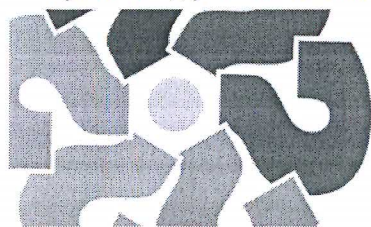


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Поиск

### MDGs revisited: higher education responding to global challenges

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Today we are witnessing serious changes in higher education, both in Russia and around the world, brought on by economic and political forces. This article will explore three factors driving this change; the first of which is globalisation – the process of worldwide economic, political, cultural, and religious unification and integration. The second factor is linked with the global economy's transition into an innovation economy, and the rapid technological advances that have occurred as a result. The third focuses on the transformation of the global value system under which high value has been put on information, and individual skills revolve around the ability to research, process and implement information.

#### Globalisation

Globalisation unifies international economic, legal, and cultural spaces leading to improved prospects of finding employment, greater flexibility, and a more effective management of change – the main goals of our societies. However, as a factor in the removal of borders, globalisation has resulted in increasingly higher requirements of the global workforce just as the ability to change occupation and cultural environment is becoming increasingly important.

Education and lifelong learning are becoming major drivers of the changes brought about by globalisation. Modern economies based on new technologies and technological revolution (i.e. innovation economies) demand the faster inclusion of specialists into new working environments, and their faster adaptation to new tools. Owing to the higher pace of modern development and accelerated changes, the ability to react adequately to market changes is becoming crucial. This is both an educational and a personal requirement and it illustrates that it is no longer only hard skills that are in demand; soft skills are too. The OECD report 'Better Skills, Better Jobs, Better Lives' claims that skills have become the global currency of the 21st century: 'Without adequate investment in skills, people languish on the margins of society, technological progress does not translate into economic growth, and countries can no longer compete in an increasingly knowledge-based global society'.

#### Innovation economy

Under the innovation economy, technology transfer between disciplines is becoming essential. It may be implemented by a specialist who has an understanding of two or more sectors as, in such instances, information and technology transfer from one field to another is possible. It leads to an increase in demand from companies for multi-functional 'cross-specialists'.

Consequently, rapid technological changes are conditioning not only what is demanded of higher education graduates; they are also bringing about changes in higher education content itself. What is especially important is that higher education is reviewed constantly and that it rapidly adapts in response to new changes. Acquiring specialist skills takes time – between three and six years on average. Those who stand to benefit from any future increase in demand for specialists to manage the implementation of new technologies will have had to have started their education and training now. However, some employers face difficulties in planning so far in advance. Government should – together with educational institutions and employers' associations – define early on which specialists and skills will be required in the future. This approach can lead to the provision of up-to-date training of these highly-sought after specialists.

1. Why does the Post-2015 agenda matter for higher education?



#### Illustrative Goal(s)



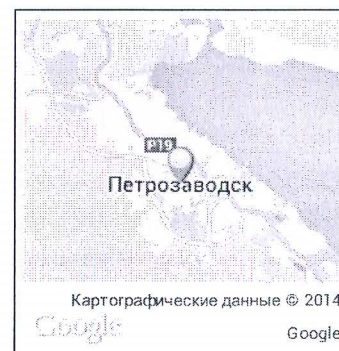
3. Provide quality education and lifelong learning



10. Ensure good governance and effective institutions



11. Ensure stable and peaceful societies



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## Information society

One of the crucial resources in an information society is human capital. In accordance with the Human Capital Report, education is one of the three core determinants of human capital. In a wide sense, education is the accumulation of information and experiences by an individual. Nowadays, in the framework of knowledge-based societies, new approaches to education are born. One such novelty is the notion of lifelong learning – providing self-education and training during one’s lifetime. The transformation of the global value system to a more information-centred one is gradually changing the role of higher education.

## Global trends

The above-mentioned trends are relevant in both developed and developing countries. In Russia higher education is conditioning the innovation processes to a greater degree. Here, universities have evolved from Soviet times where their role as social institutions was to produce the graduates needed to satisfy the demands of their associated government ministries. Today, universities are labour market institutions, providing dynamic growth in the scientific potential and welfare of Russia.

Thus, higher education not only responds to global challenges; it creates a platform for the successful development of the country’s youth, therefore preventing their marginalisation. A strong higher education sector is one of major factors for the development of the economy (regional or global), social stability, and the development of human capital.

It is becoming clear that the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) should be revisited highlighting not only primary education, but higher education as well. MDG #2, which aims to achieve universal primary education, will in turn contribute to basic skills development (literacy and numeracy) for 123 million youth between 15-24 years old (out of which 61% are women), and 774 million adults (out of which two thirds are women) according to the UNESCO Global Monitoring Report. While primary education contributes to fundamental skills development, higher education is aimed at employability, skills development, problem-solving, communication, learning to learn, and teamwork.

Fifteen years have passed since the adoption of the MDGs by the UN General Assembly and while much has been achieved – roadmaps settled and plans scheduled – higher education still remains outside of the global development agenda. At the same time, the most prominent world reports claim that the future of any economy is in highly-qualified staff and lifelong learning. It is becoming obvious that higher education is the most important driver of economic development and competition. We believe that it is high time to revisit the MDGs and highlight higher education development as the main driver of economic and social development.

This paper was co-written by Dr Maria Pitukhina, Senior Researcher, Budget Monitoring Center, Petrozavodsk State University

### References

- Millennium Development Goals
- OECD report ‘Better Skills, Better Jobs, Better Lives’
- Human Capital Report
- UNESCO Report ‘Global Monitoring Report’

Tags: Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Post-2015 agenda, Employability, Higher education institutions, Globalisation, Knowledge creation, Graduates, Learning

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