NEON summit: **Addressing differential outcomes for Widening Access Learners**
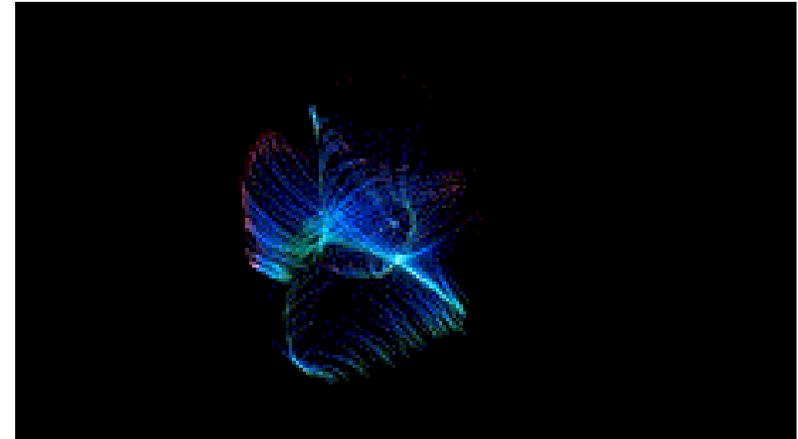
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What is to be done!

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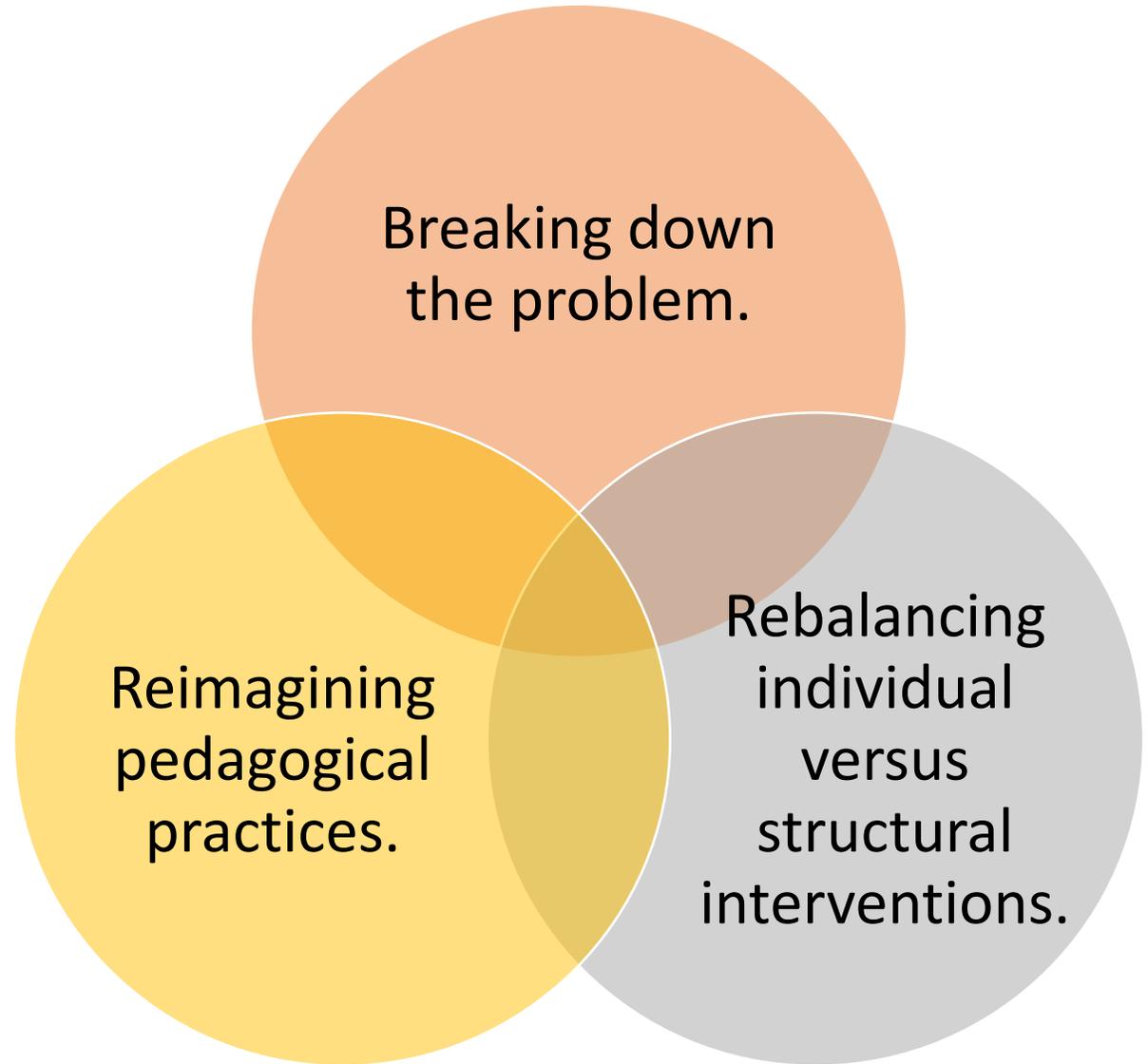
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Historical context – in search of a new enlightenment.

