ABSTRACT
A growing number of scholars believe that the future of university education lays in a reform of the existing model. If changes are to be successful, they must go beyond the symptomatic reforms of higher education in past decades. In this concept paper, Gaudenz Assenza outlines some of the reforms needed to create what he calls “The University for the Future” – an institution that is nimble, flexible and prescient, detecting social changes earlier and responding to them faster than the established system of higher education. The paper includes many concrete and practicable proposals to fix problems in higher education. It also introduces a new 6-Level Framework that helps design the changes in a systematic manner. In the final section of the paper, five options for implementing the University for the Future are outlined. The appendix presents an interview, in which the author explains the 6-Level Framework.

Introduction
This paper develops a blueprint for the “University for the Future” that integrates proven concepts with new features to expand the horizons of higher education. The ambition is not to build the best university of the world, but the best university for the world. Likewise, it is not a University of the Future, but for the future. This means that the purpose is not to build a utopia – something that may or may not work at some point in the future. The purpose is to put energy into activities that prepare the future and that are aligned with what is emerging in any particular context.

The three parts of this paper correspond to the three main areas needing reform: 1) Research, 2) Education and 3) Value.

1) Research: The University for the Future counters trends such as reductionism, fragmentation, excessive abstraction, one-sidedness and arcane specialization. Reconnecting research to practice, the university will use science as a force to solve problems facing humanity. The outcome will include pure science, but also practical policy proposals as well as business models to bridge the gap between academia and practice. Research operations will focus on ways of bringing idealistic and talented individuals together in an effort to work for the common good.

2) Education: The University for the Future revives the original essence of knowledge as the love of wisdom. The word philosophy originates from the Greek filein – to love, and sofia – wisdom. The guiding principle is a 6-Level Framework, which expands the vision of university education. The new framework is introduced in the paper and explained in the appendix.

3) Value: The University for the Future produces value for all stakeholders including students, teachers, administrators, recruiters and society. This paper presents tangible proposals concerning organizational design, synergies, efficiency and financial viability.

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1 I owe this idea to the Danish educational initiative “Chaos Pilot”.
2 The abbreviation REV corresponds to the verb “to rev”, which can be used in different contexts such as “revving up an engine”, “revving up a metabolism” or “revving up meaning”. In this paper, the concept of “revving” refers to the process of continuous improvement and acceleration of reform.
In the conclusion, three options for implementation are outlined: an incremental option, an experimental option and a systemic option. The systemic implementation is discussed first, because it is the fastest approach to create the University for the Future, but all three options ultimately achieve the same result. The three options are not mutually exclusive. The management of the university can decide to implement certain ideas incrementally, others experimentally, while launching a university-wide innovation initiative using principles and practices of successful corporate innovation programs. The proposals have to be adapted to the local conditions and the type of institution (liberal arts college, research university, professional school, community college, etc.).

In light of many failed reforms in higher education one may ask whether yet another reform is needed. The existing university model has proven resilient over centuries and many institutions exhibit resistance to change. Nevertheless, there are numerous adaptive pressures, which either intensify present patterns (e.g., resource conflicts) or trigger new modes of operation.

The University for the Future can be implemented in various forms: as a public university (state-owned) or as a private university (individual ownership, family ownership, shareholding, corporate ownership). It could also be a foundation established by public and/or private sources. Regardless of the type of ownership, the university should be established as an independent and non-ideological institution—an open community that promotes equal opportunity and freedom of thought. According to its mission statement, the university as an institution should be grounded in deep neutrality, and does not advocate any particular orientation in science, education and politics. It welcomes a wide spectrum of opinion. The mission of the university is to present diverse approaches that stimulate new questions, analysis and debate. The university aims to integrate the lessons of experience from a variety of national and international educational projects, in particular those that promote openness and the critical evaluation of ideas. The goals of the university are to incorporate “international best practice” into its own activities and to make novel and interesting contributions to science, policy, business and civil society.

In the global innovation race, it is not yet known which institution will be the first to implement the concept of the University for the Future. But it is likely that the pioneering institution gains an early mover advantage in terms of educational and research outcomes, student recruitment and value created. As with other reforms, the concept is likely to be copied by followers, thus gradually changing the face of higher education. Before we move to the concrete details, the author should acknowledge that there are many good ideas on educational reform, which are not (yet) integrated in this text.
RESEARCH

Create a university-wide Think Tank, not as a new organization with large expenses, but as a way of reorganizing existing research operations and making them visible to the world:

1. The new Think Tank encompasses all existing research operations and disseminates knowledge to business, government, international organizations and the global media. The Think Tank operates as a virtual body and complements the traditional model of scholarship in subfields within subfields with up-to-date and solution-oriented research. This is not to de-emphasize specialized or basic research, but to create a balance between different research streams and include underrepresented forms of scholarship including practical action research, interdisciplinary research, as well as frontier research informed by systematic epistemological inquiry into the foundations of science.

2. The Think Tank is designed as an ideas incubator using a project development model. The model works as follows: People come together for a few days or even several months (scholars in residence) with the purpose of generating and implementing new initiatives. In some cases, these scholars would work on their own, but in many cases, they would work in groups. A stipend could be given, but the bulk of the payment should be based on the results delivered (articles, books, project applications, patents, etc.). The project development model avoids inefficiencies such as paying people for showing up (working hours) rather than for what they produce.

3. Every member of the faculty is associated with the Think Tank. Those with long-term and permanent contracts are expected to acquire and execute externally funded research projects. Exceptions should be possible, as some scientists are more productive without the administrative burden that comes with fundraising and managing research projects. A bonus is given if fundraising efforts are successful.

4. At any moment in time, the Think Tank has a fluctuating number of sub-units depending on faculty interest and initiative. These units operate as virtual structures with minimum bureaucracy. The secret of high performance organizations is can be expressed simply as “do what you love, love what you do”. As someone once said: “If you love what you do, you will never feel at work.” Therefore it is necessary to create a fluid setting where people can move from one research team to another, exploring different areas before settling with something when they have found their true passion and the people they feel comfortable working with. In this way, the university capitalizes on a key advantage relative to business: Universities do not have a specific product range and scientific minds can explore any area that raises their curiosity.

5. The Think Tank could involve artists and practitioners working alongside with scholars. It would also bring together scientists from different disciplines, thus overcoming the fragmentation that is common in higher education.

6. In order to increase the effectiveness and visibility of the new Think Tank, it is necessary to create a clear profile and concentrate scarce institutional resources on the most promising avenues for research. This involves two steps: (1) make an internal competition for seed money to establish Research Hubs or Innovators Labs; 2) launch new initiatives such as a School for Transformative Leadership, which caters not only to business, but includes all other sectors, disciplines and professions as well. The School for Transformative Leadership could offer services across the entire university, integrating modules in established programs as well as launching entirely new programs (e.g., BA/MBA/DBA in Business Innovation; MA/PhD in Life and Career Management; MA/PhD in Leadership and Personal Development). The School for Transformative Leadership would closely collaborate with path-breaking initiatives worldwide.

7. Another pioneering development would be a new School for Futures Research, offering a BA/MA/PhD in Forecasting, Scenario Development and Futures Research and other programs with the mission to make reasonable predictions about the foreseeable future, and based on these predictions, develop solutions for societal problems. Like the School
Transformative Leadership, the School for Futures Research could offer modules across existing programs. It is equally important to study scenarios for the future than it is to understand history.

8. Researchers will explore difficult topics – for example:
   a. Problems that have clear questions but not clear answers;
   b. Issues which cannot be resolved within discrete disciplines;
   c. Topics which are in grey areas (lacking empirical data or prior research);
   d. Asking questions which go against the grain of the political or scientific majority;
   e. Solutions that seem difficult or impossible at first sight, but that may be easy if we change the assumptions;
   f. Exploring the future in addition to the past, thus being ready to face uncertainty, ambiguity and methodological problems.

9. The Think Tank integrates all 6 Levels of Education, which are outlined in the next section. What matters is that researchers stretch their mind — not just demonstrating their existing knowledge or making pragmatic choices to maximize the quantity of research outputs. The “publish or perish” mentality has increased the quantity, but not necessarily the quality of publications.
EDUCATION

1) Implement the 6-Level University

The 6-Level University represents a new model of education developed by the author based on research concerning the human brain, learning and cognitive psychology. It stands for an academic culture not thinking in disciplines, but thinking in problems; an academic culture based on principles of cooperation rather than competition; an academic culture that is value-driven rather than value-neutral; an academic culture working with ideas rather than “schools of thought”; an academic culture committed to knowledge transfer and committed to serving the community.

Brain research shows that there are different states of cognition and awareness associated with beta, alpha, theta and delta waves. There are also new insights on how “superlearning” and “stereotinking” occurs based on different states of consciousness and different capacities of the left and right brain hemisphere.

The traditional educational model stimulates a narrow range of faculties. Most universities focus on Level 1 education while underestimating Levels 2–6 (see illustration below). The way to build the University for the Future is to use the 6-Level Framework as a guiding principle for organizational development and curricular innovation.

