

RESHAPING ACADEMIC RELATIONSHIPS IN UNIVERSITIES THROUGH DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

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Abstract:

Analyzing how digital transformation changes administrative processes, student-faculty relationships, and collaboration, this study explores the transforming powers of digital technology on academic alliances in universities. Using several theoretical models like Industry 4.0 and Society 5.0, the study explores the advantages and drawbacks of digitalization in colleges. It looks at how colleges and universities are using digital resources to increase operational efficiency, customize learning opportunities, and global academic collaboration encouragement by means of tailoring of course of action. Apart from talking about the requirement of strategic leadership and fair access to technology, the paper explores the ethical issues and cultural shifts that accompany the digital transition. This paper provides insightful analysis of how digital revolution could help colleges change academic interactions. It provides a road map for organizations attempting to remain loyal to their goal of promoting knowledge, fairness, and creativity in the face of the digital era.

Important issues in higher education include digital revolution, scholarly cooperation, student-faculty interactions, and ethical questions.

Keywords: Digital Transformation; Higher Education; Academic Collaboration; Student-Faculty Relationships; Ethical Challenges.

Introduction

The digital revolution is changing the means of knowledge generation, distribution, and usage, therefore posing fresh difficulties for colleges and universities. The rise of digital technology has also affected conventional academic methods as it redefines the interactions among administration, students, and professors within the university environment. The Fourth Industrial Revolution (Industry 4.0) and the expectations of Society 5.0 call on institutions—including universities—to rapidly adapt to society changes and encourage innovation. This change is occurring within this greater space.

Once seen as conservative strongholds, universities and colleges are today leading the charge in digital transformation with technologies such cloud computing, artificial intelligence (AI), big data, and the Internet of Things (IoT guiding their way). Universities are using these technologies more and more as a way to simplify processes, increase academic collaboration, and provide students greater flexibility and individualization in their educational encounters.

But the digital revolution of colleges calls for a complete reassessment of the institutional and interpersonal dynamics within academia, not just use of new technology. With digital tools in the academic setting, knowledge exchange, student-faculty relationships, and administrative decision-making might all experience significant changes. These changes inspire important questions about the direction of academic collaboration going forward, the moral implications of technological integration, and the purpose of institutions in the current digital age.

The COVID-19 outbreak also practically forced universities to adopt online and hybrid models, therefore accelerating the digitalization of education. This abrupt upheaval has highlighted the possibilities and hazards that digital transformation at colleges presents as well as its benefits. Digital technologies have highlighted how inequality in technology access is rising and made many doubt the quality of online learning even while they have kept institutions going during crises.

Notwithstanding the seeming benefits—such as improved flexibility, scalability, and connectedness to global information networks—Universities have great challenges fully leveraging the powers of digital transformation. Major obstacles still include the digital divide, staff and student opposition to change, and poor degrees of digital literacy. Other important concerns with the moral use of data include privacy, fairness, and accountability, particularly in connection to artificial intelligence and learning analytics.

The main question that arises when universities keep embracing digital transformation is how they could effectively modify academic relationships while also addressing the pragmatic, ethical, and cultural challenges that follow?

Methods

Within the scope of this qualitative research, the consequences of digital transformation on academic relationships throughout the whole institution are investigated. The conclusions of this research are based on an in-depth investigation of the theoretical framework and a complete review of the relevant literature about digital transformation in educational institutions. Academic collaboration, the impact of digital technologies on interactions between students and teachers, and the administrative implications of using digital tools are all key problems that need consideration. The selection of the material was based on its relevance to the current issue at hand, with a particular emphasis on books, academic journals, and conference reports. By synthesizing the findings of prior research, the purpose of this study is to fill in some of the gaps in our knowledge of how academic relationships are evolving as a consequence of the digital revolution.

Theoretical Background

The basis upon which the digital transformation of universities is based is a larger socioeconomic and technical change that has been accumulating over the last several decades. The scholarly models and theoretical frameworks supporting the idea of modifying academic relationships in higher education are investigated in this part. This part aims to help one to grasp the impact of digital technology on these establishments. Knowledge economies, technology paradigms like Industry 4.0 and Society 5.0, and the effect of digital technologies on learning ecosystems provide the fundamental ingredients for this conversation.

