

INTERVIEWS (SELECTED)

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(1) **How will higher education's digitalization transform teaching and learning?**

In terms of teaching the following trends can be observed:

- the emergence of new educational content providers (MOOCs), independent from universities and the educational system (national, European, etc.), offering various formats of educational services (courses, training, quasi-diploma programs);
- the emergence of new educational formats of universities; for them, it is mostly an opportunity to enter new markets with educational services and branding (e.g., for top world universities it will be the entry with online certification programs into emerging markets);
- the modification of classic educational services (Bachelor or Master or MBA programs) through a blended-learning formula to make the transfer of knowledge, skills, and competences more attractive. The aim of such activities is also cost-effectiveness and the acquisition of new groups of students (less classes on-campus -> decrease in the costs of studying).

In terms of learning, the digitalization contributes to broadening access to knowledge and changing the formulas of knowledge transfer. Students have the opportunity to benefit from more and more educational products/“studies” offered by an increasing number of potential providers, not only universities.

Digitalization also contributes to the increasing range of possible ways of taking advantage of education – smartphonization makes it possible to study “on the way,” while doing something else (driving, exercising, etc.).

(2) What academic contents and skills should universities teach?

Universities are spaces for development, not just for acquiring specific competences for career building. This mechanistic perspective of the university (career, profession, competences necessary for work) is a threat to the idea of the university. The university should train students to be value contributors in the future world. Therefore, apart from hard competences connected with a given professional development, students should shape and develop such qualities as: curiosity, critical thinking, entrepreneurial drive, leadership, caring for others. It is particularly important that, in the technological world, students of each field of study, especially those from the STEM area, should have their “hard” curriculum blended with content coming from humanistic disciplines (philosophy etc.).

(3) How will degrees and certification look like in the future?

In my opinion, the standard model: bachelor, master, PhD/MBA will gradually be broken. Both students and employers will accept other ways of confirming knowledge, competences, and skills. It will be a wide set of certificates, master classes, development programs, annual or semi-annual programs, even

computer games results. Surely the providers of such certificates will be (and are) not only the universities. The key issue for the acceptance of such development will be the recognition of these alternative systems and certification bodies throughout the education system (ministries, universities, accreditation bodies). The sooner the system acceptance of such alternative solutions takes place, the sooner the education landscape will change.

- (4) **Who is and what role, according to you, does a university's community play in the future?**

This is a serious challenge because universities are losing their monopoly on knowledge creation. Research is more and more often created by companies/corporations for whom it has a strictly utilitarian value – research is for the commercial good, and thus, by implication, for society. Scientific research, especially in the area of management, is not promoted strongly enough among the representatives of the business world, which results in its hermetic character – society (and business) in such a case ceases to trust business schools, which requires undertaking an in-depth discussion on the relevance of research in the discipline of management sciences and the usefulness of its results for society.

Universities are certainly a forge of staff for business and institutions, they should be like a hub – where different thoughts, approaches, and people meet, creating value for society in a networked way.

- (5) **Will the change in higher education be transformative or disruptive, and why? In case of disruption, what could and should universities do to counter their potential disruption?**

These two changes are happening simultaneously; alternative education providers are developing rapidly, but COVID-19 also forced all schools to make internal, evolutionary but nevertheless valuable changes. I don't think that universities have to look at

MOOCs as competitors – a university can offer much more value than online education offered by platforms. I also think that the demand for education will grow rapidly due to social and economic changes (the post-COVID crisis, digital transformation) and the Life Long Learning trend will continue.

(6) **In summary, how would you describe the university of the twenty-first century?**

University of twenty-first century? it is a space for development, closely connected with many other key players in the social and economic landscape; developing young personalities who understand the VUCA world, who are socially responsible; university of the future is creating important social attitudes, creating research needed by society (and business), relevant to problems and issues of importance to societies. University must be an authority for societies in the twenty-first century, as so many other institutions lose it in these difficult times.

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(1) **How will higher education's digitalization transform teaching and learning?**

In a digital world, teaching face-to-face is becoming rare and its relative cost high. Face-to-face training phases will only be attractive if they provide great added value. Why travel, which is expensive in terms of time and expense, if you can benefit from the same online learning?

The challenge for training institutions will be to value their contribution as a unique contribution to learning; they will find there the sources of differentiation to

strengthen their competitiveness. More than content, the way of learning will be even more decisive tomorrow than today.

