Main trends of educational activity

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Abstract

Technological and social progress affects all spheres of public life. Educational system is one of the institutions being influenced dramatically by global trends. It brings about the necessity for its permanent renovation process. The system of global gates, which is mediator in international trade, political, information and financial interaction among the market subjects, will become a basis for international education system development. This main trend will be also a determinant for other aspects of educational activity evolution in near future.

Key words

Global gate, education, trends, social network, information flow, labour potential, competences.

Principales tendencias en la actividad educativa

Resumen

El progreso tecnológico y social afecta a todos los ámbitos de la vida pública. El sistema educativo es una de las instituciones que está siendo influida de forma dramática por las tendencia globales, lo que conlleva la necesidad de procesos de renovación continua. El sistema de «puertas globales», como proceso intermediario en los procesos de comercio internacional, en la interacción política, informacional y financiera entre los sujetos del mercado, se convertirá en la base para el desarrollo del sistema educativo internacional. Esta tendencia también marcará en el futuro próximo las peculiaridades en la evolución de la actividad educativa.

Palabras clave

Puertas globales, educación, tendencias, red social, flujo informativo, capacidad laboral, competencias.

Основные тенденции в образовательной деятельности

Аннотация

Технологический и социальный прогресс затрагивают все сферы общественной жизни. Система образования является одним из институтов, особо зависящих от глобальных тенденций развития. Это приводит к потребности постоянного обновления всех структурных элементов данной системы. Система глобальных врат, являющаяся посредником в международных процессах торговли, политического, информационного и финансового взаимодействия между мировыми рыночными субъектами, станет основой развития международной системы образования. Эта основная тенденция также будет определять особенности развития образовательной деятельности в ближайшем будущем.

Ключевые слова

Глобальные врата, образование, тенденции, социальная сеть, информационный поток, трудовой потенциал, компетенции.

Studying development trends as a perspective condition of economic events and systems is a necessary preliminary stage of planning and forecasting processes. Understanding trends as correction elements by planning provides minimisation of risks connected with a choice of incorrect ways and development strategies.

Despite the fact that the educational institute unites functional elements both of a formal educational system and separate functional processes that happen in different economic systems, it is possible to single out a number of trends that are characteristic for the given type of relations at the present stage. The part of the trends is caused by the changes in the educational institute itself, the other part is caused by the transformations that occur in the environment and affect activities of different institutes having indirect influence on various aspects of educational activities.

Technological and social progress affects all spheres of public life. These changes have an influence on the institutional structures activity, on social subsystems and state authorities. Main part of these transformations consequences appear with some time shift. That is why global trends tracking and taking them into account in any type of planning activity is the basis for institutional environment effectiveness raising.

Educational system is one of the institutions, which provides social reproduction and requires special attention while choosing the strategic targets. Necessity for taking into consideration technological innovations, technical novelties and discoveries creates a requirement of permanent renovation process of all structural elements of this system.

The purpose of this article is to analyze the main trends of educational activity, which, in author's opinion, will be the determinants in the nearest future.

Within this article the range of the analyzed phenomena has been limited to those trends which can have significant economic consequences in the future and will make direct or indirect impact on functioning of educational institutions.

The main trend affecting functioning of the world economic system is institutional fixation of the changes which have been caused by globalization process. The international labour market grouping, migration of human resources, freedom of capital flow, scientific and industrial interaction between economic subjects of the various countries —this is all the inalienable attribute of modern economic relations.

Modern economic globalization develops in four basic directions:

- globalization of finances seen in distribution of financial streams between countries and in formation of the international mechanisms for capital accumulation and movement (such as world bank system, financial stock exchanges and international payment systems);
- industrial globalization based on complicated structure of horizontal communications between industrial systems of various countries, industrial cooperation and international division of labour;
- globalization of trade relations and as a consequence development of corresponding market institutes (unified set of rules for external economic interaction between market subjects of different countries, international goods exchanges, developed traffic network);
- institutional globalization seen in development of global institutional system that provides basis for political, social and economic interaction on world level (the United Nations, the International Monetary fund etc.).

The global transformations are based on an aspiration to unite all efforts of the world community for further civilization development and for solving of actual problems of the present. On the one hand, this purpose assumes creation of uniform conditions for social and economical life, on the other hand — the economic and accordingly educational systems of separate countries become dependent on each other. The proof of the last statement is signing of the Bologna Declaration and beginning of unification and standardization of educational systems on international level in different countries of the world. As a matter of fact, the Bologna process is one of many stages for development of the global educational institute social network which in the nearest future will define the special features of further development of educational activities.