- WP is a relatively new idea and potentially revolutionary - it challenges deep held conceptions of human capability and worth, and social roles, and systems, inclusion/exclusion and dominance and ultimately power.

- Central to the European Enlightenment was the idea of the 'social contract' i.e. the view that persons' moral and/or political obligations are dependent upon a contract or agreement among them to form the society in which they live.

- Only so called 'full-persons' capable of 'rational thought' can truly participate in this social contract.

- Until early part of the 20th Century, the 'rational subject' was traditionally imagined to be white, European, Christian, male and of good 'stock',

- Inequities were deemed to be natural or even desirable.

- The 20th Century, especially the idea of universal education and social justice has challenged many of these assumptions.

- Widening access and participation in Higher Education has disrupted this social contract and HEI's desperately trying to come to terms with the idea that ALL human beings are 'full persons.'

- It is this paradigm shift that we are currently struggling to fully comprehend.

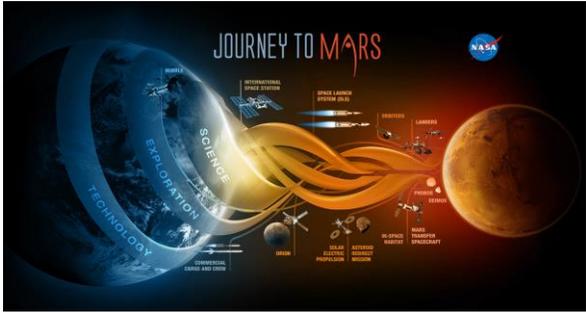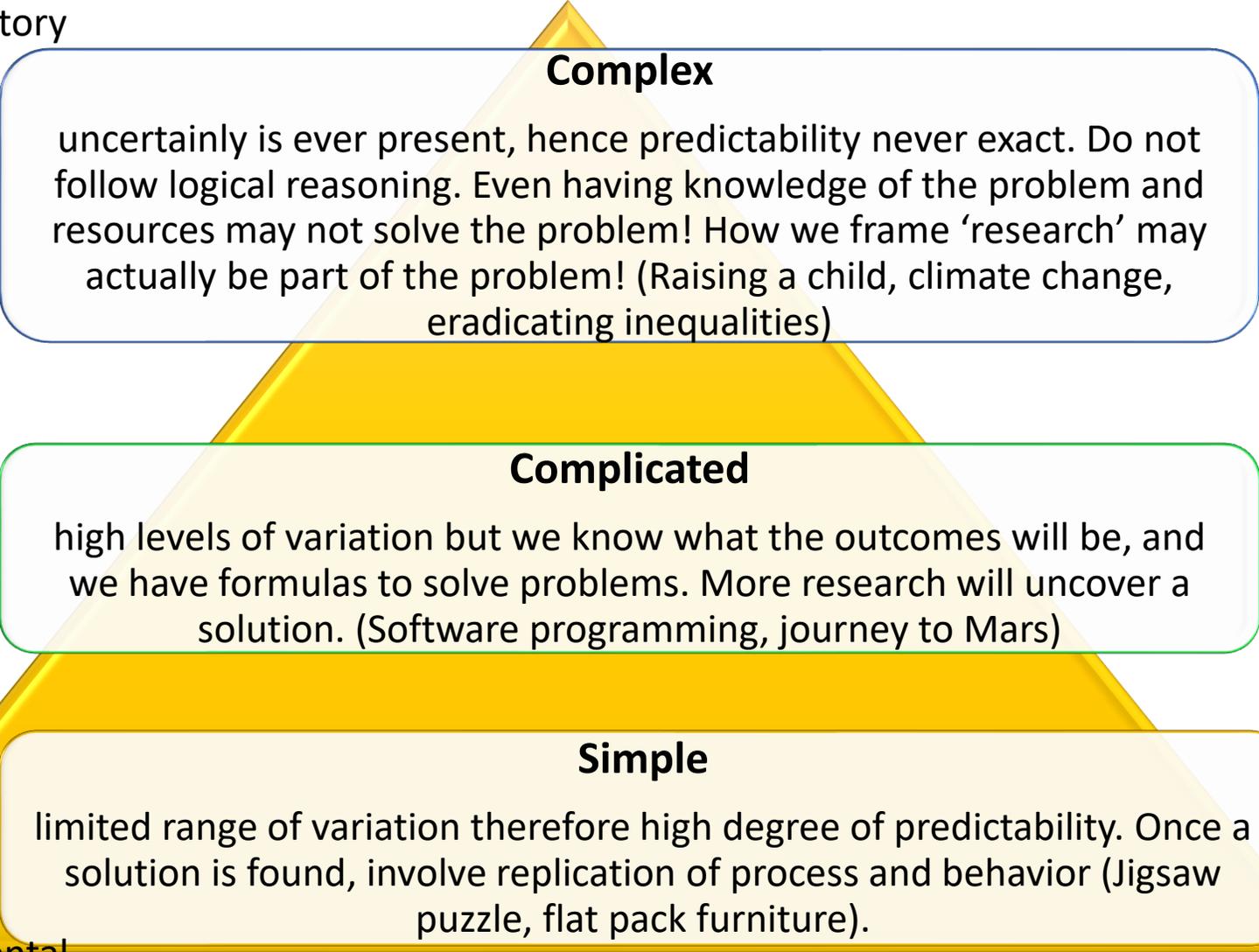# Eradicating differentials by breaking down the problem?

