



THE AGE OF GLOBAL EDUCATION

BY PETER MCATEER



Technology is rapidly transforming global education and will likely have a profound effect on the availability and movement of talent around the world. Educational technology usually changes as major advances happen in other areas of the market and we have a ripple effect. Learning Management Systems benefit from changes in database design, distance education benefits from advances in Internet based video teleconference equipment, and educational practices benefit from the development of social platforms like Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter.

However, we seem to have reached a ‘tipping point’

where educational delivery has truly become a global phenomenon. Over the next decade, the full integration of new technology into educational delivery will eliminate most geographic and time zone barriers to any student, any time, any place educational systems. Several converging issues are important.

Demand is increasing because ... education really matters!

More and more, countries worry about their placement in reports on competitiveness and education quality by the World Bank, OECD and the World Economic Forum (among others). Educational attainment is also strongly correlated with earnings and income disparities. Educational competitiveness is now a front burner issue for countries from the Middle East and South America to Asia as they seek new investments and economic growth. Chile’s Undersecretary of Education, Valentina Quiroga, speaking at a conference stated, “In Chile, your address determines your salary and education.” The government is making a major commitment to change that dynamic. Major education reform efforts are under way in dozens of countries as governments recognize that a highly skilled, mobile and adaptive workforce is a magnet for investment.

The Global Entrepreneurship Summit was held this year in Marrakech, Morocco, the first time for an African nation. Government leaders from across Africa emphasized the importance of education to business and

social innovation. The United Arab Emirates is one of several countries in the Middle East seeking recognition as a major education and innovation center. Countries such as Singapore have become hubs for major universities and government sponsored efforts have encouraged education, consulting and research firms to base operations there. The ASEAN economic community of 10 Southeast Asian nations has made educational reform one of its major platforms.

The bottom line is education quality is directly linked to global competitiveness and business investment.

● *“In the 1990s, the government [of Singapore] implemented the “Thinking Schools, Learning Nation,” program ... The government had recognized that global economic leadership required not just a highly educated and skilled workforce capable of doing high value added work but a workforce that would have the habits of mind, values, attitudes and skills needed to develop leading edge products and services!”*

- Center on International Education Benchmarking

Demand exceeds supply

As knowledge-based businesses increase as a percentage of global GDP, employers need a reliable supply of qualified entry-level staff as well as ongoing educational support for continuing education. The problem in many countries is that the traditional planning cycle for building public or non-profit universities has a long time frame. It’s also true that many economies have good top-tier schools, but below that the quality is highly variable.

- China currently graduates more than 7 million students per year, and that number is increasing. Although graduate of top schools are snapped up quickly, there are many unemployed graduates of lower quality schools.
- Although China and India already have hundreds of universities, governments estimate that demand will exceed supply in coming years. The gap between available “high quality” educational placements and demand will be more evident.
- The basic availability of classroom ‘seats’ does not insure a quality education. Many countries from Chile to Syria have enshrined access to a college education as a fundamental right of citizenship. However many of those same countries fall towards the bottom of international comparisons of student preparedness.

Higher growth rates in developing markets will exacerbate the demand and supply situation. Access to global providers who provide high quality content, ease of access, lower costs and global standards is a highly attractive offer for students/employees and employers.

● *“The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read or write, but those that cannot learn, unlearn and relearn.”*

- Alvin Toffler Author

Every major education provider seeks international students

Wealthy parents have always sought to have their children attend the best schools regardless of their country of birth. However, what was once restricted to major universities in North America and Europe is now a global phenomenon.

- In 2013, 200,000 students from India studied in another country.
- The government of China provides scholarships for international students in an effort to expand access to Chinese language and culture.
- In 2010-2011, 15,000 US students studied in China on short programs and another 11,000 participated in degree programs.
- Countries including Canada, China, Taiwan, Singapore, South Korea, Mexico, the Philippines and South Africa all have formal government initiatives designed to attract international students to their local universities.
- Major universities in developed markets with lower population growth and slower economic growth see international students as a core customer segment.

The pool of “international” students who live and study at high quality foreign universities is increasing, but the change doesn’t stop there. Educational technology is helping to realign global sources of good content and teaching with interested students.

- An increasing number of students participate with international students from their home country in blended partnership

programs. Blended programs provide the immediate benefit of a branded partner.

- Major universities in countries with good schools but geographic disadvantages, like Australia, have expanded their reach with distance education degrees that are mostly on-line with short periods of time on campus.
- India plans to deliver distance education programs to African students in 53 countries through satellite and network systems.

