Some people think that universities should provide graduates with the knowledge and skills needed in the workplace. Others think that the true function of a university should be to give access to knowledge for its own sake, regardless of whether the course is useful to an employer.

What, in your opinion, should be the main function of a university?

Currently, there has been a general debate over education in terms of what the main function of a university is. Some feel that graduates should be taught basic job-related knowledge and skills in the workplace; still, others believe education should not only prepare young people to compete in society but also help them maintain their cultural identity.

Those who claim that necessary knowledge and related skills in the workplace should be served by universities for their graduates may think that campus education has a direct and close link to the employment rate. Assuming that a job opportunity as a high-paid developer in IT companies, like Tencent, Baidu, or Alibaba, for which there are two applicants, called A and B, who want to compete; both of them graduated from top-10 universities with excellent background of computer science and technology while A has been taught more about employable skills in advance. Apparently, chances are high that the company will hire A, not B. Thus, it is better for graduates to get more prepared for job-related skills when they study at universities.

Aside from the transmission of tradition, knowledge and skills, however, throughout history, organized education has served many other purposes, such as cultural innovation, social integration and placement. In my personal view, I totally agree that universities should provide opportunities for students to have access to knowledge for its own benefits, regardless of whether the course is of practical value to people they will be working under in the future. Take cultural innovation as an example, it is faculties at colleges and universities that create culture as well as pass it onto the students. What’s more, research in sciences, the social sciences, the humanities and the fine arts necessarily leads to discovery and changes in learners’ way of life.

To conclude, universities providing the courses involved in job-related knowledge and skills may be a good way for graduates to become an employer when entering into industries, but it is not the only function of universities. What is more important for organized education is to give access to knowledge and develop various kinds of abilities that benefit one’s career and life.