

## 1 **Technology and education prospects**

2 original at

3 <http://www.economist.com/node/21528226>

4 Some university-goers are inspired by a pure love of learning. But most  
5 also believe that spending three or four years at university—and in the  
6 Anglo-Saxon world, accumulating huge debts in the process—will boost  
7 their chances of landing a well-paid and secure job. Their elders have  
8 always told them that education is the best way to equip themselves to  
9 thrive in a globalised world. Blue-collar workers will see their jobs  
10 offshored and automated, the familiar argument goes. But the graduate  
11 elite will have the world at its feet.

12 But is the past a reliable guide to the future? Or are we at the beginning  
13 of a new phase in the relationship between jobs and education? There are  
14 good reasons for thinking that old patterns are about to change.

15 The supply of university graduates is increasing rapidly. Emerging  
16 economies—especially China—are pouring resources into building  
17 universities that can compete with the elite of America and Europe. The  
18 best and the brightest of the rich world must increasingly compete with  
19 the best and the brightest from poorer countries who are willing to work  
20 harder for less money.

21 Several economists have begun to argue that Western post-industrial  
22 societies will be characterised not by a relentless rise in demand for the  
23 educated but by a great “hollowing out” – a disappearance of mid-status  
24 jobs. Alan Blinder, of Princeton University, argues that the jobs graduates  
25 have traditionally performed are if anything more “offshorable” than low-  
26 wage ones. A plumber or lorry-driver’s job cannot be outsourced to India.  
27 A computer programmer’s can.

## Questions

- 1) What are the two motives for going to university mentioned in the text? Which of them is reported as more influential?
- 2) Why is, according to conventional wisdom, education increasingly important in the globalised world?
- 3) Who is a 'blue collar' (line 9) worker?
- 4) What is *offshoring* (line 10)?
- 5) Why are university-graduates from the emerging economies, such as China, such a fierce competition for their European and American counterparts?
- 6) What is, according to the text, the difference between conventional wisdom and the opinion of a number of economists with regard to the offshoring of graduate vs. low wage jobs?
- 7) What is your opinion on tertiary education in terms of its profitability? Do you think it still pays off? Do you think education should be regarded as an investment at all? What are your personal motives for education?

## Vocabulary

**boost** (line 6) – increase, improve, strengthen

**elder** (line 7) – somebody who is older or more experienced

**thrive** (line 9) – prosper, flourish, be successful

**pattern** (line 14) – structure, configuration, arrangement

You can find additional explanation and more examples to help you understand and use English words and phrases at <http://dictionary.reference.com>, <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/>, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/> or <http://www.ldoceonline.com/>

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