

# “Disruption” awaiting int’l education sector

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New forms of educational institutions will emerge as lifelong learning becomes increasingly important for employees who need to continually reinvent themselves for a changing working landscape, according to speakers at the Class Conference 2019.



Traditional classrooms are expected to make way for new models where students will be more closely connected to industry.

Hosted by [The Class of 2020](#) –a European think-tank that shapes the future of living, learning, and working in university cities – the event was held in Berlin from November 6-7.

Traditional classrooms are expected to make way for new models where students will be more closely connected to industry, according to speaker Sonal Minocha, chief academic officer at Global University Systems.

“Some form of disruption is awaiting us. There is much more to be done in bringing universities and industry together, and not just having the world of work as a frill on top of the academic discipline but integrate it right into the psychology of our curriculum,” she said.

Universities have been held back by regulatory and administrative frameworks, Minocha said of her experience.

A “talent mismatch” has created an environment where 40% of global employers complain of not being able to fill positions, and “dismal” graduate unemployment statistics see 20% of graduates not working in graduate-level jobs in Europe.

“In India, figures reach as high as 47%,” Minocha explained.

“This is not to say that we are complacent... [but] I daresay sometimes the lack of bravery in leadership in higher education means that the pace at which we are trying to bring the classroom closer to the world of work leaves some scope for improvement.”

According to David Lefevre of the Edtech Lab at Imperial College London, post-graduate education is particularly prone to disruption.

“The future of flexibility is online and blended learning, and in order to really realise that people really have to reinvent what they think of as a campus and a digital campus, and how you flow between them,” he said.

“Along with employees reinventing themselves over the span of their careers, institutions will need to seek to do the same.”

Universities will “club together” to share physical facilities, Lefevre suggested, or global providers of physical educational locations will emerge.

“They won’t look like traditional campuses. We will see a move away from purely online programs to blended proximity to physical locations and new kinds of physical locations emerging,” he said.

However, human interaction will still be key, added Christine Neuhold, director of UM Campus Brussels.

“We should not forget that also working together in a team is a key skill and a key asset for the future.

“The world is transforming so rapidly that I think the content that we teach today might be obsolete tomorrow, but the skills that we acquire and teach [will not],” Neuhold explained.

The dilemma for universities is to continually reinvent as people visit education providers throughout their lives, added Lefevre at Imperial.

“If society is to maintain an average salary base of €30,000 and degrees are €10,000 or more, then it’s not possible for people to continually go back to university,” he said.

“At the moment our attention is focused on technology... as a solution to this cost problem.”

Lefevre explained that what these models are doing is removing the teachers from the scenario.

“The ironic thing is that... all the training that computers are good at, are skills that are likely to be either automated or outsourced.

It’s the human skills that are the basis of what is going to form our economies,” said Lefevre.

“We are beginning to see seeds of the future of how that is done, and society will certainly reorganise education systems to address this.

“I think we are on the wrong track at the moment,” he added.

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