Engaging Universities in a New Generation of Action, Adaptation, and Transformation

Francisco Marmolejo
Higher Education President
Qatar Foundation
fmarmolejo@qf.org.qa

مؤسسة قطر
Qatar Foundation

Looking for wisdom

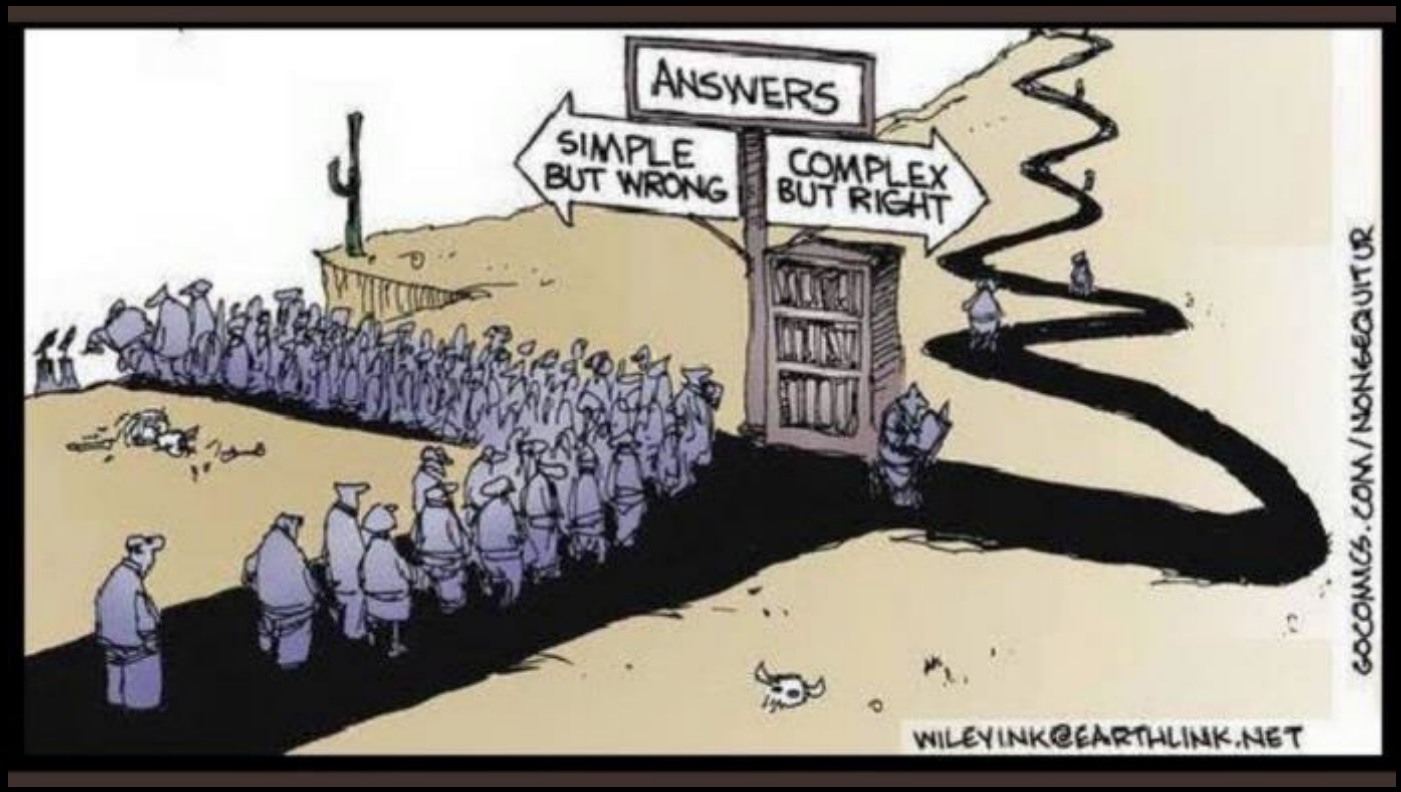
"In today's increasingly complex world and in the face of new and unexpected challenges such as pandemics or geopolitical shifts, universities must be agile and responsive, reimagining their roles in society to provide innovative solutions."

Non-Author Author: Chat GPT

Is it really a complex world?

…and universities are up and ready to address the challenges ahead?

Is it really a complex world?



…or universities are just trying to find easy solutions?

A multidimensional perspective…

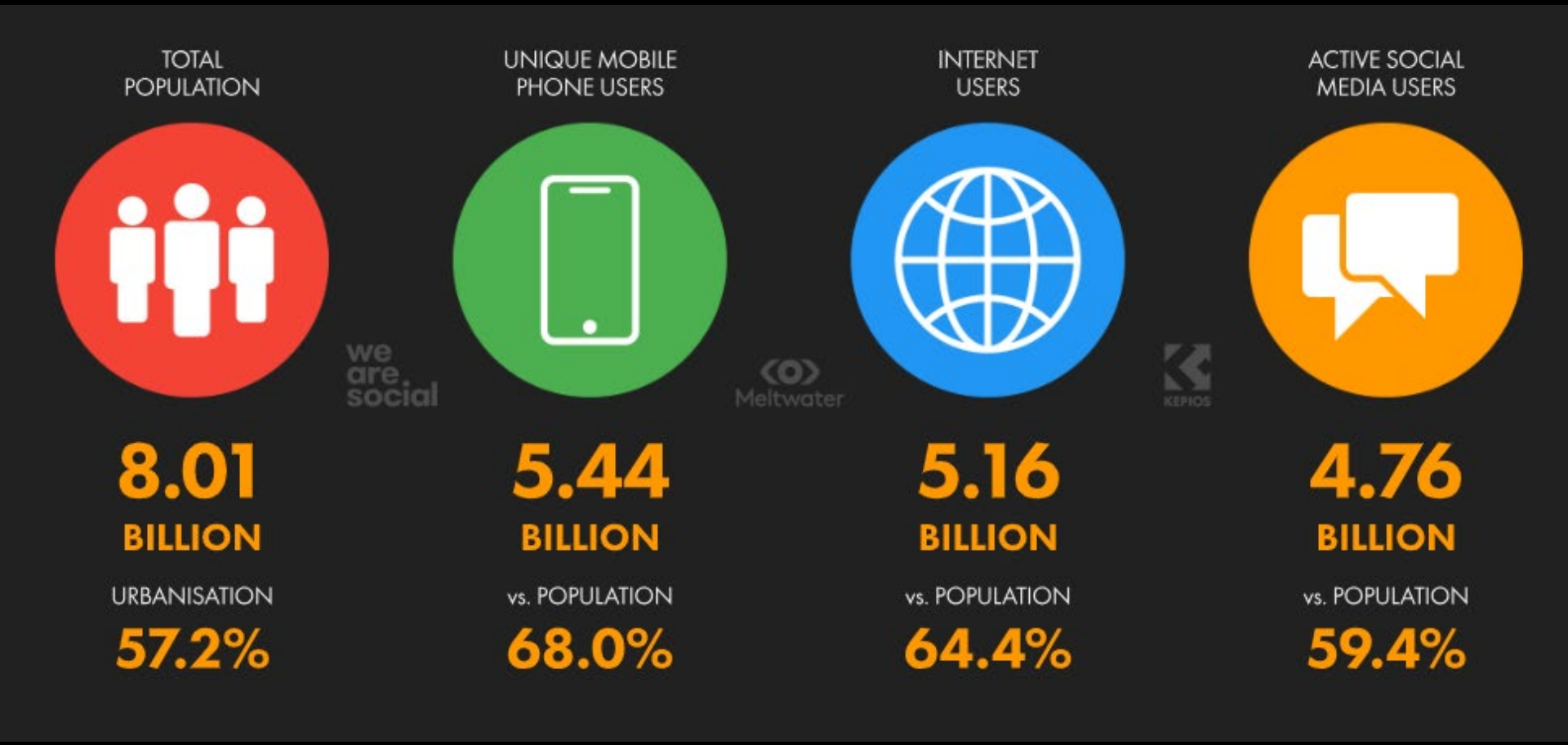
The good news…

We live in a world which is increasingly:

