

# INTERNATIONALISATION HELPING SCHOOLS AND INSTITUTIONS TO SURVIVE IN THE GLOBAL MARKET

The main aim to make the schools match the global standards is to earn sufficient revenue, secure national recognition and build international reputation, says **Dr Prem Maheshwari**, Business Director for South Asia, D2L Asia to **Elets News Network (ENN)**.



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Internationalisation is a strategic concept that has been increasingly adopted by tertiary institutes. Over the past three years, 84% of higher education institutions have identified an increase in the level of importance of internationalisation. Today, the practice of bringing the school into the international market and competing on the global sphere is driven by the end goal of increasing revenue, securing national recognition and building international reputation.

Internationalisation helps to expand schools and institutions into the international market. This is done by recruiting students from different countries, tweaking the curriculum to fit an international context, closing the geographical gap by building international campuses and scholars exchange programmes, and increasing research and education collaborations with institutions regionally and internationally.

Internationalisation increases academic and degree mobility in

many countries, but there is much controversy surrounding the topic, especially regarding diversity, equity and inclusion. Studies show that the positive effect of internationalisation only reaches a small student population. Moreover, inclusion is often overlooked in the curriculum, despite the large number of international students from diverse cultures and backgrounds.

This dichotomy between greater academic opportunities and lower access to a diverse, inclusive and equal education can be addressed through innovative solutions.

## Optimising resource allocation for greater equity

Higher education is becoming increasingly commercialised. As economic goals take precedence over more altruistic rationales, stakeholders might open new offshore campuses despite funding challenges. This profit-driven approach to administration spreads resources more thinly across the board, leading to shortages in terms of qualified manpower, financing and educational resources. This can greatly impact the quality of education delivered to students across the board, raising the issue of equity in tertiary institutions.

It is possible to bring equity to internationalisation processes by harnessing edtech tools to scale education. Edtech tools can support the internationalisation process by optimising resource allocation. For instance, the emergence of the virtual classroom addresses the shortage of human capital as it facilitates partnerships with educators on existing campuses, or even other institutions for the joint delivery of lessons. This ensures that both onshore and offshore campus branches receive the same quality of education, in the most economic way possible.

Moreover, the utilisation of learning management systems (LMS) as a platform allows for virtual classrooms that enables increased class sizes and student intake without having to provision for additional seats in lecture theatres.

Even beyond the internationalisation of higher education, there is a shortage of qualified teachers. A recent projection by UNESCO reports the necessity of scaling education due to the ageing faculty population. By 2030, it is projected that 68.8 million new teachers will need to be recruited for every child to be educated properly globally.



This impossible figure can be reduced by increasing the mobility of current educators or by scaling class sizes. An increased adoption of innovative edtech tools like online learning platforms makes it possible to do both, allowing more students to afford and access their degrees.

### **Bridging the geographical gap to facilitate inclusion**

Geography is a barrier of entry for many students that are not mobile, such as differently-abled students or those living in rural areas. These students might miss out on many higher education opportunities as they do not have the ability to travel to the university's physical campus.

Moreover, internationalisation is not inclusive for developing countries that do not align with the economic goals of the university. Universities might choose not to offer courses in countries that are projected to have a lower profit margin. This stems from the shortage of resources as well - the high costs of setting up offshore campuses, coupled with manpower issues, might make it difficult for internationalisation of higher education to be inclusive.

Full-service edtech solutions such as the Brightspace LMS can incentivise universities to internationalise into emerging economies at a minimal cost. It can also bring higher education closer to those who are not mobile. Brightspace offers a suite of eLearning tools under a single platform, from training resources to technical support, that can facilitate setting up online campuses anywhere in the world.

Universities can offer virtual degrees in many countries despite geographical barriers, using their existing pool of resources and saving the additional cost of building a physical campus. This creates a win-win situation - degree mobility is made inclusive regardless of physical geographical location and internationalised universities can reap the benefits of cultural diversity.

### **Integrating diversity into the international curriculum**

While diversity is a huge draw in the internationalisation of higher education, the presence of diversity does not automatically translate

to the integration of diverse cultures into the student's lives. A 2017 study points out that the benefits of a global campus do not naturally arise due to the presence of international students. The integration of international students in communities and classes is a primary factor in the internationalisation.

Students will not be enriched by diversity if institutions do not encourage it. Generally, while both domestic and international students acknowledge the importance of social integration, they have limited experiences with people of different backgrounds. A whopping 48% of domestic students reported little experience of mixing socially with people from different backgrounds and 58% of them expressed dissatisfaction with global opportunities provided. The benefits of an internationalised, diverse campus are not being realised to its full extent.

Moreover, the same study finds that most research regarding integration revolves around mixed nationality friendships and group work without exploring other aspects of diversity. International students are also often treated as a single entity, without regard for the differentiation in country or region. The concept of diversity in tertiary institutions is often superficial and international students can definitely be more effectively integrated with the domestic student population, especially in academic and intercultural contexts.

This can be attributed to a homogeneity in international curriculum that does not leave room for students to reflect on their intercultural experiences. With LMS platforms such as the Brightspace LMS, educators from global branches are able to collaborate virtually to tweak the curriculum. They can also be used to engage students in extra activities like inter-branch cultural exchanges that foster a deeper appreciation of different cultures.

Internationalisation is a relatively new concept that holds many opportunities for higher education students around the globe, but it would be naive to say that it is a perfect strategy. With the implementation and continued advancement of edtech tools, internationalisation can grow to be more equal, diverse and inclusive. **DL**