

Chapter 3

Borderless Online Degrees: Winners and Losers

ABSTRACT

Higher education training, once an option, is now a requirement to qualify for entry-level jobs. In much of the world, accessible and affordable education needed to qualify for work is not available. Countries with limited economies cannot afford to build campuses and train the teachers. International campuses have been tried, but they are expensive and of limited value. Borderless online degrees are an affordable solution to quickly deliver this training anywhere in the world. In contrast to start of online learning, which was dominated by a few large universities, borderless online degrees will be democratic. Community colleges, technical colleges, public universities, private universities, and the for-profits will participate, and providers will be from all countries. Borderless online degrees will present challenges, require innovative synchronous online pedagogy, and necessitate enhanced student services.

INTRODUCTION

Throughout most of human history, higher education was limited to those who could afford it. Following the Industrial Revolution, which began in Britain in the 18th century, demand increased for better-educated workers. Following World War II, a larger middle class developed at a time when there was a need for more scientists, engineers, business people, and teachers.

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Technological advances now make it necessary for workers to have more education than a high school degree. Today, skilled workers are no longer an option; they have become the foundation of national economic prosperity. However, many nations cannot meet the rapidly growing demand for higher education (Youssef, 2014).

Shortages of skilled workers not only limit economic growth but also force families to migrate in search of jobs. The solution is to increase access to affordable, postsecondary education in all countries to provide a skilled workforce. It will not be possible to meet this growing educational demand by building more community colleges, technical colleges, and universities. With an industrial base, nations cannot afford the cost, and even the ambitious building schemes will be unable to match the demand created by rapidly growing populations. The imbalance is so large that even if classrooms were available, there would be insufficient numbers of qualified teachers. International campuses are not a solution to meet the global need for additional skilled workers because the centers are too expensive and limited small enrollments. Such an educational approach cannot satisfy the high demand for affordable education.

Borderless online degrees are the one affordable, scalable way to train millions of students around the planet. The solution works because tomorrow's education must travel to the student, not the student to campus. Likewise, if a university needs to add a course in laser engineering, it may not be able to afford a full-time Ph.D. in the field, but it can hire the instructor one semester to teach the course online. In this way, even poor nations can provide high-quality education to meet the needs of workers and industry.

In many less affluent nations, postsecondary students often cannot afford to travel to campus. Borderless online degrees are a way to bring educational access to students. If students do not have Internet access at home, then they can take the course at an Internet café, a government-sponsored Wi-Fi center, or in anywhere village with Internet access. Business can quickly provide Internet sites with access for workers and their families to earn training certificates and diplomas.

Twenty years ago, online learning was impractical in much of Africa, Asia, and South America because the Internet was slow, unreliable, and often unavailable. Today, Internet access has improved dramatically due to commercial satellite companies like Space X, Arianespace, Chinese Long, and Eutelsat. Internet costs will continue to decrease as the market grows,

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