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## **YOUTH READINESS FOR DIGITALIZATION OF THE ECONOMY**

### **Ph. D. (c) Nina Skosyreva**

Omsk State Agrarian University named after P.A. Stolypin, Russia  
ORCID: 0000-0003-3532-1720  
nd.skosyreva@omgau.org

### **Ph. D. (c) Alla Zinich**

Omsk State Agrarian University named after P.A. Stolypin, Russia  
ORCID: 0000-0003-2265-5633  
av.zinich@omgau.org

### **Ph. D. (c) Vitalii Pomogaev**

Omsk State Agrarian University named after P.A. Stolypin, Russia  
ORCID: 0000-0003-4889-6830  
vm.pomogaev@omgau.org

### **Lic. Yulia Revyakina**

Omsk State Agrarian University named after P.A. Stolypin, Russia  
ORCID: 0000-0002-4641-9670  
yun.revyakina@omgau.org

### **Ph. D. (c) Marina Vasyukova**

Omsk State Agrarian University named after P.A. Stolypin, Russia  
ORCID: 0000-0001-9132-936X  
mv.vasyukova@omgau.org

### **Ph. D. (c) Elena Avlasovich**

Omsk State Agrarian University named after P.A. Stolypin, Russia  
ORCID: 0000-0003-3445-7087  
em.avlasovich@omgau.org

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### **Abstract**

The article deals with the problem of the modern youth readiness to live and work in the new economic realities caused by the digitalization of the economy and other spheres of society. The authors focus on the contradictory nature of this process, which, on the one hand, spreads inevitably, objectively, regardless of subjective factors, rapidly, intensively and extensively, and on the other hand, the effectiveness and constructiveness of its movement are directly related to the human factor, the level of readiness and ability of the subject to be an active participant in this process and influence it. The article substantiates the need to form a set of new competencies necessary for participants in the transformation of modern society into digit-based information-oriented society. The article analyzes the results of a sociological study conducted in 2020 at the Omsk State Agrarian University named after P. Stolypin, during which 1,188 respondents were interviewed.

### **Keywords**

Youth – Digitalization – Digital economy – Digital competencies



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## Introduction

Most of the countries in the world are moving along the path of becoming digital economies. Russia is consistently in the top 50 of the main international ratings for digital development but the pace of its advancement in this direction is uneven<sup>1</sup>. Besides, according to the Decree of the President of the Russian Federation V. Putin, the country has set a course for accelerated implementation of digital technologies in the economy, as well as other spheres of public life<sup>2</sup>. Thus, the vector of the economy movement as such is changing. Technologies influence the system of public administration, as well as the nature of social and cultural ties in society. It can be argued that the entire contemporary society is in the course of transformation into a digital environment. These global changes associated with the mass implementation of digital technologies in all spheres of human life, regardless of age and type of activity, in turn, completely transform the worldview paradigm of a man of today.

At that, the role of human capital as the main economic resource is being strengthened simultaneously with these processes. Without the development of human capital, its competent and effective utilization, achieving the effective application of digital technologies is impossible.

According to Global Human Capital 2017<sup>3</sup>, Russia ranks 4<sup>th</sup> in terms of human potential, 42<sup>nd</sup> in terms of the use of skills in the workplace, and 89<sup>th</sup> in terms of the availability of competent employees. The reason for this discrepancy in indicators is the quality of formal institutions. This indicates a low level of development of knowledge application skills. Therefore, in Russian reality, the formation of key competencies necessary for the successful implementation of human potential becomes particularly relevant.

A characteristic feature of a person engaged in the digital economy issues is the ability to use digital technologies in everyday and professional activities, the ability to exist in an equipped digital information environment, as well as to develop skills to use digital technologies in those economic sectors where they are useful and necessary<sup>4</sup>.

Thus, a new educational paradigm is being built. One of the most important shifts in the education model is the transition to lifelong learning, which allows recognizing and integrating knowledge and competencies.

At that, various institutions are at a different degree of readiness. Large companies, leading universities, and individual schools are showing great readiness and activity.

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<sup>1</sup> G. I. Abdrakhmanova; K. O. Vishnevsky y L. M. Gokhberg, Chto takoe cifrovaya ekonomika? Trendy, kompetencii, izmerenie. Proceedings of the 20th International scientific conference on problems of the economy and society development (Moscow: Publishing House of the Higher School of Economics, 2019).

