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## **A Day in the University of the Future**

*“The task of a university is the creation of the future, so far as rational thought and civilized modes of appreciation can affect the issue”*

**-Alfred Whitehead**

The word “university”, appears to have its lineage from the Latin word *Universus* meaning “whole” and indeed, it is apt in its description of a place where an attempt to understand the various complexities of the universe is made. Over the centuries, universities have undergone several transitions in their appearance and mainly in the manner in which they have attempted to educate their patrons. While many changes may be visible from the university of old, one fact remains the same, that is universities still remain centers of learning. They still remain conduits of ideas and theories which continue to shape the very fabric of human civilization.

While in the past, there was a lot of focus on the word “learning”, life in today’s universities is a meandering journey through assignments, examinations and hopefully, in most cases leads to a piece of paper, reverently referred to as a degree and why not? Isn’t it a degree that is ultimately a pre-requisite in securing a dream job? Isn’t it the key component for earning respect and social applause? Unfortunately, the answer to all this is “yes” and so we must persist in the meaningless journeys that we embark in, every time we enroll and keep faith in the hope that one day we will break the shackles and move into a world where there is the only pre-requisites for success is a fertile mind brimming with ideas.

The need of the hour is for universities to reinvent themselves and to undergo another transition. This transition would not imply a change in the teaching process but a complete makeover of every aspect of imparting education. The steady growth of technology promises the evolution of a university where there is a possibility for the human mind to utilize its self to its true potential.

A day in the University of the Future would begin with students logging into their ‘university information freeway’ using any appliance in their home. In other words, students would be able to attend university using their television, refrigerator and while mobile, using their mobile phones. There would be no fixed time for logging in, giving students the flexibility and the option of choosing their best time. As it has been often said, there can be no fixed time for research. The perfect time is when the mind and the body are in harmony. The same theory applies to learning. There can be



no fixed time tables, as they destroy the synergy that is created from a self-willed action.

After “logging in” to their universities, students will be able to choose the area of study they feel most inclined to at that particular moment. Having done so, they will be able to design the lecture for the day based on pre-set preferences and choices. Once the lecture is ready, students will have the option of choosing the lecturer of their choice to deliver the lecture. Availability of a lecturer will no longer be an issue in this virtual world, where the same ‘virtual’ lecturer could find himself delivering simultaneous lectures in areas diverse as information technology and biology.

Students will have the option of putting their questions to the lecturer during the lecture, instead of having to wait for the ignominy of interacting with lowly tutors. If the student does not like the course of the lecture or finds the lecturer to be boring, he or she shall have the option of changing them without having to fill in form and make long representations to university committees.

Once the lecture is over, students can ask the university to prepare lecture notes based on their understanding of the subject and to ‘store’ it for future reference. The system would gauge the students understanding of the lecture based on the interaction level exhibited by the student during the lecture. Based on the lecture notes generated, the system would generate possible assignments for the student to accomplish. The student would have the option of choosing the assignment that interests him or her most.

The student’s approach to the assignment would be monitored by the university and would be used as an evaluation criterion of the progress made in the subject. The final examination would be designed by the student himself based on his performance in the assignments. The motive behind the examination would not be to test the student’s memory or intelligence level, but would focus on evaluating the student’s ability to apply the information encountered on the university ‘freeway’ in a real life scenario. Measuring its pupil application level would be the key thrust in the University of the Future.

The future is ours to see and to believe in. While technology strives to remove the boundaries that limit us in our quest for knowledge and understanding, that day is not far when this vision becomes a reality and we shall start attending what we now refer to as the University of the Future.