

Susannah Moore

The Big Conversation

When I was first asked what education at the University of Birmingham will look like in 10 years my initial thought was, perhaps, we will still be waiting for the new gym to open! Then I went on to think things such as perhaps all the microphones in lecture theatres will work and Panopto will never fail.

But in all seriousness, education has changed so much over the last decade and I believe it will continue to change over the next. Something that has dramatically changed is the ease at which students that have moved away from home but can still contact their parents; it appears that we are relying increasingly upon our immediate family, even once we've moved half way across the country and I think this will only get stronger. Less people will be making silly cooking mistakes or carrying their washing to the laundrette because it's just too easy to get these things done for you at home.

Something else that I think will improve is the fact that all lectures will not only be voice recorded but also livestreamed to the laptops of those students still in bed. This could have a few different effects; firstly, this could cause more engagement from these students who struggle to make it to lectures during the day time. They could catch up from the comfort of their home and keep on top of all their university work. The second effect would be that students may stop coming into lectures all together – will we start to see lecturers turning up to empty lecture theatres? Is it possible that all the buildings and facilities universities have been building over the last decade could be useless and end up abandoned by all expect researchers? In which case, are all the new buildings just a waste of money and space?

Over the past 5 years the explosion in popularity of MOOCs has shown that, increasingly, people are accessing education without going out and interacting with others doing the same courses. This brings up a very interesting question, is the only reason we are all here studying at university one of meeting people and partaking in everyday social interactions? If not, what is bringing us here? Over the next 10 years I am confident that getting a university degree from home will only become easier, so I believe that universities all over the country will be asking themselves what is it that will keep people moving halfway across the country to get an education from our university.

Overall I believe that over the next decade universities are certainly going to change in a very dramatic way. I could talk about these changes for at least another 500 words, I haven't even touched on the fact that 'just googling' something has become so easy and information is literally just a few taps away. So, will we need lectures or is the internet capable of replacing them? I think universities will dramatically change and that all we can do is hope for the best and wait and see what the next 10 years bring.