+ Interconnected

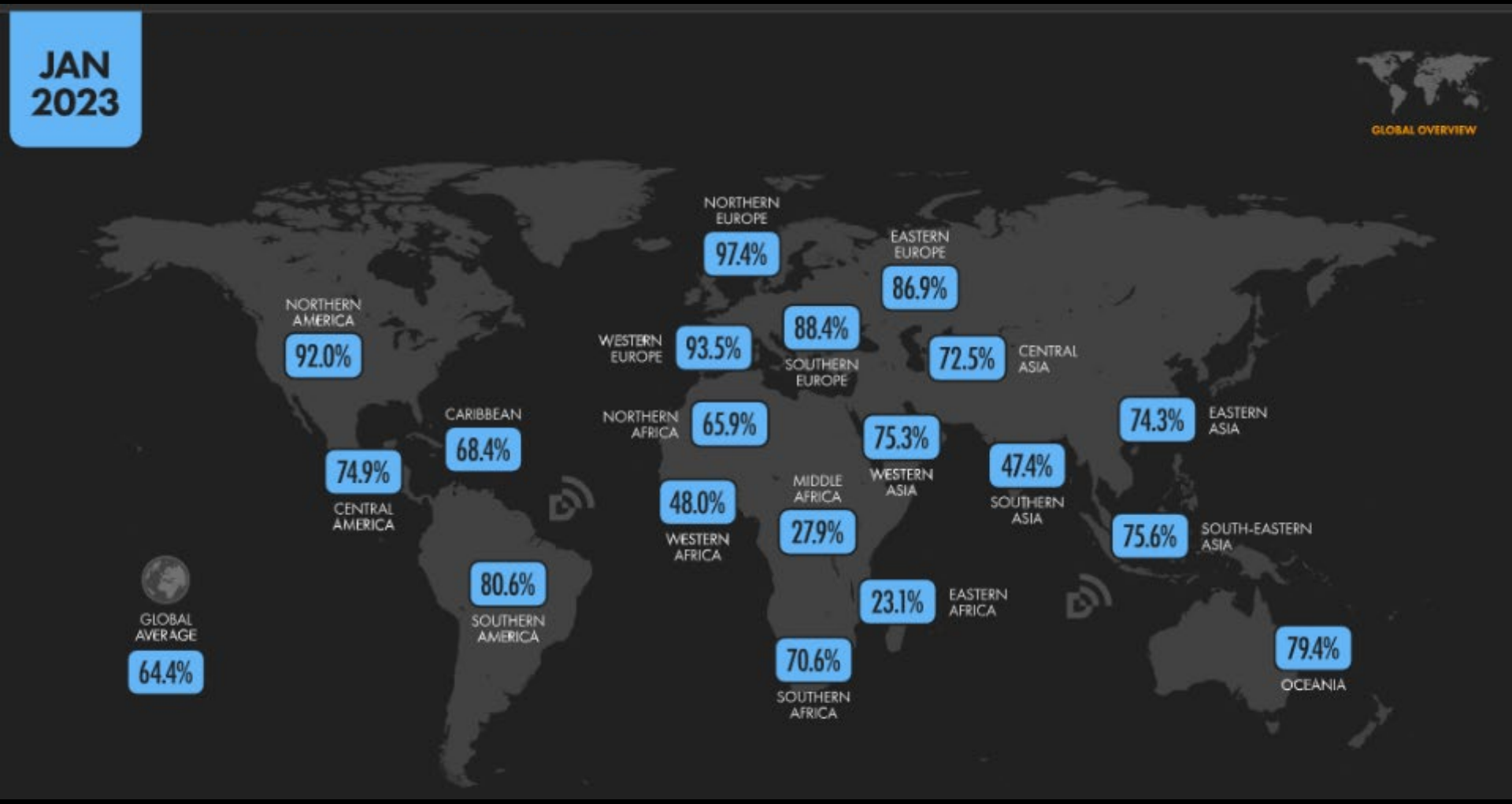
Towards an increasingly interconnected world

Global adoption and use of connected devices and services



Source: https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2023-global-overview-report

Internet users as a percentage of total population



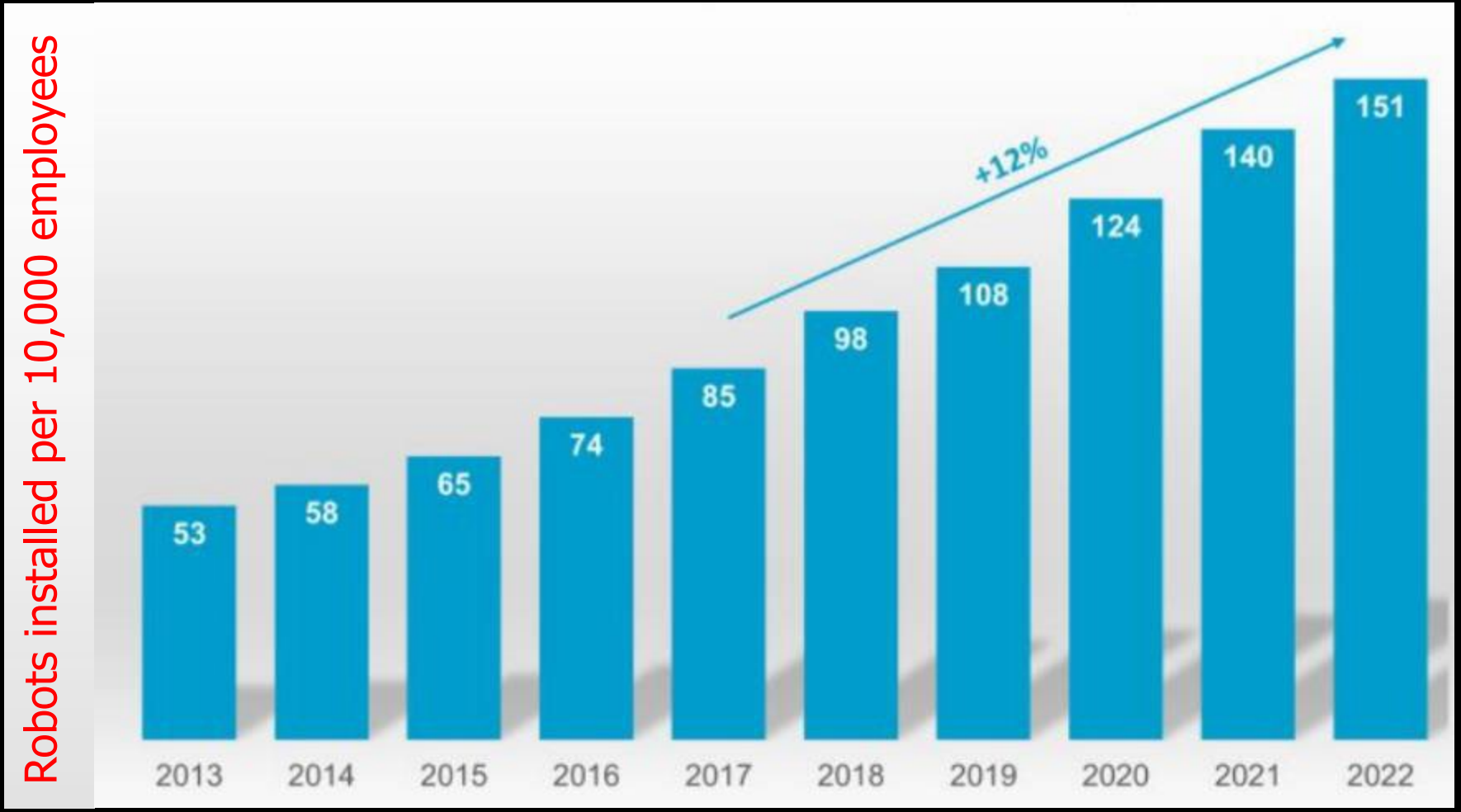
The good news…

We live in a world which is increasingly:

+ Interconnected

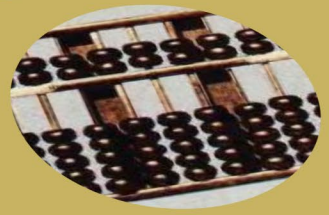
+ Automated

Robot Density 2013-2022.
World Average



Source: International Federation of Robotics

The pace of change



More scientific changes in the next 50 years, than in the last 400 years

Kevin Kelly

The good news…

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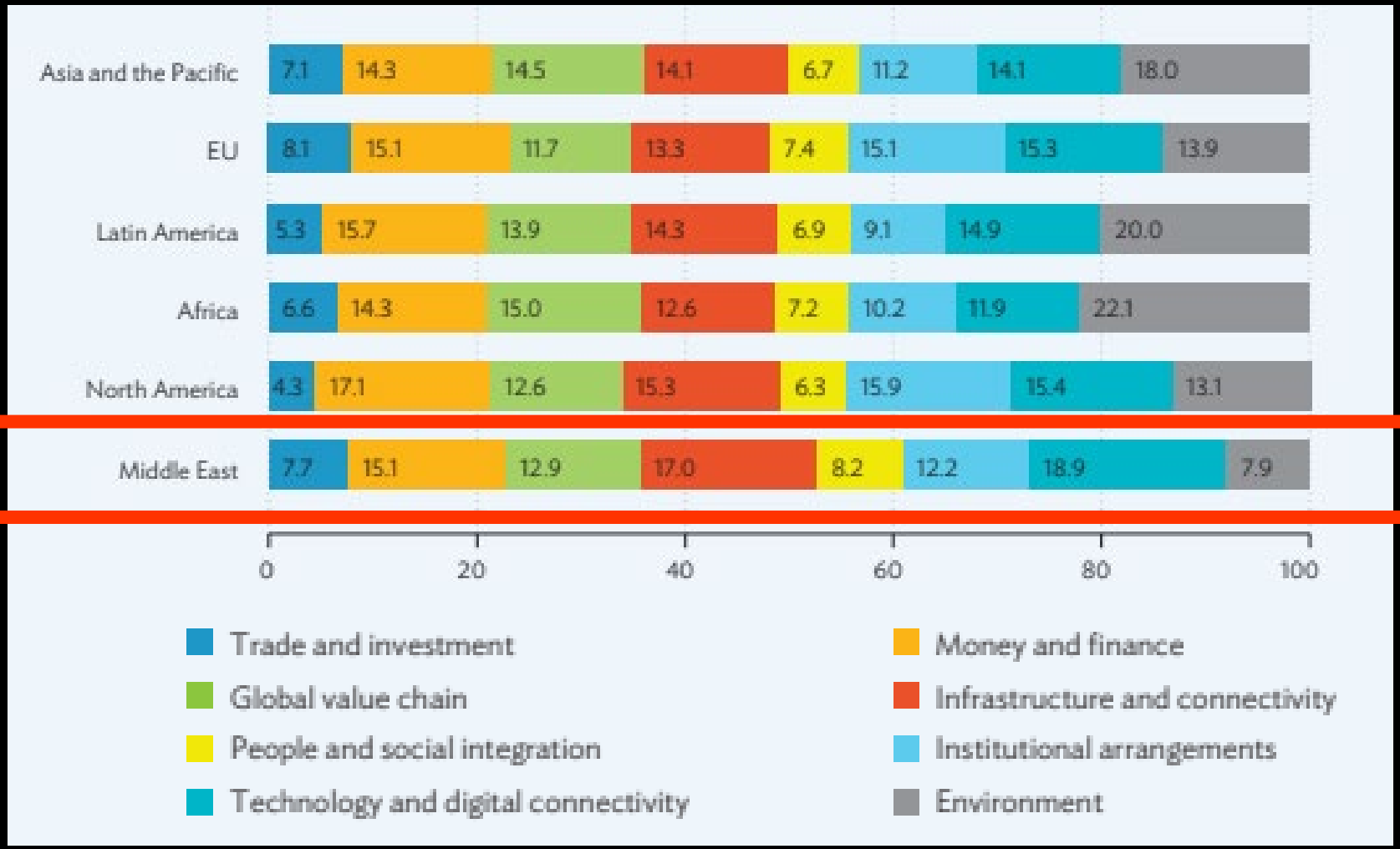
+ Automated

+ Integrated

Overall Index of Global Integration per region



Source: ADB (2023) Measuring Globalization: Framework, Analysis, and Implications

The good news…

We live in a world which is increasingly:

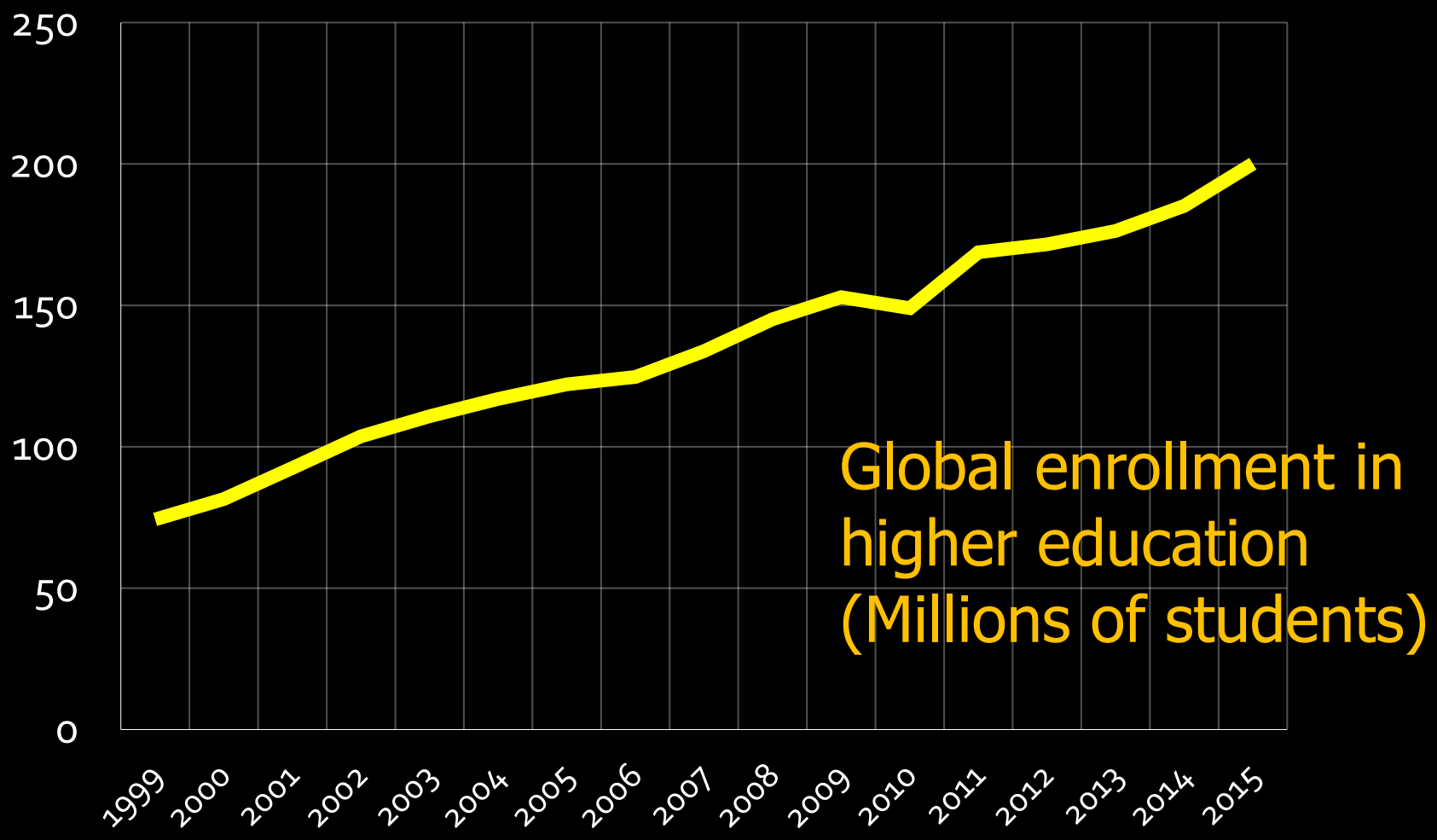
+ Interconnected

+ Automated

+ Integrated

+ Educated

More than ever more people are having access to higher education …



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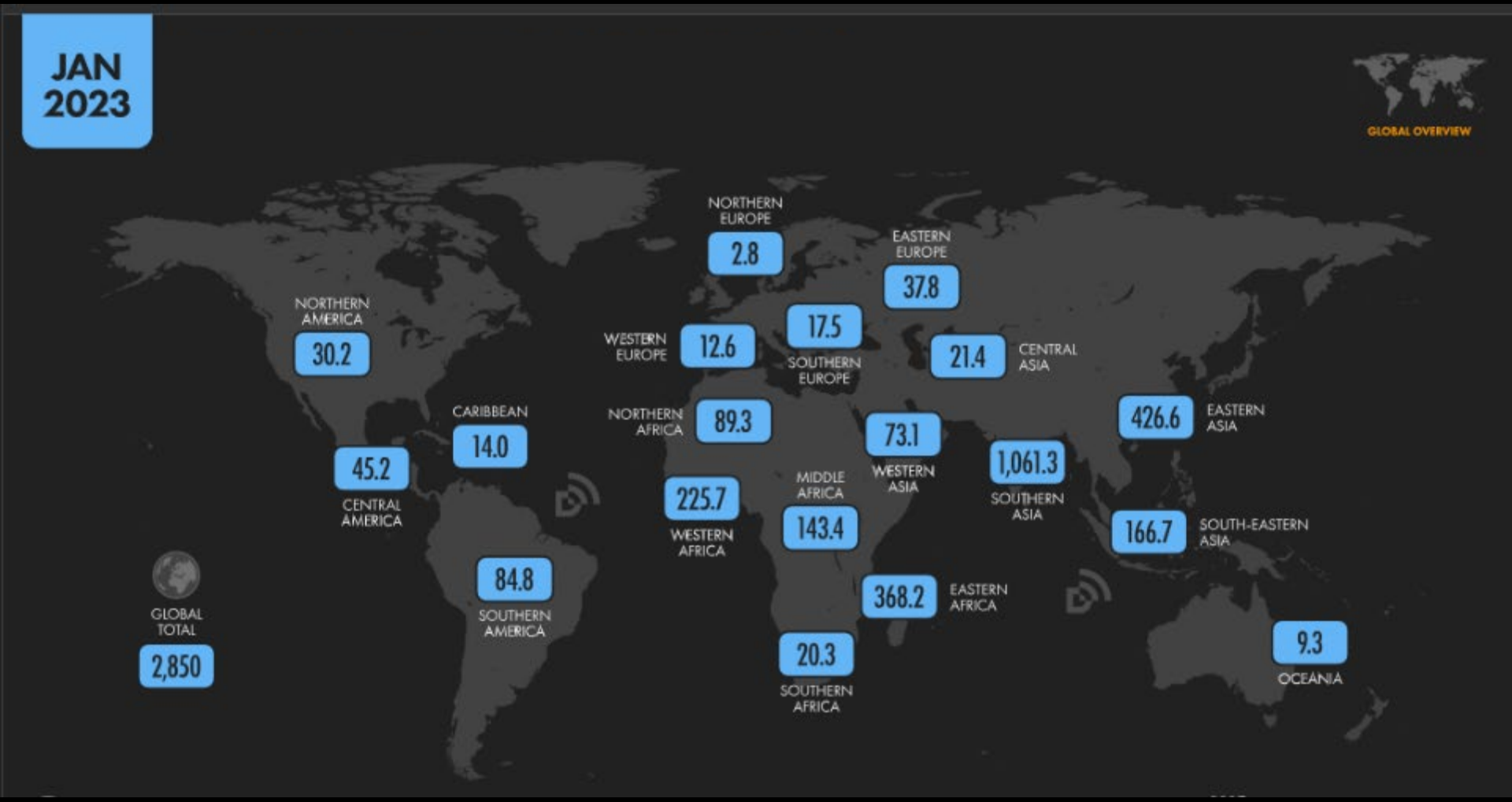
A "fertile" land for more and better higher education

The bad news…

We live in a world which is increasingly:

+ Uninformed

Number of people (in millions) who do not use the internet



The bad news…

We live in a world which is increasingly:

+ Uninformed

+ Disinformed

The day after the total solar eclipse, 85-foot waves traveled from Antarctica to South Africa.

By Sofia Ahmed • April 16, 2024

Notice from a New Jersey doctor's office proves that COVID-19 vaccines are dangerous for athletes.

By Jeff Cercone • April 12, 2024

"UN Agenda 2030 Mission Goals" include "one world government," "one world army," microchipping, "AI courts and end of individual rights."

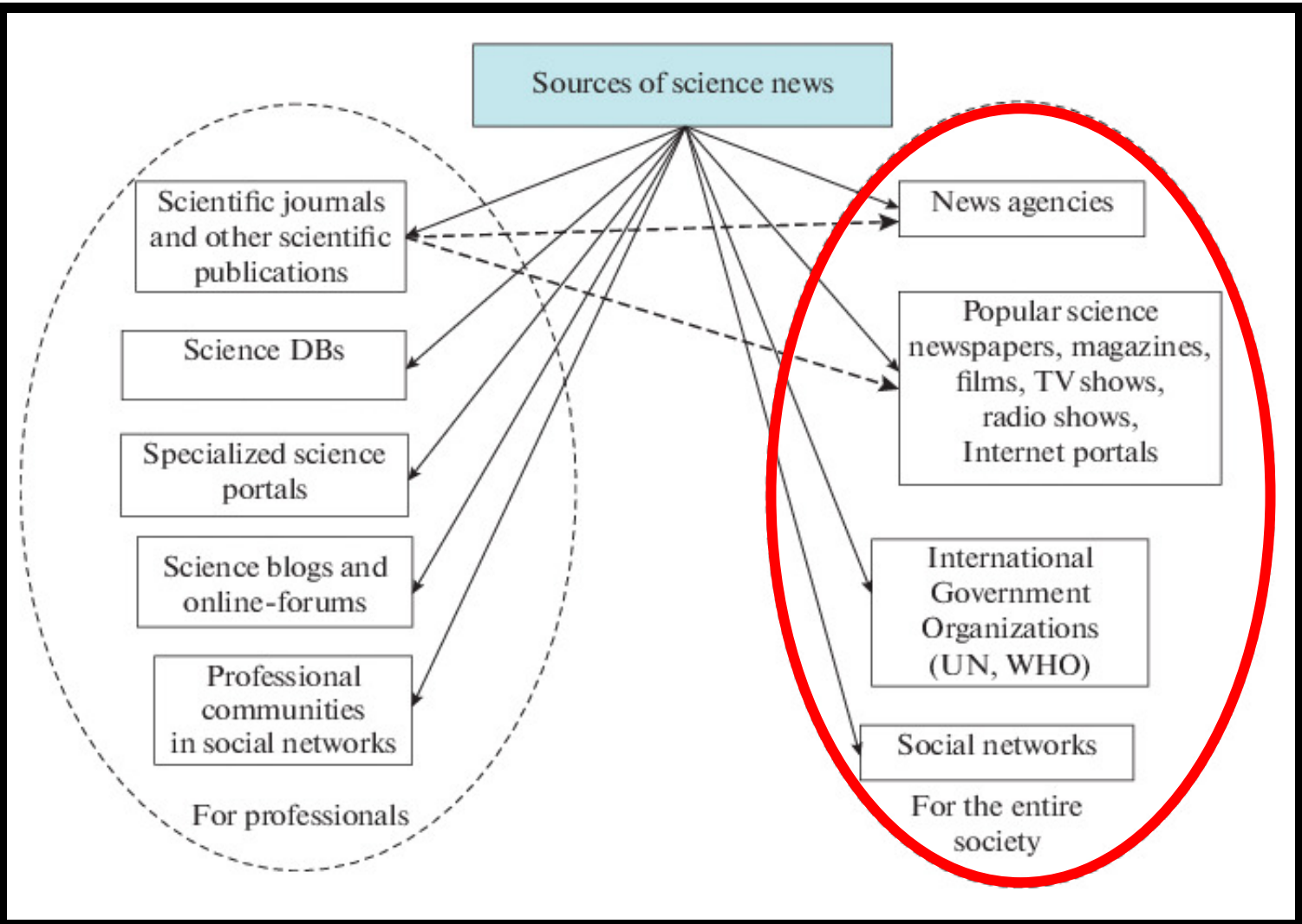
By Loreben Tuquero • April 9, 2024

The current Congress is "the least productive in our lifetime."

By Matthew Crowley • April 3, 2024

Source: PolitiFact.

Knowledge: not anymore a unique domain of universities



Source: Gerbina, T.V. (2021). Science Disinformation: On the Problem of Fake News. Sci Tech Inf Proc. 48(4)

The bad news…

We live in a world which is increasingly:

+ Uninformed

+ Disinformed

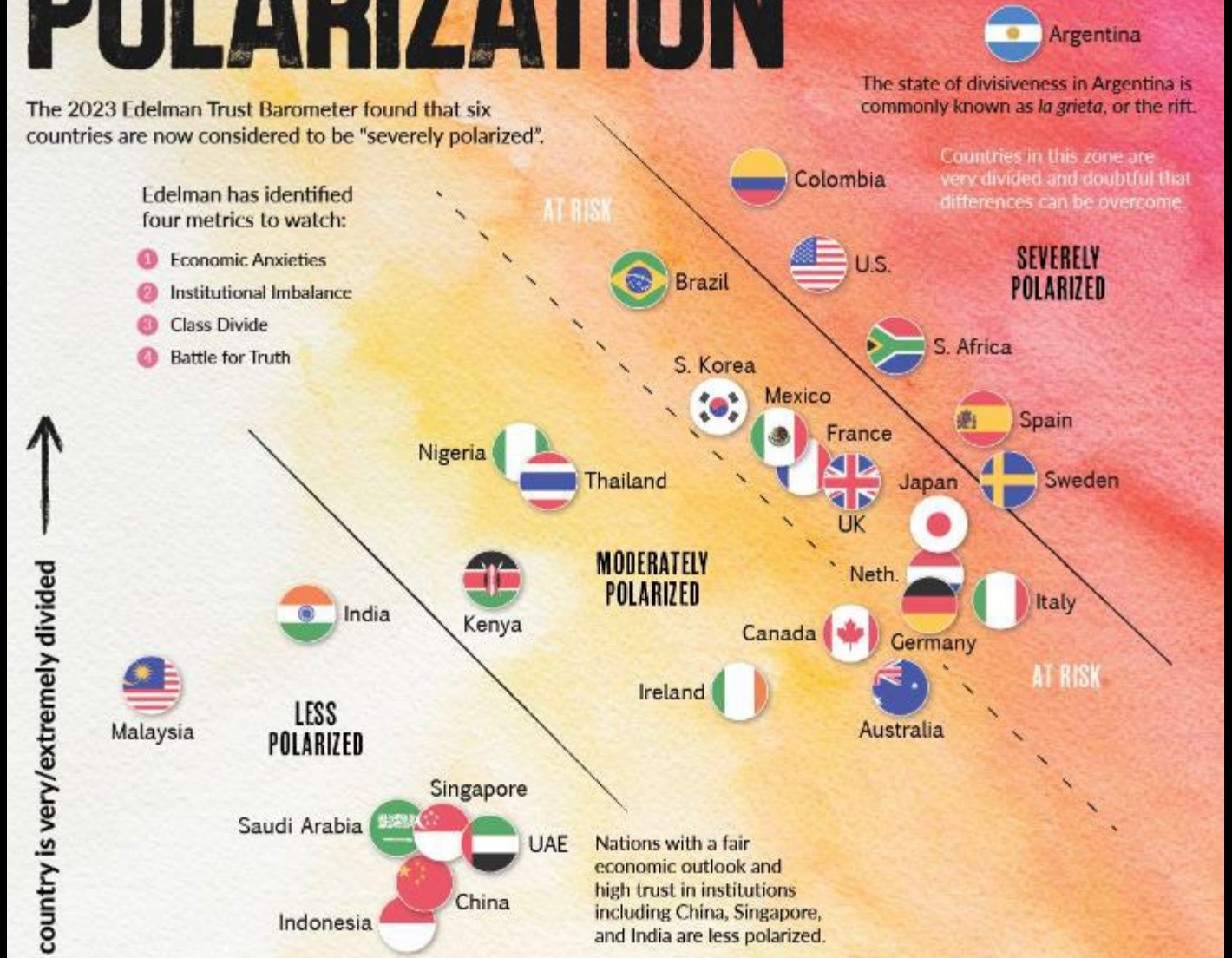
+ Polarized

POLARIZATION

The 2023 Edelman Trust Barometer found that six countries are now considered to be "severely polarized".

Edelman has identified four metrics to watch:

1. Economic Anxieties
2. Institutional Imbalance
3. Class Divide
4. Battle for Truth



Survey of 32,000+ people from 28 countries

Source: 2023 Edelman Trust Barometer

visualcapitalist.com

THEM
US

The bad news…

We live in a world which is increasingly:

+ Uninformed

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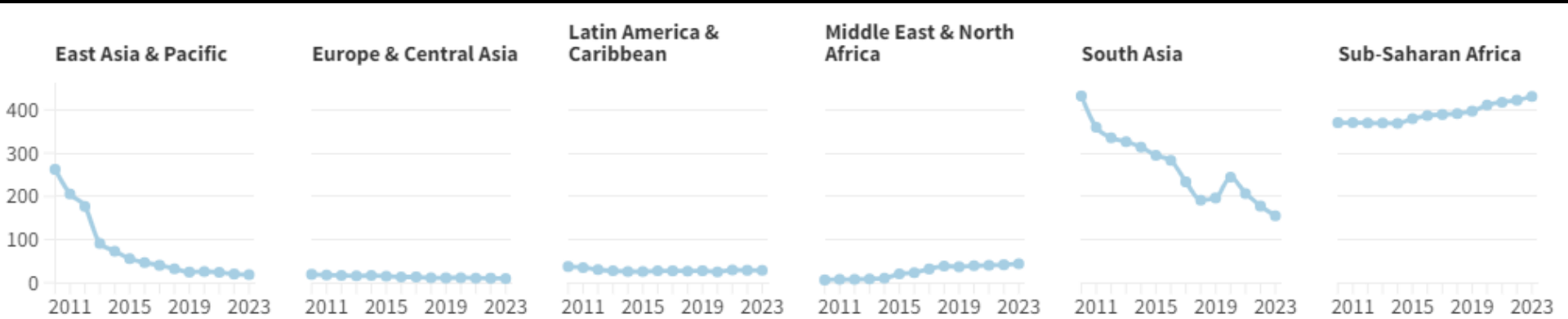
+ Polarized

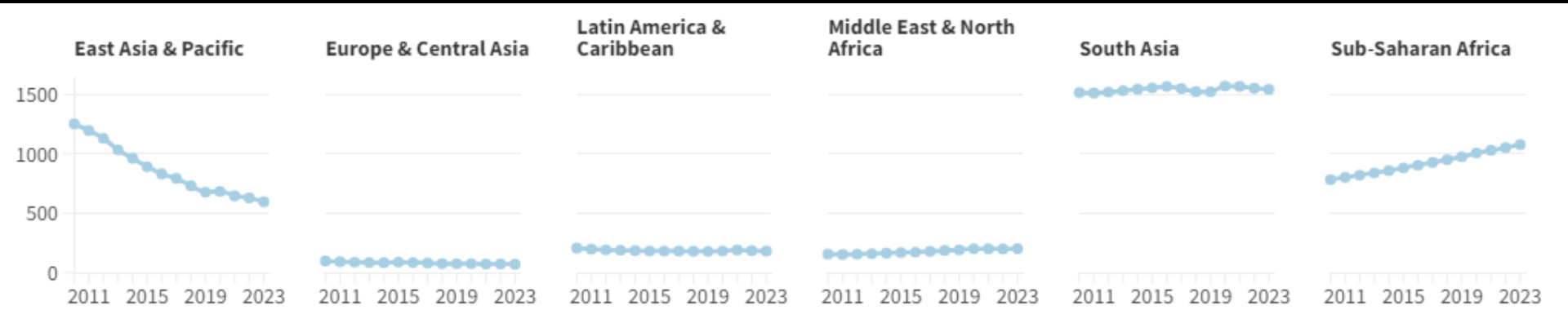
+ Unequal

Global Poverty Trends, 2019-2023

(Poverty lines: $2.15 and $6.85 per day)



$2.15



$6.85

Source: Poverty and Inequality Platform, Mahler ⓡ al (2022, updated)

The bad news…

We live in a world which is increasingly:

+ Uninformed

+ Disinformed

+ Polarized

+ Unequal

+ Unstable

Some signs

- *Conflict*
- *Economic anxiety*
- *Refugee and migration crisis*
- *Rise of violence*
- *Tense and fragile international relations*
- *Internal tensions in countries*
- *Humanitarian crises*

The bad news…

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A "fertile" land for more and better higher education

The challenging news

… we don't know how the dramatic social, economic, political and technological shift being experienced in the world, will impact higher education

…and it is not clear how quickly higher education will be adapting as well

In addition…

… in times of instability and uncertainty, universities are being seen as trying to refrain or to avoid disruption as much as possible