![Figure 1: The 6-Level University](image)

(For explanations, see Appendix, p.19ff)

- The 6-Level University draws upon the latest scientific research, while being anchored in ancient wisdom. More than 2300 years ago, Aristotle wrote that there are six different ways, faculties or capacities in the human soul to grasp the truth. The six faculties are science (episteme); art (techne); experience (empeiria); practical wisdom (phronesis); theoretical wisdom (sophia); and intuition (nous) — the capacity to grasp first principles or sources (see Nicomachean Ethics). The University for the Future promotes an approach that fosters all these ways towards knowledge, including a “personal way” in line with ideas of developing “personal knowledge” (Michael Polanyi) and a personal “epistemic culture” (Karin Knorr-Cetina).
2) Restructure or abolish departments

Living a cloistered life, the traditional academic department has become an obstacle to interdisciplinary learning and productive problem-solving. There are two ways of improving departments:

The first approach would be to free them from the homogenizing tendencies of faculty bureaucracy and installing a bottom-up process of innovation. The key is not to impose unified measures, but asking people what they would like to do and how they could innovate their work. One mechanism could be flexible, tailor-made “output agreements”, which concretize the work contract. In these documents, employees could freely specify their preferences and suggest contributions according to what they do best in terms of raising the quality of total intellectual production — whether that is teaching; research; popularizing science; fundraising; project development; curriculum design; organizing conferences; networking; mentoring and motivating; administration; website development; creating a vibrant cultural life on campus; outreach to the community; collaborations with business, civil society and government, etc. The work agreements could be annual but contain a section for long-term plans. If the work plans do not correspond with the needs of the organization, a negotiated solution could be found. People would be evaluated and rewarded based on the fulfillment of their own promises. Unlike scientometrics and other homogenizing instruments, which try to make everyone conform to the same narrow standards, the philosophy behind “output agreements” is: “everyone according to their interests and means”.

If the department-based innovation does not work or is not desired, the second option would be to abolish departments and organize teaching, research and other activities like a web resembling a complex adaptive network:

- The network consists of interdisciplinary problem-focused programs, which dismantle the artificial barriers between different disciplines and integrate Levels 1 to 5 (as illustrated on the previous page). The programs could be organized with a minimum of bureaucratic structure, focusing on topics like entrepreneurship and innovation, intelligent finance, energy and climate change, sustainable architecture and city development, ecological transportation, conflict resolution, human rights, art and creativity, ways of knowing, healthy living, generations and change, and other areas. These constantly evolving programs are regularly assessed and either continued, changed or closed down. Care has to be taken about the manner of assessment — e.g. avoiding a purely quantitative assessment of how many articles published, how many conferences attended, etc. One major book or conference counts much more than several mediocre ones. This cannot be reflected in Excel sheets or databases, which are becoming increasingly popular as tools in education management.

- This networked structure connects different knowledge hubs that integrate personalities and programs within the institution with experts and innovators from outside, bringing together people working on issues of philosophy, religion, history, politics, economics, sociology, anthropology, communication, psychology, literature, art, architecture, etc. Religious scholars and natural scientists should also be involved. Through the intersection of multiple perspectives and approaches, new theoretical insights and unanticipated practical solutions emerge.

- The idea of a problem-centered approach is not new. Already Popper mentioned that we should cease thinking in disciplines and start thinking in problems.

- Another challenge is to "democratize research", asking "ordinary people" for their real questions and problems, thus breaking the dynamics of the traditional academic ethic that is too often removed from the needs of the real world.

The networked structure will be complemented by five modules offered across schools, but tailor-made to the requirements of each school:

1. A Common Introductory Module (Level 1-4) which challenges the mindset of incoming students, clarifying the purpose of the university, stressing for instance that education is not about memorizing facts. The Common Introductory Module encourages students to learn self-reliantly, think critically, and do more than simply satisfy a set of course requirements. The module could include inspiring lectures, discussions and immersion experiences, which engender a commitment to serve the world. Tackling ethical issues with a spirit of creativity, the module could include team building activities where people learn to work well with others. The module is designed to generate enthusiasm for: (1) life-long learning, (2) taking initiative and assuming responsibility, (3) adapting to change, (4) communicating effectively in...
several languages, and (5) framing issues in a global perspective. To organize this module, lessons can be learned from liberal arts programs in the United States, where students get a 360 degree perspective by being exposed to philosophical, artistic and scientific knowledge that has been produced over millennia. Through the Common Introductory Module, the University for the Future acknowledges the importance of humanity’s collective heritage. The module could last a few weeks or months, but it could also be expanded to a full-fledged core curriculum lasting one year. The module provides an intellectual experience shared by all students before selecting their specialization or continuing with their initially chosen program. One of the main shortcomings of the traditional university system is that many students are unhappy in their study programs, yet they do not change, because the hurdles for switching between programs are high and because there is no proper mentoring system to ensure that students are actually interested in, and suitable for, their chosen studies.

2. A **Scenario Development Module** (Level 2) teaching students how to forecast future trends in a systematic way. This module fixes a blind spot in the traditional academic system, which tends to look to the past (teaching history) but too rarely to the future (futures research).

3. A **Solutions for the Future Module** (Level 3), in which students think about some of the most pressing problems facing humanity and creatively develop concrete and practicable solutions.

4. A **Skills Development Module** (Level 4) training transferrable skills such as time management, computer skills, information literacy, presentation skills, project management, fundraising, team building, communication, and conflict resolution. The Skills Development Module also teaches listening skills, speaking skills (authentic persuasion, fair negotiation, reflective and generative dialogue), thinking skills as well as writing skills (letter writing, creative writing, academic writing, journalistic writing and business writing).

5. A **Leadership and Personal Development Module** (Level 5), which teaches leadership not as a process of self advancement but self development. The module integrates insights from science and other fields in the study and practice of leadership, fostering a change in thinking beyond narrow visions of money, power and success. The program raises fundamental questions about cognition, being and human existence. The teaching methods are primarily experiential rather than abstract. They focus on training essential qualities of leaders such as authenticity, courage, creativity, imagination, initiative, professionalism, patience, respect for diverse points of view, honest communication, a capacity for exercising judgment, and a calibrated ethical compass to deal with ambiguous situations. The module reflects an **open mind** (IQ), **open heart** (EQ) and **open will** (SQ) methodology as outlined, for example, by Otto Scharmer in his book *U Theory*. After experiencing an education that is almost exclusively focused on abstract thinking, many students are hungry for a different kind of learning, which consists not only of lectures (brain-knowledge transfer) but also immersion, integrating the heart, mind and will. The purpose of the leadership model is that the educational system plays a greater role in character development.

### Course examples in the leadership module

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<tr>
<th>Global Awareness Seminar</th>
<th>Social Skill Sets</th>
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<td>Authentic Leadership</td>
<td>Emotional Intelligence and Intuition</td>
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<td>Personality Assessment</td>
<td>Creativity and Courage</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quantum Physics and the Science of Leadership</td>
<td>Uncertainty, Determinism and Synchronicity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brain Research and Consciousness</td>
<td>Leadership, Restorative Justice and Forgiveness</td>
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<td>Relativity, Uncertainty and Determinism</td>
<td>Poverty and the Bottom Billion</td>
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<td>Women Leaders</td>
<td>Individualism, Self-Interest and the Common Good</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cases of Leadership Failure</td>
<td>Power and Love</td>
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These courses train **multiple forms of perception and intelligence** including social and emotional intelligence, listening, goodwill, tolerance, compassion, fairness, empathy, kindness, respect, integrity and other character attributes, which are at least as important as intellectual prowess. Some courses will deepen the philosophical and reflective skills, while others are more practically oriented (e.g. “Social Skill Sets”, “Emotional Intelligence and Intuition”). One of the effects of these courses is to teach students to become more independent, standing on their own feet and using their resources to find solutions, rather than relying on teachers or another third party. Finally, many of these courses are oriented toward practice, thus easing the transition from university studies into the professional world.
3) Promote teaching excellence

The following measures are proposed to improve teaching results and student performance:

1. **Hire extraordinary teachers** and give them space for maneuver — allowing them to teach what they like, when they like and how they like. A vibrant intellectual life requires hiring, retaining and rewarding people who do not conform to a “one-size-fits-all” philosophy — free spirits, iconoclasts, eccentrics, dreamers, eggheads, hermits, brooding types, “brilliant lunatics” and other non-conventional people capable of inspiring passion for learning. Many of the greatest scientific discoveries and lasting social innovations were made precisely by such people. In the world of performance-based, professionalized education, their room for maneuver is tightly prescribed, and they tend to get frustrated, leave or are squeezed out. They are a species threatened by extinction.

2. **Implement obligatory skills seminars**, for example on academic writing, research methods and teaching/learning methods. These seminars can be implemented as free-standing “products” or as part of a broader Skills Development Module (see p.7). The methodological seminars should focus on deep questioning: why certain topics are discussed (or not discussed), why certain events are chosen as problems, why certain questions are asked, why one approach or another is chosen to answer these questions, and what are the underlying frames of reference (assumptions, worldviews, thinking habits).

3. **Reverse the current methodology of writing papers**. In the current system, students are expected to first go to the library to read and then to start thinking on their own. In practice, due to laziness or lack of time, they go to Wikipedia or they google a few keywords, and based on whatever the machine spits out, put together essays with extensive reading lists, which they have not actually read carefully but which are designed to impress the teacher. In the University for the Future, students are expected to first think themselves and write their own reflections. After that follows a process of careful reading to test their thinking against others. The starting point is that we know nothing, but that there is some spark or curiosity inside, which enables us to draw on that what we already know and to look for that which we do not know yet.