Action/Emancipatory

Evaluation

Complex

uncertainly is ever present, hence predictability never exact. Do not follow logical reasoning. Even having knowledge of the problem and resources may not solve the problem! How we frame 'research' may actually be part of the problem! (Raising a child, climate change, eradicating inequalities)

Complicated

high levels of variation but we know what the outcomes will be, and we have formulas to solve problems. More research will uncover a solution. (Software programming, journey to Mars)

Simple

limited range of variation therefore high degree of predictability. Once a solution is found, involve replication of process and behavior (Jigsaw puzzle, flat pack furniture).

Positivist/Instrumental

Understanding the limitations of categories, such as, BAME or WP student.

Problematising the category BAME

- We are no dealing with a minority but global majority.

- Tendency to deploy the acronym as a pronoun - drift towards deficit models.

- Considerable variation amongst the various BAME communities, hence, the need for intersectional understanding.

- Powerful correlations between attainment and factors such as 'free-school meals', parental qualifications and employment, care experiences, post-code.

- Categories can only offer some statistical inferences, which need to be critically understood. e.g. high incidence of 'plagiarism'/'academic dishonesty' may reveal higher levels of surveillance rather than dishonesty.

Problematising the concept of attainment

- Tendency towards focusing on the student and deficit models.

- We tend to see this in objective terms only, which fails to take into account personal circumstance.

- We talk about contextual factors for admissions and 'non detriment' in the context of COVD 19 – what does this mean?

- 'Awarding differentials' shifts the focus away from emphasizing behavior to institutional and structural factors.

- But its not a choice between individual or structural interventions but how these working together.

- Not agency versus structure, but agency and structure.