The globalization changes listed above were mainly caused by rapid development of information technologies. Increase of information interchange speed, freedom of information interaction and simplification of transfer and storage processes for various types of data has provided the technical base necessary for free and unobstructed international cooperation.

An intensive global IT-progress brings about the trend of junction of all information exchange structures into the global network a.k.a. wire. It is dictated by several economic preconditions. First of all, information networks enlargement decreases the fixed costs as a result of the economic activity growth. Secondly, any information network expansion brings the opportunity to sell more complementary goods at low

price level. And the last precondition is the presence of network externalities. In accordance with the last category the utility of the commodity, which is an element of the network (for example, computer or phone network), depends on the amount of potential contacts it can provide end-user with [1, p.260]. In other words, the more communicational possibilities the information network provides the higher utility it has.

On the one hand, expansion of the modern network of the Internet will be limited according to the law of diminishing returns and by necessity to find an optimal scale for the given information exchange structure that will allow to provide necessary control and management possibility. On the other hand, experience of telecommunication companies shows that unification of cellular networks, broadcasting channels, digital distribution and Internet access brings benefits to end users. So the specified processes of information and technological convergence continue to grow.

The main deterrent which does not let the listed forecasts come to be already today is the lack of indispensable normative and legal instruments and the lack of corresponding regulatory and preventive mechanisms proving protection of copyrights and acting as a warrantor of appropriate contracts execution that are being entered in the conditions of ample opportunities for information interaction. Besides, it is possible to construct the global informational network of supposed scale only on the basis of advanced networks of social trust which are being built much longer than the necessary technological base.

Nevertheless, at global level it leads to the institutional attaching of global gates as the main structure for economic, political and social interactions among the biggest countries in the world.

Global gate concept appeared as the logical continuation of «World city» theory (P. Geddes, P. Hall, F. Braudel, H. Reed, J. Friedmann, S. Sassen, C. Abbott, P. Taylor, A. Scott, P. Marcuse, R. Van Kempen, E.Isin) [2]. Differences in countries historical development, particularities of market infrastructure forming and gradual cities enlargement caused the origin of relations, in which the city center became a consumer of considerable proportion of the adjacent regions' resources, from the other side — it became a mediator in international trade, political, information and financial interaction among the market subjects.

Gradually, at global level (with development of institutional basis and increase in social capital of world countries)[1] the network construct of mega polices, which are financial, political, educational and scientific centers, has been formed.

Nowadays this network is known under the name 'The gates into the global world» or «Global gates» (see pic. 1).

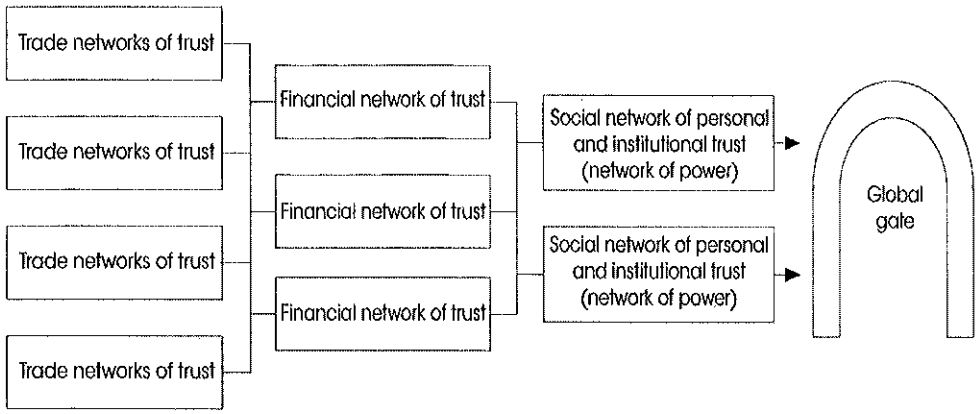
In various authors' opinion [2-4] different quantity of territorial formations of this type can be named in the modern world. The most typical ones in this global construct are: axis New-York — Boston and San-Francisco — Los Angeles, Seattle/Vancouver and Miami in the USA;

[1] **Social capital** — is the level of trust in society. This category includes responsibilities, expectations and jointly developed rules, which evolve on the base of previous social interactions (trust to the given word, cooperative behavior, friendship, public spirit, etc.).

axis Milan — Venice, Rotterdam — Amsterdam, London and Frankfurt in Europe; axis Tokyo — Osaka, Shanghai, Hong Kong and Singapore in Asia; Sydney in Australia and Oceania; San Paulo in Latin America (see pic. 2).