1. Industry 4.0 and Society 5.0 as Frameworks for Change

Industry 4.0, often called the fourth industrial revolution, is characterized by the integration of physical and digital systems. In this context, the education sector, particularly higher education, has not been immune to the transformative power of these technological innovations. Digital transformation in universities has mirrored broader industry trends, where automation, big data, artificial intelligence (AI), and the Internet of Things (IoT) have revolutionized operational and academic processes (Rodríguez-Abitia & Correa, 2021).

Alongside Industry 4.0 is Society 5.0, a concept introduced by the Japanese government that envisions a society where technology is seamlessly integrated into every facet of life, balancing economic progress with societal well-being. Society 5.0 places emphasis on human-centered innovation, where universities act not only as places of knowledge dissemination but also as key players in fostering ethical and inclusive technological advancements (Evans & Miklošik, 2023). In the context of universities, Society 5.0 encourages a rethinking of educational processes, ensuring that they empower students to be agents of change in a rapidly evolving digital world.

2. Digital Transformation in the Knowledge Economy

University reform is much driven by the knowledge economy, which is defined by the generation, sharing, and use of information. By means of digital transformation—that is, the integration of technologies such as online libraries, e-learning platforms, and learning management systems (LMS)—universities may actively participate in this market. Capacity to innovate, exchange knowledge, and stay adaptable in reacting to needs of the global market defines knowledge economies most of all. As institutions of higher education, universities lie at the intersection of this change.

Knowledge is created not only in physical classrooms but also in digital surroundings where learning may take place anywhere and at any moment. Particularly academic libraries are becoming more and more important in managing digital information as they enable teachers and students to access materials online and cooperate internationally. Digital curation, archiving, and information exchange provide a dynamic learning environment that improves research and instruction alike (Sandhu, 2018).

3. Pedagogical Innovations and Digital Learning Ecosystems

The change in pedagogy is fundamental for digital transformation in colleges. Theoretical models of digital learning can stress the change from conventional, lecture-based instruction to more interactive, student-centered learning settings. Constructivist theories of learning, which hold that knowledge is created by interaction with digital tools and cooperative contexts, guide pedagogical advancements in the digital age.

The advent of e-learning systems, massive open online courses (MOOCs), and virtual classrooms has fundamentally changed the way a student studies. Under active learning—where students interact with materials, work with others, and get feedback in real-time—these systems enable The COVID-19 epidemic made clear how important these technologies are as virtually immediately colleges had to shift to totally online models. The general acceptance of digital technologies such as mobile learning apps shown their ability to not only complement but sometimes occasionally improve conventional teaching strategies (Nikolopoulou, 2022).

Digital universities call more and more pedagogical approaches like connectivism—which emphasises learning as a process of developing a network—relevant. Students no longer rely only

on teachers to provide their main information. Rather, students build knowledge by means of interactions with a wide spectrum of online materials, networks, and technology, hence transforming the student-teacher relationship. Rather of being the only authority, faculty members serve as guides or facilitators, therefore creating a learning environment representative of the digital era (Pisoni, 2019).

4. Digital Leadership and Institutional Change Management

Digital transformation need for purposeful institutional leadership and strategy; it cannot occur naturally. Many models of organisational transformation in higher education stress the need of matching technology adoption with institutional goal and vision. Digital leadership emphasises how university leaders have to negotiate difficult issues such financial allocation, faculty development, and the incorporation of new technology while maintaining congruence with academic principles and objectives. Kotter's 8-Step Change Model is one of the most well-known theoretical models as it provides understanding of how colleges could effectively control digital transformation. According to the approach, the first stages in changing academic connections include building a clear vision, forging guiding coalitions, and generating urgency around the need for digital transformation. In colleges, where opposition to change is typically a major obstacle, Kotter's paradigm may be very helpful (Minina & Mabrouk, 2019).

