

# 7 Key Trends in Education for 2020



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A few years from now, we may look back at 2020 and recognize a watershed moment for education. With **many schools facing increasing danger from changing demographics**, we're at a point where some of the business models underlying higher education are going to start to shift. At the same time, technology is changing not just how schools function on an institutional level, but how we approach education inside (and **increasingly, outside**) the classroom. Here are 7 trends to watch for in higher education in 2020.

## 1. Schools will need to fight to enroll the students they want.

There will be a drop in the number of available students over the next decade because of **demographics in general**, but this will be especially pronounced in the US because of the current foreign policy. The new hurdles and scary headlines have made coming to the US for college significantly more intimidating and less appealing, which will dry up the pool of international students that has helped keep some schools afloat. Digital marketing, including video interviews, will become much more important not just for distance learning courses, but for on-campus students. Schools that can leverage technology to attract students from around the world and make them feel personally welcome will have a strong advantage.

## 2. The emphasis on graduation rates will require greater interactivity throughout the campus.

Whether to attract new students or qualify for loans, schools find their graduation rates under increasing scrutiny. Making sure higher numbers of students successfully complete a degree requires a greater level of handholding and interactivity. It's not enough to just supply an advisor—schools will need to do a better job of following students through their academic career, tying together touchpoints between instructors, counselors, tutors, and more. The only way this will scale practically, especially with the increasing number of remote classes and learners, will be through increased digital interactivity, including remote video interactions and predictive learning analytics.

## 3. Supplying training to corporations can offer a new line of business (and a potential lifeline) to schools.

While the supply of incoming 18-year-olds is falling, a different demographic shift is working in schools' favor. Shifts in technology and economy are causing enormous numbers of workers to need new skills. Many companies are opting to retrain trusted workers rather than trying to find new ones. In the next few years, expect many professional schools to start becoming publishers, offering private courses to enterprises looking to retrain employees. The global brands, like INSEAD and Harvard Business School, are already starting to do this on a global level, both with brand name and white-labeled courses. But there's a huge potential for local schools to do this on the local level, as well, down to bringing in instructors onto corporate campuses. This will require retooling objectives, though, to focus not on providing degrees but on creating competencies (and perhaps certifications) that workers need to be trained on.

## 4. Academic content will move increasingly towards a self-serve model.

Students have always supplemented classwork with other sources. In past few years, so much material is online that students can often on their own find content they find interesting or that is explained in the way they need. Expect this to further the trend of the flipped classroom model. The actual number of contact hours that people need to spend in a classroom environment (whether physical or digital) to achieve a credential will drop. However, material itself will become increasingly lean-forward and interactive to help guide students through.

## 5. Schools will invest in more third-party digital content and digital courses, as well as more OER content.

Textbooks have come with digital add-ons for some time. But to help bring down costs, schools will start buying content at scale to support this self-serve model. How this plays out will depend on subject matter. History, for example, requires a syllabus and a full semester to learn a topic. Coding, however, can be broken into a very simple set of stages. Schools will license skills-based courses so that their students can access micro-learning or even entire classes from a reputable source, and provide just a tutor for support. More and more content will be considered less and less unique—Biology 101 has not changed significantly in 20 years and does not need a new textbook. Schools will fight rising costs by turning to OER content.

## 6. Interactive systems will grow to support the self-serve model.

While much of this information can be considered a commodity in a self-serve model, automation will be required to manage this effectively. Students will not always make the right choices on their own. Automated systems will start emerging to identify when a student is struggling and suggest solutions, whether that's recommending additional content, assigning more practice exercises in weak areas, or scheduling a tutor. Interactive content will help learners select their own path through material; learning analytics will help guide whole courses of study. These systems will also help instructors recognize when they're failing to get through in time to intervene before a student fails.

## 7. Even as remote learning continues to grow, we'll see a return of classrooms—but they're going to be classrooms at a distance.

Using web conference solutions haven't provided a great learning experience. Second generation digital classroom set-ups are now allowing teachers to stand in a physical classroom with in-person students and still have enough telepresence to effectively interact with students at a distance. Those students feel like they're in the classroom itself, with an actual lecture, not a glorified conference call. Tomorrow's digital classroom will be less about bringing the classroom virtually to the student and more about bringing the student virtually into the classroom. This in turn will give schools more flexibility to reach different populations, even as demographics shift.

As we head into 2020, some of the big trends affecting the world—from changing demographics to digital transformation—are going to hit schools hard. But those same trends will reward schools who are able to adapt those technologies to serve their mission to educate not just the citizens of tomorrow, but adults today.

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