Essentially, the system of global gates provides the most comfortable functioning of social networks in a settled institutional structure with minimum level of financial costs and timetable.

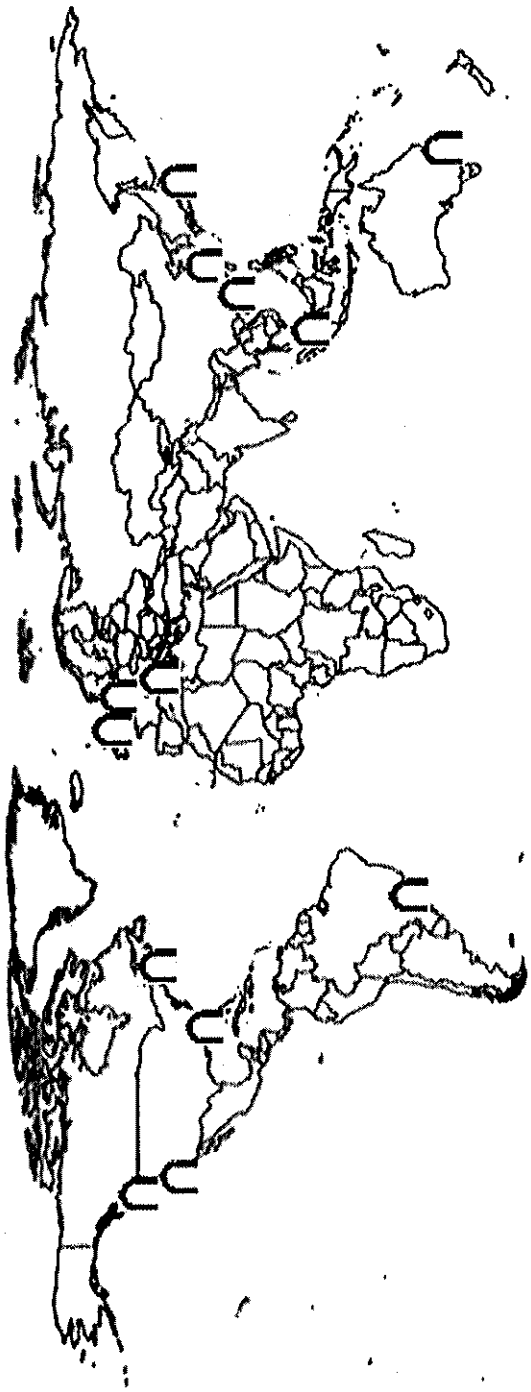
In near future global gates structure will provide the interaction possibilities for educational systems of different countries. Along with political and economic interaction networks the social network of global institute of education will be formed, which will be playing the main role in the world educational processes evolution. This global construct will become a basis for international education system development.



Pic. 1. Evolution phases of global gate forming process.

Onrush of information technology is the reason for the disproportion between the rates of educational institution technical base growth and the final effectiveness of its use. Free accessibility to any professional information profile and technical progress of data processing, transfer and saving tools bring about the reverse effect — instead of simplification of knowledge getting process for each individual, we have an effect of useless information overload for these people. Learners don't get needed knowledge during the education getting process, they just record the information. They have no time to conceive huge volumes of stated material and consequently get lost in the information noises [5]. To prevent the negative processes mentioned above a teacher has to choose the material, methods of its information transfer and learners' control forms in compliance with special characteristics of the audience, also being guided by the final level of the subject matter he wants to achieve.

It is possible to benefit by such onrush of information technologies only if new methodological base of educational activities is developed that will meet new requirements of informational reality — and will make it possible to structure the information flow more effectively [6] which is necessary for forming professional competence by trainees of higher order. The precondition of such changes is development of computer skills and information literacy by all participants of educational process.



Pic. 2. Network construct of global gates on the political map of the world.

It is necessary to consider the following fact: usage of information technologies in educational activities should not lead to reduction of teacher's role in educational, training and enlightenment process. The teacher acts as a translator of social interaction skills, principles of social responsibility and, only last of all, professional knowledge. It is possible to cultivate the listed personal qualities in a trainee only during direct interaction with the teacher. And depersonalization of educational process which is characteristic, for example, for modern remote teaching methods, causes such negative effect as social alienation of trainees.