5. Challenges and Ethical Considerations in Digital Transformation

Digital transformation brings ethical and pragmatic difficulties even if it delivers plenty of possibilities. One such difficulty is the possible "digital divide," wherein faculty members' and students' access to digital resources can be not equally dispersed. Universities have to solve these differences to provide fair access to education, especially because digital technologies are now almost necessary for academic achievement. In rural places and underdeveloped nations where internet connectivity might be restricted, this becomes especially relevant (Valdés et al., 2021).

Higher education's digital transformation also has to take data privacy, cybersecurity, and ethical artificial intelligence use in learning settings into account. For example, the emergence of learning analytics—where data on student performance and behavior— begs significant issues regarding permission, data security, and the possibility for monitoring. Universities have to create regulations guaranteeing the moral use of digital technologies and safeguarding of faculty and student rights (García-Peñalvo, 2021).

6. Future-Proofing Higher Education: A Look at the Digital University Model

At last, the digital university model is a developing theoretical framework providing a whole picture of the direction of higher education. From administrative services to campus life, this model covers the digitisation of not just academic materials but also the whole university environment. Operating in a "blended" form, digital colleges let students participate in both physical and online learning environments. This strategy is consistent with ideas of lifelong learning, which stress constant, adaptable learning paths that may fit to students's changing requirements across their careers (Tekere et al., 2022).

The digital university concept is mostly based on the integration of digital capabilities into the course of instruction. Universities have to provide students with the digital skills required to flourish in a digitally sophisticated society in addition to teaching them conventional academic

disciplines. This all-encompassing change guarantees that colleges stay competitive and relevant in a global scene becoming digital (Doroshenko et al., 2021).

The theoretical underpinnings of digital transformation in universities draw from a wide array of disciplines, including technology, pedagogy, and management. These frameworks help explain the shifts taking place in higher education and offer a roadmap for universities to navigate the complexities of digital integration. As universities continue to evolve, these theories will guide how institutions balance technological advancements with their core mission of fostering knowledge, equity, and innovation.

This section of the article sets the stage for understanding the subsequent discussions on practical implementation and the reshaping of academic relationships in a digitalized higher education system.

Results

Digitalization's Changing of Academic Relationships Universities' continuous digital transformation offers many ways to change the nature of academic connections. To stay competitive, incorporate new teaching models, and encourage multidisciplinary and institutional cooperation, universities are depending more and more on digital tools.

1. University-industry cooperation: By encouraging information sharing and innovation, digital transformation fuels partnerships between academics and industry. Overcoming obstacles such as limited resources, competing interests, and a lack of institutional backing will help to develop and maintain these alliances, nevertheless (Evans & Miklošík, 2023).

2. Central to the digital revolution of colleges, academic libraries are using digital technology for curation, preservation, and archiving more and more. Libraries are starting venues for digital innovation, encouraging teamwork, and improving digital literacy—all of which are essential for changing academic connections (Sandhu, 2018).

3. The COVID-19 epidemic hastened the use of mobile devices in educational environments. Academic uses for mobile devices among students include accessing course materials, peer communication, and research conduct. This change increases academic community connectivity and flexibility (Nikolopoulou, 2022).

4. Universities are changing their approach to communication in order to more include staff members and students. Using digital technologies to construct online communities encourages continuous participation outside of the classroom, therefore changing the foundation and maintenance of academic connections (Minina & Mabrouk, 2019).

The Need for Cultural Shifts

For digital transformation to effectively reshape academic relationships, universities must foster a cultural shift that embraces digital innovation and prioritizes collaboration and openness.

Digital transformation at universities is often hampered by opposition to change, lack of technical knowledge, and insufficient financial support, notwithstanding the possible advantages (Rodríguez-Abitia & Correa, 2021). Overcoming these obstacles calls for strategic leadership and dedication to building a digital innovation culture.

Universities have to provide staff members and students the tools they need to negotiate the digital terrain. Digital revolution not only changes the way information is generated and communicated but also redefines the role of teachers, demanding them to use new teaching strategies using digital technologies (Díaz-Noguera et al., 2020).

The Digital University Model

Emerging in recent years, the idea of the "Digital University" advocates the inclusion of digital technology into all spheres of the academic process. From administrative procedures to instructional innovations, this paradigm advocates colleges embracing digital transformation holistically (Doroshenko et al., 2021).