<sup>2</sup> Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No. 203 "O Strategii razvitiya informacionnogo obshchestva v Rossijskoj Federacii na 2017–2030 gody". 2017. Available at: <http://www.garant.ru/products/ipo/prime/doc/71570570/#ixzz5e5yX7FME>

<sup>3</sup> Global Human Capital Report. World Economic Forum. 2017. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/reports/the-global-human-capital-report-2017>

<sup>4</sup> T. D. Strelnikova y E. A. Nekrasova, Formirovanie kompetencij v kadrovoj podgotovke dlya cifrovoj ekonomiki. Central Scientific Bulletin. Available at: <http://cscb.su/n/0322s01/0322s01029.htm>

PH. D. (C) NINA SKOSYREVA / PH. D. (C) ALLA ZINICH / PH. D. (C) VITALII POMOGAEV / LIC. YULIA REVYAKINA

PH. D. (C) MARINA VASYUKOVA / PH. D. (C) ELENA AVLASOVICH

Due to their age characteristics, young people are more susceptible to new technologies, in particular, and changes in general. For today's generation, digital space is a comfortable environment. In this regard, the youth should become a powerhouse on the way to a new society. Thus, D. Tapscott notes that the Net Generation can radically change the fate of the community in the part where new technologies operate<sup>5</sup>. Concerning Russia, it can be argued that only the digital generation can transform traditional extractive institutions. But to be able to do this, it is necessary to comprehend the main development trends.

The purpose of the present research is to analyze the level of awareness of contemporary youth readiness to digitalize the economy.

## Materials and methods

Many scientific studies have been dealing with the issues of the digitalization of society and the economy. Among the most prominent scholars are S. Kuznets, F. Mahlup, G. Mensch, N. Negroponete, C. Perez, G. Stigler, Ch. Freeman, and E. Arrow<sup>6</sup>. Currently, Russian scientists are conducting large-scale research in the field of the digital transformation of the economy. Among them, one can distinguish the research of academician S.Yu. Glazyev on the issues of risk of humanity in the transition to the digital economy and changes in social formation. The research of Yu.V. Yakutin, E.D. Solozhentsev, A.E. Zubarev, and others are also dealing with the influence of technologies on the formation of the economy<sup>7</sup>.

The very term of digital transformation is an aggregative term that implies a set of interrelated changes in all aspects of human life under the influence of digital technologies<sup>8</sup>. Currently, the conceptual framework of digital transformation as a social phenomenon and its mechanisms are developing mainly in the field of business process theory and practice.

As for the competencies of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, their systematization is currently at the initial stage. The 2018 study of competencies for the digital economy, conducted under the auspices of the OECD in 31 countries has shown that the demand for competencies in the labor markets is very diverse<sup>9</sup>. These are both basic abilities, standard and advanced, as well as cognitive and noncognitive skills. This diversity is evident for any type and scale of organizations, and skills developed at any level of education.

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<sup>5</sup> D. Tapscott, *Grown Up Digital: How the Net Generation is Changing Your World* (New York: McGraw Hill Education, 2009).

<sup>6</sup> A. A. Gretchenko, "Sushchnost' cifrovoj ekonomiki, genezis ponyatiya «cifrovaya ekonomika» i predposylki ee formirovaniya v Rossii", *Science and Practice of the Plekhanov Russian University of Economics* Vol: 3 num 31 (2018): 23-37.

<sup>7</sup> O. L. Chulanova, "Kompetencii personala v cifrovoj ekonomike: operacionalizaciya soft skills personala organizacii s uchetom ortobioticheskikh navykov i navykov well being", *Bulletin of Eurasian Science* num 2 (2019)..

<sup>8</sup> V. G. Larionov; E. N. Sheremetyeva y E. P. Barinova, "Transformaciya terminologii, kompetencij i znaniy v usloviyah cifrovoj ekonomiki. Bulletin of the Astrakhan State Technical University", *Ekonomika* num 4 (2019): 21-28.

<sup>9</sup> R. Grundke, *Which skills for the digital era? Returns to skills analysis*. OECD Science, Technology and Industry Working Papers, No. 2018/09 (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2018) Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9a9479b5-en>

Currently, all countries are searching at all levels for a set of competencies necessary for successful self-implementation in the digital world, to improve the efficiency of solving problems in the digital economy<sup>10</sup>.