4. **Fewer readings**, with emphasis on high quality and careful reflection, are more likely to achieve breakthrough learning than a massive quantity of undigested reading. The current system drowns students in readings, producing information overload. Students have different levels of absorption capacity, but in most students the maximum level is exceeded, with the consequence that additional readings do not add to learning but subtract from it. The University for the Future will set a maximum reading load per study day, which will be allocated to the courses over the course of the semester. In the current system, teachers are not aware of the overall reading load and the tasks of students. For this reason, they cannot assess what is reasonably achievable. It is natural for teachers to believe that their course is the most important, which makes them assign reading packages that are not manageable in practice. In a calibrated curriculum, the emphasis is placed on quality, rather than quantity. There will be someone who performs the function of “student learning optimizer” by regulating the assignment load across courses and ensuring a cap on the overall reading load within a given period.

5. **Less quantity of writing**, but more emphasis on rewriting. It makes little sense just to give a grade to students after they submit a paper. Even if comments are added, they will not learn much. The only way to learn is having to rewrite it. It may not be feasible for teachers to read several drafts in every course, but there should be special courses focusing on writing, where students have to rewrite their text until it reaches an acceptable standard. Since everyone can improve from the present level, everyone will be asked to rewrite their papers bringing them to a higher level. For major papers such as theses, the British system of pass, minor corrections, major corrections and re-examination, or fail, is better than a system that knows only pass or fail. The latter system will tend to have most people pass, even if they are actually not good enough, because “it is too late to make them fail after they submit their thesis”.

6. Encourage professors to use **new teaching methods**: Students benefit not only from lectures, student presentations and discussions, but also from other interactive, problem-oriented and student-centered teaching methods. There are literally dozens of methods to choose from; some are more useful than others. Examples include quizzes, Socratic dialogues, role plays, documentaries, simulations, Model United Nations, practical exercises based on experiential learning, 360° feedback processes, service learning, cross-cultural training and extracurricular events, integration of creative arts and storytelling, etc. Several of these methods integrate personal experience into the theoretical framework, thus
making the learning personally real. Many of these new teaching methods are far more effective than
the authoritarian system of teaching, which do not place emphasis on informal relationships, student
initiative and interaction. This system is largely responsible for the fact that students do not feel part of
the educational process, and just want to get the degree and move on.

7. **Technologies like PowerPoint presentations, Web 2.0 and video recording** of presentations with
subsequent feedback may be integrated, but should not replace direct human interaction. The incursion
of computers and other technology into all forms of learning should be viewed in a critical light, as the
pedagogical benefit has not been proven. Many students spend far more time surfing the Internet,
checking emails, playing games and interacting on social networks, rather than using the technology for
academic purposes. More fundamental, technology is supposedly bringing people together, but in reality,
it acts as an interface separating people as well as a filter between people and the world. Instead of
seeing the world through computers, students should experience with all their senses what they are
studying. For example, students of economics could greatly benefit from visiting a poor country – not
only seeing the suffering but doing something, however small, to alleviate it. After Hurricane Katrina and
the earthquake in Haiti, a number of US universities organized trips of professors and students helping
the victims of the natural disaster. Students should also see other cultures, other economic systems (e.g.
socialism), and other religions. Travel should not be touristic. The objective is a deep immersion in ways
of living that are foreign to the particular group of students, to interact with people and to work on
projects that open their minds.

8. Introduce more **profound ways of learning**: Rather than just memorizing facts, students will challenge
the type of learning most of them received at high school. They will learn

- how the material they are studying is relevant to their lives and the world they are living in;
- how they can put the knowledge into practice;
- how to arrive at a deeper understanding of the relationship between seemingly
  unrelated phenomena and events;
- how to detect and avoid unnecessary abstraction;
- how to improve creative thinking;
- how to integrate insights from different disciplines in problem-solving;
- how to work with others to achieve positive changes;
- how to avoid self-defeating behaviors;
- how to work with past life experience;
- how to connect what is present with what wants to emerge;
- how to develop positive self-fulfilling prophecies;
- how to avoid acting from a foreign set of values;
- how to live values without becoming moralistic, etc.

In order to achieve these outcomes, teaching must be oriented more toward the process of
learning, both the process of self-reflection and the process of building groups.

9. For students who have clearly formed talents and interests, there should be more choice (choice of
courses, paper topics, projects, venues of learning). Especially graduate students should have more
**freedom of choice** and they should be challenged to find their own way if they are still too dependent
on external guidance. One cannot pretend to promote an education for freedom if one designs systems
with constrained boundaries around what adult individuals can do. Students should be encouraged to
attend lectures in other disciplines. Most true intellectuals were widely educated in many different
disciplines.

10. **Methods of team-building** should be practiced, including warm-up exercises, facilitation of team
dynamics, activation of joint problem solving, active work with motivation and resistance, ongoing and
final reflection on what was happening – both on the individual level and in the group. This includes
working not only with thoughts but also with emotions and imaginations, which can be powerful
stimulators or obstacles to learning. As a result, students get a deeper insight and broader outlook – not
only in scientific matters – but in terms understanding one’s own behavior and improving one’s
relationship to others. Large group and small group work can be fruitfully mixed.

11. Implement a new **anonymous online teaching evaluation system** which avoids creating false
impressions: Evaluations should not punish demanding professors nor create grade inflation to buy
favorable evaluation.
12. The University for the Future rethinks the current policies of constant grading, which distracts from deeper, more long-term learning. What matters is not only the performance in the classroom or in exams, which often cover only a relatively narrow set of skills. What matters is the overall progress in learning and development over time, and the contributions students make to the academic and social environment. The performance pressure should not destroy the social values and trust in the learning community. Non-traditional forms of evaluation such as 360 degree feedback may be more useful for a profound learning experience. Evaluations should be less fragmented and cover observations of development processes over a longer period of time. The short-term performance maximization model should be discarded in favor of a model of long-term continuous wide-spectrum improvement. The key is personal interest and self motivation, not external pressure. The University for the Future is not a system based on fear (fear of judgment, fear of failure, fear of opening up, fear of not being understood, etc.). Character traits that bring students into trouble in the traditional system such as challenging the professor gain positive feedback.

13. Examinations should require students to reflect, not to regurgitate. Innovative formats of exams could be implemented such as reverse examinations based on students asking teachers questions, thus training the skill to formulate good questions and challenging teachers to give profound answers, which then raise new questions, etc. Some current forms of examination can be kept, but more emphasis has to be placed on “truly understanding” instead of “sort of understanding”. There should be no pressure to believe in whatever the professors say and independent thinking should be rewarded.

14. Offer new extracurricular events and programs: guest lectures, debates, film evenings, reading groups, conversations about deeper issues in life and philosophy, field trips, community service, sports, and foreign study programs. For example, for many years, Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government has been organizing an excellent series of events, which is jam-packed with students and faculty interacting with international leaders such as Mikhail Gorbachev, Bill Clinton, the Dalai Lama, etc.

15. It is not enough to learn from great speakers. Knowledge is only complete when it is applied in practice. Benjamin Franklin once said: “Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn.” Students should be encouraged to think of and implement practical applications for their growing skill sets. For this reason, practical exercises, service learning, client projects, applied research, clinical learning, and other hands-on components will be integrated in the curriculum. These will not be any kind of practical activities, but activities which show students that they can effect change in the outer world by altering the ways in which they process the world internally. The classroom becomes a laboratory for innovation, combining teaching with practical action. Students benefit greatly from being involved in real, professional research projects coordinated by professors. They should directly experience what research is like instead of completing one minor student paper after the other, which does not give a sense of “the real thing”. Another useful activity for students is to become teachers themselves – teaching children or teenagers in local schools how to read, write, etc, and most importantly, stimulating enthusiasm for learning.

16. Integrate goal setting and career development into the curriculum. Goals and careers are dynamic, moving targets, but university studies provide a perfect environment for an ongoing reflection on what one wants to do in life. People spend the vast majority of their time chasing goals and very little time thinking about what they should be, whether the goals they set for themselves are the right ones. Good teachers act as mentors, helping students find out what they really want to do and helping them implement their vision. If you ask people what they want, the answers are often very similar: good job, earn enough money, have a family… If you ask people about their deeper goals, i.e. what they “really” want, they are often surprised by the question and cannot give an answer, at least not immediately. The challenge is to uncover these deeper goals and to help people implement them.

17. The university should stimulate a greater spectrum of intellect, but also help people train their heart (e.g., emotional intelligence) and their body (through a wide choice of physical activity). People should learn how to manage their feelings, understand other people’s feelings and how to transform their energies into something useful for society.

18. Adopt a new code of conduct — the equivalent of a Hippocratic Oath for managers, engineers and other professions. If legally possible, degrees should be withdrawn based on gross misconduct.

19. Enforce a strict anti-plagiarism policy: Before professors read seminar works and theses, students have their works checked by anti-plagiarism software. The software automatically forwards the paper to the
professor along with a plagiarism rating and report. In case of plagiarism, the program leader or responsible administrator is copied as well. There must be a clear definition of plagiarism, referring to the percentage of text copied without attribution. Students should not be punished if a few sentences are similar to an existing text. This can happen in any work, as several people can think the same thoughts.