1. Universities are digitising administrative procedures to improve efficiency and openness more and more in order to reflect organisational changes. Digital technologies for handling academic records, workflow management, and communication accelerates operations and strengthens academic ties by means of which workflows are managed (Huzzva, 2021).
2. The move towards digital and remote learning systems promotes cooperation among colleges and businesses by means of collaborative learning and remote work. Classes using digital tools and platforms for group projects help to build critical skills for the contemporary workforce (Pisoni, 2019).

Sustainability and Future Directions

Long-term success of universities in the digital era depends on sustainable management of digital transformation. Universities have to create systems that guarantee technology adoption promotes academic connections in significant ways and corresponds with institutional aims (Abad-Segura et al., 2020).

1. Universities have to make investments in the development of digital capabilities among faculty members as well as students if they are to stay relevant and competitive in a fast-changing digital terrain. Promoting digital literacy, supporting multidisciplinary research, and creating an atmosphere that encourages innovation—all of which are included here—Teker et al., 2022
2. The digital revolution of colleges is not a passing fad but rather a basic change needing long-term strategic planning. Universities have to keep improving their digital transformation plans to guarantee their agility and responsiveness to changing academic and society requirements (Valdés et al., 2021).

Discussion

The debate of how digital transformation affects changing academic relationships at universities calls for critically analyzing the possibilities and difficulties that develop as institutions fit a technologically driven environment. While also analyzing the strategic, ethical, and cultural consequences of digital transformation in higher education, this part comments on the changes in academic cooperation, student-faculty interactions, and administrative roles.

1. Revolutionizing Academic Collaboration and Knowledge Exchange

Facilitating academic cooperation is among the most significant effects of digital revolution in institutions. Thanks to formerly unheard-of communication between academics across distance, digital platforms enable new kinds of multidisciplinary research and worldwide collaborations.

Research is now done, shared, and published using cloud computing, shared digital archives, and collaborative tools.

Geographic limitations have typically constrained academic cooperation—especially in research—by definition. Digital transformation, however, lets institutions pool resources, exchange data, and engage on world issues such as climate change, public health, and technological innovation by means of seamless virtual cooperation, thereby promoting worldwide research networks. The change in how academic connections are seen and carried out from conventional, in-person interactions to digitally mediated ones exposes (Pisoni, 2019).

Research databases, digital libraries, and open-access publications have also greatly improved information sharing. These tools provide researchers and students instant access to a wealth of data, therefore promoting an open scientific and creative culture. Thanks to digital technology, universities are turning from isolated information silos into nodes in an interconnected network of worldwide academic debate (Sandhu, 2018).

2. Redefining Student-Faculty Relationships

Digital learning technologies have also changed the student-faculty interaction. More participatory, student-centered approaches are substituting for conventional education models in which teachers are the exclusive source of information and students are passive consumers. Learning management systems (LMS), video conferences, and digital material distribution systems among other digital technologies have enabled students to participate more actively in their education. This change fits constructivist theories of learning, which underline that rather than passive absorption, information is created by interaction and teamwork (Díaz-Noguera et al., 2020).

Under this new paradigm, teachers are more of facilitators guiding students over tailored learning paths than guardians of knowledge. Greater freedom made possible by the digital revolution lets teachers provide more customised comments on digital platforms, monitor student development in real-time, and change their curricula depending on data analytics. Dealing with various learning demands calls for a tailored strategy that standard models often fall short.

The digitalisation of education, meantime, also begs questions regarding the depersonalisation of the student-faculty interaction. Digital instruments could cause separation even if they provide scalability and simplicity. Though effective, virtual learning settings might lack the human connection and mentoring possibilities fundamental to the academic experience. This difficulty demands a mixed strategy wherein digital technologies enhance rather than replace face-to-face contacts (Valdés et al., 2021).

3. Impact on Administrative Efficiency and Decision-Making

Universities' administrative operations have also been much changed by digital transformation. Adoption of digital solutions for handling workflows, academic records, student admissions, even human resources has simplified processes and enhanced openness. Digital dashboards, data analytics, and automation have improved decision-making processes so that colleges may react faster and more successfully to both internal and outside demands.