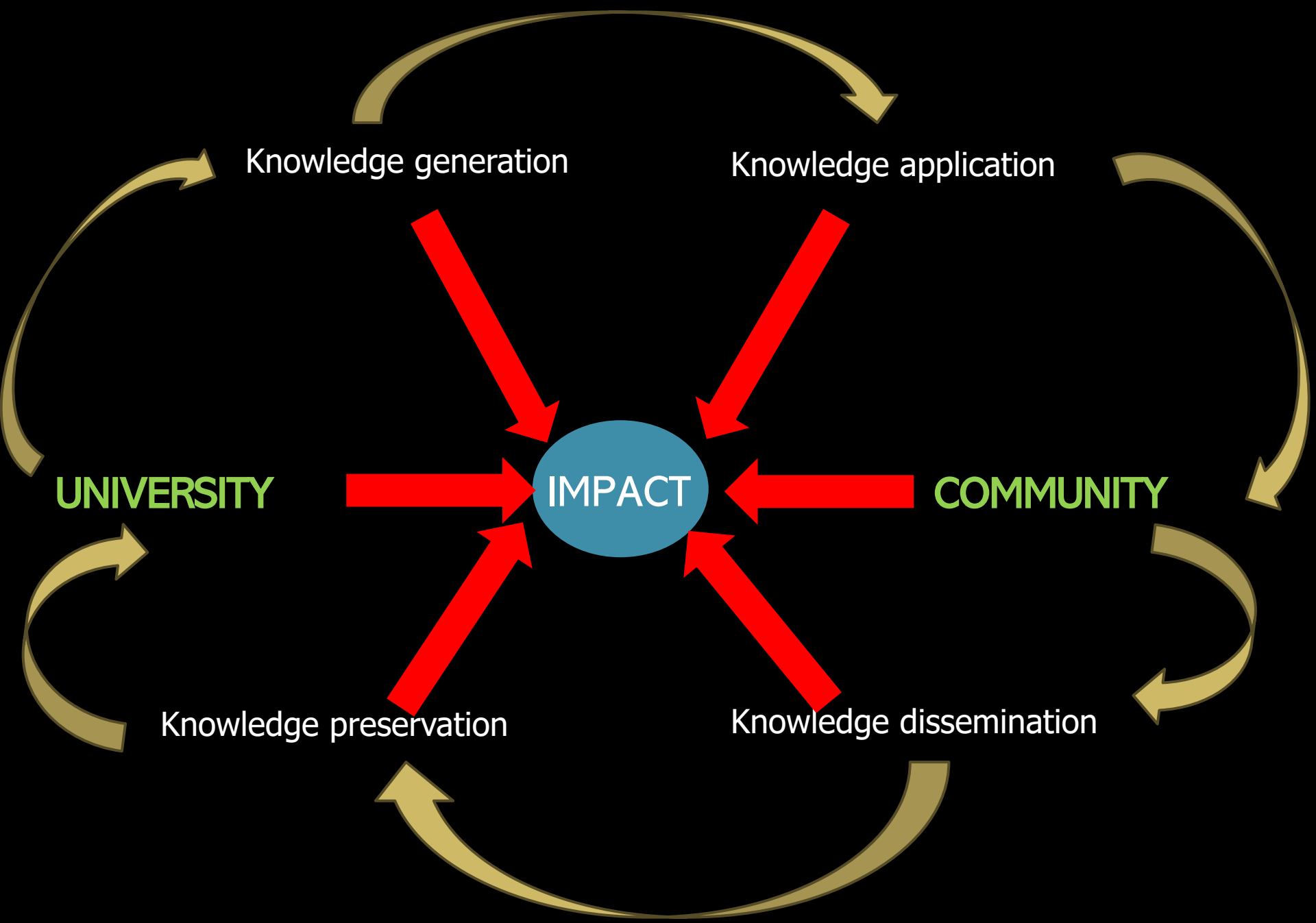
A paradox

Higher education institutions are the best laboratory for social change

...but they have a tendency to inhibit their innovation capacity

A unique context requiring the best from us in higher education

… towards the need of more engaged universities



Source: What is an engaged university? The Michigan State University Model.
https://engagedscholar.msu.edu/magazine/volume01/

Why does engagement matter?

https://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/introducing-public-engagement

Are you at an engaged institution? A checklist

Articulates engagement in the campus mission and strategic plans, linking the community to the academic strengths and goals.

Involves communities in continuous, purposeful, and authentic ways, with a deliberate approach to partnerships.

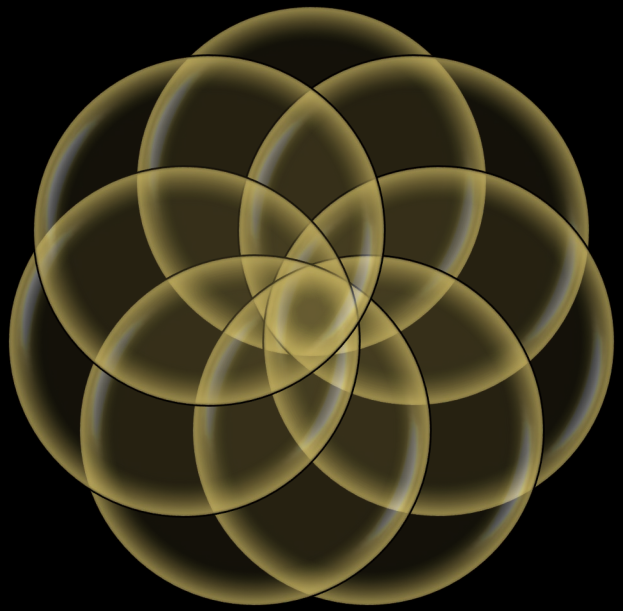
Demonstrates a core commitment to learning through engagement endeavors.

Links engagement to every dimension of campus life and decisions

Develops and sustains necessary policies and infrastructure

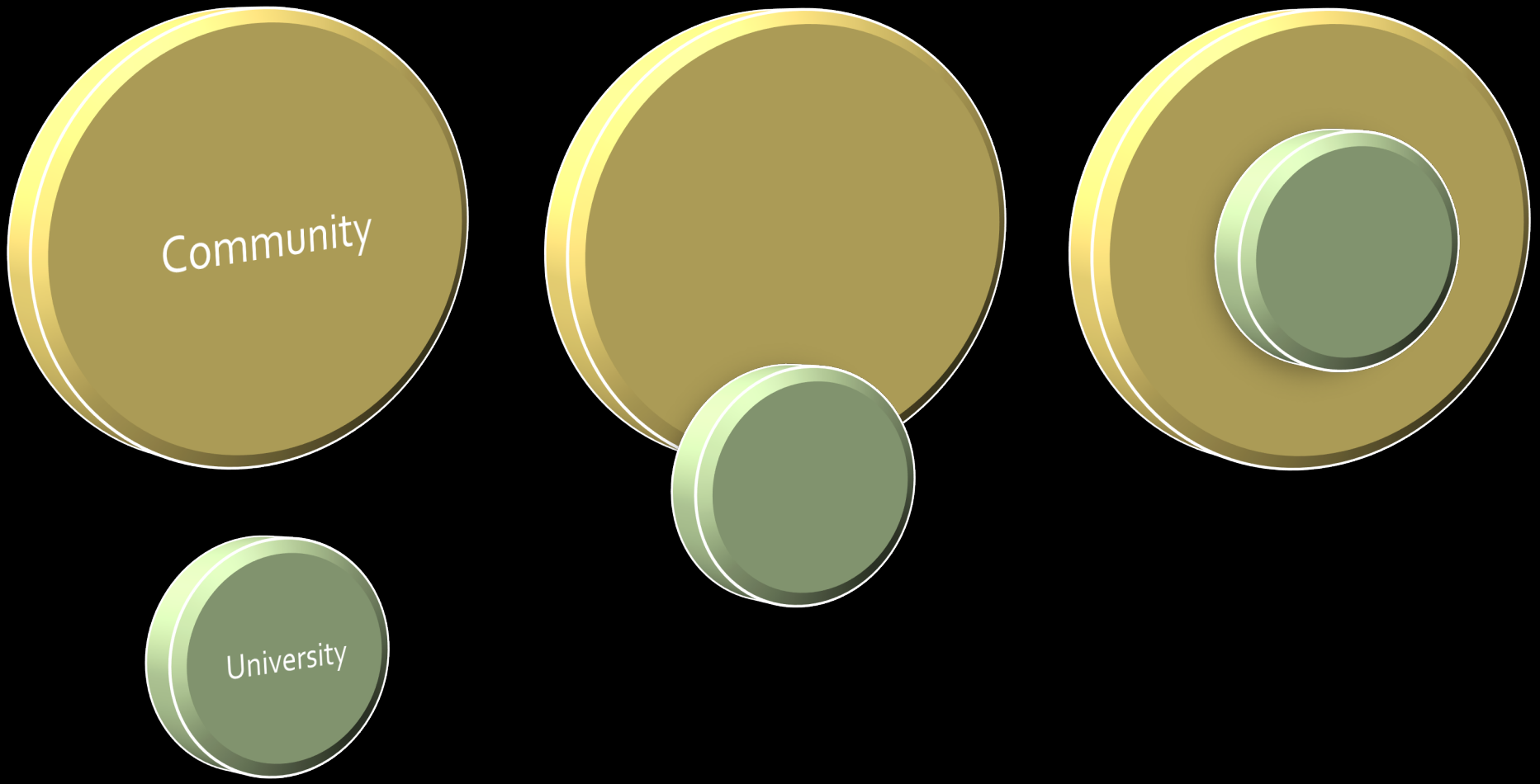
Demonstrates leadership for engagement at all organizational levels

Supports interdisciplinary work

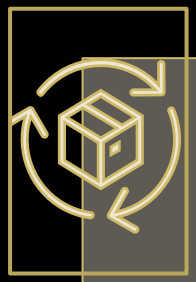


Adapted from Holland, B.A. (2001) Characteristics of "Engaged Institutions" and Sustainable Partnershoips, and Effective Strategies for Change.

We can dream about it…

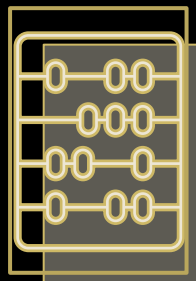


What is needed?