20. Place emphasis on quality not quantity: The University for the Future will support insight and a capacity to sense and shape the future. It will emphasize depth of learning and avoid information overload, which is known to reduce rather than increase comprehension. Deep reading will be trained so that the information passes through an active brain. There will be a maximum reading load per course to prevent information overload and avoid imbalances in reading load across courses.

21. Design an intelligent program structure: e.g., the first part of any program should be a “fire test” for students, with an intensive program of lectures, discussions, experiential learning, etc. This will challenge students when they are enthusiastic and fresh. By shifting more content to the beginning of the program, time is freed at the end of the program for reflection, for writing the thesis and for the job search. The “fire test” means intensity, not overload. Readings should be limited so that students do not just speed read, which is known to reduce comprehension because of a limited ability to digest the materials. Intensity also means giving space for people to form friendships, which is an essential component of a successful higher education program.

22. Launch a PhD training program, which essentials that PhD candidates need to know such as: 1) How to apply proper research methods, 2) how write a PhD thesis, 3) how to teach, and 4) how to publish and succeed in the academic world. This training should familiarize students with the unwritten rules, pitfalls and risks of an academic career, and explore ways of succeeding without losing your soul.

23. PhD candidates should be integrated in faculty-led research programs, or propose their own research project. Each PhD candidate should demonstrate performance on one or several criteria in addition to writing the thesis and passing the exams (e.g., publications, writing applications for academic projects, extra teaching, organizing conferences, community outreach, etc.)

24. Introduce an effective system of faculty training: Revive the forgotten concept of “Meisterkurse”, which are special immersion experiences taught by “masters”. Nowadays, Meisterkurse exist mainly in the area of classical music, where young talents get a chance to practice with the world’s most accomplished musicians. At the University for the Future, Meisterkurse will be held as in-depth learning experiences by small groups. The purpose is a multi-level transfer of knowledge and experience, including specialized knowledge in a particular discipline, interdisciplinary knowledge, life experience, wisdom, knowhow of applying knowledge to practice, etc. The purpose of these courses is threefold: 1) to develop viable solutions to some of the most difficult problems of society, 2) to move the scientific frontiers to unknown terrain, and 3) to innovate and renew existing research and teaching operations with the most advanced knowledge worldwide.

25. Internships will be integrated into the studies to ensure that students explore the world of professional work before deciding their career. This ensures that students overcome their illusions about certain professions and they will sign up for something that they know and love.

VALUE

Why do some universities achieve great results with relatively little money, while others provide a low level education for a huge tuition? The first type of institution is intelligently designed, based on simple structures, with a minimum of rules and bureaucracy, totally focused on the educational mission. This is the goal of the University for the Future.

1) Increase efficiency and synergy

The University for the Future will be more cost-effective than the traditional structure, because it will make greater use of synergies and simplified procedures:
1. Hiring the best teachers (both academics and practitioners) worldwide for **intensive teaching assignments** without requiring long-term stays locally. This is attractive for visiting professors who have busy travel schedules and it is cheaper for the university, especially when the university covers the cost of housing. During their teaching stays, these professors could be involved in local projects to share best practice and transfer knowledge and experience to their local colleagues.

2. Implement a paperless office philosophy along with paperless studies. With the advent of iPads, Kindle readers and affordable notebooks, printed papers are necessary only for those students who have an eye condition that does not permit them to watch a screen.

3. The quantity of courses can be reduced relative to traditional academic programs, which would allow students to go into more depth regarding each individual subject.

4. Professors teaching several programs simultaneously, with classes offered across schools and degree programs. Students should be able to choose courses university-wide. If classes were composed of students from different disciplines, it would reduce the cost of individual programs.

5. Publishing **a student handbook** to unify the rules and reduce the burden of inquiries on administrators and program leaders.

6. Organizing **regular quality control meetings** designed to discuss concrete written proposals for enhancing the quality of the curriculum, simplifying procedures, making it easier to start new initiatives, etc.

7. Developing an **online cost reduction system** where employees and students can suggest improvements to all systems and procedures at the university. The idea is similar to the Japanese concept of continual improvement and reduction of inefficiencies, *kaizen*. The purpose of this system is to simplify rules and reduce the administrative burden for everyone (including the deans and administrators), thus freeing time for organizational development, teaching preparation, research scholarship, consulting and other productive endeavors. The cost reduction system should be applied also to the university administration, which should be as lean as possible. The most important thing is that the cost reduction proposals do not undermine the health of employees (due to stress and work overload) and their commitment to service.

8. Offering **simple contracts and terms of agreements** with professors, which include a clause that professors are expected to help in organizational matters, fundraising, outreach or other activities that are beneficial for the university. Rehiring decisions, appointments and bonus payments should be based on performance on these criteria.

9. Strengthen the alumni network, attract corporate partners, and launch **a US style capital campaign**. Events should not just have fundraising and networking purposes, but be structured around meaningful projects, where alumni meet likeminded people across different disciplines and years of study.

10. **Sharing faculty and students** between universities, creating synergies with the most innovative units worldwide. Integrate these units as part of a global network of “Universities of the Future”. The exchange of students has the added benefit of learning foreign languages, experiencing different cultures and appreciating their home environments in new ways.

11. Integrate **internships** into the curriculum. A BA could accommodate around 6 months of practical training; a two-year MA could accommodate about 4 months, and a one-year MA about two months. These internships can be in government agencies, businesses or civil society organizations – both in developing and in developed countries. Based on the good performance of students from the University for the Future, internship opportunities would become more widespread as the students would be more sought after.

12. Integrate **guest lecturers** who are willing to share their practical experience and familiarizing students with issues that are new for them. Particularly interesting for students are people who work on the ground with environmental remediation, health problems, conflict resolution, poverty, etc. Seeing the work of such people would be hugely motivating and inspiring for students. The guest lecturers would be paid regular fees, not excessive amounts. (US politicians such as Bill Clinton or Sarah Palin are said to charge 100,000 USD for a lecture.)

13. **Academically useful events** can be organized by students as extracurricular activities. Even if funding is made available to students, the activities can be far cheaper than the regular teaching operations.
Cost-effectiveness measures will be adopted only if there is a clear pedagogical benefit. The University for the Future will not make the mistake of many traditional universities to increase the student/teacher ratio or to save on essential purchases such as plagiarism software.

2) Boost student recruitment

1) Create Job-Education Swaps (JES), which turn the financial crisis into an opportunity. The concept is a Win-Win-Win-Win Opportunity, since all stakeholders are gaining. Here is how it works:

- **Companies:** Instead of paying outsourcing agencies and/or severance packages, companies could improve their image and internal motivation by paying for higher education packages of their managers and professional staff. The idea is different from traditional executive education, which is costly for firms. The idea is that employees who would otherwise be fired are sent on a corporate training for up to 1 year (certificate), 1-2 years (MA) or even 3 years (PhD), with or without the guarantee of return to the company. With guarantee, it would work like a sabbatical; without guarantee, it softens the layoff with positive effects on (a) internal productivity and motivation, (b) external reputation as a responsible employer, and (c) reduced costs of legal challenges. The money spent on the outsourcing agency and/or severance package goes to the university, causing **no extra cost for firms**. If labor law does not permit the financial transfer of the severance package directly to the university, the money could go via the student – either as a severance package or as a services contract (Werkvertrag), whereby the services are the passed exams and the thesis.

- **Employees:** Instead of losing their jobs, employees are offered a study program, which can be tailor-made by outstanding teachers/coaches, or an academic degree earned at a first-rate university. **Main benefit: Avoidance of shame and feeling of being a failure.** There are two ways of implementing the Job-Education swaps: (1) Employees could officially remain associated with the companies, but without salary, offices and perks; or (2) they could be released but without falling into unemployment status, but smoothly transitioning into an educational program. Moreover, there could be a chance of getting back to work after receiving the degree in case the company overcomes financial difficulties. Some employees may not be able to accept the offer, because they need the severance package to cover living expenses. Others have larger severance packages and/or financial reserves and would be glad not to fall into unemployment status. Still others may not accept the offer, because they are not concerned about shame or feelings of failure, or they may not see the value of an educational package. However, even if only a fraction of the target group accepted the offer, the number of additional students would be significant.

- **Taxpayers:** Avoiding payout of unemployment benefits.

- **University:** Huge potential for additional student revenues and highly motivated students.

Already today, many professionals are using their savings or severance package for further education. The work education swaps would offer this option already at the level of the company, avoiding unemployment status and, if possible, ensuring a continued association with the company. If it is attractive for the company, special components can be built into these swaps, e.g. students could work on company relevant projects during their studies, which would earn them an additional income.

