Does the HE University have a future without an effective strategy of online learning, blended learning, m- and e-learning implementation?

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Not really.

1. Education develops with social progress. Since the dawn of man, there has been education. The level of productivity has had a decisive impact on the development of education. At the same time, politics and culture are also important influence factors. At the end of primitive society, the level of productivity increased, social classes formed, and culture and writing developed. Thus it was that schools began to appear. With developments in productivity and the political cultural environment, our education has gone from oral tradition to the age of scribes, and from the printing era to the digital age. Schools have been changing, as well as the teaching content. Today, digital learning has begun and online learning will become an inseparable component of university education.

2. Students have changed. They are netizens, both born and raised in a completely new world. The internet is a part of their lives – indeed, this digital lifestyle has been a part of them since they were small. They acquire information through the internet and participate in society online. As students change, educators need to match these developments.

3. The world is getting smaller. Based on social development, we can acquire information and goods more easily from all over the world than ever before. Travelling around the world is very simple for people today. The same thing has happened for educational resources. The dissemination and sharing of educational resources is becoming more common and easier. All this laid the groundwork for online and blended learning.

4. We need blended learning. Will online education replace campuses? Not at all. We still need campus activities to promote interpersonal learning and the interplay of values and thought. Culture and tradition thrive and are passed on when people meet face to face. Furthermore, we still need students to carry out scientific experiments in campus laboratories and other places. These needs have yet to be resolved by AR, VR and other technologies.

Therefore, in the future, the HE University needs an effective strategy of online learning, blended learning, m- and e-learning implementation.

Why is developing empathy important for preparing students for higher education and successful careers?

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In Harper Lee´s novel, To Kill a Mockingbird, Atticus Finch tells his daughter Scout: "You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view…until you climb into his skin and walk around in it." Atticus is teaching how to be empathic, how to see and feel from an alternate perspective. University stakeholders of the future will need to place a high value and prioritize empathy which underpins effective communication, the soft skill necessary to successfully navigate our increasingly technological world which will be diverse and interconnected.

Why empathy? Why will it be indispensable to have an awareness of the feelings and emotions of others, and experience them for ourselves through the power of imagination? Because empathy will be our secret weapon as we navigate our role within the rise of what many consider one of our greatest threats: Artificial Intelligence. The technology doesn't need to be our enemy but a tool we use in a shared future. Do we really want our elderly to be comforted by a robot?

Mastering this deeply human trait is not only about securing a job or staying competitive, it is how we will respond to a population exceeding 10 billion. Understanding how to be a good listener, a team player and leader who can deal with conflict requires communicating deftly with the diversity of humanity. Empathy underpins effective collaboration by building bridges and making working spaces conducive for creativity and productivity.

Interactions will require us to embrace multiple perspectives, have a deeper multicultural knowledge and a curiosity of our unique pasts.

And finally, the happiest people are the ones who live longest and tend to share strong social connections. Community building rather than focusing on the individual. Having the tools to climb in and walk around in another´s skin, we will nurture the relationships we value and be more deeply connected. We will feel less lonely and the rates of depression will decrease.

Indeed, a lack of empathy can be blamed on genetics, but the good news is that it can and should be taught through an inclusive and multidisciplinary model of education which fosters the skills of metacognition, effective listening, role playing, perspective taking, storytelling through art and literature and critical empathic thinking and feeling.

Sounds easy but teaching empathy, offering realistic experiences and reflecting meaningfully takes time. Time taken from the hard skills, the technical skills which the robots will be mastering. Universities will take the lead so primary and secondary institutions and employers will shift their priorities and like Atticus believe that being empathic will make us better at understanding humanity. At the end of the day, isn´t becoming a better human being what education is all about? If it isn´t, it should be.