It is the acceleration of information exchange processes, high rates of data updating and growth in technical possibilities for data systematization and storage that have led to the strengthening of «Life-long education» principle as a main precondition for educational activity in the conditions of modern realities [7, p. 10]. In order to remain competitive in the labour-market a person requires not only general and professional education which one receives in the beginning of one's work activity, but also continuous training directly on workplace aimed at updating and expansion of own skills and knowledge. Taking the «Life-long education» principle into consideration in educational activities, first of all, puts forward the necessity to adjust purposes, problems, structures and contents of educational programs; and secondly, expands the functioning sphere of education institutes beyond the limits of terms set for receiving of educational levels.

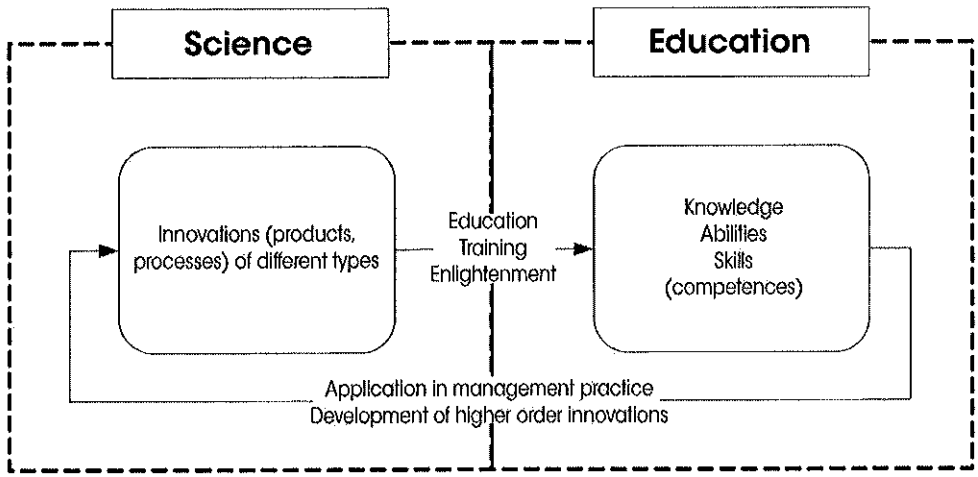
«Transformation of knowledge into the main social capital, increase of the benefits connected with getting knowledge and education contribute to the strengthening of education as a commodity product. At the same time one can experience the specificity of education as a commodity product when the benefits from it are received both by the person who consumes this product, by the whole society, and by some concrete enterprises» [8, p.159] — see Tab. 1.

TABLE 1
BENEFITS FROM INVESTMENT IN EDUCATION

DIRECT IMPACT	EXTERNAL IMPACT (INDIRECT BENEFITS)
	Decrease of criminality
Growth of the contribution to the national income	Greater social agreement
Labour productivity increase	Spreading of innovations
Growth of wages	Increase of employment rate and cultural level

The next thing that affects the essential bases of educational activity is involving of new participants in educational, training and enlightenment processes. This trend is proved by the phenomenon called the Second Academic Revolution [9]. Integration of science and education (see pic. 3) at the end of XIX century in the USA defined as the First Academic Revolution expands the interaction frameworks beyond the limits of these two institutes. Today educational activities are joined by market subjects. The last ones act not only as consumers of educational process results, but they also play a role of the «client» influencing the content of educational programs and structure of those competences that an employer requires and wishes to receive as a result of education.

This trend also can be named as «feedback education». It came from modern market economy as an analogue to feedback production —the output of products, which is oriented toward non-common market requirements (law of supply and demand), but to satisfy some special needs of every single customer. Per se, feedback education —it's a «teacher-learner» communication system, which is mainly determined by teacher's quality criteria from one side and by peculiarities/requirements of the learner from the other.



Pic. 3. Dialectical connections between main results of scientific and educational spheres functioning.

«Feedback education» category is a result of evolution of educational services market. Essentially, it is a particular case of supply and demand equilibration process. The trainee forms the demand for special type of knowledge and the lecturer (as a provider of according services) forms the supply to satisfy these needs of the potential consumer. The effectiveness criteria of such kind of relations are quality requirements for the education process, which have to be under control and in the responsibility zone of the lecturer.

On the author's opinion, feedback education will get institutional attaching in the nearest future.