(2) **What academic contents and skills should universities teach?**

More than content, it is the way of transmitting it that will be important in the digital world of tomorrow.

Universities need to cultivate their identity based on their capacity to produce knowledge. Learning to learn is essential in tomorrow's fashion. Training through research is an undeniable asset for fostering creative and innovation capacities, needed by businesses and modern societies more broadly, regardless of the sector of activity.

The soft skills that we talk about a lot today and which should not be neglected can be acquired in the context of educational situations created for learning.

(3) **How will degrees and certification look like in the future?**

A distinction should be made between initial training diplomas and executive education programs. The initial training programs will provide basic knowledge, general culture, and ability to lifelong learning. The value of diplomas may continue to be attested by accreditation bodies. The most prestigious will be promoted by strong, world-famous brands (Harvard, La Sorbonne, HEC Paris, London School of Economics).

As concerned executive education, the position of universities will be challenged by programs giving rise to capitalizable units, assessed by professionals. What better certification of an acquired skill than that shared by an experienced professional? In this game, LinkedIn is better positioned than universities.

(4) **Who is and what role, according to you, does a university's community play in the future?**

First of all, let us note that the university community must first and foremost extend beyond the members of its faculty. Like business schools, the university community

of tomorrow includes all stakeholders: professors, educational supervisors, students, alumni, partner companies, local authorities. All must contribute to making the student experience a unique and irreplaceable experience. More than today, transversal work between all stakeholders will generate value for student training.

- (5) **Will the change in higher education be transformative or disruptive, and why? In case of disruption, what could and should universities do to counter their potential disruption?**

The disruption will come from the entry of new players into the higher education sector. Several factors favor this trend. Education is an attractive market. A recent study published by McKinsey shows that over the past 15 years spending on education has increased by more than 50%, while the price of discretionary goods and services has fallen by 30%.

In addition, the individualization of training paths enabled by digitization leads to a new way of consuming education. A multiplicity of offers in multiple formats is the new competition that higher education institutions will have to face.

To resist these disruptive offers, universities will have to refocus on their two main distinctive skills: knowledge production and educational engineering.

- (6) **In summary, how would you describe the university of the twenty-first century?**

The twenty-first-century university is a great place to come to learn skills that cannot be found elsewhere. One can take part in top-notch research seminars and master classes where innovative ideas and concepts are discussed. The available equipment contributes to the uniqueness of the face-to-face experience; technical platforms mobilizing the best virtual reality solutions and significant computing capacities allow knowledge to be understood and immediately put into practice.

But the university is above all a place of meeting and confrontation with other students and with

professional circles. The labs allow students to test their ideas and easily create their own start-up. As a place open to the world, the university welcomes all types of profiles, from inexperienced students to employees who supplement their skills or pursue retraining. Everything is set up so that the student experience is organized as a continuum between online work and face-to-face studies.

The university has become one of the hearts of the city, which comes alive day and night, embodied in a physical place, but mostly accessible digitally to support the development of skills for all citizens.

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(1) How will higher education's digitalization transform teaching and learning?

Lockdown restrictions on physical contact and large gatherings forced universities to temporarily suspend face-to-face tuition and switch to emergency remote teaching, learning, and assessment. And while there have been some challenges, the transition to the new teaching mode has generally been so successful that it is bound to have a lasting effect on what we offer to whom, and how. The greater use of information and communications technology (ICT) in learning and teaching is set to both broaden and deepen education, not only through fully online learning but also blended and hybrid modes, which combine the best of both worlds.

(2) What academic contents and skills should universities teach?

Graduate attributes should not be envisaged purely in terms of employability, for although this is a prime

focus of university education, it is certainly not the only one. Instead, graduate attributes should include a consideration of what students need to survive in the twenty-first century. We should be preparing students for a world that is increasingly marked by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity. Our graduates should not only have achieved some depth in their area of study but also be able to think effectively and critically, and have an understanding of the ways in which to acquire knowledge of and insight into society and the self. They should be able to use what they gained at university to find creative solutions for pressing local and global issues.

(3) How will degrees and certification look like in the future?

Scientific partnerships and cooperation have expanded, not only across regional and disciplinary boundaries but also between academic/research institutions and commerce and industry. This development holds great promise of new avenues for research funding, scholarships, and opportunities for knowledge exchange and internships.