The Canadian, Finnish, Chinese, and Korean competency models have already been created<sup>11</sup>. Besides, the Boston Consulting Group has developed a Target Competency Model 2025.

The European model of key competencies, presented at the World Economic Forum includes ten competencies: Complex Problem Solving, Critical Thinking, Creativity, People Management, Coordinating with Others, Emotional Intelligence, Judgment and Decision Making, Service Orientation, Negotiation (ability to negotiate), and Cognitive Flexibility<sup>12</sup>.

In Russia, attempts are also being made to structure, detail, rank, and unify competencies, as well as competence centers are being created. In 2019, the "University of the National Technology Initiative 2035" (University 2035) has presented the platform of the "Basic competencies model". At the beginning of 2020, Russian legislation has identified five key competencies: self-determination in the face of uncertainty, creative thinking, critical thinking, communication and cooperation, information, and data management.

In the course of defining and discussing the basic competencies necessary for a digital society, A.M. Kondakov notes that the key competencies are increasingly shifting towards communication and creativity, the role of motivational and value attitudes, as well as moral and ethical qualities of the individual are increasing. As an example (argument), one can come up with the slogan of Sberbank: "New competencies are the continuation of our values"<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> N. Howe y W. Strauss, *Generations: The History of America's Future, 1584 to 2069* (New York: William Morrow & Company, 1991); M. V. Vasyukova, "Cennostnye orientiry molodezhi kak sostavlyayushchaya ekonomicheskogo potentsiala region", *Electronic Scientific and Methodological Journal of Omsk State University* num 6 (2019); *Skills in the Digital Economy: Where Canada Stands and the Way Forward*. The Information and Communications Technology Council (ICTC). 2016; *Digital skills for life and work*. Broadband Commission Working Group on Education. 2017; T. A. Gileva, "Kompetencii i navyki cifrovoj ekonomiki: razrabotka programmy razvitiya personala", *Bulletin of the Ufa State Oil Technical University. Science, Education, and Economics* Vol: 2 num 28 (2019): 22-35 y M. I. Barabanova, *Proceedings of the 4th National scientific and methodological conference with international participation "Architecture of University education: Building a unified space of knowledge"* (Saint Petersburg: Publishing House of the Saint Petersburg State University of Economics, 2020).

<sup>11</sup> T. V. Yershova y S. V. Ziva, "Klyuchevye kompetencii dlya cifrovoj ekonomiki", *Information Society* num 3 (2018): 4-20.

<sup>12</sup> *The 10 Skills You Need to Thrive in the Fourth Industrial Revolution* World Economic Forum. Available at: [www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/01/the-10-skills-you-need-to-thrive-in-the-fourthindustrial-revolution](http://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/01/the-10-skills-you-need-to-thrive-in-the-fourthindustrial-revolution)

<sup>13</sup> A. M. Kondakov, *Podhody k razrabotke bazovoj modeli kompetencii cifrovoj ekonomiki*. *Proceedings of the 12th International IT Forum with the participation of BRICS and SCO countries*. Available at: [https://itforum.admhmao.ru/upload/iblock/01d/2\\_Kondakov-AM.pdf](https://itforum.admhmao.ru/upload/iblock/01d/2_Kondakov-AM.pdf)

In the modern Strauss-Howe generational theory<sup>14</sup> it is noted that life values are formed up to 11-12 years and that representatives of generation Z have similar values and a similar lifestyle due to the impact of digitalization. The Net Generation was described by Tapscott<sup>15</sup>, who noted in his research that this generation was characterized by revolutionary ways of thinking, interacting, and working. An author team of E.V. Brodovskaya, A.Yu. Dombrovskaya, R.V. Pyrma, A.V. Sinyakov, and A.A. Azarov, researching at the Russia-wide level concluded "about the high level of adaptability to the labor market of pragmatically oriented hypermobile youth absorbing the harmonious type of socialization (fitting on values of the silent majority), focused on values of social trust, independent thinking, and unconventional solutions to professional issues"<sup>16</sup>.