In what follows, I give an example of low cost and high cost educational packages including living costs. The choice would in most cases depend on the size of the severance packages, although it is possible that some people with a low severance package may opt for a high cost educational package, whereas others would opt for a low cost package in order to have more free cash at their disposal. There is an option to attract public funding to Job-Education-Swaps, where, say 50% of the cost is covered by the state (on the basis that payout of unemployment benefits are saved) and 50% of the cost would be covered by the company (as a replacement for the severance package).
### Table 1: Low and high cost Job-Education-Swaps

#### 2 year MA - low cost country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Cost</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 x 5800 €</td>
<td>11,600 €</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 x 500 €</td>
<td>12,000 €</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 x 2500 €</td>
<td>5,000 €</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total cost</strong></td>
<td><strong>28,600 €</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

#### 3 year PhD - low cost country

*Internal Ph.D. student status qualifies for scholarship*

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<tr>
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<th>Cost</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 x €5800</td>
<td>17,400 €</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 x €300</td>
<td>-10,800 €</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 x €500</td>
<td>18,000 €</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 x €2500</td>
<td>7,500 €</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total cost</strong></td>
<td><strong>32,100 €</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

#### 3 year PhD - low cost country

*External status does not include scholarship (no residency requirement)*

<table>
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<th>Cost</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 x €5800</td>
<td>17,400 €</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 x €500</td>
<td>18,000 €</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 x €2500</td>
<td>7,500 €</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total cost</strong></td>
<td><strong>42,900 €</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

#### 1 year MA - high cost university and country

*This calculation is based on a newly designed international program with modules in 7 countries*

*All travel costs, accommodation and meals are included in this calculation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cost</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 x €50000</td>
<td>50,000 €</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 x €1500</td>
<td>18,000 €</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 x €10000</td>
<td>10,000 €</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total cost</strong></td>
<td><strong>78,000 €</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The suggested locations are:
- Bratislava, Slovakia
- Cambridge, MA USA
- Cracow, Poland
- Florence, Italy
- Madrid, Spain
- Prague, Czech Republic
- Vienna, Austria

2) Continue offering internationally known degrees (MBA, MIR, LLM, etc.), but at the same time **diversify study programs** with new content new degrees that attract additional target groups. Each new program should make use of existing courses in order to reduce cost. Some ideas:

- BA/MBA/DBA in Entrepreneurship and Innovation
- BA/MBA/DBA in Corporate Social Responsibility
To increase student intake, these programs could be offered across schools. To give an example: the Business School, the School of Arts and Humanities and the School of Psychology could advertise an MA/PhD in Life Design and Career Management. The program could share most of the content with another program, the MA/PhD in Leadership and Personal Development, which could be operated by the same program director. This would save costs and bring in new students who are attracted by programs that go beyond the standard curricula. As the market for regular MBAs is highly crowded, it is necessary to develop something different to stand out from the competition.

3) Implement joint degrees with capable partners nationally and internationally, with mutual recognition of diplomas. Most joint degrees nowadays mean that students spend half their study time in one location and half in the other. But for some programs, it may make more sense to get away from the school like educational process. For example, the program could be organized in modules/blocks with intensive immersion experiences led by outstanding teachers/trainers/coaches in different locations. In between these intensive training programs, students would have quiet time for individual studies and integrated projects.

4) Add premium components that students can purchase in addition to their regular programs (e.g., a seminar in China, India, Brazil; summer schools; personal mentoring by a faculty member; or individual tutoring in areas where the student has to catch up with the rest of the class). When applying for their programs, students can sign up for such premium components, knowing that they will be charged extra. The income from the premium components would be split 50/50 between university and the professor. There could be innovative ways of offering premium components also to students who cannot afford them. One idea is to offer a 5+1 model, where 5 people pay for it, and 1 is given out as a scholarship to a student who performs well.3

5) Create innovative scholarship programs nurturing a new generation of leaders who share a commitment to serve the world. Those students performing best in the BA programs get scholarships for the MA, and the best MA students get PhD stipends. The evaluation for these scholarships is based not only on grades but also on dedication, ethics and future promise, taking into account character traits and extracurricular activities. The availability of such scholarships would give a real incentive for students to pay attention to their education and the quality of their outside activities.4 The scholarship programs could have expiry clauses based on non-performance and misbehavior. The proposed way of providing scholarships fixes a flaw in the traditional system, where students get scholarships before proving their worth. Scholarships could also be provided as loans that turn into grants based on performance.5

6) Create dual-degree programs (“Get 2 for 1”) without increasing the amount of classes (students simply attend lessons in different programs).

7) There should be no maximization of student recruitment, as that would lead to a lowering of the educational results. On the other hand, the current admissions procedures are often not very sophisticated, making decisions based on grades, narrow-range tests, essays that can be written by someone else, etc. Admission to the university should be based on a more creative process where wider criteria are used to judge readiness and potential, not just the current knowledge of facts, logic or mathematics. The procedure should be focused on talent detection. In the first months, students will have sessions to discover their abilities and their goals.

8) Opportunities for participation in research projects to familiarize students with the professional world of research. The opportunities should be given as part of advanced seminars as excursions to the frontiers of science. These optional seminars are designed for students wishing to experience a more intensive learning environment due to the small class size and high standards. In these research-oriented seminars students are invited to test their skills in ongoing research projects. Although their contributions may not meet the scientific

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3 I am grateful to José M. de Areilza for sharing this idea.
4 In this context, it’s worth citing Max DePree: “When one thinks carefully about why certain people who are competent, well-educated, energetic, and well supported with good tools fail, it is often the red thread of superficiality that does them in. They never get seriously and accountably involved in their own work.” The 6-level education framework along with the new type of scholarship program outlined above ensures that students are not superficial about their learning.
5 I am grateful to José M. de Areilza for sharing this idea.
requirements, the learning effect is significant. Through personal coaching, teachers help students upgrade their skills while motivating them to consider an academic career. Students exhibiting a genuine interest in scientific practice may be hired as research assistants for further “on the job training” in the context of ongoing research projects.

**Options for implementation**

There are five options for implementing the University for the Future: The first option is a Greenfield Project (new institution); the next option is a combination of the University for the Future with a Community for the Future – both to be built as integrated Greenfield Projects. The next three options constitute different ways of implementation within an existing organization—institution-wide (large scale), experimental (medium scale) and incremental (small scale).

**1) Building a new university as a Greenfield Project**

Building a new university from the ground up is an attractive option, as all buildings could be constructed in accordance with the most advanced knowledge in architecture, energy technologies and materials. The new university would be designed based on a “total integration philosophy”: Built with natural materials; harmoniously integrated into the landscape; working with the conditions and materials given by the local ecosystem; combining ancient (e.g. FengShui) with modern design principles (e.g. Zero Emissions, utilization of natural light and air conditioning, reusable and non-toxic materials). In order to minimize its ecological footprint, the university implements a comprehensive resource saving and recycling system and achieves self-sufficiency in electricity and heating (from renewable energies), water (from the ground), and nutrition. The food supply is localized through an integrated organic farm, wood stove bakery and local store. All facilities such as lecture rooms, student’s hall, offices and dormitories give a comfortable feeling, enabling sociability as well as privacy for individual reading and research. Sports facilities would be integrated and easy to use with a web-based booking system.

By maximizing the use of natural lighting and air conditioning, the productivity of learning can be tangibly improved. The library and study rooms should therefore have plenty of daylight and be inviting to readers. The book delivery system should be automated so that every book is available within minutes and no book can get lost, because readers place them in the wrong space. The café, student club and other facilities for student activities should be operated by the students on a non-profit basis, thus ensuring affordability while at the same time providing income opportunities for students. There should be regular transparent elections to ensure that the student management cares about cleanliness and service. The university would be fully accessible to the disabled.

The buildings and landscaping would be arranged around a clear center, from which everything else emanates. Through the center the buildings and paths will be connected in an intelligent manner. There will be no traffic inside the campus, except for deliveries of heavy materials and handicapped access. Theme rooms, art facilities and gardens will replace the aseptic, love and lifeless environments of many traditional universities. The task for the architects and gardeners will be to create comfortable and creative environments, as creativity comes from the good vibes, which the surroundings transmit.

It is recommended to establish an autonomous legal form, which guarantees freedom from all locations of power. The new university could be funded through grants and soft loans, and it may pay a return to investors, but its operations must be independent of political and private interests, so that there is no interference with the fundamental nature and purpose of education: the pursuit of truth and knowledge that is independent of — and sometimes inconvenient to — those in power.

The issue of power must also be resolved internally. The University for the Future should operate in a rather horizontal manner without many layers of management. Democratic principles should allow leaders to be elected (or dismissed) by all members of the university, not by a faculty senate or similar body, which can be easily hijacked by particular interests.
2) Building a new university as a Greenfield Project along with a Community for the Future

The University for the Future can be a free-standing Greenfield Project or it can be integrated in a community that shares similar principles as outlined above. Such a community would integrate best practice of eco-villages and other self-sufficient communities around the world. The goal is to overcome the modern, anonymous and fragmented living arrangements to create a vibrant and integrated social, cultural and economic life, in which togetherness and privacy are not mutually exclusive. Let us call this the Community for the Future.

Such a community would connect a number of institutions, including the above described university, a kindergarten, an old age home, a school where children learn creativity, an organic farm, innovative businesses as well as private homes – all built in an integrated and nature friendly architecture. Some of the core questions for such a community could be framed as “How can we achieve a globally worthwhile society? How can we build and live it locally?” The community would not be ideologically committed to one political or religious stream. It would cultivate gentle closeness in freedom of coercion, devising and practicing a productive relationship with nature in its largest sense, in an uncompromised economy. The members of the community would consciously work on questions of universal reformation in all spheres of life, deepening the coherence by ever fuller (self-)awareness, evolving jointly in self-reflective activities in a mutually supportive, self-produced reality.