● *“I am also defined by my curiosity and thirst for learning. I buy more books than I can finish, I sign up for more online courses than I can complete. I believe that if you’re not learning new things, you stop doing great and useful things.”*

- Satya Nadella Microsoft
CEO

Technology allows people to shop the globe for quality education

Educational technology is helping to reshape the global education market by making it easier for students to apply, attend, participate and complete programs anywhere in the world. Coursera, a leading MOOC provider had 7+ million users (students) as of March 2014. Thirty-five percent (35%) were from its home base in North America, 25% from Asia, 23% from Europe, 11% from Latin America and 6% Africa. Duolingo an on-line language-training platform with 25 million students (as of April 2014) had 25% North America, 30% Europe, 29% Latin America, 11% Asia and 5% Africa.

- African Virtual University is launching distance and e-learning programs in 21 African Countries.
- Major MOOC providers, like Udacity, Coursera in the US, FutureLearn in the UK and Iversity in Germany all target customers everywhere in the world. Programs often have only 25-30% local students.

Major distance education providers like edX, originally developed by Harvard and MIT now list 37 charter members (major schools and universities) of their consortium with an additional 27 universities, NGOs, businesses that span the globe. They now offer 300+ courses taught by 400+ faculties. Their tag line is, *“Rethink your world – experience the best courses wherever, whenever you want.”*

● *“The principle goal of education is to create men and women who are capable of doing new things, not simply repeating what other generations have done.”*

- Jean Piaget Psychologist

The availability of open knowledge is changing the economics for everyone

There are a lot of changes in intellectual property laws that affect educational content, music and video. The invention of the “Creative Commons” licensing structure and the development of free or “limited restriction” content from sources such as the World Economic Forum to Khan Academy to USAID, Google Talks, edX, TED and many others, has changed the way we look at content sources. Although these new forums have not replaced educational and academic publishers and corporate learning vendors, the market is clearly being disrupted.

- High quality university content from programs such as MIT Open University and edX are increasingly free.
- Millions of free videos are available on platforms like Vimeo and YouTube. Some effort has to be made to respect the video licenses and the IP holder rights, but course content from high quality sources is more available than ever.
- According to the recent Creative Commons “State of the Commons” Report, “Today, there are over 882 million pieces of CC-licensed (or CC0) content on the web. Roughly 56% of that content is shared under CC tools whose terms allow both adaptations and commercial use (we commonly refer to those as free culture licenses).”

● *“Globalization has changed us into a company that searches the world, not just to sell or to source, but to find intellectual capital - the world's best talents and greatest ideas.”*

- Jack Welch, former CEO
GE

The almost universal availability of global Internet access

What was considered high speed in past years is now becoming standard. Individuals in cities as diverse as Zurich, Seoul, Hong Kong, Tokyo, Bucharest, and Paris have access to internet download and upload speeds of 1,000 Mbps for as little as \$40 USD per month. A variety of other Asia and European cities have plans with 500Mbps speeds. Although such high-speed access (at such low prices) is not universally available, they are becoming more common. The new programmable SIM chip introduced by Apple this year may introduce even more competition on rates.

- Global Internet usage now exceeds 2.3 billion Internet users (2013.)
- Internet penetration, as a percentage of the total country population is now 58% for the top 15 economies and 37% for the total global population.
- 38% of all page views in Africa are done on a mobile device. The number for Asia is 37%.
- Although 6 of the top 10 Global Internet Properties are based in the US (As of April 2014), 86% of their users are outside of the US.
- Major Asia based players like Sohu, Tencent, Baidu and Alibaba are all focused on a global customer base.

“Education should be a basic human right. edX is a nonprofit, and our mission is to change the world of education by providing great, free online courses from the best universities in the world.”

- Anant Agarwal, CEO edX

So what does this mean for corporate education?

- More and more companies will need to take into consideration country rankings and talent availability when setting up business in different countries? The data is more accurate, more available and easier to use in talent planning.
- Increasingly ‘big data’ allows us to examine both educational inputs and outputs on a market-by-market basis. INSEAD’s Global Talent Competitiveness Index now ranks 103 countries based on 48 variables.
- Corporate Universities can increasingly become brokers for content from anywhere in the world. As certain content and delivery costs drop, there can be a shift in learning investments to support informal education, just-in-time performance enhancement and customized knowledge management.

Overall, this is more than just an “inflection point” or a one-time change. There are more technologies in the pipeline and more dramatic changes to come. Google vice-president of research Alfred Spector, speaking at the 2014 annual BBC summit, suggested that technology is revolutionizing the way we learn and possibly even the way we think. Spector cites several existing technologies and predicts that we may even “abolish schools.”

● *“It takes humility to realize that we don't know everything, not to rest on our laurels and know that we must keep learning and observing. If we don't, we can be sure some start-up will be there to take our place.”*

- Cher Wang, CEO HTC

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