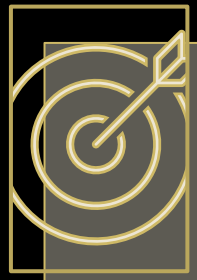
Engagement – an embedded rather than marginal approach

Distributed engagement expertise



People-centred, inclusive culture and practice on the rise

Measuring effectiveness



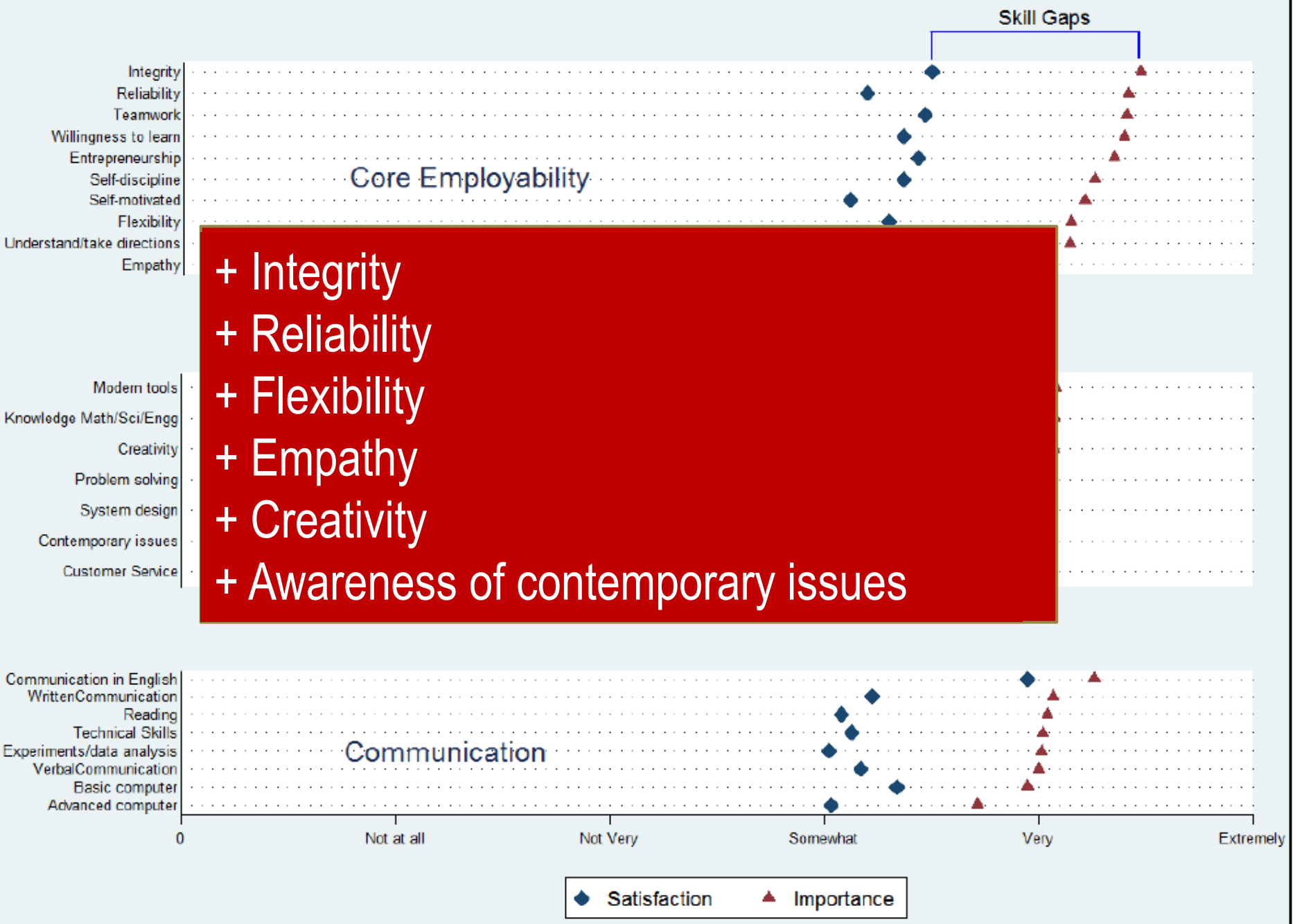
Linking good intentions with right incentives

Are we preparing our students to become engaged citizens?

@fmarmole

Email: fmarmolejo@qf.org.qa

SCHOOL
GEOMETRY
ART
BIOLOGY
HEALTH
LITERATURE
HISTORY


Skill Gaps
Integrity
Reliability
Teamwork
Willingness to learn
Entrepreneurship
Self-discipline
Self-motivated
Flexibility
Understand/take directions
Empathy
Core Employability
+ Integrity
+ Reliability
+ Flexibility
+ Empathy
+ Creativity
+ Awareness of contemporary issues
Modern tools
Knowledge Math/Sci/Engg
Creativity
Problem solving
System design
Contemporary issues
Customer Service
Communication in English
WrittenCommunication
Reading
Technical Skills
Experiments/data analysis
VerbalCommunication
Basic computer
Advanced computer
Communication
0
Not at all
Not Very
Somewhat
Very
Extremely
Satisfaction
Importance

Needed, better articulation between universities and schools

@fmarmole

Email: fmarmolejo@qf.org.qa

Ideal timing for the development of skills

	0-5	6-11	12-18	19-29	30+
Problem solving		X	X		
Persistence	X	X			
Motivation		X		X	
Self-control	X	X	X		
Team-work	X	X			
Initiative	X	X	X	X	
Confidence		X	X	X	
Ethics		X	X		

Simplified adaptation from : Guerra and Modecki (2015), *Social-Emotional Skills Development Across the Life Span: PRACTICE,* The World Bank

Needed, heavier emphasis on commitment and adaptability…. and a greater culture of evidence

@fmarmole

Email: fmarmolejo@qf.org.qa

PLACE-BASED EDUCATION

DEFINITION

Place-based education (PBE) is an environmentally and culturally conscious approach to education that uses the local environment and community as a context for learning. It is designed to provide students with the chance to exercise citizenship and agency, and build connections in their community.

KEY FEATURES

- Active project-based learning
- Engagement with local issues
- A focus on natural environments and sustainability
- Emphasis on heritage and culture
- Embraces community service and local citizenship education

Does the learning happen…?

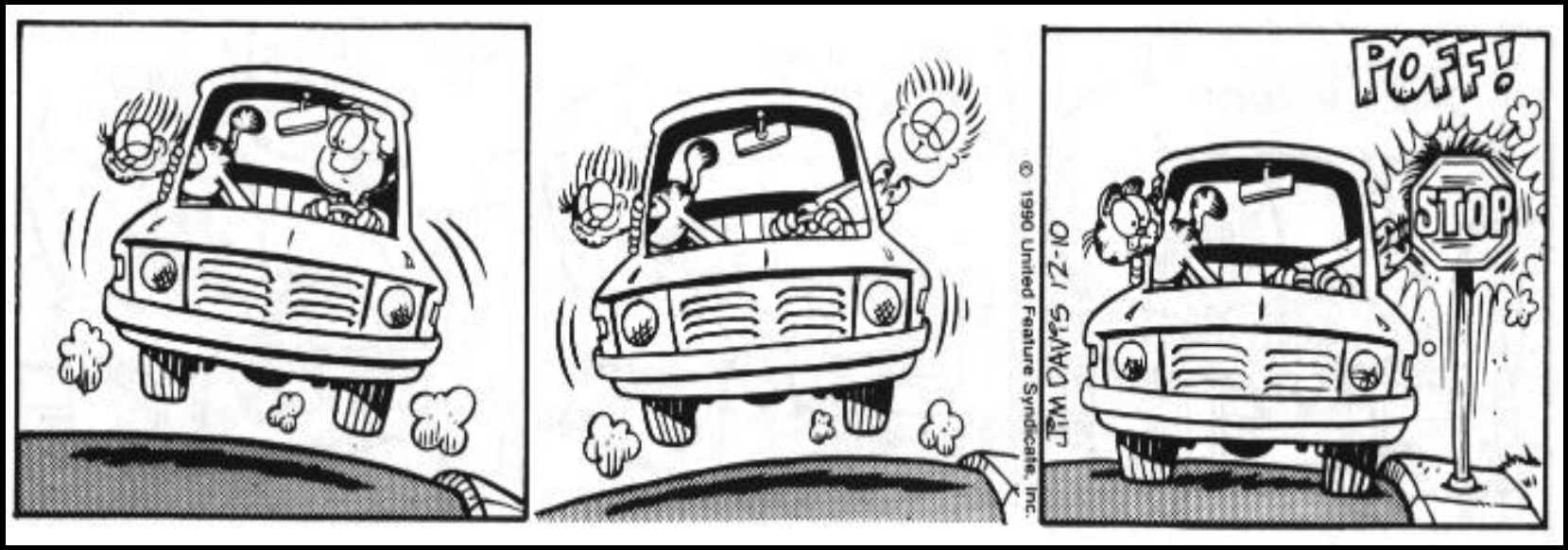
Due to the formal learning in HE?
Despite of it?
Independently of it?