For some, this may seem too idealistic or even unrealistic, for others this is the only real option. Clearly, we can do more than many believe offhand. The main thing is to connect ideas with practical realization, making the step from writing and talking about the vision to actually and creatively implementing it, concretizing thus the three levels of organic structure: giving birth to autonomous free agreement (constituting sociality and legality), for organizing the necessary material means (constituting economic life) towards integrative and integral mental quests and endeavors (constituting spiritual life, the nourishing matrix of the whole).

The Community for the Future is described in a separate document in more detail. The next three options for implementation focus again exclusively on the University for the Future, assuming that instead of constructing a new university, an existing university is redesigned in line with the ideas and principles mentioned in this blueprint:

3) Institution-wide (large scale, macro)

3.1) Implementation by an existing university

The institution-wide approach would be to launch a process to implement the blueprint in a systematic fashion across all units of an existing university. The implementation is carried out like a corporate change initiative. Implemented over a 1 to 3-year period, the initiative carries a catchy title, e.g. “Innovation Initiative” or “University for the Future Project”. The focus is on achieving improvements in all procedures and systems, including streamlining the administration and implementing curriculum synergies across schools.

The process would be organized in a simple and efficient way: The deans join working groups driven by selected faculty (“big minds”, not “big egos”) who share the goals of the project and are enthusiastic to promote it. There is a clear division of labor, ensuring that the work does not rest on the shoulders of the deans. Regular meetings ensure that the innovations are implemented in a coherent fashion. There needs to be a coordinator, strategic advisor or Director of Organizational Design (depending on the scale of the initiative).

The University for the Future Project focuses both on optimizing internal processes as well as harnessing external reputation effects. The external marketing strategy is organized by professionals. The basis could be one or several key ideas from this blueprint — those that are best communicable and most contagious. These ideas would be used to promote the overall initiative, to give it recognition among people who are not familiar with the details. For example, the launch of the University for the Future could include the announcement of implementing the equivalent of a Hippocratic Oath for all students — an oath that is actually given in a ceremony at the beginning of studies, not just a code of conduct published on a website. The ceremony should be open to journalists from all countries, generating good will and name recognition. The ceremony would be filmed and photographed and generate attention by the media and the international academic community.

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6 I am grateful to Alec Schaerer for articulating this vision.
Another option how to communicate the message of the University for the Future would be the launch of a new unit or school, which most universities do not have. The schools could focus on one of the higher levels of the 6-Level Framework presented in this blueprint: For example, the **School for Futures Research** (Level 2) or the **School for Transformative Leadership** (Level 5). Such a launch would reinforce the reputation of pioneering new concepts in higher education.

### 3.1) Implementation by an existing corporation

Instead of planning a corporate university as a Greenfield project, the corporation could redesign its entire training operations in line with ideas of the University for the Future. This could be done for one country, one region or globally. It would not require new investments in infrastructure.

### 4) Experimental (medium scale, meso)

#### 4.1) Implementation by an existing university

This approach would not involve creating a university-wide project, but a new unit — a “university within a university”.

This could be a new faculty, department, institute or center, which will try out the concept before applying it more broadly across the institution. It would comprise selected degree programs across schools, where the ideas presented in this paper are tried out. The process is experimental, using methods of **rapid cycle prototyping**, which has been successfully used in companies. If the changes work, they could be expanded to other units.

#### 4.2) Implementation by an existing corporation

This would involve the establishment of a new unit or team (within the corporation or contracted out) with the task to design selected programs for specific target groups such as:

- High potentials (HiPo Programs)
- People to be laid off (Job-Education-Swaps)
- New recruits (ImmersionPrograms)
- Middle management (executive education)
- Senior management (Meisterkurse, tailor-made coaching).

These programs would be designed in a way that they share teachers and resources, with mixing of the target groups for selected trainings whenever feasible.

### 5) Incremental (small scale, micro)

#### 5.1) Implementation by an existing university

The suggestions contained in this blueprint can be launched individually, without requiring a decision to create the “University for the Future”. For example, it is relatively simple to implement the **writing module**, design one or several new BA/MA/PhD programs, write a business plan for the **School for Transformative Leadership**, write the **student handbook**, or launch a **Think Tank**. The more aspects are implemented, the closer the institution moves toward the model of the University for the Future.

#### 5.2) Implementation by an existing corporation

The small scale approach would be to design a pipeline of programs, which build on each other. If proven successful, they can be expanded (meso, macro, Greenfield project). The most promising program to be prototyped would be a Job-Education-Swap as outlined on pages 12-13.

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7I am grateful to Clemens Sedmak for this idea.
Excerpt from an interview held at the IE School of Arts and Humanities

You have written a blueprint of “The University for the Future”, in which you argue for a different type of university. Why do we need to transform universities? Henry David Thoreau once wrote: “To my astonishment I was informed on leaving college that I had studied navigation! – why, if I had taken one turn down the harbor I should have known more about it.” One of my students, who recently finished her studies, and who knows about the idea to create a different type of university, recently sent me a similar message. She wrote: “This is a very important project! I am so happy you are doing this. I spoke to many students who just finished, like me, and every person said the same: I did not learn anything! Isn’t this sad? I studied 5 years and all I deeply know are the few things we learned in a non-traditional way.”

How is it possible to study five years and end up learning so little? One student described me her experience, which is rather common. She said: “At the beginning, I was really glad to be at the university. Passing the entrance exam meant a lot for me. I was prepared to be part of the university with my heart and my soul. I was trying to do my best to get good grades and learn as much as I could. The courses seemed fascinating and essential for my field of study. But after a few exams, I recognized that I do not remember much of what I learnt. It was a pretty disappointing feeling. I stopped enjoying my courses, because they were mostly about memorizing facts. While trying to memorize information, most students do not have mental and physical strength to create something on their own. There was a feeling that something is missing. And as the years passed by, it felt like that this “something” is important and has to be found.”

Does the blueprint present a static, fixed concept, or is it flexible to reflect changes in society? The concept of the University for the Future is dynamic and evolving. It changes over time, as people, societies and civilizations change. The recommendations made in this blueprint fit the current state of civilization with its specific set of characteristics, including a deep seated fear of novelty and change and an immune system toward any knowledge that may overturn the existing assumptions. The practical steps outlined in this blueprint are the first steps in a long process of change. The university is a “living organism” co-created by all who participate in it. As people evolve, the university co-evolves. If people develop themselves further, the university will become more sophisticated as well. If this process is not interrupted or reversed, the university will assume its true role and mission. It will become the central institution of a civilization, which is ready to (re)integrate the fragments of knowledge and to (re)discover insights that are nowadays almost completely excluded from university education.

Where do you want to build the University for the Future? The concept does not necessarily require a completely new institution built on new ground. It can be implemented as an incremental or fundamental shift of an existing institution. If there is a chance to build such a university from the ground up, then the location is very important. Ideally, it should be a “power place” in nature or close to nature. It does not matter whether it is close to a park, a lake, a forest, a valley or a mountain. Natural beauty promotes creativity, regeneration and connection between people and all other beings. It should be an environment, where people find answers to difficult and meaningful questions. The location, the architecture, the curriculum — and all other aspects of the university — should satisfy the need to recreate a connection with the original fundamentals of life and existence.

Is the idea of building a University for the Future realistic, or is it some kind of utopia? It is probably a utopia [laughs] — but only if people do not allow themselves to dream. This idea has been expressed by many novelists. For example, in Lawrence of Arabia, we find the memorable lines by T. E. Lawrence: “All people dream, but not equally. Those who dream by night in the dusty recesses of their mind, wake in the morning to find that it was vanity. But the dreamers of the day are dangerous people, for they dream their dreams with open eyes, and make them come true.” Edgar Allan Poe said, “They who dream by day are cognizant of many
things which escape those who dream only by night.” And finally, Oskar Wilde put it to the point when he said: “Progress is the realization of utopias.”

**What is the main message of your concept paper?** The main message is that the modern academic system is a one-level system, whereas the University for the Future is a six-level system.

**What does that mean?** Most universities focus on Level 1 education, which involves analyzing problems using theories and empirical data [see illustration on page 4]. This is a worthwhile endeavor, but there are other levels of education that are currently neglected. In the future, more emphasis will be placed on the remaining five levels, even though there will be much resistance by those who know only the first level.

**Please explain these levels.**

Let’s start with **prediction**, which is Level 2. The ability to forecast future events is one of the main goals of science, yet it is absent in most educational curricula. The traditional university looks to the past, not to the future. Students should learn history, but it is equally important that they get a sense of what the future may bring. There are several complementary ways of finding out about the future: some are non-traditional while others rely on systematic methods of scenario development, forecasting, and futures research. Some scientists question the value of futures studies, because they came across some predictions that seem more like science fiction than science, but just because there is some questionable work within a field is not a good reason to dismiss the entire field and to disregard the relevance of looking toward the future.

**Level 3** deals with **generating solutions**, which involves reflecting upon individual choices, policy options, new business models, etc. So far, universities have generated far more knowledge about problems than about solutions. Many scientists are proud to demonstrate proficiency in problem analysis while shying away from developing sustainable solutions. The phenomenon is visible in classrooms as well as in academic literature where the solutions are virtually non-existent. Sometimes, they are outlined in a chapter toward the end of the publication, or a few paragraphs in the conclusion, but the percentage of effort spent on developing solutions is almost always lower than the percentage spent on analyzing problems. There is a rather widespread reluctance among scientists to engage in normative research and to make proposals, because proposals can be more easily attacked than empirical studies, which are based on “hard data”. Rather than discriminating against normative research, the University for the Future pays academics to show their prowess in comparing different options in a systematic manner, and producing thoughtful proposals for viable solutions. The alternative is to leave problem solving to practitioners and politicians, many of whom do not have the time, incentives and disposition to develop fundamental solutions.

