

# A Digital Educational Environment for Small Businesses within the Context of Strategic Development and Economic Growth

## Un entorno educativo digital para pequeñas empresas en el contexto del desarrollo estratégico y el crecimiento económico

A.V. SHOKHNEKH [1](#); E.Yu. NAUMOVA [2](#); D.V. LATYSHEV [3](#); L.I. NASONOVA [4](#); G.I. SIDUNOVA [5](#)

Received: 21/06/2018 • Approved: 06/08/2018 • Published 08/12/2018

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#### ABSTRACT:

This paper looks into the need to put in place and explores the potential of a digital educational environment for small businesses, which are the fundamental guarantor of stability in any nation, playing a key role in boosting the nation's social/economic performance indicators and improving people's income levels. The authors determine a set of techniques for establishing the optimum place and role of small businesses in the digital economy; propose a set of focus areas for special-purpose programs; explore some of the key needs and wishes within the context of the competitiveness and economic growth of small businesses from a perspective of the present and future needs of the market; explore the significance of employing an additional incentivizing mechanism from the state in putting in place an educational environment for small businesses; propose a set of techniques for creating a mechanism of investment online platforms aimed at meeting relevant needs and wishes to enable support for special-purpose and purely innovative projects within the context of contracting and outsourcing; determine a set of key focus areas for educational online support for businesses to be provided by

#### RESUMEN:

Este documento analiza la necesidad de implementar y explora el potencial de un entorno educativo digital para las pequeñas empresas, que son el garante fundamental de la estabilidad en cualquier país, desempeñando un papel clave en el impulso de los indicadores de desempeño socioeconómico del país y en la mejora de la población niveles de ingreso. Los autores determinan un conjunto de técnicas para establecer el lugar y el papel óptimos de las pequeñas empresas en la economía digital; proponer un conjunto de áreas de enfoque para programas especiales; explorar algunas de las necesidades y deseos clave en el contexto de la competitividad y el crecimiento económico de las pequeñas empresas desde una perspectiva de las necesidades presentes y futuras del mercado; explorar la importancia de emplear un mecanismo de incentivo adicional del estado para establecer un entorno educativo para las pequeñas empresas; proponer un conjunto de técnicas para crear un mecanismo de plataformas de inversión en línea destinadas a satisfacer las necesidades y los deseos pertinentes para permitir el apoyo a proyectos con fines especiales y puramente innovadores en el contexto de la contratación y la

Russia's tax authorities in open access.

**Keywords:** digital economy, small businesses, digital educational environment, strategic development, competitiveness, economic growth in small businesses; outsourcing

subcontratación; determine un conjunto de áreas de enfoque clave para el apoyo educativo en línea para empresas que serán proporcionadas por las autoridades fiscales de Rusia en acceso abierto.

**Palabras clave:** economía digital, pequeñas empresas, entorno educativo digital, desarrollo estratégico, competitividad, crecimiento económico en pequeñas empresas; subcontratación

## 1. Introduction

The issue of developing a digital educational environment that will cut across all areas of life in society is increasingly taking on relevance across the world at this time. Today's innovative world is getting increasingly immersed in the Internet information environment, bustling with countless electronic/digital means of communication. Major transformations are also taking place in the education sector, with education getting more accessible via information resources. The education system, with its immutable and enduring traditions, is starting to transform and adapt to the projected needs of the information society and digital economy.

The purpose of this study is to explore the latest trends in the development of the digital educational environment, which are indicative of the enormous potential offered by galvanizing the activity of small businesses within the context of competitiveness and economic growth (Matveenko & Shokhnekh 2014). The immense potential for the further development of education theory is apparent, albeit there are a number of issues faced in this respect by small businesses.

The study's objectives are aimed at exploring the possibility of putting in place a supportive digital educational environment for small businesses, which is governed by the need for greater availability of information for the purpose of making proper decisions. Putting in place accessible educational portals offering information on ways to offset risk and resolve one's business objectives is crucial to boosts in social/economic performance indicators in small businesses (Shokhnekh et al. 2014).