- Poses a big challenge for most teachers in HEE who relate to the students on a personal level. (see later)

Focusing on structural and institutional – lessons from Health Inequalities e.g. COVID 19 – BAME Differentials

Focusing on Structural Determinants to Educational Attainment
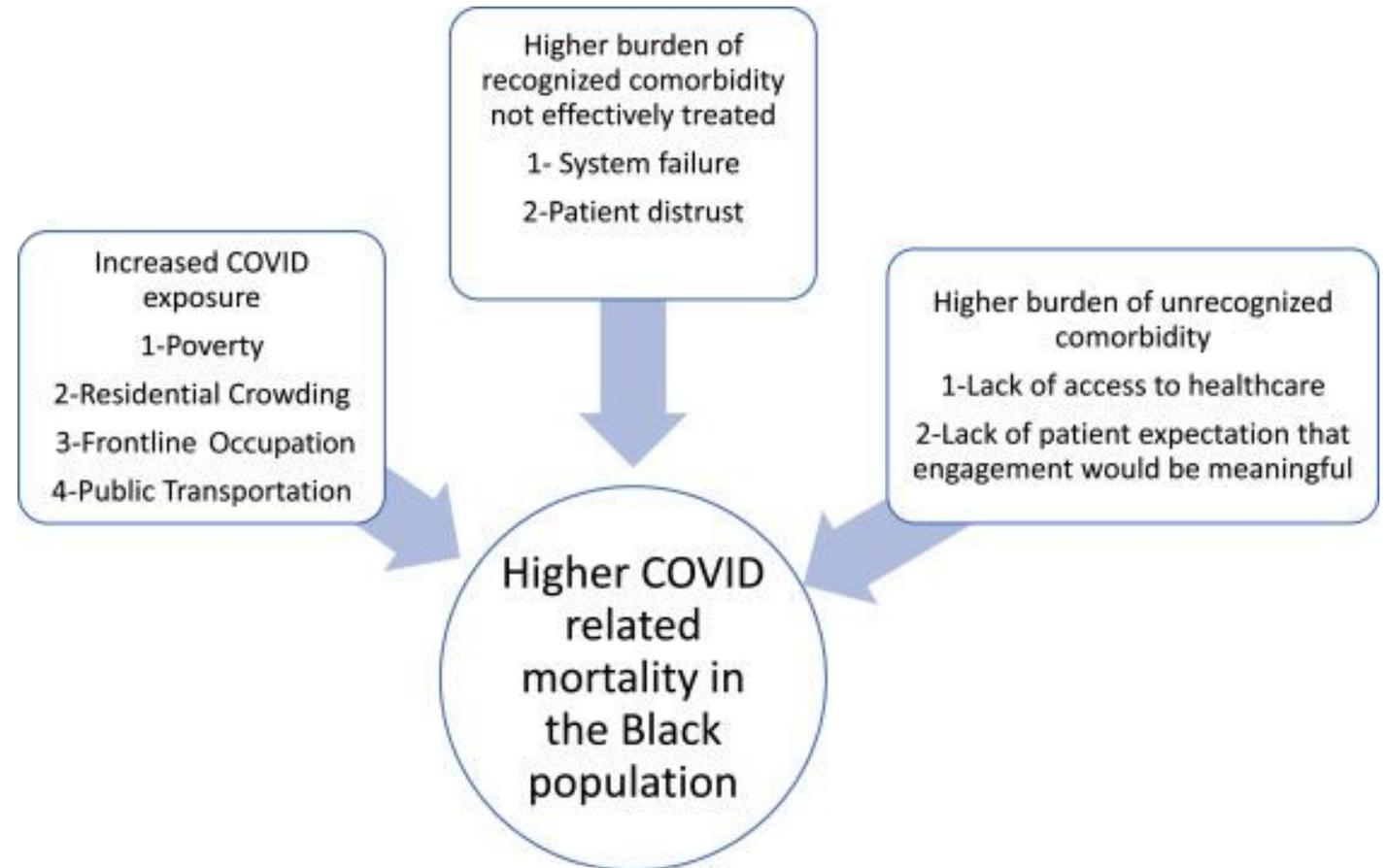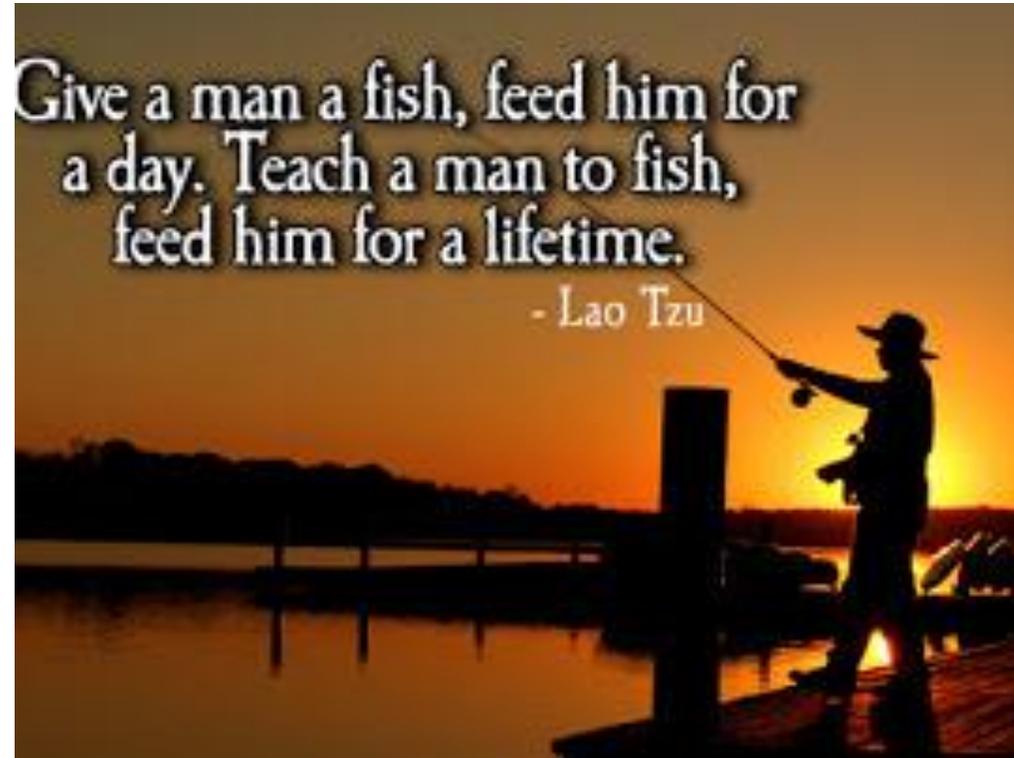
Give a man a fish, feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish, feed him for a lifetime.
- Lao Tzu

