

Speech: Education Secretary sets out plan for international education

Good evening everyone. I am delighted to welcome you all here to discuss the huge opportunities of International Education.

Around the world our schools, our universities, our teaching, are all bywords for excellence. We have the best stable of brands in the business, complemented by the gift of the greatest IP asset in history: the English language.

Few can claim to compete with the extent and longevity of our great educational institutions or the depth and breadth of our cultural heritage. Every year, as we celebrate Saint George's day we also celebrate the birth of Shakespeare.

I'm always in the market for ideas from other countries; there is no practical limit to what we can learn from each other and so others look to learn from us too. Education ministers from around the world want to know about our success with phonics, with school autonomy, and the turnaround story of our state schools especially in this city, London.

If you look at governments around the world, a good number of those holding public office have had a British education – like Pakistan's prime minister Imran Khan who studied at Oxford; while Yemi Osinbajo, the vice president of Nigeria studied at LSE and the incoming emperor of Japan, Prince Naruhito, who also studied at Oxford.

It is a truly extraordinary statistic: the British Council estimates that one in four countries have leaders who have been educated here at some point.

But the thing about excellence is that you have to keep working at it, and as you raise your game, remember others are raising theirs.

In higher education, according to the QS World University Rankings, we have 4 in the top ten; 18 in the Top 100, and a position 2nd only to the US.

It is vital that we are welcoming of International HE students to the UK. The government's 2018 immigration white paper sets out a number of positive changes to the visa offer for international students.

But sometimes we talk as though visas are the only issue to work on. In QS' International Student Survey, 2018, student visas came 7th as a factor in terms of international students' decision making. An institution's reputation, how welcoming it is to students, and employment prospects, all scored more highly.

In higher education we are still gaining volume, but we are losing share, as we have grown around 5% from 435,000 students in 2013/14 to 458,000 in 2017/18. We do have quite a reliance on one source market – albeit a very big

one: China. We should look to develop both existing markets but to diversify and develop new and sustainable opportunities too, for example continuing to grow the Indian market, and countries from South East Asia and Africa too.

The International Education Strategy looks to increase the number of international higher education students to 600,000 by 2030.

International students make a vital contribution to the UK economy. In 2016 they brought in almost £12bn through tuition fees and living expenditure alone.

But international students mean far more to us than the financial benefits they bring.

They bring greater cultural diversity to university and college campuses, and enrich the experience for all students who study there, as well as the wider communities. They stimulate demand for courses and add to the UK's impressive research capacity.

In the longer term, they offer cultural, political and commercial links, an enduring part of Global Britain

Growing the UK's in-country transnational education, at both school and HE levels, is an area ultimately with even greater potential. It enables UK education institutions to reach a much broader and more diverse cohort of international students than ever before.

I know there are barriers to overcome to make transnational education sustainable, and worthwhile.

There are specific actions in the strategy designed to support this.

For example by engaging in dialogue with countries with recognised export potential and working to resolve regulatory barriers through international agreements and the work of the Education Champion we are planning to appoint.

The latest available data, for 2016, show that international schools contributed £900m in export revenue to the UK. Early years provision has become established in China for example, and a number of British schools are now operating successfully overseas, like Dulwich which has seven international schools in the Far East.

Now, to be truly international and outward-looking we have to address some things much closer to home. We have never been world famous for our language skills, but this took a dive in 2004 when the decline of modern languages in schools began.

Global Britain needs more – a lot more – children learning a language, at least one language, and that means we need a lot more language teachers, too.

Our Mandarin Excellence Programme is on track to ensure 5,000 students in state-funded schools are working towards fluency in Mandarin Chinese, alongside 100 newly qualified Chinese teachers, to be trained by the end of

the programme in March 2020.

And the Spanish Visiting Teachers Programme, run in partnership with Spain's Ministry of Education and Vocational Training looks to support state-funded schools in England to recruit MFL teachers by providing access to a pool of qualified teachers from Spain. But we need to do more.

In January I announced a new £2.5million programme to enable thousands more young people to take part in international exchanges and visits.

Schools in England can now apply for grants to take pupils aged 11 and above to visit partner schools around the world, giving them the chance to experience different cultures, improve language skills and build independence, character and resilience. And the programme focuses particularly on children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

We need to talk about Education Technology too. This is a flourishing business sector for the UK, with a steadily growing export market. We already have the largest EdTech market in Europe and some of the fastest growing EdTech companies in the world but have more to do to maximise our position.

We know that domestic market development and export success are closely linked, so we will support UK EdTech businesses in both.

Specifically, this means:

- defining 10 new "EdTech challenges" to galvanise industry action on some real-world issues faced by the education sector where technology has strong potential to drive progress;
- helping to forge new connections between technology innovators and their users, through the creation of testbed schools and colleges; and
- supporting more effective procurement practice for both suppliers and users. For example, through support for BESA's LendED platforms – a try-before-you-buy service linking EdTech companies and educators.

Distance and remote learning have much potential. Just last week, indeed on the same day we were celebrating both Shakespeare and St. George, the Open University, a world leader in distance learning, marked its 50th anniversary. Their approach exemplifies this potential for technology to support learning beyond traditional classroom environments, widening access to higher education for thousands, and we want the UK to harness opportunities provided by technology in the coming years.

It has been said before, but UK education is punching above its weight, but below its potential. The strategy is here to support you, the education sector. I want to finish by thanking you for all your hard work that's put the UK in such a strong position across the educational export sector. We are here to work together to help drive our success in the future.

It has never been more important for us to be globally-minded, outward looking and ambitious. The competition has never been fiercer. But the opportunities have never been greater. They are there to be taken.