When studying this issue, a sociological survey named "Professional self-determination of modern youth", conducted in 2020 at the Omsk State Agrarian University named after P. Stolypin, was used as one of the research methods. The sample population of students of the 1<sup>st</sup> -5<sup>th</sup> courses of seven faculties of full-time and part-time education amounted to N=1,188 people. The method involved filling in an online questionnaire. A special section of the study was devoted to the analysis of the level of preparedness of young people to live and work in the digitized economic environment. In the course of processing the results of the study, several correlations were obtained to identify the features of this process depending on various factors.

## Results and discussion

Youth is a special social group that has specific functions and characteristics differing depending on the specific historical time, socio-economic, and political situation. In the context of the present research, the characteristics identified by Russian researchers of youth problems I.M. Ilyinsky and V.A. Lukov<sup>17</sup> are of particular interest. They indicate that modern youth has significant innovative potential, whose implementation may have both a constructive and destructive trend depending on socio-economic conditions and other factors. Besides, modern youth differs from previous generations in their ability to adapt quickly to changing conditions. It should be noted that there has always been a gap between generations. However, it is the new generation (generation Z) that has the largest gap with the previous one. Modern society is an information society where the availability of information and its openness allow young people to feel more independent from adults, which is very valuable for them. Digital technologies develop new abilities of the individual and activate various functions of the brain. Thus, the young person's personality transforms qualitatively<sup>18</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> N. Howe y W. Strauss, *Generations: The History of America's Future, 1584 to 2069* (New York: William Morrow & Company, 1991)

<sup>15</sup> D. Tapscott, *Grown Up Digital: How the Net Generation is Changing Your World* (New York: McGraw Hill Education, 2009)

<sup>16</sup> E. V. Brodovskaya; A. Yu. Dombrovskaya; R. V. Pyrma; A. V. Sinyakov y A. A. Azarov, "Vzaimosvyaz' cennostnogo i kompetentnostnogo vybora molodezhi v usloviyah cifrovizacii: rezul'taty vserossijskogo issledovaniya", *Values and Meanings Vol: 2 num 60* (2019): 76-104.

<sup>17</sup> I. M. Ilyinsky y V. A. Lukov, "Gosudarstvennaya molodezhnaya politiki v Rossii: filosofiya preemstvennosti i smeny pokolenij", *Knowledge. Understanding. Skill num 4* (2008): 5-14.

<sup>18</sup> S.A. Korshunova., *Molodezh' kak aktivnyj sub"ekt razvitiya sovremennogo cifrovogo obshchestva. Russia and world development trends. Proceedings of the all-Russian science-to-practice conference with international participation* (Omsk: Publishing House of the Omsk State Technical University. 2019)

It is important that in these conditions, the vector of youth activity must have a progressive and positive orientation.

Even though today's youth spend most of their lives in the information space and actively perceive any information, their digital skills are not developed well.

The results of the study revealed that the majority of modern youth (60.2% of the respondents) were not familiar with the concept of the digital economy. Thus, most of the respondents were not able to give a clear definition of the digital economy. When answering the question "Which of these general professional competencies are necessary for specialists in the digital economy?», young people noted first of all the ability to manage information. Further, performance, organization, self-development, and communication were noted in descending order.

However, the responses to the question "To what extent do you have these competencies?" have demonstrated that young people evaluate the current level of their proficiency in these competencies as average.



Figure 1  
The level of comprehension of the need, and the level of proficiency in general competencies

Next, the survey participants were asked to choose the supra-professional competencies that they believed they needed to have to be competitive in the digital economy.

However, analyzing the answers to the next question in the questionnaire – "To what extent do you have these competencies?", it turned out that young people, in general, correctly understood the significance of supra-professional competencies, while did not possess them themselves to a sufficient extent.