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## 2. Methods

The study was conducted using methods of deduction and induction, logical analysis and analogy, with a focus on concretizing the findings through the use of the synthetic/analytic approach, and comparative statistical analysis. It is worth noting that at present Russia's small business sector is still insignificant, standing at 20%, a figure that has persisted through the period 2013–2017. To compare, in developed nations across Europe, Asia, and the American continent the current level of development of the small business sector is 70–80%.

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## 3. Results and discussion

At present, the digital economic system provides small businesses with access to various electronic/digital communication routes. However, electronic/digital platforms dealing with the various aspects of the business activity of small businesses (organization, operational and day-to-day management, accounting, tax obligations and concessions, analysis, and control) are currently operating at a subpar level or are characterized by a number of complex technical aspects associated with their use. The current low levels of availability of information resources for the development of small businesses is a key barrier impeding the attainment of a proper level in Russia at the moment (Shokhnekh 2012).

Small businesses, the fundamental guarantor of stability in any nation, play a key role in boosting the nation's social/economic performance indicators and improving people's income levels. Stimulating the entrepreneurial activity of small business entities helps engage citizens in such crucial processes as self-sustainment, self-education, self-employment, and self-actualization.

The proactiveness of small businesses and their ability to stay sustainable and profitable

may be construed as social self-actualization, with the economic aspect viewed as attendant. Today's small businesses are not a needy sector and are not represented by the socially disadvantaged, being a self-sufficient sector that forms the basis of the middle class in civil society. The middle class in civil society, in turn, contributes steadily to economic security within the nation.

The study has helped establish that, as an economic entity, individual small businesses are in no position to influence national development. However, a well-organized system of supporting establishments for small businesses may contribute significantly to all major processes related to life activity in society.

Large and medium-sized enterprises, which carry most of the investment load, being involved with complex strategically crucial activity, can be relieved of having to deal with attendant work and services that distract them from their major activity. Indeed, in addition to their principal line of work entrepreneurs running medium-sized and large businesses have to also take care of such small business processes as clean-up, food, courier delivery, transportation, waste disposal, equipment maintenance, public supply and fire safety systems, environment cleaning activities, and recycling.

The issue of a digital educational environment for small businesses within the context of competitiveness and economic growth ought to be raised from a perspective of present and future needs, which may require employing an additional tool – an incentivizing mechanism from the state.

Today's rapid technical and technological development is giving rise to new needs in society, which in part can be met by small businesses with a focus on consuming fewer resources and producing greater economic payoffs (which is inherent to the activity of most small businesses). However, without regular investing in new types of activity, the company runs a huge risk of losing out to the competition. Also, consumers of the activity of small businesses expect high levels of meeting consumer demand both through proper production techniques and through creating new jobs for the population, which can hardly be possible without the proper level of digital information technology in place in the country (Abdikeev et al. 2010, Hedberg & Jönsson 1977).

If small businesses fail to properly arm themselves with the arsenal offered by the digital economy today and continue to work with outmoded tools, they may end up having to face significantly greater expenditure in just a few years' time, having to invest not only in digital information technology and training but enlisting contractors, whom they may either lose or fail to enlist during the process of their activity.

The levels of competitiveness and economic growth of small businesses are determined by at least two major factors: 1) how fast they develop and how fast they introduce new products and services into the market; 2) how well they understand the needs and wishes of their target audience.

It is barely possible to ensure the fast introduction of new products (goods, works, and services) into the market without the use of an effective toolbox of digital technologies in meeting client needs. A key focus is on knowing one's clients well enough so as to be able to offer them the right product. Consequently, there is a need for more in-depth analysis of information, which can no longer be done in manual mode.

A digital educational environment for small businesses within the context of strategic development, competitiveness, and economic growth ought to be not just stable and productive but also flexible and easily adjustable without too much extra tweaking required.

It stands to reason that without a sound digital educational environment in place and without due attention to the development of a proper information system, a small business does not stand a chance against the competition in vying for the consumer dollar, of added significance being the ability to ensure both the accessibility of financial instruments and their safety.