Many times we don't know

How our institutions can ensure that students are acquiring crucial life skills and community engagement and commitment as part of their academic studies?

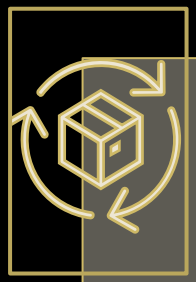
There is no magic formula…

- What it may work in one case



…it is not necessarily the best solution in other cases

What is needed?



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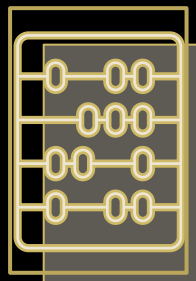

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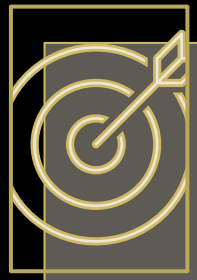

Linking good intentions with right incentives

A renewed landscape

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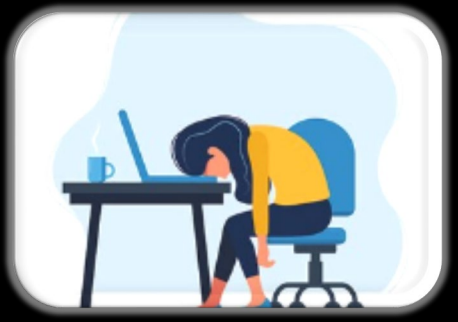
Some areas of opportunity for disruptive education

Smart articulation

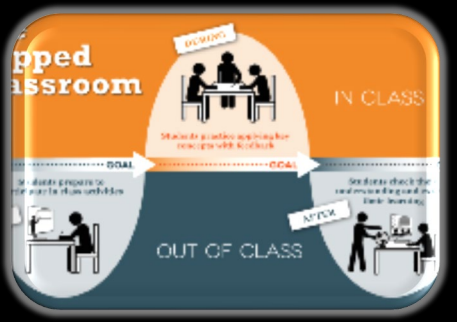
Recognition of prior learning

True flexibility



Blended delivery

The community into the school: research for social change



Students as drivers of their own learning: flipped learning

Virtual mobility

Internationalization "at home"

Are we just reacting, emulating, or proactively engaged in fostering change?

A more effective engagement:

Changing the paradigm

A good idea, but..

Too far from home

Too far from education

A priority for "tomorrow"

A critical need

Too close to home

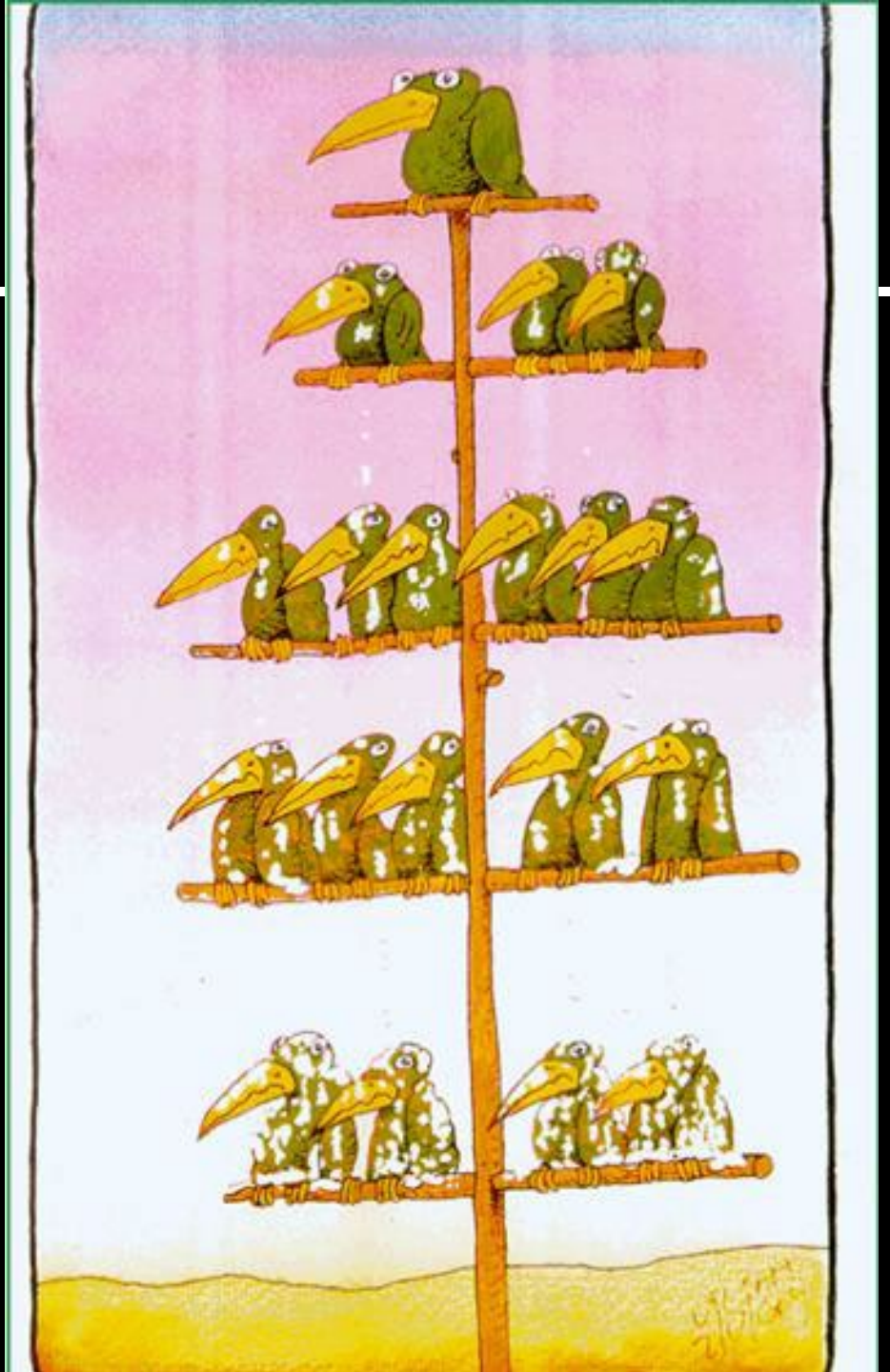
Essential part of education

A priority for "yesterday"

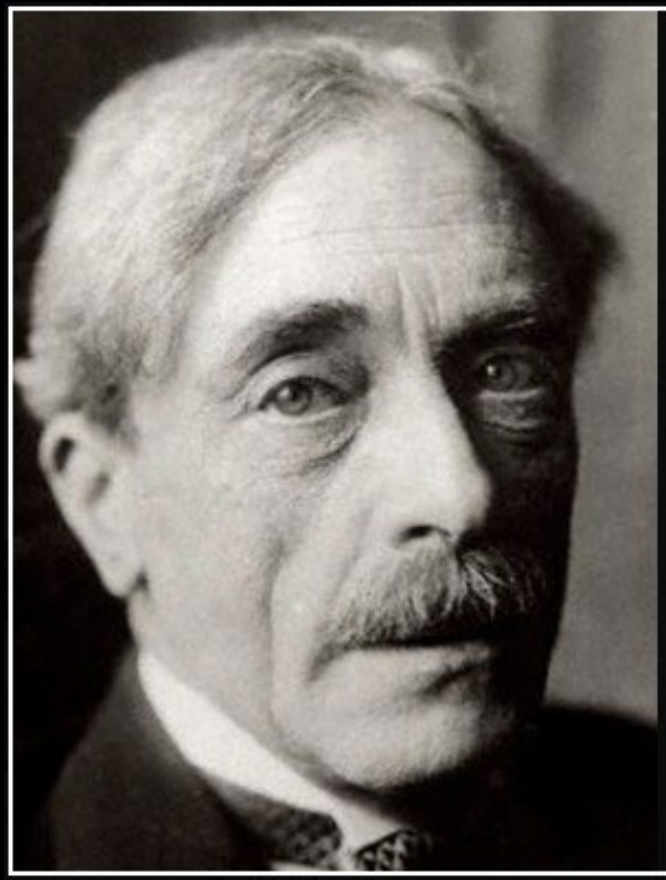
The art of ambiguity

Continuing doing the same, but waiting different results

Who is responsible?



A call for action



The future, like everything else, is no longer quite what it used to be.

— Paul Valery —

AZ QUOTES

@fmarmole

Email: fmarmolejo@qf.org.qa

Francisco Marmolejo
Higher Education President
Qatar Foundation

Email: fmarmolejo@qf.org.qa
http://www.qf.org.qa

Twitter @fmarmole

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Qatar Foundation