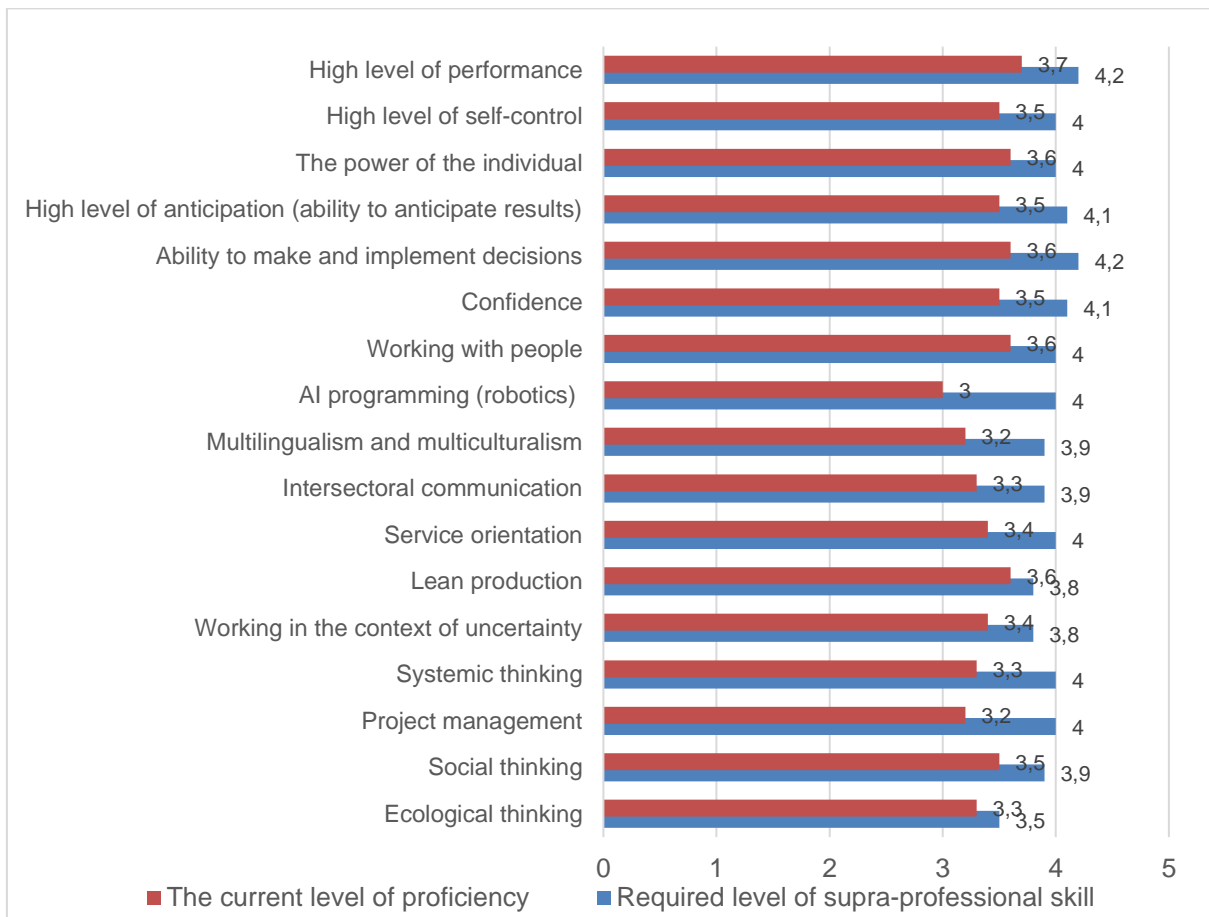


Figure 2  
The level of comprehending the need, and the level of proficiency in supra-professional skills

Thus, the respondents rated (giving more than 4 points in a 5-point scale) the following qualities as the most necessary to be competitive in the digital economy: high level of performance (average score – 4.2), ability to make and implement decisions (average score – 4.2), high level of anticipation (average score – 4.1), and confidence (average score – 4.1). However, at the moment, young people rated the level of proficiency in these skills as average, below four points (3.5-3.5 points).

The gap in many digital skills is typical for the entire population of Russia, which is confirmed by the Digital economy indicators<sup>19</sup>. While the first-order digital inequality (accessibility) is gradually decreasing, the second-order inequality (usage) remains for the time being.

Today's young people use the digital environment to gain knowledge to a greater extent than the older generation. Thus, according to the data obtained, 56.9% of the respondents often use the advantages of the digital environment to obtain the necessary knowledge and information.

<sup>19</sup> L. V. Lapidus; L. S. Leontieva y A. O. Gostilovich, "Minimal'naya cifrovaya korzina rossijskih regionov dlya transformacii promyshlennosti", Public Administration. Electronic Bulletin num 77 (2019): 212-228.

This is facilitated by a variety of training forms, in particular the use of online courses that contribute to the development of necessary competencies. However, practice shows that they do not become attractive to all students. Numerous studies confirm the shift in focus from their primary use in higher education to their use in the corporate sector as a form of professional development<sup>20</sup>.

