How edtech will prepare students for a competitive, globalised world

By Robert Speed
28 Jul 2020

As with so many elements of life today, the coronavirus pandemic is dramatically altering the global education landscape. Strict national lockdowns have seen the closure of schools and universities around the world, with students having to adapt to and embrace virtual learning models and home learning. According to Unesco, over 1.5 billion learners in 165 countries have been affected by Covid-19 school closures, prompting the organisation to launch a global education coalition to support countries in scaling up their distance learning practices. Yet even as lockdown restrictions are eased, the use of online learning portals and virtual classrooms will continue to play a critical role in education at every level - and will arguably become a core component of global education in the very near future.

Robert Speed

This is, in part, because of the rapid development of innovative education technology (or edtech), and the possibilities it brings to furthering the role of global learning. In essence, global learning refers to the 'internationalised' access to learning materials, information and knowledge – and the possibilities of offering students around the world easy access to world-class higher education (without the need of global travel).

Arguably, in a world which is becoming increasingly polarised and divided, access to global learning technology and materials can help students foster not only greater awareness of other systems, cultures and societies – but it can nurture their shared humanity and compassion as well.

Future-proof learning

For education decision-makers, harnessing the many benefits of global learning will require the adoption of the right edtech tools and platforms, as well as partnering with savvy and experienced edtech and virtual learning providers. Indeed, we can already see the importance of edtech around the world, with global edtech investments reaching US$18.66bn in 2019 - and the overall market for online education projected to reach $350bn by 2025.

Even when putting the radical impact and lessons of Covid-19 aside, a brief exploration of what edtech can offer learners and teachers reveals why this aspect of education will have a transformative effect on student outcomes. By implementing Learner Management Systems (LMS), for example, educators can gain important insight into the content that is engaging learners – and what is and isn't working. These systems can also alert instructors to individual behaviours, and provide the opportunity to tailor and adapt curriculums to meet a learner's individual needs. Importantly, LMS and other tools are increasingly supported by data analytics - and the growing ability to slice, dice, and drill into huge amounts of longitudinal information, thus empowering institutions and teachers to optimise their learning environments. In turn, data analysis can lead to enhanced faculty development and high quality research which positions students for long-term success in an increasingly competitive, globalised world.

Integrated communications within platforms

As many parents and instructors have learned in the past months, it is critical to be involved in the student's learning journey at every level – both for the student's success and for parents' peace of mind. That is why new edtech solutions and global learning platforms are being designed with integrated communications that allow parents to connect with learners through the devices, platforms and channels that they're interacting with on a daily basis. In this way, parents and community members have clear, holistic insight into the learner's daily experience and journey.

As the global education sector enters an uncertain 'new normal', decision-makers who leverage sophisticated edtech and engaging virtual learning solutions will undoubtedly place students ahead of the proverbial curve – and in a strong position to succeed in a highly competitive, digital-first world.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Robert Speed is the Vice President Middle East & Africa for Blackboard.