**Cognitive journey**

[Muhammad Omar Iftikhar](https://dailytimes.com.pk/writer/muhammad-omar-iftikhar/%22%20%5Co%20%22More%20Articles%20by%20Muhammad%20Omar%20Iftikhar)

February 17, 2021

The urge by students to acquire a degree is fortified with the objective of earning a job. The aspect of learning, however, is lost in the process of students’ preparing themselves for their professional careers. It is in fact their days spent at the university that facilitates them in enhancing their learning. The mind broadens to the extent the person is willing to absorb content. This absorption occurs when we are in a conscious pursuit to acquire learning. However, the goal underlining this absorption makes or breaks the learning process. Students, especially the millennial, need to focus on developing their skillset along with completing their studies. They cannot rely only on their degree in today’s era of continuous competition. A degree is still important but it is a document that every potential employee possesses. A skillset, on the other hand, is a specific, industry-oriented ability that defines potential employees or can turn them into entrepreneurs.

Educating the mind, therefore, becomes an assiduous journey for a lifelong learner who envisions to enhance skills, aptitude, and talent. The millennials who are currently enrolled in bachelor-level degree programs across Pakistan should have a laser focus approach to identifying their skills. This should be followed by categorizing the professions they can adapt to. Furthermore, they must know what jobs they can pursue and which jobs will be outmoded or lose their value by the time they graduate in four years’ time.

Gone are the days when students had to study such courses that enabled them to become part of the existing line of professions. Until the late 1990s and the early 2000s, students’ choice revolved around becoming engineers, doctors, architects, among a few others. However, the career game plan changed with the advent of Information Technology and the emergence of the field of data, science, and with technology becoming incorporated in all professions. Today, as we stand in the 21st year of the 21st century, the strategy to achieving professional excellence has changed drastically. What the students referred to as “align with the system” has become “ahead of the system.” Students have to actively consider all options when planning about their professional future. For instance, the field of data science was considered to be for scientists and researchers. However, business schools are offering an entire bachelor-level program on data science.

The changing times have brought upon us a daunting reality. Just like the advent in technology made the Floppy Disk and Walkman become obsolete, the changing dynamics of industries is making ‘jobs’ and professions obsolete

The changing times have brought upon us a daunting reality. Just like the advent in technology made the Floppy Disk and Walkman become obsolete, the changing dynamics of industries is making ‘jobs’ and professions obsolete

The changing times have brought upon us a daunting reality. Just like the advent in technology made the Floppy Disk and Walkman become obsolete, the changing dynamics of industries is making ‘jobs’ and professions obsolete. Telegraphists have been replaced by smartphone’s communication applications while word processors have replaced typists. Taxi services have been replaced by ride-hailing applications while switchboard operators have been replaced by automated communication systems. The jobs that are deemed important today may as well be a thing of the past half a century down the road. Students, therefore, need to stay ahead of the competition and focus on the world along with their classroom learning. The professionals too need to work with an open mind to learn, unlearn and re-learn. This will make them know about themselves while evolving according to the needs of the prevailing era. Educating the mind, however, is about satisfying the curiosity and curbing the inquisitiveness. This broadening of one’s mental horizon occurs when one is open to reading, observing, exploring, questioning, and introspecting. Such an enhancement of cognitive capabilities must be a continuous pursuit leading to the holistic development of one’s character.

*The writer is an independent researcher, author and columnist*