Further, the respondents were asked to evaluate the frequency of using various online practices, such as online shopping, online banking, electronic payments, online advertising, online games, online voting, online questionnaires, etc. It turned out that 93.1% of young people surveyed used the listed online practices quite often (52.7%) or at least sometimes (40.4 %). However, it is alarming that almost 7% of the youth surveyed never used the digital communication capabilities listed in the questionnaire.

Digital youth have even more opportunities to connect in the cyber community through networks. Under their influence, the modern generation has not only similar lifestyles, habits, and character of communication but also similar values. Thus, to the question of the questionnaire "What is more important today for achieving success in life?", 37% of respondents named education and competence in the professional sphere, 28% named initiative, enterprising, and activity. At that, 24% believe that today, connections and acquaintances are of great importance in achieving goals, and therefore success.

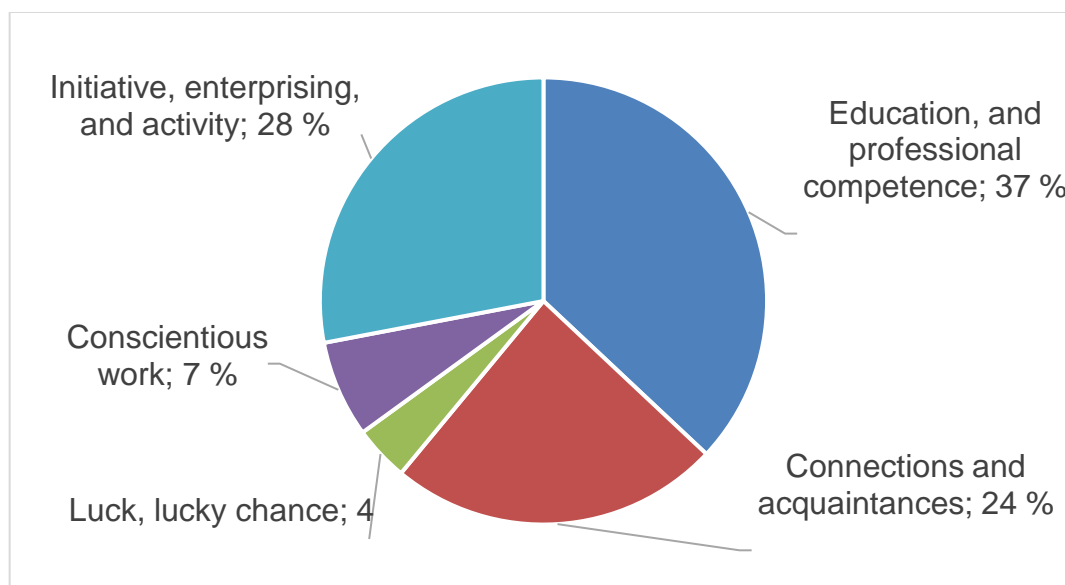


Figure 3  
What is more important today to achieve success in life?

The problem of awareness of readiness, and readiness itself require setting new research goals and objectives. Further research is required on issues related to finding common ground between the new demands of the economy and employers related to the digitalization processes, and, on the other hand, educational organizations and the personality of a young person in a situation of professional self-determination. It is also necessary to develop mechanisms for "pumping" competencies to reduce the gap between

<sup>20</sup> D. Abuzyarova; V. Belousova; Zh. Krayushkina; Y. Lonshcikova y E. N. Nikiforova Chichkanov, "The role of human capital in science, technology, and innovation", *Foresight and STI Governance* Vol: 13 num 2 (2019): 107-119.



different industries and sectors in the course of digitalization. When developing individual trajectories for the acquisition of competencies by young people, it is necessary to take into account national and age-specific characteristics, affecting motivation and informal institutions.

## Conclusion

A feature of the current state of society is the transition of all its spheres to digital technologies. Digitalization is, in fact, another challenge for society in general, and the younger generation in particular. However, this transition is perceived by young people as a more natural process. The younger generation is not afraid of changes and technologies, but to achieve success in an ever-changing world, it needs to develop more the qualities and competencies necessary to be competitive in the modern labor market in the context of digitalization of all spheres of society. The conducted study has shown that the younger generation, realizing the need to master new supra-professional competencies demanded by digital reality, is aware of a lack of readiness to work in new conditions.

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