**Future proofing the future**

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For all those that understand the importance of saving up for the future would also understand when I say we are not future proof when it comes to higher education and the graduates we are churning out. The debate on skills vs degree is not a new one. How many of you found yourself looking at a perfectly fine candidate as an employer; sitting in front of you, he/she spoke well, has the right credentials, spent the right amount of time and money on a degree that validated their knowledge and qualified them to a post grad qualification or such. And how many of you after having hired them found them to be lacking in the right skill set for that job or having the right ‘credentials’ but almost meeting the mediocrity of the job description. One can argue we may lack in the selection process, or maybe we did not identify the candidate well. But as of late we are seeing this amongst almost all the candidates, especially the younger ones. When speaking to colleagues in other higher education institutions and the corporate world, I have found them agree to this more time than ever.

While we may be trying to do our best, but as academicians, we may need to reflect.

A newly launched McKinsey paper called ‘Future skills: Six approaches to close the skills gap; analyzes over 30 current initiatives dealing with future skills for Germany alone says the number of underqualified workers will rise to 700,000 for technological skills in the next five years, and to as much as 2.4 million for cross-disciplinary skills. This is alarming as we cannot even imagine the numbers for Pakistan.

Tools and skills like photography, film making, video and audio editing, content creating skills and most importantly having the right attitude and personality to be able to be the face of it all is a must. For any position it will become a norm to not hire graphic designers, photographers and content creators, it will be expected of candidates to be this and more all in one. Creating and curating content at any stage or position will become a norm for academia and service industry. These will be called skills of mass disruption; we as employers expect you to come cloud computing ready, big data analysis and AI ready simply data literacy, sales leadership ready, knowing the entire MS suite to understanding user experience (UX Designer). Blockchain topped LinkedIn’s 2020 list of the most in-demand hard skills in 2020.

And all of this is one person! We expect you to be well equipped in all of this! Not to mention be flexible and fluid because of the rapid changing global conditions our work environments have changed drastically

Being able to be the PR team and the digital media team all in one.

Our expectations from our employee include soft skills ready, problem solving, active listening, negotiation, adaptability, collaboration and conflict resolution being just some. World Economic Forum predicts that we will need to reskill more than 1 billion people by 2030. According to the top writers at Forbes Emotional Intelligence will also be topping the charts. And all of this is one person! We expect you to be well equipped in all of this! Not to mention be flexible and fluid because of the rapid changing global conditions our work environments have changed drastically. Digital skills that everyone will need in their professional lives and to participate in society. Those who have mastered these skills can work in collaborative and agile teams and make critical decisions in an increasingly digital world. These skills will be needed by everyone in the future—not just at work, but also to participate in society.

The skills gap is a challenge, one that we must address now. Rethink today in schools and classrooms and higher education institutions to future proof our tomorrow.

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