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Moving Towards Narratives of What Learning in the Future Can or Should Be? Unfettering Assumptions and Beliefs

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For decades, scholars, futurists and writers have been thinking about the future of learning. Their visions are based on questioning the assumptions and beliefs of learning and education during their different eras. For example, in his book *Deschooling Education* written some time back, Ivan Illich argued the oppressive structure of the school system could not be reformed as it is too institutionalized. Allan Collins wrote that education systems need to move from a focus on broad knowledge acquisition to one developing beneficial habits of mind.

The assumptions we discuss and question in this panel include: When should learning designs be structured or unstructured? Are youngsters really tech-savvy in learning contexts? Is what teachers think what learners need aligned with what learners think what they need? Focusing beyond the Practical Dimensions (operational acts of teaching) to also looking at the Epistemic and the Moral Dimensions of learning (habits of the heart and the mind).

Hence, calls are made to: focus back on the learner to postulate learning of the future, use technology to personalise learning, learn anywhere and anytime, support collaborative learning, provide social connectedness, and to use technology for assessment in ways that are more learner and learning-oriented.

Future of Learning

The future of learning has to be designed by re-centering on what we know about learners; exploring the fundamentally new possibilities and limitations of technology on how we think, create, work, learn, or collaborate; and bringing about habits of the heart and the mind together with the habits of the hand in thinking about assessment.

We are now in 2022, and what do we say about the visions? Are we closer now to knowing which visions have more traction or less traction? Many policy documents and reports have documented the changing landscape of education and of learning. They include aspects of the changing demographics of learners, technology changes and advances, strong calls for access and inclusiveness, and strong calls for holistic learning and human-centered commitments. Advances in the power of Artifcial Intelligence (AI) have caused a resurgence of interests in educational technology with the empowerment of AI.

Conclusion

In summary, through postulating the future of the digital age for learning, we can reflect on the following questions: Will narratives of learning go more diversified or more unified? Will they be more well-articulated or ill-articulated? Are we better informed about the feasibility of the "schools will disappear" argument?

What will we learn about learners and learning from the science of learning will continue to fascinate us. Technology will continue to grow and outdo humans in many tasks. It is exciting times. The future is not out there to be discovered—it has to be designed. A good start is a vision of learning. We hope that this discourse on the visions of future learning and pathways to them will inspire us to continue to think of such issues and to take on active roles as designers and inventors of the future of education.

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