Nexus

Googling the title of this article will yield about 93,200,000 results, translating to a plethora of information about the word’s meaning and its uses in different contexts. Accessible. Contemporary. Encompassing. The “ACE” inventions – the Internet and the World Wide Web – paved the way for “The Information Age” and the “Knowledge Society” in the 21st Century. Now, searching for information is easy as 1-2-3 and connecting to the world is a walk in the park. People became more interconnected with each other. Globalization swept the countries and the world underwent dramatic changes.

With these recent developments, though, questions are being raised. How do we access these pieces of information? How do we manage them? More importantly, how do we use those that are only relevant to us, in our own context? The superfluity of information is a double-edged sword. First, while everything is readily available, not everyone has access to it. From the estimated world population of 7.1 billion, only 39% are using the Internet (ITU, 2013). Second, even if it is accessible, not everyone is skilled to manage it. There are only about 10 million information technology professionals in the world (ITAA, 2000). Lastly, instant information does not necessarily translate to good information. Most of the time, we need to sieve through a lot of useless information before reaching what is really relevant to us. Not to mention the spams, the viruses, and the disconnections we meet along the way. Also, with the rise of social media, concerns about confidentiality and protection of personal information also increased.

But perhaps the one aspect of the growing interconnectedness and globalization that gives an individual so much unease is the potential loss of one’s identity as countries become more open to foreign influences. People begin to imbibe cultures, traditions, and beliefs other than their own. Beyond the issues of accessibility, data management, and accuracy is the challenge of not drowning in the sea of information and losing one’s identity.

Identity, for me, is the most important facet of a “better life”.

A better life for me means knowing yourself and staying true to that in spite of all the external influences. It is doing what you want to do and being excellent at it even if it involves taking the road less traveled. It involves discovering your talents and reaching your full potential. These, for me, are the bridges to a better life. Thus, in the current enormous world of information, the most critical skill you should develop is the ability to judiciously determine the particular set of skills that you will need to attain your own concept of a better life and how and where you can acquire them. Of course, in the beginning, not everyone knows who they want to be. It all starts with forming your own concept--not the concept of others, not the concept imposed upon you, and not the concept dictated by the society—a concept that is your own, and yours alone. A concept that you have developed and crystallized throughout the years. Then, you begin to develop skills that you will need to reach your goals while keeping and enhancing those that are crucial for your success.

Solidify first your identity and the rest will follow; this is the key.
Do you want to be a 21st century philosopher? Then develop your critical thinking skills. Do you want to be an artist? Then develop your creativity skills. Do you want to be a businessman? Then develop your entrepreneurial skills. Do you want to be somebody? Then develop your self-motivation skills. Do you want to be a citizen of the world? Then develop skills in intercultural understanding. And the list goes on and on. In this fast-changing world where some occupations become obsolete and others like ‘green jobs’ become in demand, these are the 21st century skills that you can carry with you from one profession to another.

There are also the skills relevant to each industry. And one very interesting thing to note about these critical skills is the connection of one skill to another in this interconnected world. For example, if one dreams to be successful in the field of agribusiness, the success of his or her goal does not solely depend on his or her own skills. Several factors are interconnected: The skill of the farmers to produce quality crops, the skill of the agricultural engineers to design farm machineries, the skill of the agricultural chemists to formulate agrichemicals, and even the skill of the truckers to transport the goods to the market. This connection is true even in other fields. Let us consider music – the musician’s skill in playing musical instruments is connected to the musical instrument maker’s skill of crafting. However skillfully the musician can play the guitar, the drum, or the piano, what is the point if there are no existing instruments to begin with!

The ability to see, manage, and embrace connections – are the Nexus skills.

These are the skills I have learned from my twenty one years of existence that I know will help me enjoy a better life in the future: the ability to connect the bridge between “me” and my “dream me”; to see how my “dream me” translates to my concept of a better life; to connect the dots between my concept of a better life and the skills I need for its attainment; to acknowledge the interdependence of the skills I need to develop and the skills of other people; and to understand that my identity is not just limited to my occupation but encompasses my whole personhood. All these nexuses will make me an “ACE” person.

“We’re free to go where we wish and to be what we are,” says Jonathan Livingston Seagull. “You have the freedom to be yourself, your true self, here and now, and nothing can stand in your way.” It is a matter of finding and understanding who you are and who you want to be in this ever-changing world.

Works Cited