For instance, data-driven decision-making and predictive analytics are progressively becoming second nature to university management. Universities now have access to enormous volumes of information on resource use, student performance, and enrolment patterns. Effective analysis of this

information may guide strategic choices including student support services, curriculum creation, and resource allocation. Digital technologies also help instructors, departments, and students to communicate more effectively, therefore strengthening the academic community (Huzhva, 2021).

Data-driven methods used in university administration, especially with regard to privacy and data security, generate ethical questions nevertheless. While guaranteeing compliance with rules like the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in Europe, universities must negotiate the complexity of gathering, storing, and using student data. Furthermore, raising questions are the ethical ramifications of utilising student data to forecast academic success or failure as well as the possibility for monitoring (García-Peñalvo, 2021).

4. Cultural and Strategic Shifts within Universities

The need for strategic and cultural changes is one of the biggest difficulties institutions face throughout their digital transformation. Adoption of digital technologies calls for a shift in perspective as much as technical improvements. Universities have to encourage among their staff members as well as their students digital literacy and creativity. This covers guiding students to acquire the digital skills required for the contemporary workforce as well as offering faculty members training and assistance to enable them incorporate digital technologies into their teaching and research activities.

Furthermore, digital change has to complement the strategic objectives of the institution. Institutions which approach digitalisation without a defined vision run the danger of fragmenting their administrative and academic roles. Effective digital transformation calls for a coherent plan combining technology with the university's more general goal of knowledge production and distribution. Maintaining institutional relevance in a fast changing educational scene requires this strategic alignment (Rodríguez-Abitia & Correa, 2021).

Encouragement of a digital-first culture also entails overcoming any faculty and staff reluctance to new technology. Using Kotter's 8-Step Change Model and digital leadership frameworks among other change management tools can help colleges negotiate these changes. Leaders have to establish coalitions of support, convey the long-term advantages of these developments clearly, and generate an urgency about digital transformation (Minina & Mabrouk, 2019).

5. Ethical and Societal Implications

University digital revolution also begs significant ethical and social concerns. Universities have to examine the wider social consequences of their digital activities as they become increasingly technologically reliant. Critical issues that colleges have to deal with include the digital divide, data privacy, and the moral use of artificial intelligence in scholarly environments.

One very urgent problem is the digital divide—that is, the difference between people with and without access to digital technologies. Although many affluent nation universities have the means to make investments in innovative digital infrastructure, colleges in poor nations might find it difficult to stay up. With kids from disadvantaged homes lacking access to the same resources as their classmates, this mismatch might worsen educational disparities. Dealing with this problem calls for a worldwide endeavour to guarantee that everyone, regardless of socioeconomic level, may use digital technologies (Teket et al., 2022).

Universities also have to make sure their efforts at digital transformation complement moral values. This include creating rules safeguarding student and teacher privacy, guaranteeing open data collecting and analysis practices, and addressing issues on the use of artificial intelligence in academic evaluation. AI algorithms evaluating student achievement, for instance, have to be meticulously crafted to prevent prejudices and guarantee impartiality.

6. The Future of Universities in a Digital World

It is evident that these developments are not transient as institutions negotiate the complexity of digital transition; rather, they fundamentally alter the way higher education runs. Universities' future resides on their capacity to fit the fast-changing digital terrain. This entails not just incorporating digital technologies into instruction and research but also examining the basic foundation of higher education.

Universities will have to concentrate in the next years on building digital competences among their teachers and students, promoting worldwide cooperation, and designing creative learning environments combining digital and in-person interactions. A vision for the future of higher education is provided by the "digital university" paradigm, in which technology is subtly incorporated into every facet of university life. Emphasizing adaptability, personalizing, and accessibility, this paradigm guarantees that colleges stay relevant in a world becoming more and more digital (Doroshenko et al., 2021).

