Morning Assembly - 2020

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For our Form Six students, if all goes well, you will join the workforce by 2020.   Have you ever wondered what the world will be like in 2020?

Last Thursday, I went to the CEO Manpower Conference 2015, organized by the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce. The theme of the conference was "The Future of Work". It was attended by CEOs, Presidents and Directors of multi-national companies such as Microsoft, LinkedIn and Jardine Matheson Ltd., who took part in panel discussions. They talked about how technology will change the nature of work, what jobs will disappear by 2020, and the kinds of jobs that will be created.

Why was a principal there to attend such a conference? I was not the only one, and there were a few principals from other famous schools in Hong Kong. We were there because we all came with similar questions in mind. What kind of future are we preparing our students for? What qualities do they need in order to cope with our fast changing world?

There is no doubt that the world is changing quickly and it is almost certain that innovation and change will accelerate in the next ten or fifteen years. Fifteen years ago, it was a world with no Facebook, no Google, no Wikipedia, and no IPhone.   Wikipedia, launched in 2001, now features over 36 million articles in more than 200 languages. Facebook was launched in 2004 and in ten years, it now has more than 845 million monthly active users and it is available in seventy languages.   IPhone was only released in 2007 and a phone with no buttons was considered revolutionary at that time because touchscreen, as an input device, was not common.

We live in an age in which technology is developing rapidly and technology changes everything about the way we live, the way we get around and even the way we communicate. When I was a student in Australia, I wrote letters home and it usually took me about a month to get a letter back – two weeks for my letter to reach HK and another two weeks for the reply letter to reach me in Australia. I almost forgot what I wrote in my

previous letter by the time I got a reply from my family. Now, it is considered rude if it takes me more than five minutes to respond to the WhatsApp messages from my friends overseas and I can be contacted anytime, anywhere 24/7!

Jobs, and many of them are in-demand jobs, such as app developers, market research data miners, cloud computing services or social media managers simply did not exist ten years ago. Some traditional jobs will also be at risk in the next ten years. Technology is advancing so quickly that what we are learning now may soon become obsolete and outdated in a few years' time. The new buzzwords in technology include cloud, nanotechnology, drones, 3D printing, artificial intelligence, robotics and many more that I begin to find it difficult to catch up with them all.

What will your world be like in 2020 and beyond? I do not have a crystal ball for me to tell the future. You may be doing jobs that do not yet exist in 2015. You may be using technologies that have not yet been invented to tackle problems that we cannot solve now. You may have to deal with problems that we do not even know are problems yet. What matters, therefore, is not just what you have mastered but also whether you are capable of learning, capable of learning new and difficult things quickly. What matters is whether you are flexible enough to adapt them to entirely new situations and creative enough to look at things differently.

If you think getting into university is all that you need to worry about in order to survive in the future, I hope you will think twice. If you think you do not need to work hard now because what you are learning is boring or not relevant, I hope you remember that it is the process of learning that is important. It is discipline, perseverance and diligence that will make you a better learner for the future.

What about teachers? What do all these mean to us? What qualities and skills do you think our students will need in the future? What will the school in 2020 and beyond be like? What will the classrooms in 2020 and beyond be like? Will they be exactly the same except for the addition of new teaching equipment? Will the curriculum and the teaching strategies that we use remain the same? I have raised more questions than I can answer

but I hope we teachers are also flexible, adaptive and creative enough to embrace the changes that technology is bringing us and will continue to bring to us.

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