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MEET THE MENTOR—Future of Digital Education

Sunday October 8th, 2017

Speaker: **So-Young Kang**, Founder and CEO, Gnowbe, Singapore

Facilitated by: **Maryam Bin Fahad**, Managing Director, Al Fahad Media, UAE

Summary Paragraph

So-Young Kang will share her experiences as a disruptor and educator to embed values and develop character from her first teaching job in Japan to how it influences how she builds and leads her companies. She will share her views on the future of digital learning and how digital technology is redefining how we engage with content to bring it to life in experiential ways.

Keywords: Technology

Key Points

Ms. Kang began her talk with the provocative statement that “30 to 50 per cent of jobs will be replaced by robots and AI in the next decade.” Her motivation behind designing the online micro-learning platform Gnowbe came from the realization that current e-learning solutions are inadequate. Even MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses), which arrived relatively recently, continue to reflect what Ms. Kang called the ‘Industrial Revolution’ style of teaching from the one to the many.

“How can we evolve technology to escape the classroom?” she asked. “Micro-learning. We need to relearn how to learn. Everyone can teach, everyone can learn.” She sees the future of learning as a ‘many to many’ model, encompassing experiential workshops, project based learning, and having dialogue and conversation.

“There can be a perception that knowledge sharing is not actually learning,” Ms. Kang said. “Learning can happen through participation and having conversations.”





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Gnowbe—a portmanteau of ‘Growing Knowledge Into Being’—allows anyone to design targeted micro-courses that train and teach anyone, and is currently used by many top corporates to train employees. Ms. Kang explained that Gnowbe “was meant to make learning a daily process. The best way to get students to learn is to get them to teach it. The way people learn is through fun, games, participation and conversation. The Gnowbe model is ‘Learn. Think. Apply. Share.’

In response to the question, “what is the role of educators in the future?” Ms. Kang explained, “twenty-first century learning is not just giving skills and knowledge. What differentiates humans and machines? Critical thinking, creativity, and communication. We have to develop these soft skills. Yet our current mentality is still assessments, content retention, and memorization.”

Ms. Kang said that she views the teacher role as moving toward that of a moderator and facilitator. “We always need content and we need amazing, passionate teachers. These are the people who inspire and create a safe environment for students to engage in content.”

She shared a story of an influential teacher in her own life, who created a reading space in the middle of the classroom where students could lie on Astroturf among artificial trees. There was a snake in the classroom, and they could watch it eating mice.

Ms. Kang said that the classroom stayed with her because it struck her as a ‘laboratory for life.’ However, she envisions something very different in the future: “the future classroom I hope will look vastly different. It will be meetings and projects to make the world a better place. Kids can use creativity and problem solving to solve a lot of the problems we have today.”

When asked what skills children will need in the future, Ms. Kang responded, “According to the World Economic Forum, the top ten skills currently are all soft skills. Problem solving, critical thinking, creativity, management, cooperation—education needs to meet these needs, not the technical skills of today. It’s behaviors and mindsets, not hard skills.”

This could be reassuring to parents who are pressuring their children to take exams and get high scores to get into top schools, she pointed out. “The new trend of schooling is to introduce play and experiential learning.”

Asked about how online platforms can teach values, Ms. Kang said, “technology is not neutral. There are design intentions that come from values, character and purpose. All knowledge needs to come through the lens of values and character.”





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She concluded by saying, “I hope to see many more people having the courage to try a different way of doing things. The system today is not working. Instead of taking incremental moves, my hope is that people take bold, courageous steps.”

Main Takeaway: Change requires bold, courageous steps forward. We must abandon our attachment to assessment and memorization.

