



GLOBAL

## Welcome to the international classroom of the future

**Nadine Burquel and Anja Busch** 18 May 2019

The internationalisation of higher education has opened up exciting opportunities for higher education institutions to make major transformations to their teaching and learning process: exposure to different cultures expands considerably the type of knowledge that is delivered through the education process, bringing new perspectives to the classroom.

Internationalisation offers great opportunities for student mobility through exchanges, degree mobility, internships, study visits and summer schools. Academic mobility enhances the international cross-fertilisation of ideas to advance knowledge for new cutting-edge research.

Transnational education is encouraged through double and joint degrees, seen as a more advanced form of internationalisation. There are many different forms of student exchanges, mobilities and initiatives to bring international and intercultural dimensions to the increasingly diverse classroom that is today more interactive, flipped or digital. Virtual platforms are widespread as repositories of knowledge, for collaborative project work and online conversations between students or for student-faculty interactions.

The collaborative work between universities and their academic partners worldwide, their international networks and their external stakeholders help to expand the classroom far beyond its traditional boundaries. Today the classroom is constantly evolving in terms of learning spaces, technology and learning methods.

The faculty is becoming a facilitator of learning, of the discovery process and the co-creation that is taking place in the classroom.

The use of technology in the digital classroom is spreading fast. Smart devices are integrated into teaching and learning. Individual students can have their tablets or laptops connected to whiteboards and interactive walls and they will be using 3D printers or virtual and augmented reality headsets more and more in the future.

Personalised learning systems completely change the traditional ways of learning and teaching.

### **Technology and internationalisation**

Technology offers significant potential to expand internationalisation and transnational education. Having technology at hand provides access to knowledge and information from anywhere in the world at any given moment. Interacting with others from anywhere fosters a strong sense of 'internationalisation at home'.

In virtual classrooms students from all around the globe learn jointly and interact as if in the same physical classroom. Virtual and augmented reality take students a step further to have international experiences first-hand in the form of complete immersion. Holograms are entering the classroom and, in the future, might very well offer the opportunity to combine immersion and internationalisation at home.

Technology also offers tools to personalise education and better integrate students from different cultural and international backgrounds. One example involving learning analytics is the **Student Dashboard of Nottingham Trent University**. As an online resource it helps students understand their own level of engagement with their studies as well as those of their peers, signalling potential risks for their academic success.

Different types of non-traditional learning spaces also support the creation of new knowledge, such as learning laboratories like **design factories** and virtual classrooms in the Harvard Business School's HBX studio or IE University in Madrid's WOW Room (Window on the World), with its 48 screens for remote students, a U-shape digital tapestry and a 200-degree vision.

Similar initiatives have been launched by Oxford's Saïd Business School such as its Oxford Hub for International Virtual Education (HIVE) or by IESE Business School in Barcelona such as the Virtual Classroom.

Millennials and Generation Z have very different needs for a classroom experience. They expect a meaningful and interactive student experience, actively engaging with their peers within and beyond the classroom.

## **21st-century skills**

The world is moving at such a pace that students do need to understand the complexities of the interconnected and digital world, the implications for any economic activity, business or services as well as for their future career.

Students need to be taught new methods, frameworks and the latest research in their field. They need to acquire the right attitudes, intercultural communication and analytical skills to understand complex issues and produce new knowledge for the global economy.

Agility and adaptability are crucial in the ever-changing labour market. Students need to gain critical cultural awareness and understand how to operate in different cultural contexts.

With sometimes 50% to 70% of international students or more in the highly international

higher education institutions, the conversation in classrooms can be much richer, building on the experiences of students from many different cultural contexts. Yet this does not always happen naturally and supporting mechanisms are needed to make it happen.

The international classroom concept is a long-term integrated project under which international learning is aligned with institutional strategy and results in international learning outcomes.

A wide range of active learning activities and purposeful interactions is organised to promote a culture of inclusion for all students (whatever their cultural background) and to prepare them for the global labour market.

Students learn to shape a new understanding of the world and gain practical knowledge of differences and similarities in the various regions in the world. They learn to communicate effectively with diverse groups, engage actively with other cultures with openness and respect, take different perspectives in debates and understand the different approaches to conflict resolution, decision-making and communication as a whole.

Many good practices of novel teaching and learning approaches being used to enhance the learning process exist in higher education, among others through internationalisation and intercultural learning. Yet these are still too often limited to small experiments, although it has now become possible to grow these at scale through the use of new technologies.

*Nadine Burquel is an international higher education expert. Anja Busch is international accreditations officer at EM Strasbourg Business School, France.*

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