

ALBANIAN EDUCATION AND 21ST CENTURY COMPETITIVENESS: CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract

In a world economy driven by innovation and knowledge, in societies facing complex business, political, scientific, technological, health and environmental challenges, and in diverse workplaces and communities that depend on collaborative relationships and social networking, the creativity, ingenuity, agility and skills of the citizens are crucial to any nation's competitiveness in the world. Based on recent studies, over the last decade, the industrial economy based on manufacturing has shifted to a service economy driven by information, knowledge and innovation. Companies have changed how they are organized and the way they do business. Workers have more responsibility and contribute more to productivity and innovation. In response to economic changes, industries and firms have made significant organizational shifts, such as flatter management structures, decentralized decision making, information sharing and the use of task teams, cross-organizational networking, and flexible work arrangements. These have on the other hand increased the complexity of hard and soft skills demand from the workforce. The recognition that 21st century education is the engine of every nation's economy, and not only a simple input in the overall GDP, has been incorporated both in European Union's and Millennium Development goals. A fresh response is expected from governments and policy makers, to make every aspect of the education system of their respective countries aligned to meet these milestones. This paper will try to explore the position of the Albanian education system towards EU's and Millennium Development goals, the state of the infusion of 21st century skills in core academic subjects, its alignment with workforce demands, its challenges in innovation and technology development and training, and the overall impact in 21st century Albanian competitiveness in the global market. Using qualitative and quantitative analysis. This paper will try to explore how the Albanian education system has responded to these new imperatives, and steps and strategies in place to address the challenges of integrating the 21st century skills, and also to explore the flexibility of the system towards helping teachers develop different pedagogies and learning environments and the gap between these education goals and how students are currently taught and measured on large-scale educational assessments.

Keywords: *21st Century skills, education, innovation, technology, competitiveness, Millennium Goals.*