**Level 4** has to do with **skills development for solution implementation**. Already today some universities invest in Level 4 education. In these universities students learn transferrable skills such as project management, fundraising, team building, negotiation, conflict resolution, and so on. These courses are increasingly offered across different study programs. Job advertisements show that transferrable skills are appreciated by employers when recruiting students. Skills components can be integrated in all academic curricula and they should be taught in an ethically sensitive way. For example, if we teach the art of negotiation, we should not teach people techniques of manipulation. Rather, we should show how one can achieve win-win solutions in an open and honest way.

The best way to develop skills is to apply them in practice. Many people see problems, some understand them, but only very few do something about them. Universities are full of young minds, which can realize positive change when provided with an environment, in which they are free to pursue endeavors that stimulate their inherent creativity and wisdom – those parts in their personality, which nowadays are often stifled by a rigid academic system that places emphasis on homogeneity of learning outcomes. All components of the University for the Future will be built on stimulating creativity and fostering active collaboration between professors and students in teaching, research and other projects. Students and faculty will effect change together, for example, by crafting a micro-society within the university itself that sets the example of how to live sustainably and by reaching out to the community.

**Level 5** education has to do with **personal development, character building and behavior change**. This is rather difficult to teach, because there are no easy ways to transform deeply ingrained beliefs and behaviors. The main requirement is that the change must be wanted, not imposed. There is research showing that groundbreaking training programs can help people transform themselves. This transformation can be on several levels, including the mental level (e.g., revising core beliefs in which our thought processes are rooted), the emotional level (e.g., replacing anger with compassion, fear with courage, hate with love), and the physical
level (e.g., improvements in health, fitness and strength). Some concepts can be taught in the traditional way through lectures and seminars, while the more complex content is transmitted through methods that are normally not used in the classroom. Character building cannot be learned by heart, through memorization. It can only be learned by simultaneously stimulating IQ, EQ and SQ, reducing all that is false and artificial in a process of becoming truly human. The goal is to create synergy with our “intrinsic original nature”, which overcomes the feeling of void that many people experience today.

**What does that mean – create synergy with our “intrinsic original nature”?** The university should facilitate everything that is real and authentic in one’s personality. It should enable students to (re)build and (re)discover their “natural good essence” so that they are prepared to face any situation at work, in private life, as citizens— with confidence and strength of character.

**What is the source, the fountain, of Level 5 education?** The source is the primary knowing that is inside every human being. It is not something we can learn in traditional ways, from books and lectures, but we can be inspired by many religious teachings, wisdom traditions, philosophy, etc. For examples, many Greek philosophers had access to primary knowing, e.g., Pythagoras of Samos, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle. Likewise, much wisdom can be found in Eastern philosophies such as Taoism, Confucianism and Buddhism. This knowledge should be complemented by reading outstanding thinkers in the Western tradition, such as Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Friedrich Schiller—to mention just a few. Students should be familiarized with this rich heritage at the university, regardless of which subject they study.

**How can Level 5 content be taught so that it actually leads to behavior change?** Level 5 courses are not based on disseminating information; this type of education requires new methods. Level 5 courses are interactive, creative and experiential. They allow people to experience social reality—not just to think about abstract concepts. Some innovative companies are already using Level 5 training formats, and there are literally dozens of methods that can be helpful. Unfortunately, these methods are not yet widely applied in universities.

**Can you give an example?** The German insurance company Allianz trains managers using a method called “Dialogue in the Dark”. In these trainings, blind guides lead participants through totally dark environments where they learn to interact by relying on other senses. Participants report that such workshops change one’s perspective, allowing new forms of perception to emerge. The “Dialogue in the Dark” method is used in human resource development to train and practice skills such as reflective communication, trust, teamwork, intuition and emotional intelligence.

**What is the learning outcome of Level 5?** Level 5 educational programs train a wide range of qualities of leaders. There is no fixed set of qualities that a leader must have, although some qualities are certainly more important than others. Among the most important qualities are authenticity, courage, creativity, imagination, initiative, capacity for exercising judgment, professionalism, respect for diverse points of view, open communication and a calibrated compass to deal with ambiguous situations. These are not just inborn traits; they can be acquired, provided that individuals want to learn.

**Why is Level 5 needed?** In light of the patterns of leadership failure we see in the world, personality development is perhaps the most critical challenge of education in the 21st century. There is a certain paradox in the fact that universities call themselves “institutions of higher learning”, when so much of the learning takes place at the lower levels of fact-finding and memorizing. The University for the Future does not abolish these lower levels of learning, but it complements them with deeper ways of learning. This type of education focuses attention on those phenomena, which are usually in the background and which require deeper probing to be uncovered, for example, deeper relations between people or connections between events, which at the surface seem unrelated. We must ask ourselves why so many people are afraid of wisdom, why do they feel so threatened by knowledge that overturns pre-existing assumptions?

**What is wisdom?** Wisdom is integrated knowledge from different fields used to find the currents underneath the immediate facts. Such knowledge is not just intellectual comprehension. People understand that if they develop only their intellect, they will not understand the real purpose of this life. Being rational is excellent, but being too rational can be a handicap difficult to overcome.

**Why are leadership programs not offered in all academic programs?** One reason is that leadership and personality development is often misunderstood. Some people think it is elitist and hierarchical; others think it is too touchy feely; still others think it belongs to business management and has nothing to do with other academic disciplines; some even perceive it as an agenda resembling Big Brother, with experts conducting
social experiments on their unsuspecting victims. These and other misperceptions have to be overcome. Leadership is about the difficult path toward balance, harmony, authenticity, integration, alignment.

Can leadership programs be misused? As all fields of knowledge, leadership studies can be misused by those who have the wrong intentions. However, recent developments in the field of pedagogy and organizational learning indicate that there are positive ways of building character. The leadership program I have in mind transforms the mainstream form of leadership education. It focuses on acquiring knowledge and habits that lead to transformation on a personal, institutional and societal level.

What is wrong with mainstream leadership education? Mainstream frameworks assume that cleverness is more important than kindness. These frameworks are based on an anthropocentric view of the world, a materialistic and maximizing conception of the human being and a view of life and society based on self-interest and the inevitability of conflict. In these perspectives, leaders strategize and manipulate others in line with their own self-interest. Mainstream frameworks are hierarchical and power-based. They replicate the model they are teaching. By teaching that self-interest and conflict is inevitable, this type of leadership education ensures that the future corresponds to the same logic of the past — the logic of self-interest and power. Traditional approaches tend to increase people’s ego, rather than reducing it.

I can imagine that students in psychology or social science programs would benefit from Level 5 trainings, but why should students of, say, architecture or engineering focus on it? Consider what happens if knowledge and skills (Levels 1 to 4) gets into the wrong hands. Take, for example, a personality like Albert Speer. He was Hitler’s chief architect before he became Minister of Armaments and War Production in the Third Reich. Speer was very accomplished in terms of Levels 1 to 4. The problem was his character. He was aware that many people were dying in the war as a consequence of this idea. Still, he actively contributed to the war effort, forcing starving prisoners of war and foreigners to work in the German war industry. There are many other examples. Consider, for instance, Lavrentiy Beria, one of the brightest men around Stalin. Beria was an engineer. As chief of the Soviet security apparatus under Stalin, Beria organized the enormous system of the Gulag, in which more than 1.7 million people perished in the most horrific conditions. These are extreme examples, but they illustrate the destruction that can be caused by cold intelligence and superior skills.

As a percentage of the total population, there are probably not that many persons like Speer and Beria. The Soviet experience and the Third Reich have shown that there are many Mini-Speers and Mini-Berias who are just as cold-blooded as their brilliant masters. And there are even more people who exhibit characteristics such as hate and aggression on a lesser scale. That is why it is a mistake to exclude character development from our educational system.

Are leadership programs about reducing defects in character? The leadership and personal development programs are about individuals working on their shadow side, but they are also introducing a positive message of love and meaning. They help people with issues of self-mastery and social competence. These programs are not replacements for psychological treatment, but they can contribute to reducing the number of people that require such treatment.

Where do you see the role of ethics in your framework? I see ethics not so much as part of Level 5 but Level 3. This is quite a tricky matter: Ethics relates primarily to the question what we should do. It deals with principles and rules guiding human behavior and it informs decisions about which solutions we should implement. Level 5 goes beyond that. Level 5 is not about what we should do. It does not instruct us on what is moral, and it is not about “moral people” judging those who are “amoral” or “immoral”. Rather, Level 5 education is about immersion and suspending judgment in order to allow real learning to emerge. This type of learning involves a process of intensive observation, stillness and perception. One of the best recent explanations of this process is given in the book Theory U, written by Otto Scharmer from MIT. This is not a book on ethics, but on personality development and leadership. It describes what happens when we pay attention to the deeper currents. It outlines a methodology for experiencing a much more direct and visceral form of ethics than the morality and rules we know from the past.

