Chapter 10
Borderless Degree Opportunities

ABSTRACT

The family garden, raising chickens, and washing clothes in the river are becoming vignettes of the past replaced by images of millions of people living in poverty in large, urban spaces. Before World War II, a father with an eighth-grade education could work in a factory and support his family. Today, both mother and father must work, and they need postsecondary training to qualify for skilled jobs—training that is unavailable to hundreds of millions of people. This chapter describes how all nations can provide affordable, universal higher education that will promote quality living and national success.

INTRODUCTION

Tasks previously done by unskilled workers are now done more efficiently by machines. Scanners are replacing clerks in checkout lines; robots are working on assembly lines. The pattern is similar in all trades. Simple tasks can be done more cheaply by intelligent machines that do not require weekends, holidays, or sick leave. Unlike Bollywood and Hollywood movies, this story does is not fiction, and it does not have a happy ending for unskilled workers. Workers develop skills to be employable. Countries without skilled

workers are unable to attract business and retain industry. Poverty, no job opportunities, and crime are the global reality behind large-scale migrations to the European Union and the United States. Families are fleeing in search of job opportunities and safe living conditions.

Mass education has become an international responsibility (Global Partnership for Education, 2019). Strong economies promote political stability, a higher standard of living, a healthier environment. As this book was being written, England was withdrawing from the European Union, the United States was trying to build a wall to keep out migrants, and the European Union was encountering a refugee crisis. Even countries with strong economies and accessible higher education are feeling the effects of automation. By 2015 nearly 60 percent of all jobs in the United States required postsecondary education (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2015). Nevertheless, more than a hundred million students were unable to afford higher education (Clinefelter & Aslanian, 2015; Kelly, 2015).

The global need is clear. Universal access to affordable, postsecondary education has become a requirement to qualify citizens for employment and to sustain a healthy economy. Businesses will relocate to countries that have trained workers. Countries have three ways to increase the number of skilled workers:

1. Build more technical colleges and universities
2. Send students to foreign nations to be educated
3. Provide accessible, affordable online job training and degrees

Building more universities is too expensive for countries with weak economies. Likewise, study abroad is too expensive, and there is the risk that graduates may choose to remain abroad after graduation. Option 3 – borderless online degrees – is an affordable, sustainable solution. Online learning eliminates the need to train teachers, build and maintain campuses, and support all the fields of study that will be required.

Online learning is the most affordable solution because it costs the same to deliver online courses across the street or the ocean. Competition among providers will also drive the price down; small universities and technical colleges can compete with larger providers. When a student logs in to an online program, distance is irrelevant. All that matters is the quality of the training and the assuredness that the graduate will qualify for employment.

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