Consolidation of scientific sphere, education and market is also seen in the fact that the considerable part of modern educational institutions chooses commercial bases of functioning. It means that it acts as a real market subject that is sharply concerned with questions of self-repayment, financing and profit-making, as well as any other company present in the market. Excessive rationalism of existence and following to the business logic of development is fraught with disturbance of institutional functions that the educational system has which can cause plenty of negative consequences of economic, social and ecological character.

Besides that, the establishment of the already mentioned «Life-long education» principle in business circles leads to that the considerable part of companies spends funds on training their employees only because of necessity to follow the development strategy applied by leading companies which select the way of constant improvement of professional skills in order to hold the market positions. On the one hand, such approach gives expected positive results; on the other hand, because of it the education becomes a fashionable trend which the overwhelming majority of economic subjects wishes to follow. As a result in the education services market a big number of organizations appears that are just trying to satisfy specified requirements as fully as possible with the main target to maximize the profits which causes both degradation in quality of the given services, and low institutional efficiency of such educational activities.

«...The educational services have quickly moved from the category of sociocultural ones to the category of economically profitable. It is not accidentally that higher education in the USA is called «the 100-milliard business» making up to 2,7% of gross national product ... In Australia the education occupies the third place of gross national product after coal production and tourism» [10, p. 11].

In the future the education services market will only grow. This is confirmed by three main facts: statistics of expenses for education in largest companies from different countries, growth dynamics in the world market of educational activities and, as a result, decrease of transaction costs level for functioning of the world educational institute.[2]

Moreover, the education as a market asset becomes a service of periodical consumption. This trend is indirectly proved by the «Life-long education» principle which promotion provides a stable demand from consumers for the companies engaged in granting of education services. Usage of such market approach will cause that these companies will distribute incomplete, fragmentary knowledge demanding constant updating and improvement. This is the standard business practice applied to distribution of the goods which it is necessary to generate a stable demand for. It means to develop by a consumer the necessity for periodical consumption of the offered products. And there are no guarantees that the market subjects engaged in educational activity just as in another kind of business activity will not

[2] **Transaction costs** – costs incurred in economic or social system operation. They consist of constant transaction costs (for example, specific investments into founding of institutional establishments) and variable transaction costs (for example, expenses depending on a number or size of transaction). Examples of variable transaction costs are: search and information costs, bargaining costs, policing and enforcement costs [1, p. 695].

follow the listed development strategies because it can bring maximal economic benefits in the shortest terms.

«Pure market approach to education will not be of benefit to it, it will make it a product of buying and selling instead of a public good, a basis for development of national culture. Market values in the conditions of limited state financing can change the mission of educational institutions, increase stratification of society; and avoiding questions of education quality improvement will lead to poor-quality education and even to stratification of society because the existing stratification will be supported by intellectual one [11].»

On the one hand, the necessity to fulfil the targets connected with training of human resources needed for the public economic system functioning makes the educational institute to adjust to the business tasks and techniques; on the other hand — following only the specified category of short-term problems should be accompanied by clear understanding of the negative consequences that can come.

And the last moment needed to be described within the analysis of education development trends is the changes occurring in the personal labour potential structure. The main problem which remains unsolved already for many decades is the absence of a uniform model for estimating the potential of a worker in one or another professional sphere. Meaning the model that could qualitatively or quantitatively estimate the skills acquired as a result of education and natural abilities of a worker. Today the most popular approach used in studying of this problem is the competency analysis.

The economic interpretation of the competency concept is a bit specific. Proceeding from the study object of economic science the competence is understood as a personal quality formed during educational activity that allows one person to carry out a competent activity in one or another life sphere. [12, pp. 95-98]

Competent activity is the activity carried out according to established standards, aimed at achievement of definite purposes by the most rational distribution of all kinds of resources (financial, time resource and individual energy outputs etc.).

Following the standards means taking into consideration institutional restrictions and quality standards imposed by the economic and legal system of a state, and also, assumes knowing moral standards and business ethics.

So, competence is a personal quality of an individual which allows him or her to achieve assigned targets by the most optimal distribution of time, energy output and accessible resources in agreement with the established legal, moral, and other restrictions. This quality is a base for individual creative activity which shows itself in finding ways to achieve assigned targets and resource management methods needed for it.