Do we still need ethics? As long as Level 5 is not recognized as the backbone of education, and as long as personality development is crowded out by other concerns, ethics is indispensable. However, if we grow to a higher stage of development, the importance of ethics declines. Level 5 is about people doing the right thing based on their state of consciousness, not based on particular ethical principles or rules. Level 5 is not devoid of
ethics, but it is closer to the Aristotelian tradition, asking about the good act, good character, good life and good community.

In our times, in light of such widespread ethical failure, it is quite radical to argue that the importance of ethics is declining. In the present state of human evolution, ethics is of central importance to the functioning of society; its importance is not declining but growing. However, if we ask why it is becoming more important, we discover that it is because of widespread lack of awareness. The underlying problem in society is not lack of ethics; it is lack of awareness. We are so concerned about how the Pizza Connection is organizing the racket, getting fired up about all kinds of ethical violations, that we are prone to overlook the operations of a far more pernicious and more widespread Pizza Connection — the one that trades in the business of ignorance and illusion.

There are many people who try to remove people’s illusions and guide them to the truth. For centuries, people have lived under the ethical guidance of priests, Imams and other spiritual leaders. The main role of these leaders was to ensure the functioning of the community. They were more focused on “breeding” the right people than on educating them. They did not help people in overcoming illusions, as doing so would have undermined their position as shepherds. Now we are living in a different age. Individuals no longer need shepherds to show them the way; and even if they needed them, there is a problem of guidance, as most shepherds are phony.

The vision to implement so many levels of education in practice seems daunting. Why do we even need another level, Level 6? Is there really something above personality development? Some people say that there is nothing above personality development. For them, Level 6 does not exist. Nevertheless, I decided to include it in my framework, because many people are looking for Level 6 and I did not want to exclude them in my concept of a “University for the Future”.

Does Level 6 exist? Although there have been many attempts to prove that Level 6 is real, the very idea that Level 6 must be proved using traditional scientific methods is questionable. There are some questions which do not have definite answers. There are two possibilities: Either Level 6 does not exist, or the most commonly known human senses are not sophisticated enough to detect it and the words not profound enough to describe it. Even the most advanced technologies of today, which expand our limited range of senses, are not sophisticated enough to reveal the deeper secrets of the universe. Take the most powerful microscope, the Hubble Telescope, or the Large Hadron Collider in Geneva. They give an intimation of the vastness of the universe, but they cannot reveal the very essence of Level 6.

The inclusion of Level 6 in the framework is controversial. Wouldn’t it be better to stop at Level 5? I placed Level 6 in the framework so that individuals, who are looking for answers to metaphysical and transcendental questions, may organize their own learning and form their own judgment. There will never be agreement on these matters. There are so many debates and controversies; some of them are productive, others are not. Once people start fighting, or even starting wars about Level 6, you realize that they haven’t understood Level 6 — nor Level 5 for that matter. The reason why we have so much fanaticism in the world has to do with the fact that we have placed much emphasis on Level 6 before paying attention to Level 5.

So Level 6 is about religion? Some conclude that Level 6 has to do with religion; others prefer philosophical esoteric streams; yet another group believes that the immaterial is merely a figment of the imagination. For a scientist, the mystery seems irresolvable. In order not to create unnecessary boundaries, I have not given a name to Level 6. Everyone can mentally insert their preferred terminology in my figure of the 6-Level University [see page 4].

By not putting a name on Level 6, you risk being misunderstood. If I placed any religion in the figure, it would automatically exclude all others, thus making the 6-Level Framework relevant only for members of a particular religious group. The 6-Level University is universal, integrating all religions and frameworks of thought and at the same time going beyond them.

Can Level 6 be taught? I am not sure. It is certainly difficult. You can teach about religions, but how do you teach enlightenment? In the traditional concept of teaching, the idea is mind-boggling.

Can we say that Level 6, if it exists, is the “highest education”, not just “higher education”? To ask what is the highest form of education is a good question, but it is difficult to answer. It is probably a lifetime task for each individual. My sense is that people should first focus on the other five levels before attempting to reach the stratosphere. Perhaps Level 6 occurs naturally if people engage seriously with Level 5. A high degree of
integration at Level 5 is necessary to be able to explore productively whether Level 6 exists. If there is no wholesome nourishment at Levels 5, we risk wreaking havoc on Level 6. Richard Rohr, a Franciscan priest, once made a memorable statement. He said “It might be a little cynical, but you could almost figure out what Jesus said, looking at our history... We keep worshiping the messenger, keeping Jesus up on statues and images, so we can avoid what Jesus said. It’s the best smokescreen in the world. We just keep saying, ‘We love Jesus.’ The more we talk about Jesus, the less we’ll do what he said. That’s the way the ego fools itself. And in this case, it’s the way culture, nations and even the churches have fooled themselves.”

If we fool ourselves in religious, metaphysical matters, is there anyone who can help us out of our predicament? I’d love to get to know that individual. For now, I remain on the side of caution by saying that in this sphere, on Level 6, individuals are left to their own devices. We can share with a group, we can talk about it, we can connect to others in the most marvelous ways, but the truth about Level 6 we can find only individually. Before we investigate the elusive and unknown, we have to recognize the errors, illusions and limits of our experience and understanding. For scientists with academic titles, it is difficult to accept the notion that they do not know. The truths we think we have are probably truths spelled with a small t, not with a capital T. The question is: how advanced is the scientific enterprise today? Are we in the final stages of a scientific development, where only minor additional discoveries are possible, or are we still in the early stages of a vast exploration, which— if carried through successfully — might shake the foundations of what we hold to be true today?

As a scientist, why do you feel it is necessary to pursue metaphysical questions? If we want to understand science, we must also understand the boundaries of science, so ultimately we cannot avoid delving into other ways of knowing, deriving from metaphysics, religion and esotericism. To explore these boundaries, we need to find out if these ways of knowing are different from traditional scientific methods, and to examine whether they are compatible or contradictory to science. Many outstanding scientists, including people like Einstein, Heisenberg, Bohr, Planck — to mention just a few — were investigating these boundaries throughout their life, and they were careful to differentiate and calibrate their judgment in relation to these matters.

Many people have already made up their minds by practicing a particular faith. Why should they consider something that may be outside their faith? Human beings seek for meaning and they are happy when they find it — in a person, an ideology, a religion or a scientific approach. In a chaotic and fragmented world, this approach can provide comfort and companionship. But there are risks in wanting to have quick answers and then resting with them, believing that one found the truth. People search for these moments when they feel they have found what they are looking for; it makes them feel good. Finding meaning in one person or approach is comfortable, but ultimately it is constraining. There is so much to learn from different traditions and worldviews. This is neither relativism nor randomness. It’s not about going around the world and picking up ideas from different traditions. It is about education in the deepest sense, an open-minded education, which requires keeping independence and freedom from apparent coherence and institutional form. By keeping a distance, it is possible to avoid the shackles imposed by people and institutions, which often cover that which is truly essential. A lack of movement sets in once the “Truth” has been found. As long as you operate in the realm of thinking and perception, there can be no lethargy or constraints, but when you create institutions, other elements such as power, ideology and rules enter the stage, preventing people from experiencing the essence. When people are too convinced of any faith, they demonstrate a lack of independence and they create conditions that are not conducive to learning.

Are you sure that the 6 levels in your framework are exhaustive— that they represent a complete representation of the levels of learning? My framework is a continuous work in progress; it would be a mistake to exclude the possibility that other levels exist. Nevertheless, before we include them, we must make sure that they are not already included in the previously mentioned levels. For example, one may propose another level dealing with social and societal transformation. The argument would be that social and societal development is at least as important as personal development. This seems plausible. But there are several issues to be considered: First, social and societal development may already be included in the framework, especially in Levels 3 and 5. Second, personal development (Level 5) is probably primary, in the sense that it must come first. If we look at the political scene, it is full of people who wish to transform society before transforming themselves. As a result, there is a risk of doing more harm than good, regardless of how idealistic the intentions.
ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Gaudenz Assenza developed this blueprint for a different kind of university during a stay as a Visiting Professor at the IE in Madrid. IE is known for its business programs that are consistently ranked among the Top 5 in Europe by leading journals such as The Financial Times, The Economist and The Wall Street Journal (http://www.ie.edu/IE/php/en/rankings.php). Having lived in eleven countries, Gaudenz Assenza combines a multicultural background with an interdisciplinary education: He completed a dual-degree management program at the European Partnership of Business Schools in Germany and England, followed by a master (John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University). After gaining a doctorate at the University of Oxford (St. Antony’s College), he completed a professorial dissertation (Habilitation). Gaudenz Assenza worked as a research analyst at the Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva and as a senior research fellow at the Fridtjof Nansen Institute in Norway. From 2004 until 2008 he taught at the Friedrich Schiller University of Jena in Germany, where he held the „Johann-Gottfried-Herder Chair. He also teaches at universities in Central and Eastern Europe including the Czech Republic (Olomouc) and Slovakia (Ružomberok). Apart from working in academia, Gaudenz Assenza has experience from the private sector (Philips, Dun & Bradstreet) as well as from international organizations, including the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UN ECE) and the International Finance Corporation, the private sector arm of the World Bank Group. Having worked with new teaching methods for many years, Prof. Assenza is now preparing educational reform initiatives with scholars from Harvard, Oxford, King’s College London and other leading universities worldwide.