Higher Education – The Top Five Global Trends

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Education standards are rising globally. Increased prioritisation of primary and secondary education and literacy by governments, especially in emerging regions, is translating into a boom in uptake of tertiary education in many markets: the number of higher education students globally rose from 163 million in 2008 to 199 million in 2013, with more female than male students.Â In the long term, this is good news for consumer goods companies and retailers. The trend is increasing the skills of the worldâ€™s population, reducing skills shortages, increasing productivity and also raising incomes and living standards.

Graduates by Discipline in Developed Markets: 2013
% of total number of graduates:

-Education 9.3%
-Humanities and Arts 12.8%
-Social Sciences, Business and Law 33.4%
-Science 8.7%
-Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction 11.8%
-Agriculture 1.4%
-Health and Welfare 15.9%
-Services 5.7%

1. Rising Uptake of Higher Education Globally

Most regions and countries globally are seeing a boom in their uptake of higher education . The number of higher education students globally rose from 163 million in 2008 to 199 million in 2013. The reason for this is a strong growth in the number of primary and secondary education pupils and focus by emerging market governments on making education compulsory by law, as well as implementing literacy campaigns, which is translating into growth in tertiary education student numbers in most regions.

2. More Female Higher Education Students than Male

The number of female higher education students is higher than the male equivalent in 2013, at 98.6 million compared to 95.1 million. Despite this, men still significantly outnumber women in employment rates in nearly every country globally in 2013, and the difference is even more acute among senior managerial jobs. This highlights that governments and companies alike should do more to nurture and retain the pool of female talent that is being lost during employment.

3. Dominance of Arts Subjects over Sciences

Despite growing demand for science and engineering students globally, meaning that most countries experience skills shortages and brain drain in these subjects, the number of arts and non-sciences students continues to grow. The most popular subjects are Social Sciences, Business and Law, with these comprising a combined 33.4% of the total number of graduates in 2013 in developed markets, compared to 8.7% in science and 11.8% in Engineering Manufacturing and Construction. One way to attract more students to these subjects could be to sponsor talented students to study these subjects, on condition of employment on completion of higher education.

4. Boom in Private Higher Education

As demand for higher education grows, it is frequently the case that demand is beginning to outstri p supply, especially in emerging markets where the growth in students has accelerated rapidly. One key market where this trend is particularly evident is India, where public education providers are struggling to keep pace with the number of would-be students. The University of Mumbai in 2011 received 37,000 applications for 800 places for junior college level. In order to meet demand, there has been a rise in the number of private higher education institutions stepping in to provide higher education courses. In order to help the problem, its government passed the Foreign Educational Institutions (Regulation of Entry and Operations) Bill in 2010 to permit more foreign universities to set up teaching institutions in India.

5. Rise in Spending on Higher Education

Coupled with both the rise in uptake and the boom in private education, it is perhaps not surprising that spending on higher education is rising steeply in many markets. Indonesia had the biggest increase globally from 2008-2013 in its expenditure per student in purchasing power parity (ppp) terms, rising by an annual average of 12.7%. The second third and fourth countries globally were Argentina, Guatemala and Brazil, driven by both government and consumer spending on education.Â

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