

Cross-Border Coffee Break:

Developing the Best Tech MBA for the 4th Industrial Revolution

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- 1. In the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Is it far too early to say that the car or air travel will prove to be less important than the sequencing of the human genome or synthetic biology?**

I believe biotech is going to be one of the most impactful technologies that we will experience, much more so than the info tech revolution. That's going to increase life spans dramatically, increase health, increase changes in demography, raise huge ethical questions, legal questions, issues of privacy. It's going to be huge. We are on the cusp of it. I don't think we always appreciate how much unregulated research is being conducted. There are more than 3 or 4 thousand bio actors in the world working in laboratories, some working in their garages, some working in more formal laboratories. there are really a lot of innovation and research within this topic.

- 2. From your research: which business schools/regions have been most proactive in preparing for the 4th industrial revolution?**

In my experience, it has really been the areas in the forefront of the 4th industrial revolution. You have the U.S., the Silicon Valley models since 2005 and 2007, which has been accompanied by an entrepreneurial revolution as well. You also that in Europe, in Germany, which is the birthplace of something called industry 4.0, which is an explicit strategy developed by the German government. There is also a huge amount happening in China. China has very explicit strategies of promoting biotech, of wanting to become a leading nation in Artificial Intelligence, that is, as we speak, being used in the education field very intensively.

- 3. You mentioned earlier the problems of inequality, yet your talk did not provide much detail in this regard. If anything, the elite nature of the MBA seems to exacerbate these inequalities by harnessing ideas that will only be applicable for particular parts of the world, with high levels of capital. Would a real disruption to the MBA be about detaching from ideas of exploitative business relations as inhumane practices?**

This is a very important question. This is really at the heart of what I was referencing when I talked about the SDGs and I also referred to the end of my talk regarding the increases of inequality and rising CO2 wage gap. Technology can have an impact on raising inequality, so we have to be careful. We have to ensure that it's not only a small elite group that benefit from technology. That's why I'm also saying that regulation and complimentary investments are important.

In many developing countries, say countries in Africa, complimentary investments like fiber optic cables, broad band, etc., is a pre-requisite for being able to take part in the digital economy. This type of investment should take place to ensure these countries do not fall behind or fall behind even further to countries at the tech front. It also at the mission and orientation of firms that we create, and the way we impart these types of motivations to MBA graduates. They should come out of these programs with a positive desire to make the world a better place, not only for the environmental sustainability, but also the social sustainability. Just as too much CO2 is going to contribute to rising temperatures, so will increasing inequality will give rise to social disruption. This is not sustainable. This is an important point, and I think we should be giving a lot of attention to possibilities that can go wrong in the tech economy.

4. How would the Tech MBA impact b-schools in developing countries? Is there a chance to connect developing world schools with this phenomenon?

This is my hope. I want to design a tech MBA that is globally relevant. That being said, I want to emphasize that a tech MBA is not an MBA with an appendix or specialization in tech, but percolates to all of the approaches in the MBA. It makes is important to be able to cultivate that type of MBA through the developing world, because a fundamental challenge in the developing world is to find a new technology and to absorb the new technology and to make sure the new technology is distributed and disseminated throughout society as quickly as possible.

If there is not a rapid diffusion of tech, the existing digital gaps will just be exacerbated between the rich and poor countries. Technology in developing countries does not only need to be diffused but needs to be adapted to local circumstances. Therefore, a vigorous entrepreneurial ecosystem / innovation system that can support the recognition and adoption to this type of technology is essential. I hope the tech MBA will contribute in this regard as well. In our hyper connected world, the great thing is that these types of initiatives can be done in collaboration. I think GBSN is providing that type of platform where business schools can exchange best practices, can learn from one another in terms of curricula, and do not have to start from scratch in terms of designing their education programs. This also supports my argument on why education costs should decrease over time.

5. Is your proposed Tech MBA completely online without printed materials? What type of blended learning model are you proposing?

There is such a great need for advanced management education for CEOs and decision makers to lead companies in the tech world that I think we need to roll out these types of programs fast especially when I think about developing regions, are underserved in terms of business/management education. Of course, we need to use all the tools: online, face to face, blended learning, etc.

I think increasingly an MBA will probably become a 20 or 30 year program that one will follow throughout one's life, and continually updates. If that is the case, this is when I mentioned the benefit of having hyper personalized education, where students can learn on their own tempo and can have the courses tailor made for them. Big online education platforms like Coursera, are already employing AI to be able to deliver tailor made executive education programs that can communicate to companies what their employees are learning during the courses, areas they excel, so they can have a better fit within the company depending on their aptitude.

We are only at the tip of the iceberg in terms of what is possible. If we begin to scale up and integrate and begin using smart technologies to do so, we will have a proliferation of education approaches and models in a hyper personalized fashion.