You have heard how important it is for us to build a learning society that brings a new kind of higher education to more people around the world, and relies on technology to enable its expansion. Now it's time to imagine what that society might look like. So for the next few minutes, will look through the eyes of some students and teachers at this new style of higher education. It's just a glimpse, a moment in time in the learning society, in several venues. Let's see what's going on...
Six o'clock AM Rolling River, USA

Nineteen point four volts. And that's at the peak height of the sun for today at the test installation in France. Not quite high enough. Each day before breakfast Charlotte checks the output of the photoelectric fabric, so she can take it to her 8 AM physics course at Rolling River State College and combine it with the readings of the other sites monitored by fellow undergraduates.
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She IMs her French colleague Philippe at his internship at DJT*/France to find out how brightly the sun is shining. “Brouillé” is the reply. Charlotte passes this unknown word to the translator on her laptop and immediately understands the low reading. There’s fog in the air over there. Just then she gets another IM from Kofi...

In the learning society, higher education is global, practical, and thoughtful. And carried out in large measure online. It’s not centered on a classroom or a college, but on the student and the problem to be solved. Learning is not individual and competitive, but social and collaborative. It strives not to produce better test scores but to create new knowledge and apply it to important issues. We see this manifest in Charlotte’s international applied research project and her easy use of networked digital technologies.
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The tungsten he helps extract from the earth goes to China to be manufactured into the new photoelectric fabric invented at DJT in France and based on physics research done at RRSC. But not for long: as soon as the DJT factory is complete, Kofi and his fellow Africans will be ready to operate it, and they'll be manufacturing the fabric right here. After mastering his equations, Kofi checks on the loading of the freighter that's bound for China with another load of metal...

For the developing world, the additional university seats that they desperately need are seldom found in college buildings, but often located in workplaces and homes. Without the luxury of sending mid-career workers to the four-year adult sleep-over camp that typifies the traditional American and European university, these rising nations harness the internet, foreign expertise, and the energy of their young populations to learn while they work. Closely entwined with the global economic forces that have changed the face of the workplace, the new higher education system provides just-in-time learning to the most people at the lowest cost. Retraining of mid-career workers, and degree-completion for those who veered off the academic track, is an important mission for higher education systems in all economies. The power of the human network lets these varied types of students learn together, all over the world.
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6:00 PM Guangzhou, China
The money to fuel the freighter has been wired to Africa, the local factory workers have been paid for the week, and the front doors of the bank have closed for the day. Bank manager Yuan Lao connects to his WebEx session with Grant Grayson III in Rolling River. Grant is studying Chinese online at the South China University of Technology, so Lao greets him with a hearty "Ni hao!." Grant runs his family’s bank in Rolling River, and has been meeting weekly with his counterpart in Guangzhou in a joint learning expedition that will help both of them better understand the banking laws and traditions of their respective countries.
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Lao's bank is financing the new solar fabric factory in Africa, while Grayson's manages the American investment in the joint-venture factory in China. Both with significant capital from Society DJT in Bayeux, France...

Learning continues long after schooling is complete. Mature adults in high positions are not afraid of taking on the role of student. Or of teacher. The world changes in one's lifetime, and all must educate themselves in order to adapt to it, sometimes in a formal school setting, sometimes informally with peers and mentors. New networked technologies make this possible, and online social networks enable a wide choice of media and methods. The new forms of learning combine the disciplines of language, culture, law, and science to tackle the tasks of the day in ways that would rattle the faculty assemblies on many traditional college campuses. Instead of selfishly defending their turf, universities in the learning society collaborate with each other and with industry to take advantage of each others' expertise.
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12:00 Noon Bayeux, France

…where weaving had for centuries been a part of the culture in Bayeux. The photoelectric fabric developed in the lab two years ago evolved from a long local tradition of laying warp and weft to create textiles for clothing, industry, art, and the navy. The DRRT* would visit this afternoon to check on the progress of the latest research project, funded jointly by the French government and Société DJT, to increase the output of the solar cloth.
Philippe, a student at the local IUT* stretches the test samples across their cradles and monitors the digital instruments, all of which are networked over IP to fellow students in the USA and Africa. "Too bad about the fog." muses Philippe, "We'll point the webcast camera out the window so the off-campus students can see for themselves. And connect the light meter directly to the network so they can download the data immediately…"

*In the learning society, education is not defined by institution or discipline. And the line between learning, research, and practical problem-solving is purposely blurred. Governments, companies, and individuals all invest in learning and research; none has a monopoly; all contribute to moving the society to a new level of economic development and intellectual understanding. Some of the most valuable people in the learning society are those who can see through the fog of tradition, technology, and possibility and pull together diverse groups into new learning clusters.*
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That's a quick glimpse, an instant in the learning society. It illustrates new possibilities for education at the university level, new approaches to what we need to learn, how we learn it, and who's in charge. The technologies to build this learning society exist today; our task is to harness them to serve the needs of the Charlottes, Kofis, Philippes, Grants, Laos and Xiaos of the world. And in turn the needs of their societies.
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