A well-developed digital educational environment will help ensure the electronic authentication of users, devices, and electronic communication channels and ascertainment

of the reliability of wireless transactions.

Since a small business does not stand a chance without using the latest digital innovative technology, of added relevance is the focus on working out proper routes for organizing a digital educational environment for small businesses within the context of competitiveness and economic growth.

The reality is such that, no matter how much effort is put into personnel development, without a cutting-edge technological platform it appears to be impracticable and economically impractical to turn out quality products (goods, works, and services) for society (Zub & Loktionov 2011).

Currently, the Russian education sector is carrying into effect the tenets of the priority project 'A Cutting-Edge Digital Educational Environment in the Russian Federation', signed into law by the Russian government on October 25, 2016. Increasingly, of relevance is the focus on boosting the quality of and expanding the potential for continuing education. In recent years, the executive branch of the Russian government has taken steps to set relevant objectives for the development of a sound digital educational space (Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 1632-r 2017).

The prospects for the development of the above areas for research are suggestive that a present-day digital educational environment for small businesses ought to boost the accessibility, relevance, and quality of learning using cutting-edge technology and the scientific potential of Russian universities, online-platforms, and businesses. Of relevance is the further development of the idea of practical implementation of virtual academic and practical mobility in learning.

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## **4. Conclusions**

A digital educational environment for small businesses ought to be oriented toward the achievement of the following objectives:

- 1) creating a system of analysis of the needs and trends in the demand of small businesses for the quality of organization of learning, which would combine automatic and expert assessments of the reliability of information;
- 2) putting in place an information resource (portal) that would be accessible to all categories of citizens to enable access to information on how small businesses are organized, their lifecycles, and relevant obligations and concessions within the digital economic system;
- 3) integrating portals concerned with the identification and authentication of federal, regional, and local authorities, business establishments, and non-governmental organizations, with a focus on the storage and transmission in electronic form of information on demand and supply with respect to all processes associated with life activity in society;
- 4) developing open source code software aimed at ensuring boosts in the quality of online research and online learning and the possible testing of the outcomes of assimilating information in the area of taxation;
- 5) developing at the federal, regional, and local level and adopting statutes that would help put in place and run a digital educational environment for small businesses within the context of apprehending intersectoral externalities for strategic development, competitiveness, and economic growth;
- 6) creating open-access online courses for small businesses with a focus on the use of educational technology and the operation of regional competency centers intended to provide special-purpose training for the owners and personnel of small businesses;
- 7) creating real-time online platforms that would carry investment bids and offers and detail the terms and conditions of special-purpose and whole new projects both of core use and of an attendant nature implemented on an outsourcing basis;
- 8) implementing open-access educational support for businesses on the websites of local tax offices in Russian regions (a possible title for this kind of webpage is 'Enquire about the possible tax-related consequences of deals made by a small business').

# Acknowledgements

This publication was produced with financial support from the Russian Foundation for Basic Research (Project No. 18-010-01210–A 'A Cognitive Approach to the Theoretical/Methodological Foundations of the Strategic Development of Small Businesses within the Digital Economic System Factoring in Risks Associated with Shifts').

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1. Volgograd State Social-Pedagogical University. V.I. Lenina Avenue, 27, Volgograd, 400066, Russia. E-mail: [shokhnekh@rambler.ru](mailto:shokhnekh@rambler.ru)

2. Volgograd State Social-Pedagogical University. V.I. Lenina Avenue, 27, Volgograd, 400066, Russia

3. Volgograd State Social-Pedagogical University. V.I. Lenina Avenue, 27, Volgograd, 400066, Russia

4. Volgograd State Social-Pedagogical University. V.I. Lenina Avenue, 27, Volgograd, 400066, Russia

5. Volgograd State Social-Pedagogical University. V.I. Lenina Avenue, 27, Volgograd, 400066, Russia

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Revista ESPACIOS. ISSN 0798 1015  
Vol. 39 (Nº 49) Year 2018

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