13 Educational Points to Ponder in 2013

American School and University

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Many factors, including changing demographics and student learning patterns, will affect education this year and beyond.

The Mayan prediction did not transpire, and thankfully we were able to turn our calendars to 2013. As January has passed, national topics receiving strong interest include: the fiscal cliff and hopes for economic rebound; Mother Nature and her erratic behavior; and safety/security. In recognition of these national topics, but with a focus toward education, this overview offers areas for consideration that will influence and impact education in 2013 and beyond.

1. Students

-**Demographical shifts**. 2013 continues to be the year of big demographical shifts in education. When we think about demographics, we need to consider global implications, as campus ratios continue to shift to incorporate a higher percentage of non-U.S. students.

It's also important to remember that some implications also are the direct result of videoconferencing and online accessibility, both of which can accommodate a global approach.

-**Generations and behavior**. Let's face it. Millennials have been driving the mainstream U.S. higher education and are the most recent "output" of our nation's academic institutions. They look and act different than prior generations and in most cases, are being taught by other generations, which can create a generational barrier or disconnect. Because they have been labeled the "digital" generation, they have created a "just-in-time" urgency for information and knowledge and have different (often over- demanding) expectations for the campus and related stakeholders.

Gen Z (boomlets or iGen) are entering our K-12 realm. I consider these boomlets "digital on steroids" and believe this generation came out of the womb with technology in hand (and it has remained there).

Implications on students, student behavior and student needs must remain at the forefront!

Although focus on learning and student success will remain at the forefront, safety and the protection of our students (children) will trump all discussion and is likely to be paramount in 2013 and beyond.

2. Global Implications

The world and circle for learning is shrinking. Technology has and will continue to bridge any geographic division in 2013. Business and learning that does not have a "global approach" is not forward-thinking or sustainable given the outlook ahead of us.

3. "Ownership" of Educating and Learning

This ownership is changing and shifting. What once was considered the responsibility of the faculty/teacher/professor is now moreso a variety of stakeholders, most important, the student. Students will own more and more of the process and potentially the content. Given all the access to knowledge and auxiliary tools (Khan/Sophia, even Google or Wikipedia-like search engines), students can augment and drive their learning in many ways. Add to that a more engaged and active learning environment and the students no longer expect or want to be lectured to–but want to participate in the learning and "crafting" of the knowledge and related application.

4. Blended Learning

-Online + offline (and interaction in between). There is much discussion on this topic and how to harness technology, learning and interaction and the "right" or optimal balance given a particular situation. Greater availability of online courses have triggered need for lecture capture and a variety of supporting technology, as well as the discussion on where brick-and-mortar will go in the future.

Online and free offering of material (knowledge?!) is also a topic of interest. Khan and Sophia were mentioned earlier, but also cropping up are partnerships such as EdX who seek to offer online university-level courses in a wide range of disciplines to a worldwide audience at no charge. It's very interesting if we consider the potential and implications for the global learning and related vision of the future.

5. Faculty Responsiveness and Adaption

-**Minding the generational gap**. As noted in No. 1 above, the students and faculty commonly are not within the same generation. However, technology and other global influence have widened the gap to the extreme. Faculty adaptation is part of the future success criteria, as is student ownership, development and exploration into the next phase of pedagogy, knowledge sharing and successful learning.

-**New learning mindset and management of the same**. Exploration. No risk aversion. Greater degrees of freedom. Failure and trial. And rework and ongoing improvement. "Cycle thinking combined with a persevering mindset."

6. Active Learning (aka flipped classroom, SCALE-UP, upside-downside pedagogy, engaged learning, etc.)

-**Adaptive pedagogy**. Points No. 1 and No. 5 serve as the foundation for this point. A paradigm shift is needed incorporating a new look at how we teach and how we learn … and in *what* environments.

-**Enter and engage**. Given that passive is (or should be) in the past, students today and faculty will be able to drive toward an entirely new experience with many more degrees of freedom for their learning and related adaptation/preference. Immediate and dynamic is where learning is heading. Higher engagement and greater interaction are only a small portion of what is yet to come. Ideally, the environment will echo this new energy and movement within the space and help to drive it to new heights.

7. Brick and Mortar

Current and future implications of today's "traditional" campuses. Although "brick and mortar" are not going away, a restructuring, or at minimum, a refocus, is required for the 5- to 20-year vision of any campus. Those who are not accounting for this in their strategic plans and vision may be challenged to compete effectively in the coming years.

8. Space

-**The evolution of space and design to facilitate learning optimization**. Echoing the shift and restructuring needed because of the brick and mortar threat, the internal space or future space on any campus become critical to optimizing learning – learning in *all* facets. Student behavior and preference is driving different needs this decade in comparison with the last and well beyond the prior decade.

Yet, the move to change and the impetus to refocus or restructure seems to have moderate momentum. This momentum will grow significantly in 2013 and will continue. Those institutions that are progressive in their thinking, efficient with their resources and focused on student needs will thrive.

9. Demand and Supply

-STEM and beyond (+H...+A...). The future and related professional opportunities and careers (demand) must drive what our campuses are offering today (supply) and how we are preparing our students. Essential economics. And the learning environment must be effective in delivering against what will optimize learning. The projections suggest strong demand within science, technology, engineering and math, but also health. Many also believe the arts will be in demand in the future.

10. Economic

-Now that the election is concluded, **how will our educational systems be upgraded**? Education is and will continue to be a critical and common point of discussion for our government. Protection and safety will likely now override some of the alternate academic discussion; however, both will create a high prioritization, as well as urgency within our nation.

-Budget barriers and how to overcome. The prioritization as noted above will afford (perhaps and ideally) more allocation of funding for education. It will remain, however, challenging for the next few years as the rebound of the national economy occurs. As also noted above, those who are efficient and thoughtful about resources (human, capital, environmental, etc.) will survive if not thrive.

11. Technology! (integration of current)

-Facilitating communication (and learning) through today's technology. In its simplest form, technology must facilitate communication—assuming communication is the means to learning (and I believe it is).

One of the most significant challenges ... opportunities within education today ... is how to leverage technology to enhance learning ... and how to manage the same. "Managing" involves both the integration of what currently is, as well as, what will be. Given BYOD trends along with current (often expensive) existing systems on many campuses, the need to troubleshoot and plan for effective use and management of technology on an entire campus is critical. Add to that the need for online, global sharing and alternate blending of learning and strategic minds go wild!

12. Technology! (planning for the future)

-**Projecting future innovation and change** (and related disruption). There is no crystal ball, but there are great organizations that study and keep watch over technology and share such projections. This information will and should inform all future decisions related to education.

-**Proactively planning and incorporating**. Per point above–monitoring and projecting is first, followed by hypothesis on impact and implications for any campus. This will then funnel into planning and longer-term vision.

13. Technology! (identification and understanding of the implications for learning/student success)

-**Technology as an extension of student learning, faculty facilitating, and campus community**. Technology has and will continue to be prevalent. As we think about the "Boomlets" (aka iGen or Gen Z), they come in to the world with technology in their hand (so to speak). Technology must become an extension of learning–in every way possible. It is already an extension of our student population.

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