activity or research topic, but applying the theories, methods, and tools of each discipline separately; interdisciplinary integrates the different theories resulting in a theoretical foundation of a new discipline; and transdisciplinary combines the theory of one discipline with the empirical findings of another" [Lemstra, (2007), pp.146–147], in effect creating a new discipline.

3 See the paper for numerous references.

4 This word is part of an Indian copyright document by Anuj Kumar. It is a synonym for digitisation.