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Speech

Secretary of State speech at International Education Strategy event

Transcript of International Trade Secretary Dr Liam Fox's speech at an International Education Strategy event in London.

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From: [Department for International Trade](#) and [The Rt Hon Liam Fox MP](#)

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Introduction

Thank you all very much for coming this evening - and to our lead sponsor HSBC, and our supporting sponsor Pearson for making this event possible.

Let me start with a question. If I were to ask you to rank these sectors in order of their estimated export contribution to the UK economy, with the greatest at the top, what would you say?

Insurance, Education, and Whisky. Any guesses?

Well, it may surprise you to learn that based on the latest figures, Education would come top with £19.9 billion. The total export of insurance and pension services from the UK was £18.8 billion. And Whisky exports were just £5 billion.

I don't think £5 billion is small beer - if you excuse the expression. As a proud Scot and whisky-lover, £5 billion is obviously a huge amount of money. But it just shows how successful education is as an export.

Now, drawing comparisons is always a minefield and I want to make clear that while I'm quoting official figures, I'm not strictly comparing like with like. But my point is a very simple one: education is an unsung hero of our UK exports and makes a massive contribution to our economy.

The fact is that our education exports are a remarkable success story - a jewel in our economic crown - and it is a success we should be unapologetic about celebrating.

Some 67% of the value of these exports come from higher education, much of it in the form of international students.

Most of the countries on earth - some 160 - use UK international qualifications in their national secondary examinations. Thousands of international schools use the UK's K-12 curriculum - and almost 25,000 students directly attend over 40 overseas UK schools.

All but 15 of the world's countries receive some sort of transnational education services from UK universities.

And of the world's top 10 universities, 4 are in the UK, compared to 5 in the United States and only one, ETH Zürich - in the rest of Europe. Our Education Strategy thus builds on a remarkable record of success. However, we cannot rest on our laurels.

The changing global education marketplace

Britain stands on the brink of a new era in our trading history. It is an opportunity we intend to seize as an outward looking Global Britain.

The United Kingdom is a great, outwards looking trading nation. It is not only in our history - it's part of our make-up. Today, a key component of this is our services sector, we are one of the world's largest service exporters - second only to the United States.

The share of global GDP of the seven largest emerging economies -

including China, India and Turkey - has been projected to increase from around 35% to nearly 50% by 2050.

The global middle class is expected to reach 5.4 billion people by 2030, up from 3 billion in 2015.

This seismic shift in economic and demographic power will rapidly change opportunities in the global economy, driving demand for precisely those skills and expertise in which the UK already excels.

And our educational providers can be at the forefront of this shift, reaching out to seize the opportunities of a rapidly changing and expanding global education market.

Strategy outline

Our International Education Strategy is designed to achieve just this.

As the Education Secretary has just outlined, we recognise that it is leaders like you - not government - that must be at the forefront of this ambition.

That is why it is a sector-led Strategy, developed in cooperation with education providers across the UK to address the practical barriers you face, and finding the right tools to overcome them.

Some education providers may feel they are not suited to take advantage of exporting opportunities, or lack the confidence or knowledge in how to pursue them.

They may not have the information they need about how to tackle policy or regulatory barriers to access overseas markets, how to seek and get finance, or even where to go for help.

This Strategy is about overcoming these challenges. At its heart is an ambitious goal of achieving an increase in the value of our education exports to £35 billion per year.

Partnership across government

It sets out a whole-of-government approach to put in place the practical, advisory and promotional support to further strengthen the UK's position at the forefront of global education: connecting international partners, opening markets and unlocking new opportunities in rapidly growing areas such as early years and EdTech.

An early example is the digital learning company, Pearson, our supporting sponsor here tonight. They have received an official endorsement from the Thai government which allows BTEC qualifications to be delivered in every vocational and higher institution in Thailand, with the view to expand BTECs across 800 vocational

institutions in the country.

And supported by the Department for International Trade, a delegation from the Thai Ministry of Education, visited Pearson in November 2018, to discuss future plans and to sign an agreement between Pearson, the Ministry for Education and trade bodies of Thailand to work together on BTEC implementation.

Soft power benefits of education exports

Success stories like these are important: and not just for our economy. Promoting the UK's education sector is not just about jobs and exports growth.

Education is the enemy of ignorance. It promotes understanding across borders. It is something that is universal: bridging barriers of country, language and politics. It nurtures new ideas, spurs innovation and opens minds. It is the building block of prosperous, creative and free societies. It is an end in itself - the building block that all civilisations have utilised.

So this Strategy also recognises that the benefits of our education exports extend, not merely to growing the exports, investment and jobs the UK needs.

It also extends to the wider benefits of growing the UK's 'soft power': aiding our international collaboration, helping tackle global challenges like poverty, and, in turn, strengthening our national security.

Conclusion

Forging a new role for the United Kingdom on the world stage starts with rising to the exporting challenge - of which this Strategy and the education sector will form a key part.

I am confident that, working across Government, educational institutions and leaders like the ones in this room, we can rise to this challenge - ensuring that the future of the UK education sector is even more outstanding than it was in the past.

The potential is there. So are the opportunities. And, with this Strategy, so are the tools.

Now we need to build the network and relationships that will help realise those opportunities. And that is what this event is all about. So over to you

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