For some years already, we have seen a steady increase in agreements between Stellenbosch University and other universities to offer double and joint degrees – mostly at postgraduate level. This has occurred within the framework of both new and established bilateral partnerships, which hold many mutual benefits to both parties. This kind of collaboration is set to continue, and could be extended to undergraduate (Baccalaureus) level, since we already offer many study-abroad opportunities entailing semester exchanges.

Online learning is likely to increase student mobility virtually, in cyberspace. *The Economist* recently (August 8, 2020 edition) reported that COVID-19 is catalyzing innovation – the Big Ten Academic Alliance, a group of midwestern universities in the United States,

is offering many of its 600,000 students the opportunity to take online courses at other universities in the group.

At the same time, different kinds of institutions could start offering courses and end up issuing qualifications. Scott Galloway told *New York Magazine* recently (May 11, 2020), “The post-pandemic future will entail partnerships between the largest tech companies in the world and elite universities (hypothetically, MIT@Google, iStanford, HarvardxFacebook). This will allow universities to expand enrolment dramatically by offering hybrid online-offline degrees, the affordability and value of which will seismically alter the landscape of higher education.”

(4) **Who is and what role, according to you, does a university’s community play in the future?**

A university’s community is very important, but its nature is set to be redefined. At the moment, the university community is made up of all those immediately attached to the institution – i.e., staff and students, but also alumni, donors, the surrounding community (town council, schools, business chambers, tourism structures, religious bodies, NGOs, etc), government (especially structures regulating higher education), the higher education sector (nationally and internationally), research and professional bodies, as well as industry and business. With universities going more and more into cyberspace via online learning, more stakeholders are likely to become part of their community.

(5) **Will the change in higher education be transformative or disruptive, and why? In case of disruption, what could and should universities do to counter their potential disruption?**

Universities may be ripe for disruption but they are also ready for innovation. The challenges they face can be turned into opportunities.

To start with, we have to ensure that we fully optimize our core business – delivering well-qualified

graduates, producing relevant research, and having a positive impact on society. Yet that does not mean we can be complacent and carry on with business as usual. Nor does it mean we must throw the baby out with the bathwater.

While online education does not offer a cheaper alternative to face-to-face teaching, as technology costs are an add-on, it does offer scalability. The fact that one is able to serve many more students brings down the unit cost, which makes it more efficient and affordable. And that is the strongest case for universities to expand our e-learning offering (including fully online, blended, and hybrid modes) so that we can dramatically increase our developmental impact where it is needed most.

There is no question that we face immense challenges in higher education. Confronting them will require an equally immense effort. It is best that we take our cue from Daniel Burnham, the American architect who helped rebuild Chicago after the great fire of 1871. He famously said: “Make no little plans; they have no magic to stir [the] blood.”

(6) **In summary, how would you describe the university of the twenty-first century?**

The concept of a twenty-first-century university is associated with such features as technology, innovation, the knowledge society, and globalization.

Let’s start at the end, globalization: Baumert argues, “While the dominant notion of higher education and universities in particular used to be that of national or sub-national entities (Robertson et al., 2012, p. 7) with clearly defined (local and national) boundaries, we increasingly observe new forms of cross-border institutional interconnectivity that higher education and universities are becoming involved in, which challenge its (sub-)national nature.”

There is “talk of borderless or transnational education, education across borders, offshore education and international trade of educational services,” which “indicates that processes of internationalization in academia have reached a new quality that goes beyond the traditional physical mobility of people between nation states ... [implying] new modes of higher education provision as well as new forms of inter-institutional collaboration spurred by greater access to knowledge and research, in increasing awareness of international competitiveness and international standing.”

Let’s turn to technology: The use of learning technologies provides new opportunities to effectively and efficiently extend both the reach and richness of the academic offering. This is achieved through the following:

- Better interaction between lecturers and students, and better feedback on the knowledge levels of individual students.
- Improved access to content resources, so that students can move from consumers to cocreators of their own learning experience.
- Cooperative peer and social learning opportunities through the use of online collaborative tools and the thoughtful use of social media applications in learning and teaching.
- Development of graduate attributes needed for the digital knowledge economy.
- Contribution to the public good by enhancing collaboration among academics.

However, this vision can only be achieved if the following is addressed:

- The academic project and not the technology per se drives the initiatives.

- Technology is not simply used to replicate or serve as an add-on to existing teaching.
- Both lecturers and students are supported to acquire the necessary digital and information literacy and pedagogical skills to facilitate learning in the digital knowledge society.
- A research-based and evaluative approach is used to roll out ICTs in learning and teaching (Baumert, 2014).

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