By encouraging teamwork, creativity, and operational effectiveness, digital revolution in higher education is reshaping academic partnerships. Still, this change poses serious difficulties including institutional alignment, ethics, and equality. While Toumi et al. (2022) (Toumi et al., 2022) stress the pandemic's influence in supporting sustainable educational practices by means of digital tools, Khiri and Naouri (2023) explain how digital platforms redefine society norms and customs. Digital literacy, diversity, and ethical techniques must be given top priority at universities so that technology supports their main teaching goals and carefully addresses both possibilities and obstacles.

Conclusion

Universities' digital transformation marks a major change in their operations, interactions, and fulfilment of their purpose of information distribution and innovation. Universities are not only changing their administrative and operational systems but also drastically altering academic connections as digital technology are more and more included into higher education. The fundamental question asked in the introduction—how can universities effectively reshape academic relationships through digital transformation while addressing the ethical, cultural, and operational challenges accompanying this transition—requires a multifarious response grounded in strategic vision, cultural adaptability, and ethical consideration.

First of all, digital change has been a spur for improved cross-disciplinary academic cooperation across national borders. Knowledge sharing has been transformed by technologies like digital repositories, cloud computing, and collaborative platforms, hence increasing its dynamic, adaptable, inclusive character. These days, universities may create worldwide research networks, effectively distribute resources, and participate in multidisciplinary projects tackling worldwide problems. Universities must therefore invest in digital infrastructure and promote an open and innovative

culture if they are to maintain these partnerships despite obstacles such institutional inertia, limited resources, and competing interests (Evans & Miklošik, 2023).

Second, the interaction and learner-centred nature of the student-faculty connection that digital technologies have changed reflects By giving students more access to materials, real-time feedback, and customised learning experiences— Technologies such learning management systems (LMS), smartphone apps, and virtual classrooms empower students. While faculty members are moving from conventional lectures to knowledge facilitators directing students across more cooperative, digital learning settings, Universities must make sure, meantime, that this digital revolution does not dehumanise the academic process. Universities may preserve the vital human connection that supports successful education by juggling digital technologies with in-person mentoring (Díaz-Noguera et al., 2020).

Administrative efficiency-wise, digital transformation has let colleges simplify their operations, increase openness, and strengthen decision-making procedures. Universities now find it simpler to distribute funds, monitor student development, and maximise academic services thanks in part to predictive analytics, automation, and data-driven initiatives. But depending more and more on data also brings serious ethical questions, especially with relation to data privacy, security, and monitoring possibility. Universities have to carefully negotiate these issues by enforcing regulations safeguarding the privacy of their academic communities and using data ethically to improve institutional performance (García-Peñalvo, 2021).

One cannot exaggerate the cultural change needed for effective digital transformation. Universities have to create surroundings that support digital literacy, creativity, and teamwork among staff members as well as among students. This entails offering instruction and assistance for the inclusion of digital technologies into administration, research, and education. Just as crucial is matching digital projects with strategic objectives of the university to make sure technology improves rather than compromises the purpose of the institution. Strong leadership and honest communication of the long-term advantages of digital transformation will help to overcome resistance to change—from institutional structures to faculty members (Rodríguez-Abitia & Correa, 2021).

At last, ethical and social issues are rather important in making sure that digital revolution helps every kind of higher education participant. Universities have to solve the digital gap so that every student—especially those from underprivileged backgrounds—get fair access to technology. Moreover, ethical questions about the use of digital monitoring, data analytics, and artificial intelligence have to be properly controlled to prevent any prejudices and defend personal liberties. Universities may make sure that digital transformation is a tool for good change rather than a cause of inequality by building ethical frameworks and giving inclusiveness top priority (Tekler et al., 2022).

By embracing technological innovation, encouraging a culture of digital literacy, and tackling ethical issues that develop, institutions may therefore efficiently change academic partnerships by means of digital transformation. Digital technologies have great power to simplify administrative procedures, boost the student-faculty dynamic, and increase cooperation. But only if colleges give inclusion, ethical issues, and long-term strategic planning top priority can these advantages be fully realised. Universities have to be flexible and adaptable as digital transformation develops to make

sure their academic connections, values, and purpose fit the new technology environment while preserving their central dedication to knowledge production and equality in education.

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