• What are the limitations in this seemingly noble sentiment which I am sure we all share?

• Ignores 4 key factors:

1. You need equipment to fish, and the the better the equipment the better your chance of catching a fish.

2. You need access to the water, which may not be that easy.

3. You need to feel secure, physically and psychologically when you are fishing.

4. Will you be able to sell your fish in a rigged market or if you don't have contacts?

Focusing of Structural and Institutional Determinants

- COVID 19 has taught us that behaviourism simply isn't the solution and may even make things worse, hence we need to rebalance from student centred (down stream) approaches (emphasis on cognition as a way to change) to structural inequalities (upstream) focusing on systems, processes and material dimensions of student life?

- Looking after ourselves and students – Human beings, not the bricks and mortar, are the prime assets of a university.

- With the shift to online, when we think of the 'estate of the university', what does this mean and what are the implication for expenditure?

- Moving beyond the binary of home versus campus, to home and campus?

- Shifting from a (romantic) conception of university life as disconnecting, carefree, to family centric delivery of learning.

- From 'customer care' to 'pedagogy of care'
  - *"An ethics of care is in itself an act of inclusion".(*Waghid, Yusefo, (2019) Towards a Philosophy of Caring in Higher Education. Palgrave.)

Curriculum design Pedagogical Practices.

- From Lecturers to curators of learning.

- True blended learning – not just the ingredients but also the cooking – who does the cooking?

- What do we mean by inclusive assessment
  - Variety of methods:
  - Contextual assessment.
  - Natural - assessment led learning.
  - Thinking beyond the essay, dissertation or exam and the dreaded exam in the gym!
  - Online assessment, co-assessment, self-assessment.

- Mentorship and supervision - Developing the pedagogy of allyship.

- Claiming decolonized pedagogy for ourselves – we cannot play the game by instruction manual or in somebody else's boots!

- Reclaiming our professional identity, expertise and authority underpinned not by elitism, privilege and status but for the present age – 'a new age of enlightenment'.