The main lack of the competency approach is its insufficiently developed theoretical form, absence of uniform methodological base and structure of competences. The number of competences that have been offered in studies of various schools runs today into tens and hundreds. Its own contribution to the general confusion is also made by companies engaged in professional skills improvement and personnel train-

ing: the main part of training programs offered today in the market, as a rule, is directed on development of one or another competence.

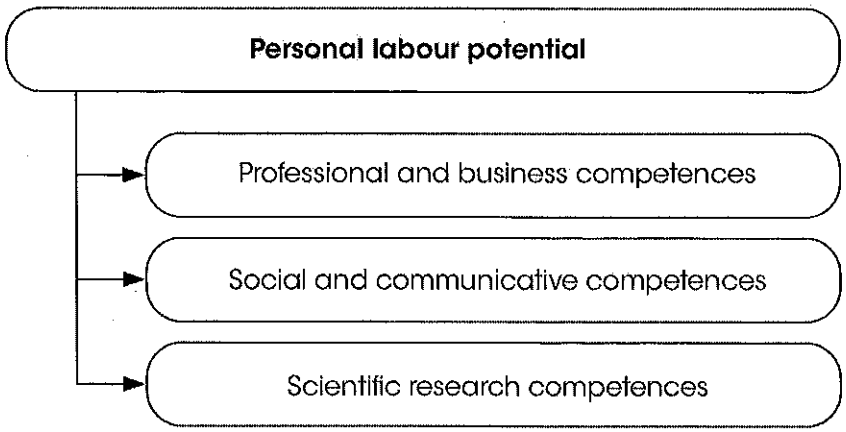
In order to avoid the confusion in the variety of competence characteristics that have been currently offered by representatives of different scientific schools it is necessary to systematize these works. As a result of such systematization a model of personal labour potential should be obtained that, on the one hand, should provide the necessary concretization level and the possibility for deeper analysis and forecasting; but, on the other hand, it should be universal and describe the structure of personal labour potential as fully as possible.

The given requirements are met by the approach that divides all characteristics of a person into three interconnected subgroups of competences: social and communicative competences, scientific research competences, professional and business ones (see Pic. 4).

Each group of competences is responsible for a specific activity field of a person which in a complex defines the personal labour potential. We will list the main characteristics that each subgroup consists of:

- Social and communicative group of competences: team-work skills, ability to present oneself and the results of one's work, business correspondence knowledge, ability to conduct negotiations;
- Scientific research competences: fundamental scientific knowledge, information searching skills, assessment of applicability of different developments, creativity, ability to run risks, responsibility for introduction of offered scientific developments;
- Professional and business competences: responsible attitude to work, computer skills, ability to refuse from old methods of work for new ones.

It is the harmonious development of all groups of competences listed above that will lead to formation of a professionally skilled person as a competitive participant in the future labour relationships.



Pic. 4 The structure of personal labour potential as a result of competence characteristics systematization.

Looking at the examined trends and changes one can draw a conclusion that the group of scientific research competences will become the most demanded in the nearest future. Let us analyse the main preconditions of this forecast.

The rapid development of information technologies examined earlier constantly changes the market environment and economic activities conditions. As a result new methods for solving already existing problems are created and absolutely new requirements that an individual should meet in ones economic activity arise. In order to increase the efficiency of labour a person needs to be able to work with great volumes of information and to assess its applicability for achievement of assigned targets.

The necessity of constant training and improvement of own abilities, skills and knowledge is an integral attribute of person's competitiveness in the modern labour market. Increase of information loading, information networks integration and information exchange speed-up not only demand constant updating of own knowledge, but also put the flexibility of thinking and creativity potential of an individual on the first place among other necessary attributes for employment.

The last category of the examined competence characteristics is responsible for innovative potential of a person, skills necessary for successful dealing with great volumes of information and analyzing its applicability; and it cultivates the responsible attitude to results of one's own developments.

The group of scientific research competences helps to develop the integral outlook on the environment, understanding of cause-effect relationships between processes that happen in the world.

The given qualities allow us to talk about development of ecological and social responsibility in a person — the characteristics which are obligatory for labour potential regardless of work activity.

Above-listed trends will form the general vector of educational activity development — world market of educational services functioning in institutional sphere of global gates; tough competition among educational institutions; consideration of the personal labour potential as a three-dimensional structure of competence characteristics; qualitative changes in the structure of teaching processes, in methods of exposition and presentation of the material. And still, the main focus for the subjects of this market is the necessity to follow the principles of social responsibility and long-term effectiveness orientation.

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